

An Interview with
Christine Belden

at *The Historical Society of Missouri* St. Louis
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Oral History Program

The State Historical Society of Missouri

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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.

THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MISSOURI-ST. LOUIS
WOMEN AS CHANGE AGENTS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

29 DECEMBER 2014

CHRISTINE BELDEN INTERVIEWED BY DR. BLANCHE M. TOUHILL

Christine Belden: My name is Christine Belden.

Blanche Touhill: Would you talk a little bit about your youth and your parents and if you have siblings or grandparents or cousins or playmates, who among that family encouraged you to go to college or go on to school or said to you, "Christine, you have really ability in a certain talent and what are you going to do with that talent?" and then talk a little about your elementary school and your high school. Were you a leader in any of those situations? Did a teacher say to you, "You really have a lot of talent" or "You really have an ability to write" or "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Who encouraged you, that's what I'm really after.

Christine Belden: Okay. I grew up in University City when I was very young. I moved away for high school but in my early years, I lived there. The first person in my life I remember encouraging me was my 4th grade teacher, Winesta Russell and she was the kind of person who, when we would be in class, if you were talking too much...there was another girl who was a very good friend of mine and we were always talking too much and she just moved us to the side of the class and put us together in our own little world and we did all of our work together and that year that I was in her class, my parents were getting divorced and she took me to the faculty lounge and we had a long conversation and she basically said, "Everything's going to be fine. This happens. Just concentrate on your family and friends and school and you can do and be whatever you want to be," and I believed it because I think that she was very sincere about it and she had had some similar experiences, I think, and she shared some of that very personal stuff with us, and I think she actually ended up being the superintendent of the University City School District later.

Blanche Touhill: How wonderful.

Christine Belden: Yeah, and I kept in touch with her for a very long time. I was about nine at

Christine Belden 12-29-2014

that time and I kept in touch with her until I was thirty, I think, and then we sort of lost touch after that. But she was probably the most encouraging person outside of my family and I would say, in my family, it was probably my mother but my mother did it in a very sort of indirect way. She sort of made it seem like it was your decision even though, looking back, you can tell she was sort of guiding it a little bit. We did ballet and horseback riding and then if it was something you didn't really like, she'd say, "Well, why don't you try this or do that" but my mother

also, by example, because she was a very strong, independent person. She had her own business and I sort of watched her as a young girl struggle with that and her family and build it and the support she had from her friends. But I think by example was probably the strongest thing. I went to boarding school in high school so it was kind of a different experience. It was in a different state and I think the way I dealt with it mostly was...which was unusual for me at the time because I think I didn't really care much about academics, but I did care about it then because I think I realized that being educated was powerful and that you had a better chance of success in life if you did well in school. As a young teenager, I didn't care. I was kind of bad and a little bit of a juvenile delinquent, didn't go to school, but when I got there, I changed and decided that that was really important.

Blanche Touhill: Did you like the school?

Christine Belden: Yes and no. The school, it's a...how do I explain it...the school was for kids who not really were troubled but a lot of kids that went there had problems with their families or came from broken homes but it was a Baptist school. It was run by a religious guy who had worked in Iran so there were also a lot of kids that escaped the Shaw that came there. So it was this very strange mix of, like, some troubled teens and then political asylum folks but the school was very, very strictly religious and I wasn't raised that way. But the people who were running the day-to-day infrastructure, not really the teachers, but the day-to-day infrastructures were not very educated and sort of had this really blind faith and I started to question that, like, "Well, you say this but you act like this," or "You say that somebody has to be baptized to go to Heaven but how old is it? One year old? Two years old? Three years old?" and I got in a lot of trouble for that actually and I had to write a lot of papers and got a lot of detention so it became sort of this rebellion but through academics as opposed to rebellion through being bad.

Blanche Touhill: How were the teachers?

