

An Interview with
Joan Newman

at the Historical Society of Missouri St. Louis
Research Center, St. Louis, Missouri

13 June 2014

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Oral History Program

The State Historical Society of Missouri

Collection SA1148

International Women's Forum DVD 53

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PREFACE

The interview was taped on a placed on a tripod. There are periodic background sounds but the recording is of generally high quality.

The following transcript represents a rendering of the oral history interview. Stylistic alterations have been made as part of a general transcription policy. The interviewee offered clarifications and suggestions, which the following transcript reflects. Any use of brackets [] indicates editorial insertions not found on the original audio recordings. Physical gestures, certain vocal inflections such as imitation, and/or pauses are designated by a combination of italics and brackets []. Any use of parentheses () indicates a spoken aside evident from the speaker's intonation, or laughter. Quotation marks [""] identify speech depicting dialogue, speech patterns, or the initial use of nicknames. Em dashes [—] are used as a stylistic method to show a meaningful pause or an attempt to capture nuances of dialogue or speech patterns. Words are *italicized* when emphasized in speech or when indicating a court case title. Particularly animated speech is identified with **bold** lettering. Underlining [] indicates a proper title of a publication. The use of underlining and double question marks in parentheses [(??)] denotes unintelligible phrases. Although substantial care has been taken to render this transcript as accurately as possible, any remaining errors are the responsibility of the editor, Josephine Sporleder.

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MISSOURI-ST. LOUIS
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S FORUM ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
JUNE 13, 2014
JOAN NEWMAN INTERVIEWED BY DR. BLANCHE TOUHILL

BT: Would you introduce yourself?

Joan Newman: I'm Joan Newman.

BT: Joan, would you talk about your early life: your family, your cousins, your elementary school, the kids you played with, high school. Who, in all that setting, who really said to you, "Joan, you have ability and you should decide what you want to do and go forth in life and do good things"?

Joan Newman: I attribute my ability to think and do what I want to do and did, my mother and dad. My mom and dad were just incredible for those times. I was born in Youngstown, Ohio, blue collar area, my dad climbed poles for the phone company; my mom was a stay-at-home mother and had a happy childhood. It was one of these Leave It To Beaver kind of childhoods, had nice friends. We moved a lot. I moved from Youngstown when I was in the third grade and then moved to Akron, Ohio and stayed there for three years and then moved again when I was just starting seventh grade, to Hudson, Ohio and spent my formative years in Hudson, Ohio which I always loved. It was this New England-y looking neighborhood, a little bit southeast of Cleveland, great school, great friends. I marvel because my weekends I'd hop on my bike and just go visit friends and play and today, it's a whole different picture than it was then. I just loved it. So my parents...I never heard from my parents, "You can't do this as a woman" or "You can't do that." They just were very, very supportive, to the point where they spent most of their money on education. My brothers both went to private school, had some learning disabilities...I have two brothers...and they spent their money on education and we all went to private colleges and I know they financially suffered because of it but that's just the way they were.

BT: And how about your friends, did your friends have ambitions beyond being a housewife or a...

Joan Newman: You know, that's interesting, I'm not sure we ever talked about it but when I go back to my high school reunions, I'm a little surprised that not more of them went into any profession like being a lawyer. They just didn't do that and I'm not sure I understand why.

BT: Were there nurses, secretaries, librarians...

Joan Newman: One is a librarian, a great woman; one was a teacher but given the caliber of the families that they came from, the socioeconomic families and their aptitude, I was just surprised that they didn't do more.

BT: Did they marry and were housewives and mothers?

Joan Newman: Most of them, yeah, most of them. So I was always kind of surprised at that but I was raised with this work ethic. I mean, I just knew that I had to work through high school and through college, not that my parents ever told me to but I just knew that I had to contribute because they were already...

BT: And what kind of jobs did you hold?

Joan Newman: I was a soda jerk in high school. There was a great, old-fashioned drugstore and I worked there every Saturday, every Sunday and usually after school. And in college, I was one of the receptionists in the dorm and worked my way through there. So I just did whatever I could do. My dad worked in Cleveland at the phone company and I got a job working in the office and it's interesting because I think that's the first time I really realized I had to be better than anybody else because my dad had gotten me the job so I had to prove that I wasn't just there because of my dad.

BT: And were you accepted eventually?

Joan Newman: Yes, yes, I was. So I worked my tail off, but it was fun. It was great.

BT: Did you learn typing and shorthand or were you more of a receptionist and clerk or...

Joan Newman: It was interesting, I would punch in the orders for phones in those days and it was...I don't even remember what kind of machine it was but I'd learned how to do it. I did take a typing course in high school. I was on

the track...we had two tracks in those days, one was kind of the Home Ec track and the other was the more educational track, for lack of a better word, and so I did take a typing course which has served me well but that was my only entrée to anything.

BT: When you talk about punching things in, was that the IBM cards kind of thing?

Joan Newman: It was, I think. Tapes would come out. It was really...this was back in '66...'67 so, yeah, it was an old-fashioned something.

BT: At the telephone company were there mainly men in charge?

Joan Newman: I remember mainly men, yes.

BT: Because they had the big lawsuit in St. Louis or a class action suit over women...other jobs at the telephone company, being opened to women but I don't know what year that was but I think the years that you were in the telephone company were earlier than that. I think that came in the '70s or the '80s.

Joan Newman: It might have been, yeah.

