

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

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**DEE JOYNER INTERVIEWED BY BLANCHE TOUHILL**

Blanche Touhill: Would you introduce yourself?

Dee Joyner: I'm Dee Joyner and I work for Commerce Bank. I have two roles, two hats I wear. One is heading up our Organizational Development team for the company, and the other is helping out with Community Relations in the St. Louis market.

Blanche Touhill: Tell me something about your family: where you were born; did you have brothers and sisters; did anybody influence you towards your career in time and your elementary school or secondary schools, was there a teacher that said something to you that made you stop and think about what you were going to do with your life; what were your early years like before you went to college?

Dee Joyner: Well, I was actually born in a hospital Alton, Illinois. My parents lived in Edwardsville which is where they grew up and that's where I grew up as well. Edwardsville, of course, is part of the St. Louis Metropolitan area, a smaller community but it eventually was the home to Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville. So that was a big influence in the later years. When I was growing up, it was a small town. I can remember riding my bicycle all over town. I was on my bicycle from the time I got up in the morning until it was time to come home for supper and nobody worried about anything. It was, wherever I was, it was safe and it was fine. I have a brother who is three years younger than I am. We are very, very close now. When we were growing up, he was my little brother and always either trying to get me in trouble or to take the fall for something he did or, I can remember as I got older, he loved to spy on me and on my girlfriends and boyfriends and just generally be kind of a nuisance but

we're now really great, great friends and I treasure our relationship quite a bit.

Blanche Touhill: And so your brother was a part of your early life?

Dee Joyner: Yes, and he and his family now live in Columbia, Illinois. He went on to be a school teacher and taught school for over 30 years and so he's younger than me but he's been retired for about three years now. He likes to rub that in but that's okay.

Blanche Touhill: What level did he teach?

Dee Joyner: He taught Social Studies at the junior high school level and he did that for 30 years. So I think it was just fine that he retired when he did.

Blanche Touhill: And that's a nice town.

Dee Joyner: It is a wonderful town, yeah; it is a nice town and it's close and so it's easy for us all to get together.

Blanche Touhill: What about your mother and father, did they encourage you to go to college?

Dee Joyner: Well, you know, it's kind of interesting. I guess in my mind, I just always thought I would go to college and I don't remember though that we ever really discussed it all that much. Neither of them were college graduates. Both of them did graduate from business school and so they very much valued education. Education was always important in our family and we were expected to do well in school and all but it's interesting because I never remember any overt conversation about, "This is something you must do and you must think about what you're going to be when you grow up" or anything like that. It was just kind of assumed.

Blanche Touhill: How was your elementary and secondary school experience?

Dee Joyner: Well, elementary school, I went to a Catholic parochial school in Edwardsville and had the typical Catholic elementary educational experience of children of that era. We were taught by the nuns. Of course, in those days, they wore full habit but I have very fond memories of my elementary school years and the old school building is still there and whenever I get to Edwardsville, I drive by and it brings back lots of memories.

Blanche Touhill: And do they still have a school?

Dee Joyner: They do still have a school.

Blanche Touhill: And did you ride your bike to school?

Dee Joyner: Well, actually, we lived close enough that I could walk. Now, I have to tell you, when I drive by and look at it, of course everything looks a little bit closer when you get older than it did when you were a child but it still seems to me that that was...when I was pretty little, was walking by myself to go to school and I would walk home sometimes for lunch and then back again, although we did have a cafeteria so, as I got older, usually I ate in the cafeteria but I walked to school and in those days...my mother did not drive in those days and there wasn't a second car. There was nobody driving you to school.

Blanche Touhill: Did you walk to school with other kids?

Dee Joyner: No, I walked to school by myself because there weren't any other kids who really lived in my neighborhood who went to that same school but, again, it was just what you did.

Blanche Touhill: Did you walk to school with your brother?

Dee Joyner: You know, I probably did but I don't remember that. I do remember, when we went to kindergarten which was not in the Catholic school, that was...because they didn't have kindergarten so it was in a public school. It was even further away and I do remember somehow walking him to kindergarten his first day or something like that. I don't know, maybe we hadn't started school yet or something but I really don't remember. The one thing I do remember though is one day, I was walking home from school for lunch and a big dog came out and literally chased me all the way...I ran faster than I've ever run in my life. This dog chased me all the way home and I was scared to death. I knew that dog was going to bite me and I didn't want to go back. I think my mother probably had to walk me back to school after that.

Blanche Touhill: But that was the only danger that you encountered?

Dee Joyner: That was the only danger I encountered.

Blanche Touhill: And how was high school?

Dee Joyner: I went to a public high school, Edwardsville High School and, again, had fond memories. I was probably...what would I call myself...a little bit of a stir the pot, not a trouble-maker exactly but I liked to have a good time and if I had a teacher that was open to that, there was a lot of joking around and all. Sometimes I would carry it too far and get in trouble. Some teachers did not appreciate some of the jokes but I had a great time in high school.

