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ELLEN SHERBERG INTERVIEWED BY BLANCHE TOUHILL

Ellen Sherberg: I'm Ellen Sherberg.

Blanche Touhill: Ellen, would you talk about your early life: where you were born, your parents, your cousins, your grandparents, your playmates, your elementary school. Did somebody say to you, "Ellen, you're smart" or "You can do whatever you want to do if you put your mind to it"? Talk about those early years.

Ellen Sherberg: I grew up in Richmond Heights. It was a very middle-class neighborhood. What I really remember was we were the only Jewish kids there and I really desperately wanted to be Catholic. I wanted to wear uniforms; I wanted to go to Little Flower and I felt very much on the out and I think my parents worked very hard to make us feel proud of who we were and sort of special. I don't remember being told I was smart or destined for greatness but I remember feeling a responsibility and sort of feeling special. So I remember when everybody had to tell a different Christmas story, that I was schooled in the story of Hanukah and I was far more popular because it was a war story. It was more interesting. Mainly, what I remember is the Richmond Heights Library and I remember being in the reading clubs every summer and getting my reading certificate. I remember they each hung on my walls. It was George (Annickson's?) father who signed them all and I can see them all. So I remember a sense of reading. My dad, I think, he took us to the symphony, to the kinder concerts. He took us to the Muny opera. There was a sense that there was a bigger world out there. My dad was...he had an auto salvage yard. It was my grandfather's yard so he was essentially a junk man but my father was the kind of guy who could make everybody feel special. He would talk to the trash men and he would talk to the presidents of companies and he had really high standards for us, just in terms of our

behavior. It was a neighborhood. It was a neighborhood where kids ran down the street and you didn't know whose house you were at. What I remember was, there was a point where my mother had, I guess, a growth on her throat, on her larynx so she had a small operation and she couldn't talk and she would stand out on the porch at 5:30 and just give these two big claps and my brother and I knew that we had to be home. It seems so Ozzie & Harriet-like now but I really remember it that way.

Blanche Touhill: So it was a happy place...

Ellen Sherberg: It was a happy place.

Blanche Touhill: And you played as neighborhood children?

Ellen Sherberg: We did.

Blanche Touhill: And you loved reading?

Ellen Sherberg: I loved reading.

Blanche Touhill: So, when you went to grade school, did some teacher...well, did you run the school newspaper...

Ellen Sherberg: Not in grade school. I just remember grade school as grade school and I don't think it was so pressured as it is now. I think we just went to school. We went to school. I'm sure I got pretty good grades. I just don't remember it.

Blanche Touhill: Did you walk to school?

Ellen Sherberg: We did. We went to school with the Catholic kids across the street and they stopped at Little Flower and we kept walking to West Richmond which was destroyed when they built Highway 40, that viaduct.

Blanche Touhill: How far out did 40 go when you were a child?

Ellen Sherberg: I have no idea.

Blanche Touhill: It didn't go out too far, I don't think.

Ellen Sherberg: I don't think so but it was all changed when they expanded it and, as I said, they built that viaduct which must have been, I guess in the early to mid '50s because we moved when I was in 6th grade.

Blanche Touhill: And how was high school? Were you more active in high school or do you have more memories of high school?

Ellen Sherberg: You know I have okay memories of high school. I was active in the high school paper. Yeah, I think I was pretty active in high school. I kind of hated it but it was what it was.

Blanche Touhill: Why did you not like it?

Ellen Sherberg: You know, I don't know anybody who I like who liked high school. Why would you like it?

Blanche Touhill: So you went to college?

Ellen Sherberg: I did go to college.

Blanche Touhill: Where did you go?

Ellen Sherberg: I went to Vassar.

Blanche Touhill: Why did you choose Vassar?

Ellen Sherberg: This is sort of a great story: Actually, I chose Case Western Reserve and I chose Case Western Reserve because it was very much like Washington University but not in St. Louis. My mother had a friend whose daughter was there. I went and I visited. I thought it was swell. I applied; I got in. I was planning to go there in Cleveland and I was walking down the hall one day and this guy said to me, "Oh, I hear you're going to Western Reserve. It's great. I'm going too. You'll be able to write my English papers and I'll do your Science," and I said, "Oh, no, I'm not going to be taking Science," and he said, "Now, Ellen, it's a pre-med school; everybody there takes Science." I went home and I said, "We have a problem because I'm not going to a school where they teach a lot of Science," and we got that huge college book out that they had then and it would tell you how far through it we were that we got to the V's and we got a Vassar and my dad said, "Why don't you go there?" and I said, "I can't get in there," and he said, "No," he said, "we met those people on vacation. That guy's daughter was going there and I'm as smart as he is so you can go there and it only cost \$15 to apply. What do you care?" So I applied.

Blanche Touhill: And you got in?

Ellen Sherberg: I got in.

Blanche Touhill: Did you visit the school?

Ellen Sherberg: I had never visited the school.

Blanche Touhill: So you just packed your trunk and left?

Ellen Sherberg: I did. I packed my trunk. I had never been to New York. I did.

Blanche Touhill: Did you go by yourself?

Ellen Sherberg: There was another young woman from St. Louis who was going who I met the day before and we got on the airplane and we went. We knew nothing.

Blanche Touhill: So how was Vassar?

Ellen Sherberg: You know, Vassar was a very special place for me. I think Vassar was where I learned to think and where thinking was valued and if I didn't learn to think there, I learned I had to think there. Vassar's whole mantra, both then and now, was primary sources so there was very little research and lots of writing and lots of essays and it was good. You know, it was an all-girls school and there were times where you thought, this sucks...there's probably a better way to say that...but I think Vassar was important for me.

Blanche Touhill: Did you write on the paper there?

Ellen Sherberg: I did. I was the editor of the paper in junior high and high school and in college.

