

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MISSROUI-ST. LOUIS
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S FORUM ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
SEPTEMBER 20, 2013
DEB HOLLINGSWORTH INTERVIEWED BY BLANCHE TOUHILL

Deb Hollingsworth: I'm Deborah Hollingsworth and I'm regional vice president of external affairs for AT&T in my current position.

Blanche Touhill: Talk about your early life. You can talk about your family; did you have brothers and sisters; where did you grow up; when you went to school, was there a teacher that had a great effect on you or was it somebody in the neighborhood or was it your mother or father. Talk about your early life and how that experience put you on a certain path.

Deb Hollingsworth: Sure. I grew up in Raton, New Mexico, which is in Northeastern New Mexico, a very small town of about 6,000 people but it was kind of rural America at its best. I had a great little downtown with lots of wonderful businesses and I could walk to school so I walked to elementary school, I walked to junior high, had to drive a little ways to get to high school but everything was very easy, easy to get around. Everyone knew you and I really liked that in a lot of ways. My father was a business person there. He owned a car dealership so most people knew him and my mother and they were active in the community and my mother always encouraged us, as did my father, in education, that education is the most important thing. You have to finish school and I never knew people didn't go to college. My parents grew up out in rural New Mexico on dry land farms and ranches. Both of their parents came to New Mexico with a land grant. So they had very difficult lives and lived through the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl. So that impacted their lives and they were fortunate to have been able to go to college but they did not graduate so they were just insistent that you go to college and you complete it and you don't get married; you don't do anything until you get that education and that you have a good income and can take care of yourself. So

that kind of framed our family. They had very high expectations for us. There were four of us, four girls and so I was the youngest of four and somewhat of a surprise, I'm told. My oldest sister was 19 and in college when I was born and the next one was 16 and the next one 12. So I was almost an only child and had basically four mothers. So I got a lot of direction and a lot of care and always felt somewhat special in my family which was lovely but they all had high expectations and my sisters all were very outstanding, did well, got scholarships. I would say we all had a good talent or something that gave us some insight into what we wanted to do in the world. Music was always part of our family. My mother would come in and wake us up singing. We learned to sing early on. We'd sing, my mother and my sisters and I would sing and we had a very good friend who taught music in the school system and her name was Clarissa Webber. In fact, one of my sisters is named for her and Miss Webber was just a wonderful musician and a great teacher and so she gave me free piano lessons from the time...she started me at five but I was a little too young so we picked back up, I think, when I was seven or eight and she gave me piano lessons every week of my life until I graduated from high school. So I really give her a lot of credit for being a big influence in my life as well as my family because I saw what education had done for her and she grew up in Denver, Colorado and was a teacher in many places but came to our town. She brought a lot of great music and theater to the city which we wouldn't have had because we were small and got me involved in the Raton Choral Society. So we did the Messiah every Christmas; we'd do a spring play; a musical and I learned to perform at an early age. So I was always expected to stand before an audience and sing and sing well and did many talent shows growing up and singing in school in the choir and I would say, I give a lot of credit to her and my mother for encouraging me to do that. It would have been very easy not to because it takes a lot of strength to feel confident enough to stand up and perform and know the material well. So I would say I really got into singing more than playing the piano even though I did both and was expected to do well in both. School was also a big priority so I had to do well in school, keep my grades up and I had many wonderful teachers all

along the way and I had one in high school who encouraged me to write a speech and it was recorded at our radio station for the VFW Voice of Democracy Speech Contest and the theme was my responsibility as a citizen. So I would say that kind of exposed me to a much bigger world. Luckily I did that and I was selected as the winner from New Mexico which I never even really thought I would be because I was from a small place. As you know, we had Los Alamos and the (Labs?) and many brilliant people living in New Mexico, especially in that area, whose children, I'm sure, were far better than I would have been but fortunately I guess I had the right content and the right delivery and was selected. So I was able to go to Washington, D.C. and I took my first plane flight that year and flew to Washington, D.C. for the competition and met the 49 other students from across the United States and that just opened a whole new world to me and we got to tour Washington, D.C., meet our senators and our representatives and even go to the White House. That was when Gerald Ford was President and we went to the White House and sat in the Oval Office. Unfortunately, one of the students stole paper from Henry Kissinger's place, I think it was, or someone's and so, unfortunately, that didn't turn out so well. We were kind of detained until that came up but that really gave me a view that there was something bigger out there and that travel was in the future for me. The fun thing about my home town, everybody knew that I was going to Washington, D.C., so if I went in a shoe store, they would be like, "Take these shoes. You're going to Washington, D.C. and we want you to look your best" and so it was really funny, taking clothes to the cleaners, the cleaners would say, "We're not going to charge you because we know you're taking this to Washington, D.C. and we're so proud of you." So not only was your victory personal and in your family, but the whole community celebrated with you. So that was really a wonderful thing and kind of got me on the track to get more into communications and speech, keeping music as well. So, that really, I would say, kind of defined me when I was young and then after seeing Washington, D.C., I was like, wow, I want to learn more about the government and how it works and find out, how do you influence things and change things, not only there but at