Blanche Touhill: Did you build friendships in this elementary/secondary school that you still have?

Dee Joyner: I do, actually. There are several girlfriends I have who still live in the area and my high school class has class reunions every five years so I'm over there, see everybody then. But there's a small group of us that were pretty close and we still get together for dinner two or three times a year, which is nice.

Blanche Touhill: So, it was time for college...

Dee Joyner: Time for college and I went to SIU-Edwardsville and that's where my view of the world really changed because when I went through my elementary and high school years, there weren't women role models. I mean, there were women teachers and that was the role model. So I just assumed that there were probably two careers I could pursue. One would be nursing or the other would be teaching. So when I went to college, it was with the full idea that I'm going to get a Bachelor's Degree in something, I didn't know...education, I guess, and then teach. Well, what happened was, I had to work my way through school. I paid my way through my entire college and I worked as a student worker on campus and I happened to work...just a coincidence...for one of the offices in the university that was responsible for community relations for the campus and so sort of state and local relations, government relations. All of a sudden, I realized there were all these other things out there that I could aspire to do that I never thought of. I'll never forget this one time...and I wish I knew how or even if this woman was still alive...to be able to share this with her, but we used to hold conferences on campus and we would invite various business leaders, labor leaders, government officials onto the campus for these different programs. So, as the student worker, I was kind of the assistant, if you will, and so I handled the registration desk and did that. But I got to go to the conferences as a result of that. There

was a woman there who was a lobbyist for the International Lady Garment Workers Union and she was a lobbyist in Washington, D.C. with Congress. She spoke at this conference and it absolutely changed everything I wanted to do in my life. She had such an influence on me, that a woman could do something like that, a woman could be involved in all of the government policy-making and legislation and all that kind of thing and she could do it with Congress and Washington, D.C. She was a fabulous speaker and very inspirational. It was at that point in time that I thought, I want to be like that. So I changed my major to Political Science, although at SIU they call it Government, and ended up getting both a Bachelor's Degree and a Master's Degree in Government there. That was a turning point and that was reinforced by my professor, who was sort of a mentor to me during that period of time and who basically said, "You can do anything you want to do so go for it if that's what you're interested in." It really changed my whole direction.

Blanche Touhill: What year was that roughly?

Dee Joyner: Well, it would have been probably...I started college in 1965 so probably '66, that kind of time period, and what a time period to be interested and involved in government; oh, my goodness, and because I had to work my way through school, it took me six years to get my undergraduate degree. So I was there for that period of time and then another two years after that, getting my Master's. So I grew up at SIU-Edwardsville. It was just interesting, the whole Viet Nam war era and...

Blanche Touhill: Cambodia?

Dee Joyner: Yeah.

Blanche Touhill: Watergate?

Dee Joyner: Watergate, yeah.

Blanche Touhill: Did you feel that you could change the course of the government?

Dee Joyner: You know, I was very idealistic and I just thought my generation could change the world and I remember my mentor, and actually, the professor I worked for as a student worker, who headed up this institute, I remember when there was a protest on campus but here we are in Edwardsville, Illinois. It's not like the East Coast or the West Coast or

anyplace else. It was kind of marching around the center of campus carrying placards or something. I think the biggest deal that ever happened was one of the Sociology professors led a group of students down to the draft office and smashed a picture of the president on the ground or something. That was the height of the civil disobedience or whatever. But anyway, I can remember, there were students on campus who were really involved in the anti-war movement and really kind of stirred things up. There was a sit-in in the chancellor's office and all this kind of stuff. I thought, you know, all of this energy is being, in my view, sort of wasted on protest when it could have been channeled to actually doing something to make a difference. So I had this idea that if we could partner...because this is Southern Illinois so organized labor was pretty powerful in the political structure there...if we could partner with organized labor, we could build houses, affordable housing for people who needed it in the Metro East area and what a partnership that would be and how powerful that would be. So I talked to my boss about it and he agreed that he would convene a meeting between these student radicals and organized labor on campus, to have this discussion about, how could we work together to take all this energy and do something positive for the community? Well, needless to say, if you can imagine these two totally opposite groups of people: the young students who are rabble-rousers and these established labor leaders, both parties looking at each other like they've come off of separate planets or whatever. We ended up having two meetings. They actually came back for a second meeting and then it kind of all fell apart. The students, they wanted to continue to pro...you know...

Blanche Touhill: Did they find something in common?

Dee Joyner: You know, they did have some things in common. I mean, there's a social justice theme here that they shared but it played itself out so differently and I don't think, in the long run, either had patience for the other's viewpoint but those first two meetings, it was interesting because the labor leaders were talking about how, as they grew up in the labor movement, the fights that they had to get the rights for workers and all and here are the students who are protesting the injustices of the war and there were some commonalities that they were beginning to see but we just couldn't sustain it long enough to really turn into anything but

that's sort of an example of the idealism of those days. It was fabulous. I mean, a great time to grow up.