Blanche Touhill: So you always had the ability and the interest?

Ellen Sherberg: I did.

Blanche Touhill: And you kept reading?

Ellen Sherberg: I did and I majored in English.

Blanche Touhill: Did you make friends at Vassar that were special?

Ellen Sherberg: I think I did. I had a lot...but they have no...I don't think I'm friends with any of...maybe a couple, not very many. I tend not to look back.

- Blanche Touhill: Yes, you move on.
- Ellen Sherberg: Yes.
- Blanche Touhill: And so you always moved on?
- Ellen Sherberg: I always have.
- Blanche Touhill: When you left grade school or you went to middle school, you left the 6th grade behind and...
- Ellen Sherberg: You know, interestingly enough, actually, when we moved, my parents would take us back to the library to get those reading certificates. You know, ultimately I moved on.
- Blanche Touhill: Did you major in English?
- Ellen Sherberg: I majored in English and I minored in Political Science.
- Blanche Touhill: Did you pick anything up on the East Coast that interested you a great deal? Did you get down to New York? Did you...
- Ellen Sherberg: Yes, I went to New York and I went to graduate school in New York.
- Blanche Touhill: Where did you go, to Columbia?
- Ellen Sherberg: To Columbia.
- Blanche Touhill: And was the Columbia experience?
- Ellen Sherberg: Well, Columbia journalism school, at that time, was a particularly interesting place. It was in the early '70s so it had been through its own tumult that campus had and our class, I think, was 20 to 30% women so it was more women than they had had in journalism and the Columbia journalism experience is a one-year Master's, so it's really tough to get in there but it's really easy to get through and, again, it was all very practical, hands-on experience. So I thought it was hard but I liked it a lot.
- Blanche Touhill: Well, you always had the writing deadlines. If you were an editor, you always have it.
- Ellen Sherberg: Yes, but at Columbia, it was hard. They sent you into places you didn't know. They made you, again, write hard; think hard. I remember very much going to cover the funeral of a Spanish girl in the South Bronx. She

had been shot by a sniper and the entire service was in Spanish. I was on the subway and a policeman said, "What are you doing here?"; "It's a school assignment." He said, "Are you crazy?" and he stayed with me the whole time. So Columbia really made a practice of throwing you into environments that you were less familiar with and that was important.

Blanche Touhill: And you succeeded?

Ellen Sherberg: I did okay. It was all pass/fail so who knows?

Blanche Touhill: I know, but I'm saying that you survived. You got the Master's.

Ellen Sherberg: I did and then ask me what happened next.

Blanche Touhill: What happened next?

Ellen Sherberg: Then I came back to St. Louis and in St. Louis, there were two newspapers at that time and I was encouraged to come back by my professors at Columbia because they said there were two newspapers here and that was important, that would be important for me and, because I was from here, that should give me a leg up in the hiring. The one newspaper, the Post Dispatch, I had received a Dow Jones fellowship in copy editing when I was in college. Actually, the reason I received the fellowship in copy editing is that, too, was the first year they allowed women in the program. They only allowed women on the copy desk because they thought the reporting was too dangerous. So Dow Jones did not accept women in their reporting internships at that time. So, I had copy desk experience, copy editing experience which is rare. So the Post Dispatch offered me a job on the copy desk but I think everybody knows that once you go on a copy desk, you never get off the copy desk because nobody wants to do that. So I was reluctant to take that job. So I interviewed at the Globe and before, when I was at Vassar, someone had suggested that I get an interview at the Globe to figure out what I wanted to do and I interviewed with a man named George Killenberg, a legendary managing editor of the Globe Democrat.

Blanche Touhill: Yes, his children went to UMSL.

Ellen Sherberg: Right, and Susan was from here and then she ran the PR at Wash U for a while, I think.

Blanche Touhill: Yes, yes.

Ellen Sherberg: So, Mr. Killenberg, he was very sure of his views and so when I went to interview...I was a sophomore in college, I guess, and I said, "You know, I really want to be a reporter and I'm at Vassar" and he said, "Well, you have to transfer to MSU," and I said, "Well, I'm not going to do that." Well then," he said, "you're going to have to just cover society news if you go to Vassar," and I said, "Well, I'm not going to do that either," and he said, "Well then, you better just stay there and get all A's and go to Columbia Journalism School," and I didn't get all A's but that was really why I went to Columbia Journalism School. So, when I returned, having done what he said, I thought, he said, "Nobody's going to take you seriously. You went to Vassar." He couldn't quite get past that. He said, "You could either be the assistant to the TV Guide person or you could be the secretary on the city desk," and I said, "Which one can I get off of fastest?" and he said, "You can get off of the city desk fastest." Then I said, "Then I'll be the secretary at the city desk." So...

Blanche Touhill: What did that mean, that job?

Ellen Sherberg: That meant...it was incredible, what that meant. That meant that when I sat down, they gave me a list of all the offices, all the beat offices and all of the bars next to them so that I could find the reporters and they said...they were very clear...they said, "If anybody calls any of these people, they are always on assignment. We don't care if it's their mother, their wife, their daughter, their son. We don't care if it's an emergency. You say they're on assignment and you call one of these numbers." That's what that meant. It meant that there was an older reporter who was probably...a man named Carl Major, the finest rewrite man in St. Louis; he was just incredible. He had somewhat of a drinking issue and so he would come into work with his cup...this was early...and it was filled with some colorless liquid that I don't think was water and he would rewrite a story and then he would give it to me and I had to retype it because nobody could read his typing. So essentially, you were the copy girl; the secretary; you answered the phone; you made sure that people did what they did.

Blanche Touhill: But you got to know all the reporters very intimately?