Christine Belden: Some of them were good and others were not and there were some that were so bad that you just...because it was a private school so they didn't really have to be certified and it was all based around religion and so, there are just certain things that they're teaching you and you're thinking, this doesn't make any sense. So I spent a lot of time reading things on my

own and I gravitated towards the teachers who were certified and educated and they gave us a lot of out of classroom stuff to read and lots of music to listen to and all different things. So I ended up learning unique things I never would have learned in a standard school but I think in a weird way it drove me to go to college and be educated and be smart and be aware of the world because there were a lot of people there that weren't very smart.

Blanche Touhill: How were the Iranian students?

Christine Belden: Well, there were a few different paths, yeah, so there was a guy called Ike Chandertot. He was named after Dwight D. Eisenhower because his dad was friends with Eisenhower and he was of Thai descent but somehow, through Iran, very sweet, very smart, very soft spoken. There was another guy who...I can't remember his last name now, but his first name was Farhad and he was very angry. They were all teenagers too, remember, but did not like women, was very upset because he was a very traditional Middle Eastern man, was very upset that people didn't have covered heads or that women spoke their minds and so I think, for him, it was very difficult to be there and, of course because we were teenagers and didn't really know better, we'd do anything we could to wind him up, which probably wasn't very nice in hindsight. But it was very interesting to be around all of those different kinds of people because, coming from St. Louis, I'd never met anyone like that before. So it was very interesting, but for the most part, I think it was pleasant, I would say, except for Farhad.

Blanche Touhill: Did you make friends there?

Christine Belden: Yeah, I had a lot of friends there. I mean, in some ways you were oppressed because you were in this boarding school that had very strict rules because the boarding school was in the South, there were different rules for boys than there were for girls, which, being the daughter of my mother, was a very big problem for me. Boys were allowed to leave the campus; girls could not; girls couldn't go anywhere unchaperoned. Boys could smoke and girls could not and so I had lots of social issues with those kinds of things. But, yeah, you made friends. You lived in a dorm so you had roommates. You had to wash your own clothes. You had to do chores at the school, but it wasn't a boarding school where everyone was

wearing suits and ties and it was prim and proper. It wasn't like that. But it was a very interesting experience.

Blanche Touhill: Do you have any friends from those days?

Christine Belden: Not anymore. I think I probably lost touch with the last ones when I was around late 20's because people from all over the country, so it wasn't like you would...I've never lived in Kentucky so there weren't...and they didn't have class reunions, that you could just sort of go back each year if you wanted to to visit and I did it once or twice and then I didn't do it again after that. So, no, most of those folks I lost touch with them.

Blanche Touhill: If you just looked at yourself as you were growing up, did you like music?

Christine Belden: I loved music. I loved music from a very early age. I had a radio in my room from the age of five or six years old. I would make my bed every Saturday. My mom would give me a dollar and she would drive me to the record store and I would buy a 45. I had a record player and I did it my entire life and when I decided to go to college, I decided I was going to study medicine and I wanted to become a doctor and go to Africa and give people shots. I went through the whole pre-med: biology, anatomy, medical ethics and I got to the real scientific parts, like physics and chemistry and I couldn't do it. So I was two-and-a-half years in and I called her and I said, "I don't know what to do," and I was like, "No matter how hard I try, I genuinely don't understand this. I can get a tutor. They can try to explain the torque pressure of a bridge. It doesn't mean anything to me. I can't grasp it." All of the other kinds of scientific things like botany and anatomy I could understand but the real maths part, I didn't get it and I was 20 years old and she said, "I think you should..."...I was in Kentucky because I actually went to school there for a couple years...

Blanche Touhill: Where did you go?

Christine Belden: I went to a college in Jackson, Kentucky that was just, like, a...

Blanche Touhill: ...community college?