the state level. So that was one of my favorite memories of growing up and then just being with my family and knowing the people in my community. My mother was always visiting people who were ill or helping them and doing things for them so she and I, from when I was just a little girl, would go visit people and I remember one woman, Mrs. Payne, and we would go visit Mrs. Payne and just see how she was doing and she was great at quilting and knitting and I remember, I still have the little doll quilt she made me as a child and I remember looking at that and the detail and asking her about it and just learning so much from her and she had one of those great cat clocks that moved its tail and I remember that too, sitting there looking at that and thinking, how does that work? It was really cute. So I learned from that, how to communicate with older adults and really care for people and give back. So I think that also gives me the sense of giving back to my community and helping other people, just even stopping by, as we did, to visit them or take them food or take them somewhere, would do. So I was really happy that I learned that from my mother and my father also. My father was a good businessman but he was very kind and so he let many people take advantage of his generosity but we never went hungry and he still made enough money to take care of all of us but I remember my mother saying, "He should be a little tougher with some of these people" and she would always help with the business. She also had...I think at that time they would give them a teaching certificate so she taught some elementary and kindergarten and would substitute in those areas. So she was excellent at teaching me. I mean, she would drill me in the evenings and work with me, up into high school. I would have her quiz me on things I would go through and study and write notes and then she would ask me questions and I'd have to answer orally. So I attribute her helping me really get some great study habits as well. So that was very important to them and when I went to college, they were thrilled I was going to college and I went to West Texas State University, which is now part of the A&M system and I went there because I get the best scholarship. I would have probably enjoyed going to maybe a larger school but that was big enough for me and I had never really been much in Texas at all so it was a big change. I

grew up in the mountains and this beautiful cool weather. We never had air conditioning and I went down there, it was hot, flat, it smelled of feed lots but the people were lovely. The people were the most friendly people you would ever hope to meet and I just found my place there and I got involved in student government and various organizations on campus and we did fundraisers and I was involved in an association called the Association of Women Students. So that gave me a lot of great opportunities too and I was able to go to national conferences and meet women from all over the United States. One in particular I remember because Bella Abzug came and spoke and that was during the whole women's movement which really I hadn't been exposed to much of that, not even on my college campus even though there were many women and women leaders, I really hadn't been exposed to all of that. So that was a real opening, eye-opening experience for me and I always remember that fondly because I just enjoyed her message and hearing the power of women and what we could do and we didn't have to just be limited to these jobs; we could really do anything. So after that, I got more engaged in that and just helping other women and getting them engaged on campus and leadership positions there. Then I decided that I should interview for jobs or go on and get my Master's so I had a choice in the end. We had a career center on campus and for some reason, I just would go there every week and sign up for interviews because I thought the more I interview, the better I'll become and hopefully I'll get a really good job because my parents, "You have to graduate. You have to get a good job," you know. My father owned his own company and he was very big on "You want to work for a big company. You don't want to work for yourself because you work all the time, unless you have really good employees you can count on." He didn't always have the best employees. So that was kind of in my head and so I interviewed with a lot of companies. One of them was Southwestern Bell Telephone and I started interviewing probably my junior year and I met a couple of people and so when they would come back to campus, they would always say, "We're going to be back on this date. Come back again" and so, sure enough, my senior year, they offered me a position in the...they

called it Guidelines for Management Development, GMD Program, and so they would take people fresh out of college and put them in a job, not necessarily related to their degree, which is interesting and basically they called it a “sink or swim” opportunity. You either make it or you don’t within a year and they measure you along the way. They’ll send you to some training but a lot of it, you just have to learn on your own. So I thought about that. I also had applied for graduate school at the University of Oklahoma and I could go there and I had a graduate assistant position in speech and communications and the person who was the dean of the communications school was from there and he was really hoping I’d go there and then I thought...my father, unfortunately, had cancer and was not doing well and I thought, I better take the job. I can go to school later on which, great last words for most of us, right? Anyway, so I did go to work for Southwestern Bell Telephone Company and I went to San Antonio, Texas for my interview with the department I would be in and it was in the Network Department, of all things. I knew really nothing about engineering, nothing about how a phone worked. I did know communications, public relations, journalism and, of course, music, so, interesting skills for that but I interviewed and they showed me around and I had never been to San Antonio so it was kind of a fun experience, to see that city and have their good Mexican food and see the river walk and I thought, well, this might be fun. They didn’t know where I would work: would it be there, would it be in one of the other states, and they didn’t know exactly what my position would be but it would be in that organization. So they offered me the job and I remember they gave me a little kind of glossy pamphlet that told me what my benefits would be and how much money I would make. So I was very excited and I went back to college and called my parents and told them what was going on and, sure enough, they offered me the job and it was in Corpus Christi, Texas, starting on June 15th, 1979. So I had never been there obviously. I didn’t know anyone there. So the person I would report to called me and said, “Okay, we want you to come down and you’re welcome to bring one of your parents with you and come talk to me and look around for a place to live.” So luckily, my mother