Ellen Sherberg: You did, you got to know the reporters very well and it was interesting because you also got to see how people treated secretaries on the city desk, and women. There was another reporter...I probably shouldn't

name...and he came up to me one day and he said, "I heard you went to Vassar." I said, "Yes, I did." He said, "I heard you went to Columbia." I said, "Yes, I did." He said, "Well, you probably have better credentials than most people out there." I said, "Oh, no, no, no..." I said, "I have the best credentials of anybody out there but..." I said, "I'm not, by far, the best writer of anybody out there, ever. There are some people who have no college degrees and they're really terrific writers," and he said, "Yeah," he said, "but you know, with all those credentials, you'll never get to be editor here," and I said...I was 23...I said, "Do you want to step back into the publisher's office and have that conversation?" and he said, "No, I would never do that," and I said, "Okay, because really, I don't want to be editor here." I said, "There's only job I want here," and he said, "What's that?" and I said, "Yours." So that whole experience of a city desk was very significant in my life, in many ways much more significant than the colleges I went to or the education I got.

Blanche Touhill: And how did he react to that?

Ellen Sherberg: He laughed.

Blanche Touhill: But it struck at his heart, I'm sure.

Ellen Sherberg: Well, you know, years later he worked for me, actually. And there are other things that happened at the Globe. At the Globe, there had been a strike in 1973, I think. It was the great newspaper strike in St. Louis. It was a 100-day strike and I was an education reporter at that time. So I had been on the radio reporting education and when the strike was over, Bob Highland offered me a job, a part-time job at KMOX, part-time, and I went to Duncan Bauman who was the publisher of the Globe and asked if I could do that and he said, "No," there were too many of his reporters on KMOX and I said, "Well, the other four are men. I'm the only woman they've asked. That seems not fair to me." "Oh, Ellen," he said, "life is not fair." So that was one thing that happened at the Globe. The other thing that happened at the Globe was...one of your friends...I was writing a story about Susan Block and I went back to Mr. Bauman's office, as you would only do if you were 23 or 24, and I said, "I have a problem. I have a problem with the style of this newspaper because it doesn't allow me to use the word "Ms." and I'm writing about this woman and I don't know if she's married or not, and so he said, "Who is it?" So I told him and so he, of course, thought it was the other Susan Block and he said, "Oh, no,

she's married. I know her husband." I said, "No, no, no, no, no, no, that's not who it is and also, that's not the point," and he looked at me and he said, "You know, Ellen, I respect women far too much..." ...I'll never forget this..."I respect women far too much to neuter them and I would never call them Ms." and I said, "Well, I respect you and I'm calling you Mr." I would do stuff like that at the Globe all the time and they would just laugh and kind of brush me off.

Blanche Touhill: Well the fact that they put you in a beat must have been a big thing.

Ellen Sherberg: Well, they only put me in a beat because I was on the suburban desk and, again, I went back to Mr. Killenberg's office one day and I said, "I have an issue. Nobody is reading my stories. They're buried in the back of the paper and nobody's reading them," and he said, "Well, of course they are. You shouldn't worry about where they play," and I said, "Well, tell me something I've written" and he couldn't. I said, "You're not even reading it. You know, this is not working for me. We've got to do something about this," and I took the next day off...it was my day off...and I came back and somebody else was sitting at my desk and this guy said to me, "They just promoted you," and that's how I got my beat and I got education, which is, of course, a girl's beat, but it worked well for me. It was an exciting time in education.

Blanche Touhill: I want to get back to the exciting time in education but I don't think there were very many women reporters in those days.

Ellen Sherberg: You know, interestingly, there were many more at the Globe than there were at the Post. There might have been Sally Bixby, (Deftee?) and Connie Rosenbaum were at the Post on the news floor but the Globe had had Sue Ann Wood and Marguerite Mitchell and Margaret Mitchell, both for a long time and when I was there, Kathy Waters Guest was there, Karen Marshall was there. There were many.

Blanche Touhill: I did not realize that.

Ellen Sherberg: And the Globe, which was extraordinarily conservative in its politics, in a way had many women there, none of whom they treated particularly well, in my particular opinion but Sue Ann Wood was...she then took on the rewrite. She was a very valued and respected member of the staff and so was Marguerite, actually, and they gave women good assignments; they did.

- Blanche Touhill: Did they pay you the same?
- Ellen Sherberg: Oh, yeah, they had to. There was a guild. We just weren't paid the same as the Post.
- Blanche Touhill: Oh!
- Ellen Sherberg: Right, no parody. We used to have big parody buttons.
- Blanche Touhill: How did you get in the union, just, if you got a full-time job, you were in the union?
- Ellen Sherberg: Right, it was a closed shop.
- Blanche Touhill: And did the men that were not particularly on their beat but could turn in the stories, did they appreciate your efforts?
- Ellen Sherberg: Oh, no. You know, newspaper men are newspaper men. Some of them did and some of them didn't. They were very funny. Actually, they were wonderful to me. I learned so much from them but, you know, they were characters. It really was a different time. It was fun.
- Blanche Touhill: Well, I look around St. Louis and I wonder to myself, where did all those people who went to Garavelli's...
- Ellen Sherberg: Well, there was Garavelli's, there was a Missouri Grill. I remember Jack Flack was the political reporter at the Globe and he was amazingly well connected as Duncan Bauman, the publisher was, and he came up to me one time and he said, "Hey, kid..." ...because that's all they ever called you...he said, "I hear that you want to cover politics," and I said, "Yeah, I do," and he said, "Not going to happen here because I'm friends with the governor and I'm friends with Tommy Gilton and if I were you, I'd go make friends your own age." So I started covering the board of aldermen and there was a back row at that board and there was a very young, smart guy on that board and that was how I got to meet Dick Gephardt so I actually took Jack's advice and it served me well.
- Blanche Touhill: Isn't that fascinating.
- Ellen Sherberg: Isn't that great?
- Blanche Touhill: Gephardt then was in politics for the rest of his life.