BT: And that's not to say that the office in Cleveland might have been different than the office in St. Louis because...well, it's a subject I don't know anything about.

Joan Newman: I don't remember. No, I don't remember, Blanche.

BT: Did your teachers recognize that you were a worker and had ability?

Joan Newman: I always had straight A's. I don't know that I ever received a lot of encouragement from them. I don't know that there's a particular teacher I can look back and say, my goodness, she or he really transformed me or in some way was very inspirational. The teacher I remember the most...and this is going to sound funny...was my English teacher in seventh grade and I had just moved to Hudson and we spent virtually a year diagramming sentences and I loved it. I absolutely loved it and it has stuck with me because a lot of what I do now in my coaching is some writing skills and it just all comes back.

BT: Actually, I learned to write through the diagramming method as well.

Joan Newman: Fabulous.

BT: And to this day, I can still diagram a sentence and it was...I lament the fact that they took that out of the schools.

Joan Newman: I do, too. I will ask some of the lawyers with whom I work, "Did you learn how to diagram sentences?" and they look at me like I fell off from another planet. So they had no idea but it's very sad that I think our children aren't learning the basics of writing and sentence structure.

BT: Yes. Were you a leader in the school or the neighborhood or the high school?

Joan Newman: I was. I was a quiet leader, I think, more than anything. I was captain, I was very good at sports. I was captain of my field hockey team and captain of the basketball team and ran...

BT: This is high school?

Joan Newman: This is high school...ran for student council and won that so I was kind of a quiet leader in my own way.

BT: Were there any women who became the president of the student council?

Joan Newman: Not that I remember, no.

BT: The boy was the president and the girl was the vice-president?

Joan Newman: Exactly, that's right.

BT: How many were in your school?

Joan Newman: Oh, that's a good question. Oh, there might have been maybe 400 in my high school, a small school, yeah, probably 400.

BT: So you were a baby boomer.

Joan Newman: Oh, yes, I am a baby boomer, born in 1947, yes.

BT: And how many were in your elementary school...let's say class? Did you have a large number or a small number?

Joan Newman: I remember small classes but I don't remember how many were in the class, yeah, not large.

- BT: Did you play individual sports like golf? Did you take those up?
- Joan Newman: My mom made us take tennis lessons and so we did that, my brother and I but I was more of a team sport person. I liked team sports.
- BT: So, where did you go to college?
- Joan Newman: I went to college at Case Western Reserve University.
- BT: Of course, which is a wonderful institution.
- Joan Newman: Well, I got there kind of...I ought to tell you, it's a funny story...I only wanted to go to Connecticut College for Women so that's the only school I applied to and I got on the wait list and, as my nature is, I wrote them back and said, "If you don't want me the first time around, I'm not coming and I won't be on your wait list," which set panic into my parents because they were thinking, "Now where is she going because she has no place." In Hudson, the dean of Flora Stone Mather College, which was the women's school of Western Reserve University at that time, before Case and Western merged, but Flora Stone Mather was the girls school; Western Reserve was the boys. The dean of Flora Stone lived in our neighborhood and my mother knocked on her door and said, "Could you please take Joan to your college?" and she says, "Of course we would take Joan." So that's how I ended up going to school 20 miles from my house, in the heart of Cleveland, which were...those were very interesting times, with the riots, et cetera, but I loved it. I just had a great time at that school.
- BT: Did you live in the dorm?
- Joan Newman: I lived in the dorm and my parents were great. I might as well have been 500 miles away from home because they never bothered me. My dad was great. He worked in Cleveland so he would come by and take my friends to dinner periodically but it was great. It was wonderful.
- BT: You were aware of the riots?
- Joan Newman: Oh, very much so because where Case Western is located...I mean, there were tanks on most corners. It bordered right on a very bad area of Cleveland. So, no, we were aware of the riots.

- BT: Was this both the Vietnam War and Cambodia or was it the African American struggle?
- Joan Newman: It was the African American struggle at that time. When I was in law school, we had the Vietnam and Cambodia but, no, this was the African American struggle.
- BT: And were people killed?
- Joan Newman: I am sure they were. I don't remember statistics but I just remember, it was not a pleasant time. Now, was I afraid? I don't know if I was afraid or even wise enough to know to be afraid. It was just all very interesting, seeing this around me.
- BT: Did you actually take part in the riots?
- Joan Newman: No.
- BT: You were more of an observer and a sympathizer?
- Joan Newman: Exactly, yeah. I was never one to do marches and that kind of thing, no.
- BT: But you were part of the American public opinion that was deciding which way we were going to go?
- Joan Newman: Absolutely, yeah.
- BT: Were the students at Case Western...I assume they were very interested in the...
- Joan Newman: They were a pretty liberal group as well, yeah.
- BT: But it's interesting to have the tanks.
- Joan Newman: Yeah, I remember the tanks.
- BT: Because I remember the problems in St. Louis and I don't recall that level of military or police.
- Joan Newman: Yeah. Cleveland was a rough, rough neighborhood, many parts of it.
- BT: But it has a wonderful symphony and a wonderful art museum.
- Joan Newman: Well, that was the beauty of going there, is they were on the campus so my art classes were in the art museum so the campus is right there. I

mean, the campus has now expanded but the heart of the campus at that time, three blocks away was the art museum and the symphony and it was great.

BT: And it had a lot of rich ethnic neighborhoods like St. Louis.

Joan Newman: Well, right across the street on Euclid was the Italian neighborhood, just like St. Louis, yeah. No, it was a great place to go.