flew down there with me and I interviewed with them and went around work and my mother joined us for dinner and then we looked for an apartment and then, in June, I moved down there and began my job. Well, my job was really overwhelming. I worked in this big room, a switch room, full of machinery and wires and I had a little office in the back with a glass window with wire running through it, a metal desk, a metal filing cabinet and two chairs and the people who reported to me, the oldest was 65 and the youngest was 34 and I was a 22-year-old woman walking in there into a technical area I knew nothing about. So, it was hard for those first few months because I had to learn a lot. I had never been around a union and we had a union and the relations with the company and the union there were terrible and had been for years. So people were filing grievances and luckily I didn't have any at all but I went in and sat in on some so I knew what they were like and I remember, my boss' boss, in the meeting with this union president, and they literally were shaking fists at each other across the table, so that was quite an experience. My exposure to unions had been the United Auto Workers and when they went on strike, we had no vehicles to sell so it was not good and the coal miners also, because there were coal mines near where I grew up and when they would go on strike, people were in desperate times because they didn't have money and the workers weren't spending money. So it was an interesting change of mind on unions and understanding them. I remember my boss, on the first day, gave me the union contract book and said, "Read this and understand it" and it's not easy to understand even to this day but I did my best. I had to learn all the technology. I had to manage people. I had to rate them. I had to have certain measures, quality measures that were internal that I had to meet and some of them had been really bad. So my job was to kind of turn this office around and, in the meantime, a new office came online. This was new technology back then. It was an electronic switching system which was brand new. Before that, it had been called a mechanical and it was step-by-step and a little mechanical arm, when you dialed the number, would go like, three, seven, four, and this was all electronic so it was just clicks. So a new office was converted and I acquired that as well so I had even

more people and more responsibilities and I finally learned it all. I had to learn how to read orders. We'd get paper orders, kind of off of a teletype machine, every day so one of my people would pull the orders and split them out and then each of them would take a stack and wire this gigantic frame. So I had to learn how the frame worked, how it was wired, then how you converted that into electronic signals that went into the big switch that actually switched calls across the United States. So it was a lot to learn. Fortunately, I was able to learn it but many a night I stayed up learning and dreaming about orders and line item equipment and cable and pairs but I mastered it. In the meantime, I met this young man in Corpus Christi who worked in public relations and he had community relations teams and he's like, "You should get involved in this. We do things in the community and I think you'd really like it and you'd get to know people and get to know Corpus Christi" because it was lonely. I mean, I didn't really know anyone. I did end up going to church and getting involved in a few other groups where I met people but it was hard and it was hard being a young single woman then. It was hard to know what to wear because back then, women didn't wear a lot of slacks, some. Luckily, I had some because by then, pantsuits had become okay and you could wear them and I needed to because I'm climbing ladders but it was difficult, I will say. So, fortunately, I got involved in this team and got to know the community and a lot of groups would come in and want tours of my equipment. So I would give them tours and I got to know Walt Patterson, was this man's name, and finally I became a leader of one of these teams and we won awards in the state for being one of the best teams engaged in basically communicating the company message externally. In the meantime, I made it through my year and I was assigned a new position, which I have to go back...when I got my first job, the person I replaced had no idea he was getting a new job until his boss and my boss walked in with me and he said, "Javier, this is Deborah and she's going to take your job" and Javier is like, "Where am I going?" and he's like, "I'm moving you to this position" but it was very awkward but Javier was a lovely person too and he did his best to help me learn what I could but he had to learn a new job at the same time. So his time was limited. But I

would say it was very male-dominated, very few women and the women that were there were older. I was probably the youngest woman in the whole group at that point and I wouldn't say they necessarily were especially helpful, somewhat but not a lot. Probably they felt, "We served our time; you serve yours." So I took this other position. Then I moved upstairs. I was in another position and this was over circuits and so I had to learn all about how circuits function and basically my group was to troubleshoot circuits. When there was a problem, the technicians in the field would call in and we would look at the design and walk them through the process and make sure they had everything accurately wired and turned up. So it was interesting. That was for all of South Texas, so we worked with people all over the state, in Houston and many other cities. During that time, we had a hurricane come through and that was really interesting because then I really saw the Bell system at work. Whenever a disaster would hit, you would prepare for it. You could not leave your job. It would be job abandonment and you'd be fired so if there was a hurricane, a tornado, a flood, whatever, you had to report to work and you had to stay there for the duration. So they would bring in food, not really cots. We just would bring blankets and pillows and sleep on the floor. So the hurricane hit. After it hit, all of these people from all over the United States converged and helped rebuild the network and repair all the service. It was just incredible. The Bell system, to me, was an amazing thing. When I went there, there was a big room full of binders and they were all called Bell System Practices, BSPs and so anything you wanted to know, you would look it up in there and it would tell you exactly, everything from the size of your office, depending upon your level, to how to wire a circuit and all wiring, every standard was consistent throughout the United States. So when there was a disaster, anyone could go, you could dispatch people anywhere and they'd know exactly, when they picked up a cable, the colors and what went with what, all the equipment. It was amazing, amazing. So I really had a lot of respect and regard for that. In a sense, it was almost like the military, I would guess. I have never been in the military but very structured, very hierarchical and everything you needed to know was written down and there was