- Ellen Sherberg: Right. He was an alderman...
- Blanche Touhill: And he worked for Anheuser Busch as a lawyer, didn't he?
- Ellen Sherberg: Right, he was at Thompson-Coburn and he was working but he ran for Leonor Sullivan's seat. So, he was right, make friends your own age.
- Blanche Touhill: So your conversations with people did sort of guide you?
- Ellen Sherberg: They were terrific and they didn't pull any punches.
- Blanche Touhill: Why was the education beat so interesting?
- Ellen Sherberg: The education beat was interesting when I had it because I covered the very first teachers strike in St. Louis which, actually, I could tell you was on January 22nd or 23rd, 1973. It was the same day as Roe v. Wade and it was the same day that Lyndon Johnson died because I thought I was going to have my first page one byline and, in fact, it said, "St. Louis Teachers Strike, see Page 3" because these other truly momentous things happened. Also, it was the first deseg ruling in St. Louis and it was Berkeley and Ferguson-Florissant, that case and Kinloch. So there were a lot of things that happened [inaudible 24:39].
- Blanche Touhill: So you got around the whole area?
- Ellen Sherberg: I really did, and again, I met wonderful people. At that time, Dan Schlafly had just left the school board...
- Blanche Touhill: Senior?
- Ellen Sherberg: Senior, but took it on himself to sort of walk me through the politics of it and explain who was who and he turned out to be a life-long mentor and help. I mean, I was really lucky.
- Blanche Touhill: Do you think coming back to St. Louis helped your career or not?
- Ellen Sherberg: Well, it helped my life. I mean, I came back because there was this guy here so, you know, I never looked back. It didn't hurt it. I guess I always thought that I would end up...I had the Dow Jones fellowship so that was in Providence and so I think I thought I would go back to Providence and go to the Boston Globe because that was sort of a feederpaper. I always thought I would stay on the East Coast but, I'm happy for how things worked out.

- Blanche Touhill: How many years have you been married?
- Ellen Sherberg: Thirty-seven...it's thirty-eight now.
- Blanche Touhill: From the education beat, did you go to another beat or did you then move to the Business Journal?
- Ellen Sherberg: Actually, from the education beat, I went to KMOX Radio because, when Dunc Bauman said that I couldn't go to KMOX part-time, Bob Highland said, "Well, if I can't have you part-time, I'll take you full-time."
- Blanche Touhill: What did you do for Bob Highland?
- Ellen Sherberg: I was a reporter and I got to cover politics and got to cover conventions and, again, I really learned a lot. John Angeledes who had been the city desk editor at the Globe, went to KMOX and I was the one he took with him. I was really lucky. I really...I have to say this: Men have been very good to me in my life. I've had some really phenomenal men who have, I think, gone out of their way and now we use the word "mentor." I don't think they were mentoring; I just think they kind of brought me up. I guess today you might call them sponsors more but they didn't think of it that way. They didn't choose me. I always thought they just weren't going to let me make a fool of myself or of them.
- Blanche Touhill: Was it your writing skills or your reporting skills? What was it that you had that people took you and allowed you to really develop?
- Ellen Sherberg: I actually think, more than my writing skills or my reporting skills, it was my ability to connect the dots, with the understanding of politics and of the politics of systems and I would ask questions about that and these guys, many of them...and Al Fleischman, I guess, was the ultimate one of them for me. They loved telling stories and so you would say, "Well, tell me how that happened," not unlike what you are doing now, and they would tell you and...
- Blanche Touhill: And you wouldn't see the dots, how they are connected.
- Ellen Sherberg: Right, then you actually did learn that they were connected. You know, you had a sense of it. You knew there was one but they loved explaining it and that's why I think they liked me.
- Blanche Touhill: So you listened and you learned.

- Ellen Sherberg: And I cared, actually, I really did care. Like, other people would care about stamp collecting or the stars; I kind of liked the dots.
- Blanche Touhill: When you worked for KMOX and you went out on a beat, did you have all kinds of different subjects or did you specialize in politics?
- Ellen Sherberg: I got to do the politics. That was sort of the reward. I actually thought I was on sort of the abuse beat at KMOX so I did child abuse, spouse abuse, adult abuse. I was really into a lot of social systems issues.
- Blanche Touhill: When you're a reporter, do you go at 9:00 and come home at 5:00 or do you...how does that work?
- Ellen Sherberg: On a radio station at that time, you did not, which was ultimately what led me to leave. First of all, we had snow days and so on snow watch days, you got in at 2:00 or 3:00 or whenever they called you and...
- Blanche Touhill: How did you get there?
- Ellen Sherberg: Sometimes they sent a jeep. I mean, there was no looking back. I remember, one time they called. Jerry was in medical school at the time so when the phone rang, in the middle of the night, we were each sort of hoping it was for the other one and I remember one time they called and they said, at 3:00 in the morning, "Is Ellen there?" He's like, "Well, of course," and they said, "The snow is so heavy. Mr. Highland got stuck in his driveway" and I was like, okay. "So we're coming to get you. We'll be outside your house in 15 minutes." So, you know, you really...on radio, it was reactive and you went in when something happened, snow watch not being the most exciting but the more regular but if there was a bombing or a fire, you just answered the bell. It was fun.
- Blanche Touhill: Now, how did that fit in with your family?
- Ellen Sherberg: Well, it was fine until I had a little girl.
- Blanche Touhill: I know. But then, tell me, did you hire a full-time person or...
- Ellen Sherberg: Yes, we did. We did, we had a babysitter. I think now they're nannies but it was a babysitter and it was a woman who came to our house and helped take care of our daughter. My parents were extraordinarily important and a part of that relationship. But ultimately...and also, you

worked six days a week at KMOX...ultimately, I knew that I couldn't keep doing that and so I started looking for jobs.

Blanche Touhill: That would be more regular?