Christine Belden: Yeah, community college...and she said, "I think you should come home. I have an idea" and I was like, okay, and so I came home to visit her and she said, "I think you should go into music" and I said, "Don't you think

I'm a little old to be a rock star?" and she said, "I didn't mean performing; I mean business" and I was like, "I don't know what that is." So we flew to Los Angeles, we went to Capitol Records, she knew someone who worked there. We walked through the whole building, we walked into the studios, they explained what the record business was and talked to a couple people and I was like, "Well, what do I do?" and the guy said, "Go to school and study art and communications and come back." So I went to Mizzou and I studied art and communications and I graduated and I did some things there, like booking artists to come through the school and do big performances.

Blanche Touhill: You did and you liked it?

Christine Belden: I loved it; it was great. We had Randy Travis play, big shows like 20,000 people there and we sort of did all of the arranging, brought the artists in and it was all kinds of music: rock music; country music; hip-hop music; electronic music, whatever it was, because it had to represent the student body. So I did that when I was there and I also worked as a production person in a club that had artists that came through. Then I graduated and I decided I still wasn't ready so I moved to Chicago and I went to Columbia College there and studied media management and music business which kind of taught you about...

Blanche Touhill: Wait a minute...media management...

Christine Belden: Yes, and music business, specifically and it sort of taught you about music publishing and how records are made and what managers do and it was more specific.

Blanche Touhill: Was it a year, two years?

Christine Belden: It was two years because I had a Bachelor from Mizzou.

Blanche Touhill: And they took your undergraduate's work?

Christine Belden: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: The first two years anyway, and then you really got another major?

Christine Belden: Correct, exactly. So I have two Bachelor's, one in that specific media business, music business/media management, and one in just arts and communications from Mizzou and while I was in Chicago, I wanted to

work at a company called Wax Trax Records which was a very famous record store in Chicago that was also a record label. They hadn't hired anybody in seven years and I managed to get a job there. So I did that while I was in school because I paid for it because it was a second degree and my mom sort of helped me with other things. Then I decided that I had to move to Los Angeles or New York because there really wasn't enough music business...

Blanche Touhill: Okay, now stop. What is Columbia College? Where is Columbia College?

Christine Belden: Columbia College is in downtown Chicago. It has a film school, it has a music school. Sherry Lansing, who actually was the president of Paramount Pictures went to Columbia College and it has more of these specific degrees because the bigger universities, it's a broad...you know, here's an arts degree or a communications degree, but this was a music business degree taught by people who had actually worked in the music business.

Blanche Touhill: Now, how did your mother decide that that's what you would want to do?

Christine Belden: Because she knew that I had loved music my whole life. I never put the two together, ever. I thought everyone loved music and to her, I guess, it was very simple. She was like, "This is something that you've done since you were five years old. It's been consistent..." ...

Blanche Touhill: With your radio?

Christine Belden: Yeah, with my radio and my record player and I always would go see live shows and I was always getting the concert tickets and all that kind of stuff and I had done it my entire life and she said, "I think you should try to do that as a career," which I didn't even know existed. I mean, I had never thought, how do you buy records in a store? Who's responsible for that? It had never crossed my mind, ever. She just said, "Let's just go see some people and talk to them" and I thought, well, that's cool.

Blanche Touhill: Now go back: When did you decide to become a doctor, when you were in high school?

Christine Belden: Yeah, I think so. I think that I thought that it was an important thing to do and I never wanted to be a doctor, like, in a hospital. I wanted to be a doctor that went and helped people.

Blanche Touhill: Overseas particularly?

Christine Belden: Yeah, and I haven't thought about it in so long. I'm not really sure when and where it started. It did start in high school and it was part of that academic rebellion, like, what's something that I could really do that would make a difference, and it could possibly have to do with some of the immigrant folks that we went to school with.

Blanche Touhill: Okay. Oh, could be.

Christine Belden: You know, because they were all seeking asylum in the States and maybe it was influenced by that. I'd never really thought about that until now but I'm sure that had something to do with it.