BT: And students probably came from all over the world to attend Case Western?

Joan Newman: Well, they did and it was an eye-opener for me because when I was growing up in Hudson in my formative years, it was not a diverse city. It was mostly...not mostly...all white, very affluent people, which my parents weren't. So there wasn't an African American to be found so when I hit college, it was all of a sudden seeing different people, which was great.

BT: Now, I always thought they were very strong in engineering and things like that but I did know someone who had a PhD in history from Case Western.

Joan Newman: Case was the engineering side and then when they merged...so Case really was more of the engineering and Western Reserve, I think, was a much more liberal educational system.

BT: Now, when you entered the girls school, were your classes all girls or did you go to classes with the men?

Joan Newman: They were integrated, they were.

BT: But the dorms were separate and you had separate campuses or did you?

Joan Newman: Didn't have separate campuses but the dorms were not co-ed at that time but a block away was all the fraternity houses.

BT: Did you join a sorority?

Joan Newman: No, no, I didn't really. It's not my style.

BT: And were you in a leadership position at...

Joan Newman: I was president of the dorm, I remember that, for years, so to that extent, yes.

BT: And people came to you with their troubles?

Joan Newman: Pretty much so, mm-hmm. In looking back, I don't know why I ran for that position. It just, I guess there was something in me...I don't know.

BT: Well, you were working there too...

Joan Newman: That's true.

BT: ...so you knew a lot of people, I'm sure.

Joan Newman: Yes.

BT: ...as a result of that.

Joan Newman: Yeah, and the dorms weren't large. I mean, they were three floors and maybe 10 rooms on a floor or something so they weren't huge.

BT: So you knew the people very well?

Joan Newman: Absolutely. It was a really nice community and it was my first real entrée to the Jewish community. I had no...nobody in Hudson was Jewish and so all of a sudden, I'm in a dorm with probably 60% women who were Jewish, so that was interesting as well.

BT: So you learned their holidays and festivals and religious...

Joan Newman: Absolutely, absolutely, yeah.

BT: And their culture?

Joan Newman: Exactly, yeah, exactly.

BT: When then did you decide to go to law school?

Joan Newman: After I graduated from college, I majored in political science, didn't know what to do with it, had no idea and decided I would apply to law school

BT: During the summer or something?

Joan Newman: I guess it must have been my senior year. I don't know whether someone counseled me on when I should apply or where or what but I just did and

applied to Case Western and to Wash U and got into both and decided, well, I'll go to Wash U. The only reason I applied, actually, to Wash U was because there was no application fee. So, my career is not planned. It's just...you know...it just happened, so I decided, I'll go to St. Louis and see what that's about and off I went.

BT: Had you visited the campus at Wash U?

Joan Newman: I had no idea, no idea. I just got in my car and drove off and started school and had a roommate. I picked her up in Indianapolis.

BT: Oh, how nice. So you knew each other before you moved in?

Joan Newman: No, there were only four women in my class and I had contacted the four. One was actually from here and living at home and I'm not sure where the other one was living, so Karen, my roommate, said, "Sure, we can room together" and so that was it.

BT: And how many were in the class?

Joan Newman: About 120. We dwindled down to about 70 because of the Vietnam War so we lost a lot of...

BT: Was that the numbers system, their number came up and they had to go?

Joan Newman: Yes, so we graduated with about 70.

BT: I wonder if those people returned after the war?

Joan Newman: That's a good question, I don't know whether they did or not.

BT: I would say most of them probably did. If they lived and they...

Joan Newman: I would think.

BT: Yeah. Well, how did you like St. Louis?

Joan Newman: I loved St. Louis. What was interesting is...and I remember this vividly, the weather. Cleveland weather is pretty dreary at times, especially in the winter and I just remember walking to campus one day and it was in November and the roses were still blooming and it was gorgeous and there was sun, so I liked St. Louis. I'm not sure I explored St. Louis because I studied day and night. I mean, that was my life. I remember

even being in the bath tub and having my books. I had never worked that hard. I didn't work that hard in college. I did my first year and ended up with, I think, a C average at the end of my college career because I just didn't apply myself but I worked in law school.

BT: When you came to St. Louis, did you have an apartment off campus?

Joan Newman: Yes.

BT: Oh, you did, in that sort of area to the south?

Joan Newman: You know, it's off Delmar and McKnight, the old...I've forgotten what they call those now or did but I had...we lived there. I can't remember what they called them but they're still there.

BT: A series of Apartments?

Joan Newman: Yes, exactly.

BT: And then you just could walk to school?

Joan Newman: Well, I had a car or we could take a bus so, yeah.

BT: Well, the fact that you looked around the class and there were four women and 120 others...well, you were part of 116 others.

Joan Newman: Mm-hmm.

BT: Did that say something to you?

Joan Newman: You know, this is frightening, Blanche, but no. I don't know what I expected. I don't know that it dawned on me that, gee, this doesn't look right, but I just...they were interesting times then because, under the Socratic method, a professor always calls on you and one professor had Ladies Day, so once a semester, it was Ladies Day and the four of us would get called on and then we were done for the semester, which...

BT: Did you know when the Ladies Day was?

Joan Newman: I don't think so but in retrospect, I find it very offensive but then I just...I don't know that I reflected on too much as I went through all of this. I just wanted to get through it and do as well as I could and then move on to the next step. So I didn't...

BT: Did you like law?