Ellen Sherberg: That would be more regular.

Blanche Touhill: And was Mr. Highland disappointed when you left?

Ellen Sherberg: He was furious. He was furious. He was really angry because I was leaving for nothing. Cause the Business Journal was a start-up so...

Blanche Touhill: Oh, it was just starting up?

Ellen Sherberg: It was just starting up so he just thought that was about as dumb as you could be and plus, he didn't like anybody to leave him anyway, plus, I was, like, really cheap labor. So, if he got rid of me, he might have to pay somebody a living wage.

Blanche Touhill: Didn't you have the Guild membership over there?

Ellen Sherberg: Yes, but it didn't mean anything. It was a very weak guild. Actually, at one point, Mr. Highland was...I should tell this story...Mr. Highland was negotiating with the union...with the guild and the way he negotiated was, he just said, "Nobody was in it," which meant that you weren't on the air. Well, the guild was responsible for my health insurance. So I had had a small procedure and I had called the insurance company to see if it was covered and it was. What they didn't tell me is that I wasn't covered and so the HR person called and she said, "We sort of have an issue here," and I said, "No, no, no, no, no, because I checked and I know this is covered," and she said, "Well, actually, you're not covered." I remember, I went into John Angeles' office, who was the DS director and I said, "I'm going to see the chief," which is whatever they call Highland. He said, "What do you mean, you want to see him?" I said, "I don't have health insurance. I'm going to go see him." So I sort of marched into his office and I said, "This is what just happened" and he said, "Well, you know, it's negotiations," da da da. I said, "This is illegal. This is, like, wrong. You can't do this," and I remember he said, "You're yelling." I said, "Yeah." He said, "Well, you have to stop yelling." I said, "I'm going to yell from here to Black Rock," Black Rock being CBS' headquarters. I said, "You can't do this." I said, "You can't do this to me and you can't do this

to everybody else in that newsroom. That's wrong. What if I was, like, run over by a car? You can't do this," and he was just like, "Brrr brrr brrr." I was like, "You can't do this." I went back to the office, to the newsroom and a couple hours later, Kathy called and she said, "You know, Ellen, it was just a paperwork mistake and you are covered" and I said, "Well, what about everybody else?" and she said, "I believe they're covered too." I said, "I think I'll come down and see," and we were all covered. Now, I don't think he did that because I was a girl; he just did that because he was negotiating with the union and he thought he could.

Blanche Touhill: That's a wonderful story.

Ellen Sherberg: I thought he would reach in his pocket and pay me for a minute. I was so angry.

Blanche Touhill: Well, I think with your husband in the medical field too, you saw trends all over the United States.

Ellen Sherberg: I was angry.

Blanche Touhill: So you made contact with the Business Journal. Did you go as a reporter?

Ellen Sherberg: I did. Actually, the reason I ended up at the Business Journal was because Carol Vitter and I are very close friends and Mark was starting the paper and Mark said, "How would you like to be the editor of the Business Journal?" I said, "I don't care anything about business...I don't know anything about business and I don't care anything about business," and he said, "Then please don't do this. Do you have any ideas?" and I gave him Don Keogh's name and Don, indeed, became the first editor of the Business Journal and Don called me and said, "You got me into this. You ought to come here" and I said, "I don't think you got the memo. I don't know anything about business and I don't care" and he said, "Don't worry about it. You won't have to cover business. You can just keep covering politics." I'm like, "Okay," and he said, "This is the best thing I've learned about business." He didn't know a whole lot either. He said, "It's 9:00 to 5:00, Monday through Friday." I said, "I'm in." So I went there and now I do care about business a lot.

Blanche Touhill: Yes, you do. Well, how many years have you spent at the Business Journal?

Ellen Sherberg: Well, I've been there 34 years, almost 34...33.

Blanche Touhill: Isn't that wonderful!

Ellen Sherberg: It has been for me.

Blanche Touhill: And you really shaped it.

Ellen Sherberg: Well, it shaped me. I've been lucky.

Blanche Touhill: So when you went, you worked on politics?

Ellen Sherberg: Well, for a minute, it was like...for a second, I worked on politics but then they assigned me to cover business. I knew nothing. I made terrible mistakes. We all made terrible mistakes but this has always been a company that let me learn from my mistakes. Somebody was going to.

Blanche Touhill: Why did Mark Vitter think there was a need for a Business Journal?

Ellen Sherberg: Actually, because Mark's partner was Andy Newman. Andy at that time was running Edison...or he wasn't running it yet and he had gone to Houston and he brought back this Houston Business Journal which was inches thick just filled with real estate ads and information and Mark said...Mark had always wanted to get involved in publishing...but he felt that in St. Louis, they were covering utilities and they were covering publicly held companies but nobody was covering private companies, real estate, really the business and that was his vision and actually, it's very much still our vision.

Blanche Touhill: So you went to work and they were just putting together a staff...

Ellen Sherberg: Oh, my gosh.

Blanche Touhill: And it was in Belleville? No...

Ellen Sherberg: No, it was in Mansion House, actually.

Blanche Touhill: In the Mansion House, okay.

Ellen Sherberg: It was in Mansion House.

Blanche Touhill: You were worried that it wouldn't make it?

Ellen Sherberg: I wasn't smart enough to be that worried. I was just excited it was 9:00 to 5:00. It never dawned on me that it might not make it.

Blanche Touhill: So you went in and how many years did it take before you became the publisher?

Ellen Sherberg: I became the publisher in 1990 so it took 10 years.

Blanche Touhill: But you knew everything by then?

Ellen Sherberg: Well, no, I didn't. Actually, I still don't know hardly anything. I didn't but my career's been shaped by other people leaving and opening up either an opportunity or a gap or whatever. I didn't actually have a focus.

Blanche Touhill: So you were the Renaissance Woman?