a practice and a reason for everything. So it made it pretty easy, in a way, as long as you fit the mold and you did what they told you but you had no control over your career, in a sense. The company decided where you would be, just like that first assignment. I was in classes with other people who were in that program and they had various assignments too. I always said mine was the worst. Some were in personnel; some were in marketing; mine was the technical, but I'm so glad it was because I learned about how the company worked and, really, the bread and butter of our system, which is the network, even to this day, even though it's changed a great deal. So I really learned a lot in Corpus Christi and then I moved to San Antonio, Texas. They just came in one day and said, "Your job is in San Antonio; report there Monday." So you would just go, tell the people at your apartment complex, "I'm leaving. I'll pay whatever I have to pay to break my lease" and load your things up or they'd have somebody move you if you had a lot and you moved to a new city. So I moved there and I worked in another network organization, again, all men and when I got in this organization, we had various people assigned to each manager but when I came, they gave all the people to me because I think I was the woman and I think they didn't want them and I was the young kid. So I had all the people to manage which, managing people, sometimes I tell people, I think that's one of the most difficult jobs you'll ever have, is managing your people. The work, everything else, you can generally do, but people are very complex and you have to learn and understand them. So I just thought, oh, well, that's good because I can do it. So it was interesting being the only woman in that group and, again, it was very technical but I enjoyed it and I got to know people. By then my friend, Walt Patterson, from Corpus Christie in PR had moved to San Antonio so I was on his team again and I got involved in that and that gave me a whole new view of San Antonio. It was an exciting time to live there. Henry Cisneros was mayor, one of the big Hispanic leaders in the United States. He was young and very hopeful of the future and so the city was growing; it was fun to be part of it. Well, then, a position opened up. My friend, Walt, was moving to Dallas, so he called me and said, "Would you like me to put your name in to take my place? I think you'd do a good job"

and I said, "Oh, I would love that if they would." Well, sure enough, I got a call, I got an interview and I was selected for that position. So I got to have...basically what I really wanted to do was be involved in PR and the community so I started then doing that and I worked for a woman named Dora Salinas and Dora was interesting because she had worked her way through the company starting as a service representative and working up to her position and she was very involved in the community and we worked well together and I enjoyed it because she told me a lot of stories about the early days and prior to my arrival on the scene, there had been a big case with Southwestern Bell where a couple of high leaders were accused of sexually harassing women and misusing funds and it became open to the public and was really bad. One of the men committed suicide and she had worked with these men and basically, they would target young women in her group and take them and do bad things with them in the evening and did this all across the Southwestern Bell territory. So it was quite a case. It was called the Ashley Gravitz case. Interestingly enough, a lot of the women who testified in that case were then kept with the company, obviously, but moved to St. Louis. So, it kind of comes full circle. I heard all these stories about the Ashley Gravitz girls, they called them, and then I met them later in my career when I moved to St. Louis. So that was an interesting piece of women's history right there, just hearing about how women were basically abused and taken advantage of because they were lower level and young and probably didn't know any better. She said, "I did my best. I would tell them, 'Ladies, you cannot do anything wrong. Don't do anything you shouldn't do. I know you're going to go to this. I know what's going to happen. Don't do it if you can. I promise there won't be retaliation. There will be nothing to happen'" but a lot of people fell victim to it because they thought they would gain favor and be promoted. So, that kind of then, I think, totally changed the company. A lot of people were gone. They really began promoting more women and paying attention to rights and focusing on, "Okay, we need to really watch what we're doing and not take advantage of anyone" but at that particular point, I was more interested in the women's side of it. So I was in San Antonio for five-and-a-half years and then I got

to move to Dallas and do a bigger job with stakeholder relations in the big PR kind of Texas headquarters in Dallas which was really fun because I was on the 36th floor, I think, and I looked right out at Pegasus, downtown Dallas, so I thought I had moved to the big city. Here I am in Dallas and that was very interesting, to work there, a bigger operation, more at risk, more professional, more opportunities and I got to meet a lot of women then state-wide. One was Anne Richards and she had a women's organization in the state and I was kind of in charge of women constituencies, African American, Hispanic, disabled, so I got to meet people in all walks of life and I got to work on a couple of big issues in Austin at the capital. One was a program called Local Measured Service and it was where you would charge an amount for each local call. Instead of unlimited local calling, you were charged per minute and that was not a popular thing. So it was really interesting, to go down there and work on that issue and hear the opposing sides. And interestingly enough, a man I worked with down there would later influence my life in St. Louis. His name was Shawn Loehman and he was kind of the top lobbyist in Texas at that time for the company and so I worked a lot with him, with older adult groups and others that were opposing this legislation and this action by the company. So I learned a lot about the company issues and how they impacted other constituents which was really important to me. So I was only in Dallas about 10 months and I'll never forget the day. I was driving in, down the toll way, down to downtown Dallas and I looked ahead and I saw this beautiful city and I thought, I really like it here and I parked and I went into my office and my boss, a very tall man named Jim Patello, came in and we were in cubicles then and he looked over the cubicle like a giraffe and said, "Come on in my office," and I went in and he's like, "You're moving to St. Louis" and I'm like, "I am?" and he's like, "Yes, you're going to do similar work for the whole company up there, for all five states." I said, "Okay, when do I go?" and he goes, "You need to be there Monday." So I came to St. Louis and I interviewed with my boss and talked to her and then I kind of went back and forth for a while to Dallas and moved to St. Louis and really, at first, didn't know quite what to think. Dallas was a whole different thing than St. Louis back then and in Dallas,