Joan Newman: I found that what really happened to me was my thought process changed and that was learning to look at different perspectives and putting myself in somebody else's shoes so that when you're trying to get from A to Z, you start thinking about the different ways that you can get there. So I think it made me a little more versatile in my thinking. So, did I like law school? For that reason, I did but I worked, I really studied and worked hard, and it paid off because I graduated in the top five percent of my class or something.

BT: Were you on the Law Review?

Joan Newman: I was, and that was done by grades then. Sometimes in schools now you can write to get on, but no, it was all done by grades.

BT: But you could write because of your diagramming?

Joan Newman: I could and I was an editor so I had a good time. That was just another layer of something to do. So it was a vigorous three years in terms of being studious. Competition, I found competition was more than I thought, that my classmates were very competitive and because it was a different environment and a different rigor, I didn't really know...because you only have one test a semester and that's it, and I had no idea how I would do. I have this recurring dream: I went to my second semester and I can't believe I did this but I took an evidence class and the second session of this evidence class, the professor asked for an answer. He said, "It's a three-word answer" and none of us were getting it and the answer was "race judakada" which is two words and I never went back to the class. I skipped the rest of the semester. I have no idea why I did that and I actually got the highest grade in the class.

BT: So you read the work, you read books?

Joan Newman: I read the work and obviously did well but I still have this recurring dream of going back and taking the exam and nobody's told me that it's a different day or it's already passed or something but it was a bold move on my part. I don't know what gave me the inclination to do that but it was...

BT: Yes, because that's a very strong statement.

Joan Newman: Stupid, stupid, stupid move.

BT: Well, no, it's just that you felt you couldn't learn.

Joan Newman: Yeah, I didn't have the patience for that. So law school, did I like it? I liked being challenged but it was hard work.

BT: Did you intern in a law firm at all while you were going through?

Joan Newman: After my first semester, I clerked for Judge Cone who was a probate judge. After my second semester, I clerked for a law firm, Lewis Rice and then after my third year, I clerked with them as well and I decided not to practice right after I graduated. I went back and got a Master's in tax at Wash U. So Lewis-Rice...

BT: What made you go for tax? Was it a teacher?

Joan Newman: No, it was...I was married then and Charles was a year behind me and I just thought it was pretty unfair that I had to start work before he did. So I thought, okay, I'll stay in school one more year and I kind of liked the intricacies of regulations. That's kind of how my mind works in the weeds and so I decided to get a Master's in tax and so I did that.

BT: You told me a story once that Charles was being interviewed in California...

Joan Newman: After law school, we were trying to determine, did we want to leave St. Louis? Where did we want to practice? We went on the East Coast and Charles is from California and went to University of California at Santa Barbara and always wanted to return there. He just loved the area. So we flew out and he had a job interview at a firm in Santa Barbara and he was offered a job and that night, we, along with some firm members, went out to celebrate his job offer and they asked me what I did and I said I was a tax lawyer and they kind of looked and the next morning, Charles got a call revoking his offer from the firm and because I wouldn't be happy in Santa Barbara because I couldn't find a job doing tax law but I could do domestic relations law and we were just going to cut the losses. The firm said, "Let's just cut the losses now before anybody gets too deep into this." And it was interesting, when I was interviewing, mostly in California, I would be honest and say I wanted to have children; is that a problem, and they'd say, "Yes, it is, and thank you" and off I'd go and not

get an offer. St. Louis was the only city where I could be open about that and I had opportunities. So that's why we stayed.

BT: And was that Lewis-Rice?

Joan Newman: It was Lewis Rice, very, very progressive, just incredible.

BT: And when you went to work for them and you had children, did you have time off?

Joan Newman: I took three months off with my first child, Anne, although I was going crazy. After two weeks, I was calling and saying, "Send me work. Do something. I can't just sit here all day," and my second child, Elise, I decided to head for Florida. My parents lived in Florida so I went to Florida for two months, just to take some time off and did work but that was about it. I didn't feel like I could or should take a lot of time off.

BT: How did you take care of the children then?

Joan Newman: We were incredibly lucky. We found a woman named Magda who had escaped from Czechoslovakia a few years before and came to this country and she took care of our kids from the time they were both born until they were six or seventh grade. So we had pretty fabulous, steady daycare. We had looked at daycare centers but in those days, they were not particularly attractive. So when they got to be nursery school age, we sent them to Wash U nursery school and that was a great place, but she would pick them up and do all that.

BT: Did she come at 7:00 and leave at 7:00 or...

Joan Newman: She came about 7:00...7:30 and left about 6:30...7:00.

BT: And got their breakfast and...

Joan Newman: She got their breakfast...

BT: ...got them dressed?

Joan Newman: Yeah, but I rarely did breakfast meetings. Those were the days when...and I didn't feel comfortable saying "I can't do a breakfast meeting because I want to stay home with my kids," so I would just say, "Can't do a breakfast meeting on this day because I have another breakfast meeting."

BT: Yes, and so it worked out?

Joan Newman: And so it worked out. That's what I did.

BT: And were you able to come home at dinnertime or did you have to work longer hours? Well, it would depend...

Joan Newman: Well, because of the nature of my work and what I did, it was a pretty regular schedule. I wasn't a litigator so I wasn't...I had more control. So I would leave about 5:30 or 6:00 and be home.

BT: So you really gave people advice on their taxes?

Joan Newman: I did. I represented companies in developing and implementing their pension plans and keeping them compliant with regulations and all of that stuff.