Ellen Sherberg: You know, I don't think so. I just think I...I don't know, I just sort of take it on.

Blanche Touhill: Well, talk about being publisher.

Ellen Sherberg: It's a great job. If you have to work, it's a great gig.

Blanche Touhill: Did you try to focus on any particular business or did you follow trends or...

Ellen Sherberg: Actually, it's changed a great deal because, really...so I say this, because I say it to everybody else so I should say it to you: really, I just modeled after you. So when you started making sure that when people said Washington University, St. Louis University and UMSL, that's what I did.

Blanche Touhill: So you said Post Dispatch, Globe Democrat and...

Ellen Sherberg: ...and the Business Journal, and I just would show up and they never showed up, as you know. So truly, that was it.

Blanche Touhill: And so Business began to realize that you were the...

Ellen Sherberg: I was showing up.

Blanche Touhill: You were the Journal...if they wanted to get into the newspaper in a positive way, you and your reporters had to understand what they were doing?

Ellen Sherberg: Right, and again, and I was there and I was at the United Way and I was at RCGA and I was at Arts and Education Council and I was giving them free ads and supporting all this stuff and I was showing up, mainly and

that was the deal, as you know better than anybody else, because, you know, Blanche, really, you were the only woman I could look toward, so I did, and I just copied it.

Blanche Touhill: Well, I was copying you so it was a mutual...

Ellen Sherberg: But you know what I mean.

Blanche Touhill: Yeah, I do know, I do know exactly, yes.

Ellen Sherberg: So, you created a parity where there was none and every time they would say it, I would kind of laugh, I'd go "Okay, whatever you think."

Blanche Touhill: How did you get to the idea of honoring women?

Ellen Sherberg: You know, a lot of what I did was based on what the Globe Democrat used to do and when the Globe went out of business...again, really, I am either...I think what they call it now is a second adapter, but then it was just sort of, I'd just copy and so the Globe had those Women of Achievement. Well, we just did The Most Influential Women in Business. The Globe had legislative awards. We have legislative awards. They gave them silver plates. We give them silver-plated silver plates. Yeah, we just...and a lot of that was Mr. Bauman's predecessor...Dick...it will come to me...and he really had a sense of having the newspaper as part of the community. It was a very different point of view than certainly the Post Dispatch, which was more, either aloof or segmented, whatever word you want to use, but felt that it had to not be part of the community but, rather, observe...

Blanche Touhill: National and international...

Ellen Sherberg: Right. So, that was their MO and ours was different. We really saw this. I've always seen it as a community newspaper, except that instead of covering Belleville or Edwardsville or Ladue, we cover the business community and it's worked.

Blanche Touhill: What's your view of the business community today, since we lost so many Fortune 500 companies?

Ellen Sherberg: Well, I think that...and I think David Kemper actually has done this...if you look at the companies we have now, they're worth more than the ones that we lost.

Blanche Touhill: Really?

Ellen Sherberg: Yes, and of course, Express Scripts being number one on that list but AT&T has more people here than they used to have. Purina has done phenomenally. I think the business community is okay. What we don't have, I think, is strong political leadership that adheres to the business community or allows the business community to grow and while many people will look to the tax structure in New York or California and call it anti-business, I would say that if you look at New York and California, they're very good to business. There are certainly regulations...or Chicago, which, of course, wooed Boeing. And so what we do here is say that we're pro-business but we don't feed it enough and so it doesn't grow and the problem we have in St. Louis right now is a shrinking base. When the lead in today's Post Dispatch is, we're losing at a slower rate, that's not good.

Blanche Touhill: 29,000 to 300 or something...

Ellen Sherberg: Right, that's not good, 2,900, I think, to 3...

Blanche Touhill: Oh, 2,900, I'm sorry, you're right.

Ellen Sherberg: But we're losing at a slower rate. That's not good.

Blanche Touhill: Do you read all the newspapers?

Ellen Sherberg: I read a lot, some days more than others and some papers more than others.

Blanche Touhill: And I'm sure you select across the United States?

Ellen Sherberg: I do.

Blanche Touhill: What do you think is going to be the future? Are we just going to have two or three national and then other newspapers will be local? How is that...will newspapers survive?

Ellen Sherberg: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: They will?

Ellen Sherberg: Newspapers will survive. They may look different but they will survive and, yeah, they may go back to their own future of just being sort of

green sheets...that's how they started off...for the neighborhood. I think we will have only a couple of national newspapers.

Blanche Touhill: Well, somebody told me the other day that the University of Missouri-Columbia's Journalism School was thinking of changing its name to something like Media Studies.

Ellen Sherberg: I wouldn't be surprised, although I think they're still doing pretty well.

Blanche Touhill: Yeah, so I'm sure they are. Does Columbia University ever send out anything to its graduates on things like that?

Ellen Sherberg: I think they're actually thinking about lengthening their program. Their program is only a year and so they're now thinking they're not really touching their students enough. So they were talking about going to a two-year program. I don't know if that happened or not. Yes, but Columbia was...it had been a very traditional program run by former journalists so it would be hard to put it on the cutting edge of change and I think they were caught off guard by the digital wave.

Blanche Touhill: Yes. Well, it's fascinating how America has the communication highway...

Ellen Sherberg: Right.

Blanche Touhill: ...and that it has changed. It has totally changed and it's affected politics.

Ellen Sherberg: It's affected everything.

Blanche Touhill: Yes, it's affected everything, yeah. Let me talk about, if you had been born 50 years earlier, what do you think you would be doing?

Ellen Sherberg: I think I would have been a suffragette and somehow gotten involved...

Blanche Touhill: And writing still?

Ellen Sherberg: ...in women's rights and writing. You know, I actually think I probably would have done sort of the same thing.

Blanche Touhill: But you might not have been hired by a newspaper.

Ellen Sherberg: Well, there were a few.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, were there a few?