women could just pretty much wear red suits, purple suits, green suits. You didn't have to be conservative at the company. I mean, you still dressed professionally back then but you didn't necessarily wear black, gray, navy, those type of colors and all the women in St. Louis wore gray suits. We all had little white blouses with little bowties. So it was kind of interesting and I kind of had big hair. So I had to totally kind of conform to the image eventually and people were not friendly. I remember that, just walking through the halls, walking on the streets, people didn't say hello. In Texas, people talked to you if they've never seen you before: "Hi, how are you doing?" If you're driving in the car, they'll wave to you, much like people in rural areas do. So that took some getting used to and I remember over the holidays, I made loaves of bread and brought in for different people: the guards, the people in my parking garage, and I remember giving one to a guard and he's like, "Why are you giving me this? Do you want to go out with me or something?" I'm like, "Oh, no, I'm just being...I just want to say thank you for what you do and watching me, make sure I'm safe in the building." So it was kind of a different culture but I enjoyed it and I eventually, I think, got into it but much more competitive. Everybody was kind of climbing their way to the top. This was the headquarters for the company at the time so there was a certain expectation of work and what you would do and I really enjoyed it but I worked with an interesting group of people, one I had worked with before because I worked with a lot of disabled constituencies when I was in Texas and I met this man because he was doing that at the corporate level and his name was Darryl Lauer and he was visually impaired but a really lovely man. So I knew Darryl and I had traveled with him to various conferences and things and so he was in my group. At least I knew him and a few other people that I had known and I remember then thinking about how kind people were. I had one friend I sort of knew from Texas that was up here and she sent me a list of people like doctors, dentists, where you should go to have your hair styled, all that sort of thing and I thought, how helpful that is, when you move to a place that you don't really know anyone but it's also a fun challenge, to find where you're going to live, where you're going to shop and who

you're going to be with and what kind of things you'll do. I have to say, really, St. Louis then, I just really love this city and I love the people here. So I overcame that unfriendliness, so I thought, and now I think people are really very lovely and very friendly. So I had many jobs here. In 1993, the company went through a big change. The corporation in '92 announced it was moving to San Antonio and Mr. Whitaker was our CEO at the time and we had a lot of holdings in Telmex, a telephone company in Mexico and Latin America and he wanted to be closer to the customer as well as some issues here in the regulatory environment in Missouri. It wasn't the best to do business with. So he moved the company to Texas and, again, Anne Richards entered the picture. She was governor of Texas. She said, "Come on down. We'll make you feel right at home and you'll get what you need in Texas." So the right things converged and the corporation moved. As a result of that, a lot of restructuring happened and so my position at the time was moved and eliminated. So at that time, they did this big, I would call it, kind of a grand plan: they looked at every employee; they looked at your education; back to education, fortunately. I returned and got my Master's Degree at Webster University while I was working in St. Louis because all these downsizings started happening in the early '90s. We really never had that. The contract changed. America changed, the United States, the world. We became global. The competition started impacting the company and we had to change. So, in '93, when we did a lot of these downsizings, the big one, they looked at your education. They looked at your ratings and I called it horse trading. They sat in a big room and they looked at every person and decided where they would fit, or if they fell below the line...you were above the line or below the line, you were walked out and you had to find other places to work. So that's, I think, a big reality check for a lot of employees and many left then because they didn't want to move to San Antonio or they just fell below the line. Fortunately for me, I had been involved in a product called "Caller ID" which was brand new and I worked with a lot of organizations on privacy issues related to that and, really, I would say, was instrumental in getting the company to do call blocking, allowing that to happen. So if you didn't want your number to appear, you could block it.

So I had testified before a few public service commissions on those issues and one was the Missouri Public Service Commission and fortunately, the people in the Missouri division remembered me and said, "We'll take her." By then, I was engaged to my husband and had two children and could not leave St. Louis so I had to remain here. I was told I got a call one Friday morning and they told me, "Leave your office and don't come back until 4:30. We don't care where you go but don't come back" and they said, "There's going to be somebody outside your office" and I said, "There's someone here now." He said, "Stay on the phone with me and talk with me until that man leaves. He was going to offer you a job in Houston" and this goes back to John Loehman that I met in Austin. It's John Loehman on the line and he was in the room trading people and he said, "I know you need to stay in St. Louis because you're getting married so this man was going to offer you a job in Houston, which is fine but I'm working on something in Missouri." I said, "Okay," and he's like, "Go home. Go wherever you need to go but be back at your desk at 4:30 and I'll call you" and I said, "Okay." So, I leave, I go to my condo, I do some work, I come back to the office at 4:30, my phone rings and John says, "Go to 100 North Tucker and see this man and he's going to offer you a job." I said, "Okay, thank you." So I went over and I became a part of the Missouri Regulatory organization. So from that point forward, I worked on regulatory initiatives in Missouri. I was able to stay. I was able to get married and my life continued on. So, fortunately, I had the ability to remain with the company and not be cut or be moved and stay in St. Louis. So it's very interesting. Again, it goes back to relationships and people you know and you never know how that will impact you down the road, just like meeting and knowing John Loehman. He at least knew me and cared enough to say, she needs to remain here. Let's find something for her here. So I really thank him to this day for that, believe it or not. I learned a lot about the regulatory environment and it was just an incredible thing. I met a lot of interesting people. One of the commissioners was a woman named Diane Drainer and she was one of the only female public service commissioners and she was tough but I've run into Diane since and just a lovely person. I remember one case I was