BT: And there was a good market?

Joan Newman: It was a fabulous market. I think what really shot me up in my career was, the year after I started at Lewis Rice, there was this federal pension law called ERISA, the Employee Retirement Income Security Act and it was a result of Studebaker stealing money from the pension plan. So all of a sudden there's this huge amount of regulation and laws on company pension plans. So the demand was great and nobody wanted to do it in the firm and so it was an absolute niche for me to do and that's how...

BT: Were there other women in the firm?

Joan Newman: There were two.

BT: Out of how many?

Joan Newman: Probably then, 35, but there were...the law school classes, two years after I graduated was when they started admitting more women.

BT: What year was that, roughly?

Joan Newman: Probably '75...'76, so all of a sudden they're inching from a very small percentage to 30% and then 40% but the two, actually one of whom, Joan Cronin, one of our members, she was at the firm and she left to go to the Federal Reserve and there was another woman who left so I rose and was the first woman partner at the firm.

BT: Oh, you were?

Joan Newman: So that was interesting times also, but it...

BT: And as the law school began to produce more women than they came into the firm more easily?

Joan Newman: They did. They didn't necessarily stay but they came in.

BT: Yes. Well, I think that's true of all the big law firms.

Joan Newman: Yeah, I think that's right.

BT: Well, it's true of the big accounting firms too.

Joan Newman: Exactly.

BT: They hire a lot of people and then sort of...some self-select out and some are told they're not going to be partners?

Joan Newman: That's right, and off they go.

BT: It's a business.

Joan Newman: It was more of a profession then. It is definitely a business now, very much so.

BT: Do you think the advertising made a difference, when they began to advertise?

Joan Newman: No, I don't think so.

BT: Well, then, what caused it?

Joan Newman: I think several downturns in the economy, especially the latest downturn, has really made tremendous changes in the business and its very bottom line oriented and the pressures are greater and the clients are pushing on prices. So it's very, very different. Happy to be out.

BT: Well, my husband used to say in the days when he started, that a handshake between the lawyers and things were sort of settled...

Joan Newman: Exactly.

BT: And he said now everybody has to be deposed and it goes on for years...

Joan Newman: It does.

BT: And it's not the same.

Joan Newman: No, it's not the same at all, not the same.

BT: When you were a tax lawyer and you met people who were going to hire your expertise, did any of them resent the fact you were a woman or did that come up?

Joan Newman: No, it didn't come up.

BT: Everybody was changing then?

Joan Newman: I think a lot of the contacts that these companies were mostly the VP of HR in companies, some of them were women; most were men, but it didn't seem to matter whether I was a woman or not. The one thing I had confidence in was my ability to do whatever substantively the work was and to have a decent enough presence so that I could relate to them. I watched...my area of law was not one where people had a lot of people skills. They were more like engineers, kind of introverted, so to find somebody who actually could speak the language and explain it and have some personality was difficult to find. It certainly wasn't prevalent in the firm in terms of my area. So it worked out well.

BT: Did you have many women professional friends?

Joan Newman: I had no friends. You know, no professional friends, I had no women colleagues and maybe that's why I'm drawn to what I do today, is just coaching people and being a sounding board and hearing things that I wish I had been able to tell somebody, and it's not just women, it's men as well. So, no, as I looked around, I had no women colleagues that I could really confide in. My colleagues who did what I did in this particular area, ERISA, were all male so, although we would meet once a month and talk about new laws, they weren't women. I didn't make a lot of time or any time for friends outside my family in the profession because I didn't have time. So, no, and law firms are pretty lonely places anyway. So, no, I didn't have any.

BT: Where did Charles go to work?

Joan Newman: He went to work at Thompson Coburn.

BT: Oh, yes, okay.

Joan Newman: And then went to Brian Cave and now he's with SNR Denton or whatever the name of it is. The one thing about having Charles was I could let down and talk about the things that were happening at my firm and he would understand. That was somebody I could talk to but it certainly wasn't from a female perspective. But that was helpful.

BT: Were there other people at Washington U who married while they were there or planned to marry?

Joan Newman: A couple but not...

BT: Oh, because there were so few women.

Joan Newman: Yeah, just a couple, no.

BT: But eventually, you did go to Brian Cave, didn't you?

Joan Newman: I went to Thompson Coburn then, after about 18 years.

BT: And what made you move?

Joan Newman: It was a time when...and I'm not one for change; I don't like change, but at Lewis Rice, I was very active in the community and I don't know that I did this consciously but in retrospect, I understand that practicing law wasn't feeding my soul. Helping employers provide pensions for their employees or not provide them wasn't doing it for me. So I went out in the community and just loved being active in the community. I also taught the graduate tax course in pensions at Wash U for about 17 years. So all this was going on at Lewis Rice, don't know that they ever really appreciated that and that, coupled with kind of a sense of boredom, I'm not sure it was, and Thompson Coburn was knocking on my door and I decided, okay, I'll go there. And I went there and was very happy.

BT: When you taught at Washington U, was it like a Monday, Wednesday and Friday or...

Joan Newman: Oh, it was a Monday/Thursday or a Tuesday/Thursday, smack in the middle of the day, like, 3:30 to 5:00. It didn't permit night courses so that was a chunk of time away from the practice, yeah, and it helped me. I taught the first course right after ERISA was passed so it really helped me learn but it was time-consuming.