Blanche Touhill: Well, I think to a certain extent, they did succeed. I think they did get the country to say, "Why are we there?" So I think there was an empowerment that paid off.

Dee Joyner: Mm-hmm, certainly collectively, when you think about it all across the country, yes, I would agree with that.

Blanche Touhill: While you took the Master's, did you get a graduate stipend or did you continue to work...

Dee Joyner: I continued to work and actually, I had, during my undergraduate years, and then into my Master's, I had an opportunity to do some internships in Washington, D.C. which was really great, very wonderful opportunities and one of the visiting professors that came and taught at the university was from Washington, D.C. and had worked in the federal government for the Department of Housing and Urban Development. So he was real instrumental in helping to point me in the right direction and open some doors. Then I was sort of like a student assistant when he came to campus to help, because he worked out of our office. So, that was a great experience, to have that.

Blanche Touhill: For whom did you work in Washington?

Dee Joyner: When I first went there, I worked for Westinghouse Corporation, in their lobbying office, which was really a great experience. The second year I went back, I worked at the Department of Housing and Urban Development as a summer intern. It was a formal program that the federal government has or had at that time and what was really great about that was, when I got there, they were busy. They didn't know what to do with me. I really was not having a very good experience. I was kind of sitting in the office, sort of counting paperclips, just that kind of thing. I talked to my boss and I said, "You know, if you really don't have anything I can do to contribute to the work here, could we put a plan together and let me spend...like, a rotation, so that I could see some other offices?" So I spent some time on Capitol Hill; I spent some time with the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the International City Management Association and the City of Washington, D.C., where they were going through...at that time, it was a new concept to do zero-based budgeting

and so I got to work in the Budget Office and go to some of the community meetings they had. Model Cities was a big federal program that was really just taking off right then. So I spent some time in the Model Cities office working in low income areas in the district. So I ended up having the most incredible experience because they were willing to work with me and help me design it, not just let me, but help me and so it turned out to be just a great, great experience.

Blanche Touhill: Where did you live?

Dee Joyner: The first time...so you realize, I'm from Edwardsville, Illinois and I'd never been anywhere, except on vacation with my family to, like, the Ozarks or Wisconsin or something. So the first year I went out there for this little, like one month at Westinghouse, I lived near Dupont Circle in Washington, D.C. which, at that time, was pretty much of a hippie hangout.

Blanche Touhill: Yes, it was, yes.

Dee Joyner: Yeah, yeah, and it was just an incredible experience. I walked everywhere and it was just great. Then when I went back to work at HUD, I took my daughter with me and so we lived in the Virginia suburbs and then, after I graduated from college, I actually went back to Washington, D.C. to work a full-time job with a consulting firm that did a lot of work for the federal government. So they consulted on Model Cities projects, economic development, administration projects, that kind of thing. So then, of course, I took her with me and we lived in the Maryland suburbs at that time. So I had the experience of the real urban district when I first went there and then the suburban experience the other two times I went there.

Blanche Touhill: And you were really in lobbying? You really could see how the lobbyists could work?

Dee Joyner: I did have that experience, yeah. I didn't actually, of course, do it myself because I wasn't...and I did a lot of research that supported some of the different positions and all that kind of thing.

Blanche Touhill: But it does link back to the woman who spoke?

Dee Joyner: It does; it does, yeah.

Blanche Touhill: So you come back then to Edwardsville and you get your Master's?

Dee Joyner: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: Then what?

Dee Joyner: Then, I went to work for the East-West Gateway Coordinating Council, so the Regional Council of Governments in St. Louis. That was a perfect experience for me, right out of school, to really begin to put to work what I'd learned, both in college as well as my internship experiences and I spent five years there, doing a variety of things but much of it had to do with the support that we provided to local governments, so some of that consulting experience that I had had sort of came into play there. I left Gateway after five years...

Blanche Touhill: Who was running Gateway in those days?

Dee Joyner: Well, when I first went there, it was Gene Moody and then Al Richter was the executive director during most of my time there.

Blanche Touhill: Were you the only woman around in this lobbying...

Dee Joyner: Yeah, at that time, I don't know that I would quite classify it as much as lobbying as it was more sort of technical assistance, project work, more project work, and by the way, we had a wonderful partnership with the University of Missouri-St. Louis and with the Extension Service. We actually got a grant from HUD to put together a technical assistance program for local governments and so we partnered with the University and the people at the University who were doing outreach to local governments, to put together what I thought, of course, was a great program, to help communities uncover their needs and set goals and sort of put together a community plan. Then we would help work with them to figure out how we could apply for grants to fund some of the projects that they wanted to take on and didn't have the funds to do. So we worked with Normandy and we worked with Sullivan-Missouri and so we were sort of all around the Metropolitan area.