testifying in. It was during the time when my husband, who also worked for Southwestern Bell, he had to travel back and forth every week to San Antonio so he worked there four days a week and then would come home and work from St. Louis on Fridays. He was out of town. Our oldest daughter was in college. Our younger daughter was in fifth grade and in after school care at the school so I always had to pick her up by 6:00 o'clock. All right. I'm in Jefferson City. It's about 3:00 o'clock and I had made arrangements with a neighbor to pick Lauren up. Well, the neighbor pages me...this was before cell phones...and I look at the number, I'm in the hearing room and I'm like, uh-oh, so at the break I called her and she's like, "I can't pick her up" and I'm like, "You can't pick her up? What am I going to do? I'm in Jefferson City." By then it was, like, 3:30, quarter to 4:00. I had to get back up on the witness stand after the break. So I told our attorney, I said, "I really have no one else to call at this point that I know I could get a hold of to pick her up. I need to get back in time to pick her up at 6:00, if at all possible" and he's like, "Well, come in and let's see how long they're going to put you up there." So I was up for about 30 more minutes and then he said, "I'm so sorry but this witness needs to leave to go pick up her child" and I remember Commissioner Drainer say, "That is fine. We are a family-friendly commission" and I was able to leave and a [inaudible 41:37] of mine, bless his heart, he had to get up there and finish the testimony. So I owe him big time but I'll always remember that and then driving back, you know, at the speed of light, the best I could, to get there and pick her up. I think I was 10 minutes late and you had to pay \$1 for every minute you were late but you have to do those things. So balancing family and work is always a challenge and Lauren probably got the worst of it because I know another time when Mark was working in San Antonio, she was sick and she woke up that morning and she's like, "I'm really sick" and I'm like, "You better be sick; you better not be faking" and she's like, "I'm really sick" and when she said that she was, I'm like, "Well, I have to write this testimony" and we didn't have computers then that you could bring home with you. I said, "I have to go in and write this testimony. I'll be there for two hours. You're just going to have to come with me." So I

took her into a break room where there was a sofa and it was quiet and not many people in there and I laid her down and covered her up. One of my co-workers gave me a sweater she had. I covered her up and she slept and I'd check on her and I wrote my testimony, took her to the doctor and got her back home but you just had to make those sacrifices sometimes. Today, so much easier. You pull out your laptop, your child is sick, you just stay home or take them to the doctor and go back home and work until the evening. But those were challenges, I would say, being with children and work. It was stressful, very stressful, working when you had to testify because you would sit there and think, hmm, the outcome of this case is going to impact the bottom line of my company and my job and all these other people's jobs so it's a huge responsibility too because one misspoken term could really change the bottom line and you had to be serious about that. But I look back and I'm so glad I had that because, then again, you learn that whole process and how government works and how things are decided. So I learned all about tariffs and how to read them and how to testify and how to get things done and how to work with the commission and their staff and answer questions. Sometimes commissioners would ask you questions you didn't even know what the question meant but you had to be respectful and say, "Okay, if I understand, is this what you're asking?" or "Correct me if I'm wrong...". So you learn a lot about the process and how things work and it was a long, arduous process. Then, I eventually got the opportunity to move to a marketing job and this was fascinating because it was a result of the Telecommunications Act of '96. Nothing had changed at the FCC from 1934 to 1996. In 1996, they revised the act and they opened local networks to competitors and they allowed local companies to get into long distance. So I should reverse a minute: in 1982, a case was filed and it was against the Bell system and basically it was saying we were a monopoly, which we were, a regulated monopoly and we should open our networks to competitors. So Judge Green, in 1984, issued a mandate that said, "We will break up the Bell system." So we were broken into seven regional Bell operating companies and we were one of them, one of the smaller ones and at the time, our CEO was Zane Barnes and