- BT: Oh, it's very time-consuming. You had to prepare for the class.
- Joan Newman: Oh, yeah.
- BT: And to keep updating as the laws were changing or being interpreted in a different way?
- Joan Newman: Yeah.
- BT: So you went to Thompson Coburn. What charities did you become involved in, or non-profits?
- Joan Newman: First was the Girl Scouts, and moved my way up. Carolyn Losos was instrumental in getting me involved in the Girl Scouts so became president of the board there, was involved with an organization called the Jewish Employment & Vocational Services which is now MERS Goodwill, so when you see Goodwill, the Jewish Employment & Vocational Services was renamed the Metropolitan Employment Rehabilitation Services but it's a fabulous organization because MERS, one-half, was really evaluating and training and helping people who are challenged in many ways find employment and the Goodwill piece was the financial piece. They had these stores that were just making money so you could pay for all of the other side, so very, very successful organization. But I was involved in the merger of MERS and Goodwill so I became president of MERS/Goodwill at some point. But that's an agency near and dear to my heart. When you hear someone come in and say at a board meeting that their job is wrapping silver at Long John Silver's and they take a bus and it provides them money and...
- Blanche Touhill: ...a feeling of usefulness?
- Joan Newman: Very much a feeling of usefulness and you feel good about it. So that's what MERS/Goodwill does.
- Blanche Touhill: So you were really establishing another network?
- Joan Newman: Very much so, very much so. I was United Way board so there were lots of things I did in the community, the Women's Self-Help Center which is now called Safe Connections, I think, yeah.
- Blanche Touhill: When the women's movement was coming along and Gloria Steinem was writing and all that, did you stir? Did you say...

- Joan Newman: You know, I don't know what...I wasn't that rah-rah, I wasn't out, as I said, marching. I always was and I always am thankful for what I have been able to accomplish and having two daughters, you know, I was always one to say, "Do whatever you want to do. I don't care what you do," but never one to pound the streets. I should have been but never was.
- Blanche Touhill: No, I'm not saying you should have been. I think everybody is different and you grew up in a different world and you were doing what you could to help women move ahead. Are your daughters, are they more independent?
- Joan Newman: They are very independent, I mean, extremely independent. Ann, who has the Ph.D. from Stanford came here to teach, didn't like it, went back to Stanford and she's teaching there and has an administrative position...extremely independent. I'm amazed...in their marriages, everything about them. They hold their own and my younger one who is the head of the Education Department the New York Museum of Transport, whatever it is, in Brooklyn, very independent, very savvy. Ann's more in the clouds and is an educational person but Lisa's the street smart, savvy kind of kid so, yeah, they're very independent.
- Blanche Touhill: And do they credit you with that?
- Joan Newman: I think they would tell you that, yes. They watched. I'm sure they do.
- Blanche Touhill: As a professional lawyer, that was something in those days.
- Joan Newman: Yes, yes.
- Blanche Touhill: So if you entertained, you would be entertaining other lawyers but the men would be the lawyers, not the women.
- Joan Newman: Yeah, that's right, yeah, so, no, it's been interesting watching them. They didn't want any part of the law which was fine.
- Blanche Touhill: Sure. Well, they're independent.
- Joan Newman: Yeah, they have their own wishes, which is good.
- Blanche Touhill: Did your mother ever talk about the suffragettes or getting the vote?

Joan Newman: No. My mother is one of these remarkable people that I wish she had worked and I ask her this all the time: "If you had worked, what would you have done?" She worked a few years periodically when my family needed money and she worked at a bank, very, very, very sharp woman. I would have loved to have seen what she could have done or would have done with a career.

Blanche Touhill: Well, then, let me ask the next question: If you had been born 50 years earlier, what would your life be like?

Joan Newman: Oh, I think it would be much different. I think I certainly wouldn't be where I am. I imagine I would have gotten married, had kids and been a housewife, I guess. I'm almost positive I wouldn't be where I am.

Blanche Touhill: Would you have gone to college, I wonder?

Joan Newman: I don't know the answer to that. You know, my mother was such a role model in many ways. My parents went to college for one year but she was a role model in terms of community service. I used to go with her...she did work for the church. Anything she did, I was right there and watched and sometimes...it's interesting, sometimes I...I'm not a hands on helper like my mom was. She would iron choir robes or she would take food...

Blanche Touhill: But you made the organizations.

Joan Newman: Right, and it's different and so I think...I've always gone through thinking I haven't done very much because I haven't done the hands on thing that my mom did which was my role model but I've done it in a different way.

Blanche Touhill: Are your daughters interested in non-profits?

Joan Newman: You know, this is amazing to me. Ann, the older one, is such a focused kid. No, they have a little two-year-old and they work and they spend time and so they're not community-oriented. My younger one and her husband are. They're off...she's treasurer of their co-op, he tutors high school kids, she's off doing tutoring and doing things, so, yes, they're more community-minded. I don't know why, what the difference is.

Blanche Touhill: Well, I think the example, you're saying probably if you had been born 50 years earlier, you might have gone to college for a year or something or

maybe not, but in those days I don't think that was the important thing for a woman because she wasn't going to work outside the home.

Joan Newman: That's right.

Blanche Touhill: And if she did happen to, it was a very limited job kind of situation.

Joan Newman: Exactly, yeah.

Blanche Touhill: But you would have been active in the community?

Joan Newman: I might have been, yeah. I don't know who my role model would have been then, 50 years ago. I don't know.

Blanche Touhill: I don't either but you might have been in the suffragettes or something.