Ellen Sherberg: Yeah, there were a few.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, so you think there was...

Ellen Sherberg: Yeah, I think there was.

Blanche Touhill: There was a possibility?

Ellen Sherberg: Right.

Blanche Touhill: Would you have become publisher?

Ellen Sherberg: Probably not, but I would have been very happy, being a reporter my whole life.

Blanche Touhill: Yes. That is what you are naturally but you had this other opportunity so you took it.

Ellen Sherberg: Right.

Blanche Touhill: Did you get some award that you really treasure or some...

Ellen Sherberg: No. I mean, I've been very fortunate.

Blanche Touhill: You've gotten awards but there's not one or two that stick out?

Ellen Sherberg: You know, I just don't like that stuff. I think reporters, by their nature, are much more internally judged and motivated and, if anything, are probably cynical of anybody who says anything nice about them, not nearly as gracious or appreciative as we ought to be.

Blanche Touhill: [Inaudible 48:18] writers?

Ellen Sherberg: You know, Nora Ephron...

Blanche Touhill: And thinkers.

Ellen Sherberg: Nora Ephron's...one of her earliest essays was called...and then the collection of her books...was called "Wallflower at the Orgy" and I really think that most of us would much rather be...

Blanche Touhill: Observers?

Ellen Sherberg: Yes, pressed up against that wall, watching somebody else.

Blanche Touhill: I want to ask about...did you go to the conventions and the inaugurations?

Ellen Sherberg: I did. I went to all of those things.

Blanche Touhill: And how was that, exciting?

Ellen Sherberg: I thought they were very exciting. I think there's something about being where you think history is being made that...you know, that is why people become journalists; I think you think it matters.

Blanche Touhill: And do women journalists connect with other women journalists all over the country?

Ellen Sherberg: Sometimes, not necessarily, and also, business journals are a little bit off the beaten path.

Blanche Touhill: Yeah. What is your circulation now?

Ellen Sherberg: I think our paid circulation is about 17,000.

Blanche Touhill: That's wonderful.

Ellen Sherberg: It's not bad.

Blanche Touhill: And is it in this region predominantly?

Ellen Sherberg: Almost all in this region.

Blanche Touhill: How many business journals are there in the United States?

Ellen Sherberg: There are hundreds. Our company has 40 newspapers and 3 other digital sites.

Blanche Touhill: Forty newspapers and additional sites.

Ellen Sherberg: Digital.

Blanche Touhill: Does Mark still own it or...

Ellen Sherberg: Mark owns 20% of it.

Blanche Touhill: So he kept at it?

Ellen Sherberg: Yes, he did, thankfully.

Blanche Touhill: Was he initially a reporter or anything?

Ellen Sherberg: No.

Blanche Touhill: He was a businessman?

Ellen Sherberg: He's always been a businessman. He's always been interested, fascinated, actually, by media.

Blanche Touhill: Well, I'm going to change the subject a bit but why do you like the International Women's Forum or dislike it?

Ellen Sherberg: You know, I like being around smart people and smart women, it's even better.

Blanche Touhill: Do you have time for other charities and things like that?

Ellen Sherberg: I'm on the board of Planned Parenthood.

Blanche Touhill: And they certainly have had an interesting year or two.

Ellen Sherberg: Right, right, they have. I'm probably not their most devoted board member but I support them and...

Blanche Touhill: And this is the national board?

Ellen Sherberg: No, local. I've always been involved with the United Way and with the Women's Leadership Initiative there.

Blanche Touhill: Yes, yes, I remember when the Women's Leadership was created.

Ellen Sherberg: Right. You were there.

Blanche Touhill: I was there, yes, and I can't think of the woman's name that did it.

Ellen Sherberg: Well...

Blanche Touhill: You can't remember it either.

Ellen Sherberg: I can see her...

Blanche Touhill: I can see her too.

Ellen Sherberg: Charmaine Chapman.

Blanche Touhill: That's it, Charmaine Chapman.

Ellen Sherberg: Right. You know, it's raised more than 60 million dollars now.

Blanche Touhill: You know, it was genius. It was just genius and when I would go to those meetings of the women and they would talk about contributing, I thought, did she get that idea from someplace else or did she...

Ellen Sherberg: Actually, she got it from me.

Blanche Touhill: From you? When it was announced, I thought to myself, it's great and I don't think the men realized how important it was going to be.

Ellen Sherberg: Oh, they had no clue. They like it a lot now.

Blanche Touhill: I bet they do.

Ellen Sherberg: But, you know, really, it was interesting and I got it from Don Suggs.

Blanche Touhill: Really?

Ellen Sherberg: Yes, because he started the African American Leadership Society and I remember hearing him speak about it and he talked about how important it was for society at large to realize that African Americans were...and these were his words..."on both sides of the giving dollar" and...

Blanche Touhill: That's a wonderful phrase.

Ellen Sherberg: And you could see in the room, people trying to figure out who they knew who could give \$1,000 and you could almost see them counting on their fingers and I left that meeting and I called Charmaine and I said, "We can do that too. We should do that too."

Blanche Touhill: I think, as a matter of fact, you were in the room when I was invited to join them.

Ellen Sherberg: I think I was, yeah.

Blanche Touhill: There are many brilliant things that people have done but I just thought, I don't think the male population will necessarily understand what they have done here. They have really tapped a source which had never been tapped for the United Way.

Ellen Sherberg: And now everybody has a women's auxil...I mean, it was really the old women's auxiliary but on steroids, you know?

Blanche Touhill: Oh, yes. Well, women with money.

Ellen Sherberg: Right, but you know, Blanche, the other side of it was, until that started, women didn't know how to sit at the table with their money, how to bring their money. They brought their time; they brought their husband's money; their company's money. The power of bringing your own money...

Blanche Touhill: That you control.