Blanche Touhill: All right. So you're in Chicago and you say to yourself, "I've got to go to LA." Now why do you have to go to LA?

Christine Belden: Because the music business really only exists, even today, in Los Angeles and New York. That's where the big record companies are...and Nashville, and at this time, Nashville had a much smaller music scene.

Blanche Touhill: Does Nashville just do country music or does it do all music?

Christine Belden: No, it does all music, but it's changed significantly in the last 10 years. When I was deciding, it was predominantly country music but that's not the case now, not at all, it's not the case. Nashville is the fastest growing music city in America, maybe in the world. But Chicago is not one of those places. You could do it but on a very small scale.

Blanche Touhill: So you had to go to LA...

Christine Belden: ...or New York, yeah, and I didn't want to be poor in New York because it's too cold. So I decided to go to LA so I just packed up all my stuff and put it in a U-Haul and drove out there.

Blanche Touhill: Did you go back to Capitol Records?

Christine Belden: I did. That was my first job. I got a job there.

Blanche Touhill: And you did get a job.

Christine Belden: I did.

Blanche Touhill: Did you go back to the people that you saw before?

Christine Belden: No, because they weren't there anymore. It was just ironic.

Blanche Touhill: Serendipitous.

Christine Belden: Yes. When I was in Chicago and I decided that I was going to move to Los Angeles...this was 1995...I was watching the Grammys that year and there was a very successful artist that year called Alanis Morissette who had done this amazing album about women and it just struck a chord and it was very popular throughout the world and there was a guy called Glen Ballard who produced that record and he won five Grammys on television that night, and record producers are not famous people. You just saw them on TV because he won all these Grammys. I moved to Los Angeles and I had a band come out from Chicago and they needed somewhere to stay and they all slept on the floor of my apartment because I knew them and they were meeting with record company people and they were meeting with these guys who were starting a label in the Capitol Records Building and they said, "Oh, you should come and meet them" so I said, "Oh, fine, all right." So I went and met these guys and we just had some music conversations, dinner, drinks, whatever and the guy called me the next day and said, "You know, I've just started this label with Glen Ballard" and I said, "The record producer?" and he said, "Yeah, it's at Capitol, it's brand new. It's a month old. We're just setting it up here. Would you come and meet him?" and I said, "Yeah, I would." And so I went and had lunch with him and they hired me and I started as an assistant and I worked my way up to a senior A&R person. And so my job there was, we went out and found artists and then we developed them, helped them find record producers, helped them make records, photographers for art, the whole thing, and you developed their career from nuts to bolts. Then they go out on the road and they tour and they promote the records. So I did that for...well, five years at Capitol Records and then I went to Island Records after that for two.

Blanche Touhill: And what was Island Records?

Christine Belden: Island Records was our little tiny label that was part of Capitol moved to Island so we switched record labels and it was kind of the same thing. We did the same thing. You're just going out and finding bands and developing artists. It's the greatest job in the world. It's so much fun. It's so creative. It's so gratifying but towards the time that we went to Island Records, the music business was starting to decline. That's when CDs were coming and there was a lot of piracy and Napster and, for me, the internal side of the business got very toxic and people were very negative and lots of people were getting fired and moving to different labels and then all those people would get fired and move to different labels. And I found it very stifling and I didn't want to do it anymore. And it's the only thing I'd ever wanted to do and I'd been doing it for so long that I wasn't sure what to do next. One of my coworkers and I met a British band that were traveling in the US and they were looking for some help and so we talked to Glen, our producer who was the head of our label, and we did a little developing with them and we got them signed to a separate record label, not ours, someone else's and I ended up going out with them and I went on tour with them and I went all over Europe and I went to the UK and sort of developed them, like, on the road with them as opposed to being the business person. I sort of became a member of the band who does all the business. I was thinking, oh, what am I going to do when this is over, and we flew to Vancouver to go onto a television set because they were going to perform on camera for this TV show and as soon as we walked on the TV set, I was like, oh, this is cool, TV and music. Now, this is something that I could do. When we finished that record cycle, I married the singer from the band who I'm still married to today, 10 years later, and the agency that booked his tour needed somebody in film and television music which is an agency called CAA and I ended up working there and I worked there for eight years. I just left at the end of last year to start a new business, another record company. So I completely changed careers, from making records to working in film and television music and that's finding music for film and TV projects.