Blanche Touhill: Well, in a way, that still exists, doesn't it?

Dee Joyner: Uh-huh, yeah.

Blanche Touhill: Maybe in a different form, I'm not sure...

- Dee Joyner: Yeah, in a different form.
- Blanche Touhill: ...but there are those grants that if the communities can work together...and I know that you UM-St. Louis is still involved in the Great Streets Program.
- Dee Joyner: Yes, mm-hmm.
- Blanche Touhill: Which is really what you're talking about...
- Dee Joyner: Very similar.
- Blanche Touhill: The East-West Gateway Council has something to do with the Great Streets, don't they?
- Dee Joyner: I would suspect that they do because...
- Blanche Touhill: I think they do and they got the funding then and it's not just for the University of Missouri. It's for the communities along Natural Bridge to...
- Dee Joyner: Right, to be able to change the street state and help to redevelop neighborhoods.
- Blanche Touhill: That's right, [inaudible 22:58].
- Dee Joyner: Exactly, yeah. So it is interesting, isn't it, after all these years, that there's still programs like that and things like that going on in the community. So it was an interesting time.
- Blanche Touhill: Do you remember any project in particular during that period that you worked on that came to fruition?
- Dee Joyner: I know that there was a community development project in Sullivan, Missouri that helped them get funds to build a community park in a part of the city that really didn't have any recreational services. I remember that.
- Blanche Touhill: Have you gone back to look at it?
- Dee Joyner: I have not, no. I drive past there every now and then when I'm on my way south but no, I haven't really stopped back to see what's going on. But it was an interesting program because we really worked with the elected officials and most of them hadn't really experienced a planning process like this before and not everyone has patience with process but they all

were just really engaged and it was nice to be able to see that if you sit down and think about what it is that's really important to accomplish and then you figure out, how do you get the resources to accomplish it, you really can make things happen. So whether it had lasting impact, I don't know but it was a great partnership with the University and I thought a really effective kind of process.

Blanche Touhill: I think the University, when they came to St. Louis, that extension, instead of being farm and home economics, it became urban problems and I think they carried that goal from the very beginning when they opened and they've kept it up. The other campuses are now working in economic development but I think we were there...

Dee Joyner: First, mm-hmm.

Blanche Touhill: ...a little ahead of everybody else, yeah and I think that was because we came in and we realized that if we were going to grow, we had to have partnerships with the community. So then what happened to you?

Dee Joyner: So then I went to the Coro Foundation and became executive director there.

Blanche Touhill: And that was the height of Coro, right?

Dee Joyner: It pretty much was, yes.

Blanche Touhill: And talk about Coro, what Coro did.

Dee Joyner: Well, Coro was/is...its programs still exist in a different form but the organization was leadership training institute for individuals who are interested in careers in public service. So the hallmark program, the Coro ran when I first went there, was the Coro Fellows Program, which still exists today, which really is for college graduates who want to pursue a career somehow in...maybe not even necessarily the public sector but that has some impact within the community. A fabulous program, great seminars that work on learning skills, but especially the internships that they have where they really get to experience what it's like to work in different sectors of the community and begin to see the inner connections between those sectors and how to impact public policy and community growth. So, that's when I went to Coro, that was the basic program, the cornerstone program that we ran. But while I was there, we

partnered with the Junior League of St. Louis to develop here a Women in Leadership Program which was patterned after a program that started at Coro in San Francisco. So we put together a program which still exists today for Women in Leadership and it's really a great program. Sue Clancy was president of the Junior League and I was the executive director of Coro so we collaborated on putting this together. The Junior League was a major supporter, financially, of the program in its early years and there's just lots of graduates all over St. Louis now who have been through that program and they have a pretty active alumni network as well.

Blanche Touhill: And that still goes on today?

Dee Joyner: It still goes on today, yeah.

Blanche Touhill: But there's a change in Coro?

Dee Joyner: Well, what happened was, Coro was always a fantastic organization but it always had a challenge raising the resources it needed to really be able to grow and sustain. So finally, a few years ago, Coro basically...Focus-St. Louis took over its programs and Coro, as a stand-alone organization, dissolved. So Focus now runs the Fellows Program and the Women in Leadership Program in addition to Leadership-St. Louis, Emerging Leaders Program and other leadership programs that they run. So now all of those leadership programs are under one umbrella which I think is really, in the long run, a really good thing, for both the programs and for St. Louis.

Blanche Touhill: So, when Focus raises money, then some of that money goes to Women in Leadership or in Focus-St. Louis or whatever program it is?

Dee Joyner: Mm-hmm.

Blanche Touhill: And so I guess that helps to raise money. There's one organization really working on leadership?

Dee Joyner: That's right.

Blanche Touhill: How does the alumni work?