Ellen Sherberg: And asking others for it and the ability to raise money. It was as though...I always thought there was a book that we didn't get in terms of how to be leaders and how to be respected and a lot of it was around women and money and women in philanthropy and we taught them that. I mean, we would bring men in to talk to them about how important it was and how to ask.

Blanche Touhill: Did the United Way board approve the idea?

Ellen Sherberg: I think she just did it.

Blanche Touhill: She just did it. It was an executive decision?

Ellen Sherberg: Right. They would approve it now.

Blanche Touhill: Yes, they would approve it now; yes, you're right. Is there something we've missed along the way here?

Ellen Sherberg: I just think how lucky I've been.

Blanche Touhill: I know your mother is still alive, isn't she?

Ellen Sherberg: No, she passed away a couple years ago.

Blanche Touhill: I bet that your mother and father were proud of you?

Ellen Sherberg: My mother and father were always proud of us.

Blanche Touhill: And what happened to your brother?

Ellen Sherberg: He's in Florida. He's a businessman there, doing well.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, he went into business?

Ellen Sherberg: He did, yes.

Blanche Touhill: So he followed his father into this...

Ellen Sherberg: Yes, he did.

Blanche Touhill: Into small business?

Ellen Sherberg: Right, right, that's exactly right.

Blanche Touhill: That probably grew.

Ellen Sherberg: Right.

Blanche Touhill: And is Jerry proud of you?

Ellen Sherberg: You know, I think Jerry's proud of me. I think, you know, he would be happy if I didn't have a bad sense of direction and, you know. You know, Jerry grounds me.

Blanche Touhill: Yeah, yeah.

Ellen Sherberg: And certainly, I wouldn't be who I was without him.

Blanche Touhill: Well, it is a successful marriage and you both had careers and you had a family and you've lived in St. Louis for all those years.

Ellen Sherberg: Right, right. You know what pleases me most, though, is that our daughter is in business and she works and so, you'd like to think it wouldn't matter what she did but that she works outside her home and has two kids pleases me.

Blanche Touhill: Yeah.

Ellen Sherberg: It pleases me because I think we didn't scar her so badly that she wouldn't go that way.

Blanche Touhill: Well, I know you always made an attempt to be home for dinner.

Ellen Sherberg: Absolutely.

Blanche Touhill: And did your husband do the same thing?

Ellen Sherberg: You know, when he could. He was a pediatrician, he is, so his schedule was a little less predictable than mine, yes. I had some rules around that.

Blanche Touhill: What other rule did you have?

Ellen Sherberg: No nights, no weekends. People would say things like, "Oh, would you come to dinner here?"; "Would you come to this program?" and I would say, "Well, your speaker is going to have to be much more insightful and sensitive than our daughter and much funnier than our son, because that's really who I'm planning to have dinner with tonight. If he's that good, I'm in."

Blanche Touhill: Well, I knew that you had that rule and that you really made an effort to be home for dinnertime.

Ellen Sherberg: Right, I did.

Blanche Touhill: And eat together and, I assume, have discussions.

Ellen Sherberg: Right, sort of, yeah.

Blanche Touhill: Is your daughter a writer?

Ellen Sherberg: No, she writes pretty well. She does a lot of small business consulting. She was in not-for-profits and now does strategic work for small businesses and small non-profits.

Blanche Touhill: Is there going to be another project or are you staying with the Business Journal?

Ellen Sherberg: I know where I am.

Blanche Touhill: How many staff do you have there?

Ellen Sherberg: About 30.

Blanche Touhill: And did Duncan Bauman live long enough to see you as the head of the Business Journal?

Ellen Sherberg: He did and he was very proud of me, which was sort of stunning, but he said that on numerous occasions.

Blanche Touhill: Wonderful.

Ellen Sherberg: Who knew?

Blanche Touhill: Yes, who knew? Well, he was a man of another time.

Ellen Sherberg: Yes, you know, with a very, very, very strong wife, Mrs. Bauman, Nora. She was all over it.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, I did not know that.

Ellen Sherberg: Yes, he was of a different time.

Blanche Touhill: Yes.

Ellen Sherberg: But that worked for him.

Blanche Touhill: Yes, that worked for him, yes.

Ellen Sherberg: And he understood how to use that paper...I mean, again, looking back, working for Dunc Bauman and for Bob Highland was a great education. It wasn't always a great workplace but it was a great education.

Blanche Touhill: Well, they were both...I think of Highland as more of a public figure in many ways than Duncan Bowman.

Ellen Sherberg: Yeah, they were both very political and very shrewd.

Blanche Touhill: Yes.

Ellen Sherberg: And they used their power bases well and so, again, you could learn a lot by watching. You might not want to emulate it but you at least understood it.

Blanche Touhill: Yes. What other events did you go to that you really enjoyed, like the political conventions?

Ellen Sherberg: I don't know. I kind of like them all. Once there, it was fun, right.

Blanche Touhill: And you read every paper?

Ellen Sherberg: Every business journal...

Blanche Touhill: Yes.

Ellen Sherberg: ...that we publish? Absolutely.

Blanche Touhill: Before it goes out?

Ellen Sherberg: No.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, okay, all right. So you have faith in your reporters that you have?

Ellen Sherberg: Well, you have to.

Blanche Touhill: Yeah, because you don't have that time but the next day you read it?

Ellen Sherberg: Right.

Blanche Touhill: And then you get the phone call?

Ellen Sherberg: Right, I do.

Blanche Touhill: Do you get more phone calls than the reporters?

Ellen Sherberg: I get different phone calls than the reporters.

Blanche Touhill: As you look back over your life, did you find the right role for you in a professional world?

Ellen Sherberg: I think I have. I think, when I was in junior high school and I joined the school paper and I learned that you could get out of class early and walk down the hall and find out what was going on, that I knew that this was what I wanted to do and I get to still do it.