Blanche Touhill: How do you find music?

Christine Belden: Well, to find music for recording is different. That's trying to find artists when they're just emerging and it's different with the internet. When I was doing it, you would go to nightclubs, you would fly around the country, you would hear things from different radio stations about local

artists and you'd fly out and go see them, and, you know, they're still under developed so there are certain elements that have to be there that you have to recognize: are their songs good; are they good performers; are they charismatic enough to be performers that people will gravitate to. It's kind of like all of the TV shows now, like, The Voice and American Idol. It's kind of like that on the road. That's sort of what we did 15 years ago. For film & Television...

Blanche Touhill: But now that's changing, you're saying?

Christine Belden: Oh, yeah, it's totally different, well, because of the internet, it's completely different.

Blanche Touhill: Why is it different?

Christine Belden: A, because of technology, anyone can make records. In the 1970's, it cost \$200,000 to record an album and now you can make one in your living room for five and it'll sound...

Blanche Touhill: For \$5,000?

Christine Belden: Yeah, and it will sound just as good as the ones from back then.

Blanche Touhill: And then how do you get it out to the public?

Christine Belden: Different ways. Most of it comes from performing or Facebook pages or those kinds of things. I'll give you an example. There's an artist called Owl City and Owl City is a guy called Adam and Adam was making music in his basement and putting this music on the internet for sale and somehow people started to discover it and it sort of started to snowball and Adam worked at a Coca Cola factory in Milwaukee and when it gets to a certain level, it blips on the record company radars and they see it and then they start tracking and try to find who the artist is. And so it had reached this level where kids were buying this music directly from him and the story is, his accountant came to his parents' house and he was in his parents' basement and they said, "Adam needs to quit his job because the record companies want to sign him" and the parents said, "You know, he's got a good job at the Coca Cola plant. We don't think he should do this" and they said, "He's making \$20,000 a month selling records. He can quit his job," and he's now a very famous recording artist. He was signed to RCA and they went in and made a record with him and he's traveled all over

the world and he's had an amazing career. But it was just from that. And there's a lot of stories of that, of people sort of doing that. I mean, it's a new age, for sure, but the business of music is not healthy. People don't buy music. They listen to it on the internet. They can make their own playlists from Spotify. So the new question is, how do you make music profitable for the artists because they're the ones who always suffer?

Blanche Touhill: How do you do it?

Christine Belden: I don't know the answer to that, to be honest. I mean, I think you have to educate people that music is intellectual property and that people that create intellectual property should be paid for it and people don't see that. Napster changed all of that. People don't understand that something is being created.

Blanche Touhill: Explain Napster.

Christine Belden: Napster was a peer-to-peer sharing technology that was developed in the mid '90s where people could share music without having to buy it. So if I had music on my computer, I could share it with you and then you wouldn't have to go buy it. I think, in essence, that's not really the issue. I think that the issue is that people don't understand that it's intellectual property. My own mother, I told her, "When you go to the hair salon and you hear music in the salon, the salon has to pay a performing rights society to have that music playing because it's not their property," and I think that the generation from Napster forward, kids who are 25 years or younger, do not understand that artists don't get paid for making music. Taylor Swift, who's a huge recording artist now, took all of her music off of Spotify and the reason is because it probably got 500 million plays and she probably made a thousand bucks, for 500 million plays. That's crazy. Why do it?

Blanche Touhill: So you moved out of that field because you felt that it was changing...

Christine Belden: Mm-hmm.

Blanche Touhill: ...and at this moment you had to find something else?