Dee Joyner: The Women in Leadership alumni?

Blanche Touhill: Yes.

Dee Joyner: Well, they have their own organization. They have networking meetings for the members. Sometimes they, or groups of them, will take on projects but a lot of it is just so that they can keep connected because I think what happens is, when you go through a program like that and you have this really special experience, you bond with the other members of your class and then become part of this larger network, that the women find it just really helpful to them to be able to use those connections, whatever they end up doing in their lives. So, that's why there's a real interest in making sure they stick together. Now, some of the classes continue to meet together even, but the broader network becomes really important as well.

Blanche Touhill: When you were running Coro, did any of them come back and talk about the problems they were faced with the glass ceiling or anything like that?

Dee Joyner: You know, Blanche, yes, there was some of that. They would share their experiences. I mean, the women, of course in the program were interested in advancing their careers so they were always sort of interested in, what's the next step look like who are the role models out there and who can mentor me and all of that. I think in a lot of ways, while the glass ceiling always came into the conversation because it was a fact of life, their focus tended to be more on, "Well, what can I do? What can I do next?"

Blanche Touhill: So they weren't victims?

Dee Joyner: They weren't victims. That's a very good way to put it. They were not victims. They were aware.

Blanche Touhill: And going to work on it?

Dee Joyner: And going to work on it.

Blanche Touhill: And they were a generation that was filled with change...

Dee Joyner: Mm-hmm.

Blanche Touhill: So I'm sure they didn't think that the glass ceiling was there forever.

Dee Joyner: I'm sure that was the case. I think there was a feeling of optimism as well, that they could make a difference, they could change things wherever they were.

Blanche Touhill: When you started down this path, when you were listening to the woman who made the speech on lobbying and working for the union, was there something specific that you wanted to change?

Dee Joyner: Oh, that's a really good question.

Blanche Touhill: Or was it just the whole society?

Dee Joyner: You know, I think it was more making a difference and how I made that difference, I wasn't really quite sure so it was more within whatever realm I found myself: what can we do to make it better?

Blanche Touhill: And do you still have that idea?

Dee Joyner: I do.

Blanche Touhill: So it's not a particular cause that has led you through your life but it's been a variety of situations that could be improved if the right pressure was placed and the right people were informed of the truth?

Dee Joyner: Yes, yeah. I really do think...it started way back then but it becomes who you are.

Blanche Touhill: Who you are, that's what I think, it's who you are.

Dee Joyner: Exactly, yeah, it is.

Blanche Touhill: Does your daughter have this too?

Dee Joyner: You know, my daughter is definitely a change agent and she's comfortable with change. She doesn't have the same community connection. She serves on a not-for-profit board and she gives a lot to that and she loves what she does and the contributions she makes but she's happy to have one board to serve on and to make a difference in that one area. Now, she works really hard at work and is involved in a lot of change projects there and so her fulfillment maybe is just a bit different.

Blanche Touhill: But she still has that spark?

Dee Joyner: But she does.

Blanche Touhill: That things can be better?

Dee Joyner: Yeah.

Blanche Touhill: But it's not her career; it's your career.

Dee Joyner: It's sort of like that, yes.

Blanche Touhill: So then, after Coro, where did you go?

Dee Joyner: Well, then I went to St. Louis County Government and I started out as planning director for St. Louis County. I was the first woman planning director in the County.

Blanche Touhill: You were?

Dee Joyner: I was.

Blanche Touhill: How did that react? How did people...

Dee Joyner: Well...

Blanche Touhill: When you went in the room, were they ready to attack?

Dee Joyner: I'll tell you two funny stories. The first one is, after I had been planning director for about a year, one of the commissioners took me out to lunch and he had been a good friend of the county executive and he said, "Okay, I just want to tell you, when the county executive appointed you that job, I thought he was absolutely nuts. What was a woman going to do with all of these developers and hard-line driving men? How in the world is she going to manage this organization?" He says, "I just want to tell you, I was wrong."

Blanche Touhill: After a year?

Dee Joyner: That was after a year. That was huge. I mean, the fact that he even admitted to me what his feelings were and that he was wrong was huge.

Blanche Touhill: Now, was it H. Milford who appointed you?

Dee Joyner: No, it was Gene McNary.

Blanche Touhill: Now, why did he pick you?

Dee Joyner: Well, that's a really good question and I'm not even really sure why. He knew of me because of my work at East-West Gateway Coordinating Council because the work I did was pretty visible. He was on the board of

directors there and his chief of staff at that time, I also worked with because of his involvement with East-West Gateway. So I was sort of a known quantity and when the person who was in the planning director role left, for some reason, my name surfaced and he said, "Yeah, I think she would be fine in that role."

Blanche Touhill: Did you stay in that job with H. or did you...