I remember they had a big event at the Kiel Opera House to announce the unveiling of Southwestern Bell Telephone Company as its own stand-alone company, not part of the Bell system. So we watched it...I was in San Antonio at the time, remotely...but we learned what the company was going to do and I remember one of the ads in particular that they showed was a cowboy out on the range with a fire using a mobile phone and that was in 1984. So the vision was there. I also remember getting a publication and it talked about all the seven regional Bell operating companies and when it came to ours...they had little caricatures of each one so NYNEX was this New York looking thing; California was a California looking thing. Here we were, we were a grandmother in a rocking chair knitting and it said, "We will tend to our knitting, Zane Barnes" and I thought, that's interesting. So we kind of looked like the little backward grandma knitting but I will tell you, that paid off because, in the end, we were one of the only ones...we are one of the only ones still standing out there. So, anyway, Mr. Barnes eventually retired. Mr. Whittaker took over and we became on the fast track and we really moved into different directions and we had to because competition was there and local service was really probably not the place to be back then, except, it was a steady check because local service was still regulated and you knew you'd get a rate of return on your investment. So that was also part of the whole regulatory process. We'd have to file huge regulatory cases, boxes and boxes of paper, years of testimony just to get a little increase approved. So you learn a lot about that system. Then in '96, the Telecom Act of '96 came and opened our markets to competitors. So a competitor could come in and resell our service and brand it with their name. We still did all the work. We had all the facilities but they could rebrand it. So it was kind of like going into a supermarket and I would say, "Okay, this aisle is mine. I'm going to put my products and services here and you are going to let me have this space for a certain reduced fee and your people are going to process my customers on the way out and then I take my piece of the revenue and I pay you very little for that." So it wasn't the best situation for us but it did allow us to get into long distance which was lucrative, believe it or not, even back in 1996

but the process was just huge, a huge checklist you had to meet: have you done this; have you done that; have you gone through all of these things in order to open your network. There were hearings, it was long. In Missouri we didn't get into long distance until 2001 and by then what had happened in the long distance market? It was pretty well gone. So all that work to get into that. So one of my jobs was working in this new wholesale environment and we had to build entirely new network systems that didn't communicate with existing ones because all our wholesale had to be totally separate from retail. So it was really interesting and I enjoyed that a lot. Then I got the opportunity to come back and work for a Missouri president, Jan Newton and do a lot of different, interesting work for her and I just really enjoyed it. I learned a lot. I got exposed to the St. Louis community. I learned about getting into long distance market and just what that meant and then, full speed ahead with wireless service and just learning how to function in the community and deal with a lot of different individuals, both internally and externally and I'll never forget Jan. She took me to lunch on my first day and said, "You know, I know you're going to do well and I'm excited you're working with me. Just know, never bring me a problem without a solution" and I thought, what a good thing to tell someone because so many people come to you and whine and complain about things but they have no solution. They have a problem but they've not even thought, could this be a possible solution, and so that really...if more people would practice that advice, I think the world would be better and certainly the company would be better. So I enjoyed all my years of working in the company and still do. The job has changed a great deal from the day I took it when I worked for Jan Newton. I've worked for three different presidents since then which is really interesting because they all have a different style. They're all interested in different things and that's taught me a lot about leaders, leadership, what I want it to look like and how I want to be, as far as a leader. So it's been an interesting career full of changes. One thing I have noticed, I would say, I think the opportunities for women in general in business...and I'm out in the community a lot so I talk to a lot of other women in business and leadership positions...it's changed a lot. I think in the

last few years, women have kind of forgotten all the work that we had and what we did to get to this point and it's somewhat, I would say, reversed. It's kind of gone the other direction and we've become maybe just comfortable and forgetful that we have to help other women. We have to promote other women and give them and minorities in general, a lot of opportunities. I think my company does a very good job of that with diversity overall but I see in a lot of places that we've regressed and that we've kind of forgotten the battles of Bella Abzug and other people who really put women into the forefront and the people in our own companies and community who had to basically plough new ground so women would have a chance to advance and have other jobs than teachers and nurses or operators, for that matter, in my own company. So I hope that women will continue to work with each other and help them get the skills and the tools necessary to be all they can be in the future.

Blanche Touhill:

If you had been born 50 years earlier, what do you think your career path would have been?

Deb Hollingsworth:

Oh, it would have been totally different. Yeah, 50 years earlier would have been, you know...no, women had very little...a lot of women didn't even drive. They had no rights. It would have been totally different. I wouldn't have had the opportunities I've had. I would have probably just been at home. Maybe, if I was lucky, I could have done something, one of the accepted professions, perhaps; maybe not even. I might have been able to be a telephone operator, maybe, if they allowed women in by then because they used to be all men. So it would have been a totally different story. So I really credit the women who came before. It was very hard. I think about my grandmother and her life. I don't know how she ever did it. I don't know how she ever did it. It was so difficult. Even my mother, those were difficult times. Now, my mother, I would say, was more...she was more out there and she did more. She had more of a drive and more of a spark, you know. She drove everywhere. She paid the bills. She did all those things. Some women today don't even pay the bills. So I don't think I ever thought of women not doing that or not driving but 50 years earlier, most didn't.

Blanche Touhill: How did you get into the International Women's Forum?

Deb Hollingsworth: Well, I think because of my community involvement and my work at my company, I was nominated to join and that's just been a terrific cap, if I would say, to a lot of things that I've done. I've met really outstanding women like you and others who were really pioneers in their careers and have done so much for the world, not just here in St. Louis, but across the world and so I'm very honored to even be a member and part of this illustrious group of women that have been such leaders in their various industries. And it's fascinating because you meet such interesting women, not only just within our own chapter, but others. I had the chance to visit with the New Mexico chapter a few years ago and the women there and what they've done and how they are just outstanding women everywhere and different professions and different interests and just what they're doing to make the world a better place. It's a great way to learn leadership at many levels.