Joan Newman: I might have, it could be.

Blanche Touhill: Or the Red Cross.

Joan Newman: Oh, yeah, that's right.

Blanche Touhill: Well, then, let me ask a couple of other questions: I know you're a member of the IWF. Do you want to comment on that?

Joan Newman: I love it. I knew nothing about the IWF until Carolyn Losos asked me about it. I didn't know it existed. I didn't know what it did and I said, "Sure." What I find remarkable is I'm part of this group of women whom I would never had met probably. Blanche, I don't know that you and I would ever have met and gotten as close as we are and I could look around the room and think that's probably true of 90% of the women. So it's especially meaningful for me because here I am with these very accomplished, bright women and I love it and that was a void in my life. I just had no women and I wish I could kind of go back and have this group in my life, say, 30 years ago and would have had a little more support system than what I had.

Blanche Touhill: The only women's group...well, there were a couple of women's groups 30 years ago but they were things like Zonta and the Professional Women's Organization and there was an organization that used to meet once a month and they ate lunch together and the only thing they did was stand up and introduce themselves but I got to know so many people with that networking organization. That was one of my main

women's...I've built a lot of friends out of that networking thing. But there wasn't much.

Joan Newman: There was a women's bar group, lawyers' group but I had made a decision early on I wasn't going to join that because I was a lawyer first, happened to be a woman. I was doing whatever I could do to fit in and not distinguish myself in that particular way. So I didn't want to do that.

Blanche Touhill: And it probably was a very small group.

Joan Newman: Yeah, that's right.

Blanche Touhill: It was a boutique organization.

Joan Newman: Yeah. No, I think that's probably right, yeah.

Blanche Touhill: Well, then, let me ask one other question before I go back to the rest of this interview: Did you get any awards in your life...I know you've gotten awards but was there one or were there two or three that really meant something special to you?

Joan Newman: I can't remember the awards but the Women of Achievement was a nice award for community service. That meant a lot to me because I don't even know if I knew much about Women of Achievement until...

Blanche Touhill: And you probably made friends in that organization.

Joan Newman: I have. I became president early on when I guess it was, the Globe stopped supporting it and then the Business Journal and I don't know but a board was formed and I became president of it and helped get the organization off the ground.

Blanche Touhill: Again, because a lot of people thought it would just sort of die...

Joan Newman: Exactly.

Blanche Touhill: ...when the Globe stopped financing it.

Joan Newman: Exactly. So I love going to those luncheons and seeing the impact women in our community make and how little is known about what they do. So I just think it's fabulous.

Blanche Touhill: Do you go to the YWCA lunch?

Joan Newman: You know, I've never gone.

Blanche Touhill: Well, you know, I always thought there was a distinct difference, the Women of Distinction was for volunteering and the Y was really professional women.

Joan Newman: I didn't know that, okay.

Blanche Touhill: And there's all kinds of overlap, there's just all kinds of overlap. But I always thought the Y did something very clever, that they introduced that. I'd say that's about 30 years old or 20 years old.

Joan Newman: Yeah.

Blanche Touhill: And the Women of Distinction is and old, old award in St. Louis.

Joan Newman: Yeah, very old award. So that's probably the award that means the most to me.

Blanche Touhill: Why don't you talk about your new business.

Joan Newman: My new business I love. I stopped practicing law about nine years ago and then...the genesis of what I do came from being on the management committee at Thompson Coburn and I was in charge of associate training and development and I felt very strongly that there were certain skills that they needed to learn and I initiated some programs and I loved it and the light just went on. I had actually gone to a career counselor for about two years trying to figure out what I wanted to do in my next life because I didn't want to practice law for the remainder of my life and the light went on, thinking I'll just take the show on the road and somehow go to law firms and train lawyers. So I quit Thompson Coburn, went to coaching school. There was a fabulous woman named Susan Skeffington who had a behavioral coaching school and she ran it once a week, once in New York, once in Australia and once someplace else. I went to the one in New York, like, 10 people, for about a week-and-a-half, very intensive and it was great and my business then evolved from the group training on business development leadership skills, whatever it was, to coaching and so 90% of my business now is coaching lawyers. I'm hired by law firms to come in and coach their high potential lawyers. They're either partners or on the verge of making partner in leadership skills and business development and that can include time management,

interpersonal skills. It's just a fascinating business but I feel like I'm giving back now and I just love it. So it's fun.

Blanche Touhill: Would you talk at length about this coaching, when you go to a law firm and you coach the new lawyers, do you come back and see them again or how does that work?

Joan Newman: The process is I am hired by the law firms, although occasionally an individual lawyer will call me but I now work, for example, one national law firm that has about 40 offices throughout the country and I'm their executive coach so I coach their lawyers who are on the brink of becoming partners on business development leadership skills. So at any given time I might have four to six of them in a year, coaching them. The process is...and this is different, I think, from my competitors but I spend an awful lot of time getting to know them and their skills and their colleagues and who they work with and so I really understand what they do. Then we identify some skills that they want to develop or enhance and then we develop a plan and then we work together on how's it going. That process might be six to nine months and that's the official end of my engagement but I never end then. I tell them there's no end because you can't put a timeline on this so I'm still going back to clients I worked with three to four years ago and contacting them and saying, "How's it going? Is there something I can do?" because they have different stages in their careers and they might need stuff. So I don't charge for that and the one thing, I think, that gives me credibility is that I have practiced, I have been on a management committee...

Blanche Touhill: You have taught.