Dee Joyner: No. So what I did was I was planning director for about five years or so. It was at the time when Vince Schoemehl was mayor of the City of St. Louis and Gene McNary was County Executive and they thought maybe the time had come to merge the city and the county. So I left the County Government to work on a super secret project to research what that could look like, the finances of it, what it could mean and I worked for them as well as Civic Progress to put this plan together. Well...

Blanche Touhill: How long did you work on that?

Dee Joyner: About six months and the plan was great. The numbers showed that this could be really a positive thing for the community. Needless to say, the process of ever getting there was very daunting but politics kind of entered in at that point and the decision was made, this was just not the time; it's not the right time to take it forward. So at that point, I went back to County Government and then...

Blanche Touhill: In Planning?

Dee Joyner: No, as head of the St. Louis County Economic Council.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, okay.

Dee Joyner: So then I was economic development director for the county for several years and then Gene left to go to Washington, D.C. to be immigration commissioner and H. was appointed county executive. He came and asked if I would come over and be his chief of staff. So that's how that all happened and that was a phenomenal experience too. I mean, I have to say, the experience I had in government was fabulous and I will forever be grateful and thankful for it and I will say something else about women in leadership roles: I really do believe I had experience in leadership because I was in government and the not-for-profit sector where it was easier and more possible for women to achieve those leadership roles

than I think it might have been if I had come up through more of a business career ladder. The experiences I had and the exposure I had to all kinds of people in leadership roles, whether they were from business or from government or from some other sector of the community, because of those roles I held, it was just phenomenal. I think about that a lot and oftentimes, when I am talking to younger women, I really encourage them, even if they don't want to work in government or not-for-profit or whatever at this stage in their career, volunteer because there are so many opportunities to get to do things that you don't necessarily get to do when you're working your way up a corporate career ladder.

Blanche Touhill: Well, actually, being the chief of staff was a very important job.

Dee Joyner: It was huge.

Blanche Touhill: How many years did you do that?

Dee Joyner: Well, I did it for 18 months because then H. lost his election bid and so then I was out of a job and that's how I moved into...

Blanche Touhill: Into the bank?

Dee Joyner: Into the bank, yeah.

Blanche Touhill: But you must know everybody in St. Louis.

Dee Joyner: Well, back then I knew a lot of people. Now, of course, a lot has changed over the past 23 years but, yeah, at that time, I did, I really had a chance to work with all kinds of people throughout the community.

Blanche Touhill: What do you think about the current plan to merge the City and the County by just the City coming in as a County?

Dee Joyner: You know, I think that that would be fine and I think that probably some sort of an incremental approach is going to be the most feasible and it's coming around full circle because, you know, now the City and the County Economic Development Agencies have merged.

Blanche Touhill: I knew that they were beginning to do it, step by step.

Dee Joyner: Yeah. So they've merged and I'm now on their board so I'm back working with many of the same people I worked with when I was in County

Government 23...24...25 years ago, yeah, but that's a really important step and we're all very mindful of the model that this could be for other forms of collaboration between the City and the County if full merger isn't really possible. There's other ways that the governmental entities can form partnerships and work together in various service areas that would make it better, more cost-effective, better service, more sustainability than everybody kind of doing their own thing.

Blanche Touhill: The reason I'm interested in that merger is, when my husband was in law school, he had an internship one summer funded by the Ford Foundation to study the merger between the City and the County.

Dee Joyner: When was that?

Blanche Touhill: That was a long time ago. Let's see, I think he graduated from law school...I'm going to say, in...it's hard for me to figure it out...I'd say about '57, so he must have made the study in '56 or '55, the summer and it was a wonderful plan but you couldn't get the public to vote it and so then when I heard about this new one where you just come in as the County, I thought, well, that's all right, but I thought, people won't understand that, but when you see groups coming together that would be beneficial to both sides, then you say, well, that's not a bad thing.

Dee Joyner: Yeah, that makes sense.

Blanche Touhill: What do you think about the schools? Do you think the Normandy School...isn't that, in a way, a merger of, not a school...well, in a way, merger of school districts or making sort of a different configuration of schools and school districts?

Dee Joyner: Yeah, and you know, it's so...

Blanche Touhill: Yeah, I don't know what the answer is...

Dee Joyner: ...difficult because the school districts are so tied to the communities...

Blanche Touhill: The local communities.

Dee Joyner: ...the local communities.

Blanche Touhill: And we have so many local communities.