Blanche Touhill: Is there something you want to talk about that we haven't talked about so far?

Deb Hollingsworth: Oh, I think we've talked a lot. I think just the history of my company is so fascinating to me, from when I started in 1979 to 2013, it's a totally different place.

Blanche Touhill: How is it different?

Deb Hollingsworth: When I started, the contract with employees and the employer and the employee in the United States was, "Come to work here. You will have a job until you retire. We will take care of you. You're loyal to us. You will do what we ask you to do, without questioning." Then I would say the contract changed in the '80s and certainly in the early '90s and it became, it's employment at will. You may not be here your whole career. "Here's your job. We expect you to do it. You control your career. We don't as a company. You're in charge of your own career. You decide where you want to go and what you want to do from this point forward and if we have an opening there, great; if we don't, then you'll leave and go somewhere else," and it wasn't that lifetime employment contract anymore. But that's because the world

changed. Competition came in. We're three different people. I believe Robert Reich says this in a book I read, "We're three different people: we're employees; we're stockholders of companies, so we want those companies to give us the best return on our investments; and we're citizens of the United States." So we expect all these things but we're really one person. So how do you balance all of these, and I think we're still going through that but my company has changed a great deal. We were a regulated monopoly and that was the contract with the United States, if you will: "We're going to regulate you. You can be this monopoly. You do this. We expect you to do certain things. You're going to make sure everybody has a phone. You're going to make sure, in a disaster, that this is all recovered and you can control it. When we need things, information, you're going to be able to supply it to us," so the government changed also. So the company had to change. Now there are many companies competing in our particular area and the technology has changed and people carry computers in their pockets today. So, it's changed a great deal. It's day-to-day operations, you have to be on the cutting edge. You're constantly flooded with information so you have to stay on top of your profession at all times and know the latest and greatest. For example, today, the new iPhone 5C comes out. So there's a new device; there's new technology; there's new software, all the time and you have to stay up to speed or you're left behind and so it's changed a lot, from that regulated monopoly to a competitive, mobile-driven company, it's just...it's been continuous change from the first day I walked in the building and it will be until the last day when I walk out. It will always be change. Every day is different and every day you never know if your job is going to be there the next. I think that's across the board in corporate America. The competition is so fierce and we're so bottom line driven as a nation that companies have to adjust and change constantly or they're purchased or they go out of business.

Blanche Touhill:

Have the American people accepted this, do you think?

Deb Hollingsworth:

Yes and no. I think we're still struggling with it but I also think by 2020 we will have to accept it. It's fact. The last few years, I think of all the issues we've gone through with a recession, have taught

us that work is a precious thing; a job is a precious thing and it's hard to get one, it's hard to keep one and you never know when you're going to be laid off or let go or your company is going to go out of business.

Blanche Touhill:

Are women in the pipeline to move ahead?

Deb Hollingsworth:

I think some. I think we need to do a better job of getting women in the pipeline to succeed because you're right, a lot of the women leaders from what I call the old days, we're all getting older and nearing our retirement years and who's going to be there to take this up and move it forward and will they have that same commitment? The younger people are, I would say, totally different than I am. If I go to work and I find out that I have to work into the night and into the next day, I do. They're more concerned about personal time and their friends and their family, which isn't a bad thing. There has to be a balance but what is that balance? I don't know that we've figured that out yet and I think a lot of young women don't want to make those sacrifices but I am encouraged with some of the women that are out there. I think they are leading companies and doing the right thing and doing their best to balance this and determine how to move other people into the pipeline and get them to the highest levels. Cheryl Sandberg is a good example. I think she's doing a lot of that and Melissa Myer also has done some of that and they're young, ambitious women and hopefully they're bring others with them. I think that's my message to women: Wherever you are, bring other women with you because there's plenty of room for all of us and we can just help each other and continue to grow and take those wonderful positions that are out there waiting for us and make the world a better place.

Blanche Touhill:

Is there anything you want to mention?

Deb Hollingsworth:

Let's see. I'll just mention one thing: Back to my early years and the focus on education and the people, I would say, who kind of shaped me, that education is precious. It is so important and I always tell people, that's the one thing you have control of, is your education. Do well. You can be even in the worst school but if you study hard, do well and look for resources, and they're out

there, but you can't be lazy and you can't expect them just to come to you. You have to look for them. So focus on education is critical. That made me the person I am today and that's because my parents knew the value of education and they knew that was the key out of poverty or out of low income. You have to have education in order to be qualified to get a good job and to be a leader. Anymore, you can't just hope that the country is going to take care of you or the government is going to take care of you. I don't think that is going to happen anymore and education is the key to your future. If there's one thing women should focus on, is getting as much and the best education they can and never stop learning; continually learn your whole life. We all do every day. I think those of us that stay active and look for those opportunities and we're fortunate in St. Louis to have great institutions of learning where you can go and learn anything you want to learn almost any day of the week and great opportunities to wonderful authors, wonderful speakers, professionals in this community. You can learn every day. So education is my message for people. If you want to advance in the world, value education. Teach your children to be educated and to continually learn every day of your life. Never stop.

Blanche Touhill:

Thank you very much.

Deb Hollingsworth:

Thank you.