Joan Newman: I have taught. I know the intricacies of law firms. I have a new client as of a year ago. He's a newly elected managing partner of a law firm. It's about 1000 lawyers in the country. It's global. And he's 39 and he decided he wanted a coach, good for him, and he interviewed three people and he selected me and we've been working for a year and it's just fun, getting to know these clients and understanding what they're going through and helping them but I have this...I don't usually toot my own horn but I have this great ability to understand and to give them advice and it's sound advice because it's based on years of experience in a law firm. So I do, I go back and keep up with them and it's fun.

Blanche Touhill: Is it different coaching women than men?

Joan Newman: No. In fact, the men open up a little bit more than the women but I probably have equal men and women now. Most of my clients are outside of St. Louis. But, no, it's pretty much the same.

Blanche Touhill: Do you go internationally?

Joan Newman: I don't. I have clients that have offices internationally but I don't do that. Usually the process is I'll go meet with them for a half a day and get to know them and then may meet with them again but then it's all by phone, which I thought would not work well and I thought Skype might be better. However, I've discovered that when you're on the phone, you're not distracted by looking at somebody's face on a screen. They focus more and it's almost easier for them to be honest and open than through Skype, for example, but it works out well.

Blanche Touhill: How do you handle confidentiality?

Joan Newman: In terms of me representing...

Blanche Touhill: What he or she says to you and what you say back to them?

Joan Newman: I tell them it's all confidential. I don't tell anybody at the firm what we've talked about and I even say, "If I see you at a social event, I will pretend I don't know you unless you come up and say hi. There's no reason for anybody to know that we're working together if it happens to be in St. Louis because it's..." ...I'm very strict on the confidentiality piece of it.

Blanche Touhill: Did you take any leadership courses or was it just your experience in college or high school, being a leader in sports and student council and leadership at the university as the president of the dorm? Why do you think you're good at leadership?

Joan Newman: I don't have the slightest idea. The one thing I think and I say this to my clients, is I think to be a good leader; you have to be situationally savvy. You have to understand the audience you are in at that moment and you have to understand the difference between your behavior style and theirs and align yours as much as you can to theirs, which I think helps in communicating. It's just being able to relate to people. So I think that's maybe the one thing that has helped me through the years. I don't know. I care about people, I really do.

- Blanche Touhill: And does that go back to your mother, your mother cared about people?
- Joan Newman: You know, Blanche, I don't know but I sit here every day and say how blessed I am and you can look anywhere and find people who aren't as blessed and that, to me, fosters even more caring and trying to do for people.
- Blanche Touhill: What I find interesting is that you really just have methodically gone forward and always been a leader in some way and that you sort of...maybe it's your interest in people that makes you the leader.
- Joan Newman: It could be. I'm inquisitive. I love to learn things and learn things about people. I think that's important but that's because I care.
- Blanche Touhill: In the last part of your career, you've really chosen people rather than the subject matter of law.
- Joan Newman: Exactly, that's exactly right. But that, to me, is again feeding my soul. I know what it's like to be a lawyer in a law firm. It's even worse now than it was when I was there and if there's any way I can help somebody make it through their day, you'd be surprised the stuff I hear so it's very gratifying, very gratifying.
- Blanche Touhill: You build friendships that aren't public friendships.
- Joan Newman: Exactly, it's true.
- Blanche Touhill: And you don't get leadership awards for that.
- Joan Newman: No.
- Blanche Touhill: You get leadership awards for something else. Do you advise these people to become active in the community?
- Joan Newman: I tell them that's one way, if we're working on business development, that is one way. I also think, as a lawyer, the community expects it. But some people aren't...you know, you have to deal with their comfort zone and how comfortable are they in doing certain things and I try to have them go beyond that. But, yes, I do, I agree.
- Blanche Touhill: Are you pleased you became a lawyer?

Joan Newman: I am. The only other thing I probably thought about was becoming a doctor because that's more the people piece of it.

Blanche Touhill: Yes, it is.

Joan Newman: And so I don't know that I had it in me to do that, but, yes, I don't regret being a lawyer.

Blanche Touhill: In other words, you're saying you wanted to be a professional to help people...

Joan Newman: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: And the two areas that attracted you were medicine and law?

Joan Newman: Exactly.

Blanche Touhill: But the political science major tips you in a...

Joan Newman: ...to the law.

Blanche Touhill: ...in the law.

Joan Newman: That's right, yeah. I don't know if I was that good in sciences.

Blanche Touhill: Well, you didn't put your mind on it either.

Joan Newman: No, I didn't.

Blanche Touhill: The other was easier.

Joan Newman: You're right.

Blanche Touhill: It was more fascinating.

Joan Newman: No, it was, exactly.

Blanche Touhill: Well, is there anything in closing that you would like to say?

Joan Newman: No, I don't know...I should know what's going to happen with all of this but I just think it's a great thing that we are doing and if there's any woman out there who's going to watch any of this, that hopefully she will be inspired by things that she can do because I really don't think there are limits but it's helpful to have people be supportive and help you along the way so hopefully this will be that support.

Blanche Touhill: I think that's a good point that you have to approach life, that there aren't limits...

Joan Newman: Yeah.

Blanche Touhill: And we all know that there are but you just have to say mentally, "I'm ready to go as far as I want to go."

Joan Newman: Exactly.

Blanche Touhill: Well, thank you very much.

Joan Newman: Thank you, Blanche, I appreciate it, thanks.