- Dee Joyner: And we have so many local communities, that's exactly right; that's exactly right but clearly they've got to figure out a better way of dealing with school districts that don't have enough resources to provide the right level of education and taking their money to pay to transfer them somewhere else is not the answer. That's just going to seal their fate.
- Blanche Touhill: Well, and that will lead to the bankruptcy or...
- Dee Joyner: Absolutely.
- Blanche Touhill: ...and then you have other problems that arise from that as to what will happen to these children and these teachers and everything else. So tell me about the Commerce Bank. So you then went to work...did you go to work for Commerce right away?
- Dee Joyner: I left the County Government and went to work for Commerce Bank and never thought I'd work for a bank or be...and I don't really consider myself a banker because my role is really human resources and...
- Blanche Touhill: It's the same and it's outreach to the community.
- Dee Joyner: Well, part of it is, part of it is, yeah but I have had a fabulous career there. I've been there 23 years. I started out in their Trust Company and worked in the Trust Company for 10 years doing a variety of different roles, learned a lot, had some great experiences, and then the bank was really looking at how to pull together their training and development activities and they wanted to really create an organizational development group that could really help move it to another level of leadership trainings, succession planning, improving our internal communication vehicles and all of that and they asked me if I would be interested in forming that unit. So that was a fabulous...it's sort of like, if I went way back to East-West Gateway and projected forward, I never would have planned this career but when I look from where I am back, I can connect all the dots. So that opportunity to create the organizational development group was a fabulous one and one that sort of drew on past experience. So I've been doing that about 12 years now and then several years ago, the person who had been heading up our community relations activities in St. Louis retired so, because I had the community background, they said, "Why don't you take that on too." So that's why I say, I sort of wear two hats and it is great because I still do love the community and I still love to be involved and so it gives me a great way that I can do two things.

- Blanche Touhill: Are some of the problems the same?
- Dee Joyner: Yes, yes, they are; yes, they are.
- Blanche Touhill: And you're adjusting them but they're...
- Dee Joyner: You know, in some ways, the problems haven't moved forward; in other ways, they're new but related or there's a different way of looking at it or whatever.
- Blanche Touhill: Are there more women that you deal with than in the older days?
- Dee Joyner: Oh, absolutely. I used to go to meetings and I was the only woman in the room and now, there's...
- Blanche Touhill: They're in the pipeline?
- Dee Joyner: They're in the pipeline and there's many more...I have many more peers who are women. I used to not have really any peers that...there might have been others somewhere in the organization but many more women in various levels of leadership role. We have a woman, my boss, who is a member of the executive management team for Commerce. So, yes, there's many more opportunities, thank heavens.
- Blanche Touhill: How did you happen to join the International Women's Forum?
- Dee Joyner: Well, I joined when I was in County Government, when I was planning director for the County when it first started in St. Louis. When the St. Louise group first got organized, they asked if...
- Blanche Touhill: Oh, so you were one of the founding...
- Dee Joyner: I was one of the founding members, yeah, and Gail Jackson was the leader back then and she invited me to come to a meeting to explore the possibility of starting a chapter in St. Louis. So I've been involved since the very beginning. It's been great.
- Blanche Touhill: A great ride.
- Dee Joyner: A great ride and it's been so neat to see the expansion in the number of members and back then it was trying to figure out, okay, now, who's the top woman here and who's the top woman there, who's...and now, there

are many, many top women in all sectors of the community which is great to see.

Blanche Touhill: And if you had been born 50 years before, what would you...

Dee Joyner: I probably would have been a high school graduate, stay-at-home mom, living in Edwardsville, Illinois.

Blanche Touhill: And probably volunteering for things?

Dee Joyner: And probably volunteering for things, yeah, probably a life not all dissimilar to that that my mother lived, although it's interesting because even though she was a stay-at-home mom, she did graduate from business school; she did work before she got married, and she did go to work later, when I was in high school and probably if she had been born 50 years later, she would have been a career woman.

Blanche Touhill: Do you want to talk about awards that you've had or any that pop out, one or two that have particular meaning for you?

Dee Joyner: Well, I've been blessed to receive a number of different recognitions. There are several that probably have a special place for me. Both SIU-Edwardsville and St. Louis University have recognized me as Alumnus of the Year and SIU, a couple of years ago, inducted me into its Hall of Fame, which was really nice and especially because the school meant so much to me in my growing up years and to be recognized like that was really special. I have been Woman of Achievement and WYCA Special Leader Award, recognized by the University of Missouri Chancellors Council. So there's a number of...many of the awards have to do with organizations that I've been a part of and that always makes it special, to have that kind of peer recognition, I guess.

Blanche Touhill: You know, I remember years ago, you came onto the campus and we went over and looked at that property on the east side of Airport and that has come along, hasn't it?

Dee Joyner: It has, yes. Now, you're talking...

Blanche Touhill: I'm talking about the warehouse area.

Dee Joyner: Mm-hmm, across the highway over there?

Blanche Touhill: Across the highway and Express Scripts has moved over there.

- Dee Joyner: Well, Express Scripts is huge. Oh, my goodness, and they just keep growing. Isn't that...that's a fabulous partnership with the University.
- Blanche Touhill: Yes, but you were always saying that land is there and can the campus use it and...
- Dee Joyner: And the St. Louis County Economic Council has been very involved in helping to partner to make that development actually work.
- Blanche Touhill: Yes, and the China Hub, they're...
- Dee Joyner: The China Hub, I think they are. You don't hear about it much but I think there's still a lot of behind the scenes desire to really try to figure out how we can be a hub.
- Blanche Touhill: Well, what did your brother think about your success?
- Dee Joyner: That's a good question. You know, he's a good guy. I think he's proud of those accomplishments and...
- Blanche Touhill: ...his older sister?
- Dee Joyner: ...his older sister, yeah. He'll give me a hard time every now and then but we're good friends.
- Blanche Touhill: And what about your girlfriends that didn't go on to college or they went on to college and then didn't have a career? Does it make a difference that you're a leader?
- Dee Joyner: You know, I don't really know what they think about that or whatever. The ones that I keep most in touch with did go to college. Three of them, three of my closest friends all became teachers and two of them are now retired and the third one is semi-retired. She works a couple days a week. I don't know what they think about me, to be honest with you. When we all get together, it's just like we never left high school.
- Blanche Touhill: Did you find that women helped you along the way?
- Dee Joyner: I have one who really helped me a lot. She became my best friend and unfortunately died of cancer a number of years ago but she was really the first professional woman other than the lobbyist I mentioned earlier but the first person I really knew who was a professional woman whose career was ahead of mine that I could look up to and see what she did

and how she did it. She worked for the Department of Housing and Urban Development when I was at East-West Gateway and she was our grants manager. So she kind of had a responsibility for the money that we got from HUD.

Blanche Touhill: She had to be very careful.

Dee Joyner: And we became really close friends. We actually lived close to each other in the University. We carpoled to work and she taught me so much about what it really is to be a woman professional, about how to dress, about how to wear make-up, just about how to present yourself as a woman professional and I will be eternally grateful for that relationship, for her mentorship which really turned into a friendship and now her daughters are my adopted daughters and one of them has a little boy who's now my adopted grandson. So it's wonderful that we have this extended family but, yeah, she is the one woman who always jumps into my mind whenever anybody asks me, were there women along the way. She was definitely one.

Blanche Touhill: Good. When I always think of you, I always think of a very pleasant personality so then I have to say: how did you get what you wanted done? By being pleasant? Well, everybody has their trick; everybody has their way of getting what they want. Some people do it by a variety of ways you can do it, but everybody always says, "Oh, Dee is such a nice person." So how did you do it?

Dee Joyner: Well, you know, it doesn't work all the time and sometimes people think that you're not a fighter just because you're nice but that's who I am and I think it's the way I influence. So if I can help you get something done that's important to you, then you're going to think I'm a good person and we'll be able to work together and make things happen. I've just never found...first of all, it's not comfortable to my personality. I don't enjoy conflict. It doesn't mean I won't confront it when I have to but I really don't go out and seek it and I certainly don't want to go out and cause it. So I think that's the way I've learned to influence.

Blanche Touhill: So then, working in your field is not difficult for you?

Dee Joyner: No, no. Now, some personality types are not as pleasant to deal with but most of the time what I've found is if I'm just honest and am who I am and don't have hidden agendas and try to figure out where they are and

what they're trying to do and why they're this way or whatever, usually you can find a pathway through somehow.

Blanche Touhill: When you're in charge of reorganizing parts of the bank, that could be a very difficult job. So how do you approach that? In the same way?

Dee Joyner: Well, I think in a lot of ways, it's sort of similar. It's really trying to figure out who the different players are, what their agendas are, what their needs are, what they're trying to accomplish and then how can I or how can my team help support them in trying to get there but do it in such a way that it has a positive impact on the greater good of the organization, if you will. That's one of the things I love about organizational development because it really does, it helps you to work with people in a way that makes them successful and I've always been...I think this is something that goes back to my childhood and my relationship probably with my father who I was always trying to please...is how can I add value by what I bring to the table that's going to make you successful and therefore feel better about me, and it seems to work now.

Blanche Touhill: I think it's been very successful.

Dee Joyner: Do you think so? I mean, I'm not sure it always does.

Blanche Touhill: I think it's been very successful.

Dee Joyner: And some people may look and say, "Well, you're not a hard-charging..."...da da da da da, but that's okay and, you know, at this stage in my career, that's just fine with me. I'd much rather...

Blanche Touhill: Well, you're not hard-charging. You determine what you think is the best way and then you go around trying to figure out how...

Dee Joyner: Try to figure out how to get everybody in alignment.

Blanche Touhill: [Inaudible 56:16]. I understand that. Is there anything you want to comment on that we've sort of missed?

Dee Joyner: You know, I think you have asked some absolutely wonderful, insightful questions. I don't know that there's anything else really that I have to add at this point.

Blanche Touhill: Well, I've enjoyed this conversation very much and so thank you very much.

Dee Joyner:

Well, thank you, Blanche, I really enjoyed it too. You're a great interviewer.