Christine Belden: Yeah.

Blanche Touhill: And you fell in love with this TV music?

Christine Belden: I did. For film and television music, artists do get paid.

Blanche Touhill: So, if they perform, they get paid?

Christine Belden: They get paid.

Blanche Touhill: Then who owns the product?

Christine Belden: It depends. If they write it for a film or television property and they're paid handsomely for it, usually they will either share the ownership with the production company or sometimes they just own it themselves and they license it to the program. But they get paid to perform on the program. They get paid every time the program is repeated and that performance is repeated and they get paid a fee for using their property.

Blanche Touhill: And that's what you do now?

Christine Belden: And that's what I do now. Well, that's what I did at CAA, was sort of making those connections. What I do now is, I've moved to a record company and it's an even further step, so I moved to a record company, I'm starting a division for them that goes to independent film and television and actually invests money in the project and then we function as their music department and we help them get all of the music in.

Blanche Touhill: For the film?

Christine Belden: For the film.

Blanche Touhill: Or the TV?

Christine Belden: Or the TV, yeah.

Blanche Touhill: So you get the script?

Christine Belden: I get the script.

Blanche Touhill: And they say to you, "We want this kind of music" or they say, "Get us music"?

Christine Belden: Both, it depends. Sometimes they'll say, "We want this kind of music" and then we sort of say, "Hm, that's probably not the best choice. Try this" or "How about this?" or "How about that?" We also hire people that are the more boots on the ground person that does the day-to-day. We sort of oversee it. So we help them find someone to score the film, someone to

pick the music for the film. We make sure everything is all put together and all the licenses are done and that the director and producer are very happy with the product.

Blanche Touhill: Now, when you do that, you don't have these people who, like, score the music or get the musicians together and play it, you contract out?

Christine Belden: We find them, yeah, we find them. For example, if they say, "I want a score that sounds like Star Wars," then I will go and listen to a whole bunch of composers because I know a lot of those folks, and I'll put together a reel of samples and say, "Here's a whole bunch of artists that will sound like Star Wars" and then they listen to it and say, "We like this guy" and then I call his agent and I make a deal for him to score our movie. And then what happens is, we put this money in and we oversee everything and then the music in the movie becomes a copyright of our record company as a publisher and then we then exploit the...

Blanche Touhill: Sell records?

Christine Belden: Yeah, and we exploit the copyright for television commercials or other things and then we pay back the composer who wrote it and the producer who made the movie. And our first movie that we did is a movie called Still Alice and we think that Julianne Moore is going to be nominated for an Academy Award.

Blanche Touhill: I just heard that today. I listen to St. Louis Radio and they said Julianne Morris...

Christine Belden: Julianne Moore, yeah.

Blanche Touhill: Julianne Moore had a chance at the Academy Award, right?

Christine Belden: Yeah.

Blanche Touhill: But that it was a movie that a lot of people didn't see.

Christine Belden: It's not out yet.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, it's not out yet, I see.

Christine Belden: Yeah. It was out very briefly. They have to release it for a week in New York and LA to qualify. It comes out January 16th but it's a movie about Alzheimer's Disease so it's not a Friday night feel-good film but it is very

good and she's very good in it and she's actually favored to win and that was our first movie. We worked on it in the spring.

Blanche Touhill: And what kind of music did you choose?

Christine Belden: The music is mostly score, it's mostly just three string pieces and a piano and the guy who did it is a British guy called Ilan Eshkeri and he did a beautiful job.

Blanche Touhill: Now, did he write the music as well as had the performers play it?

Christine Belden: Mm-hmm, yup, he did all of it. He did all of it and he could possibly be nominated too but I don't know that his chances are as good as hers. I think her chances are great.

Blanche Touhill: Are you going to go to the Awards?

Christine Belden: No, I'm just going to watch on TV, yeah, but she's also nominated for a Golden Globe so we're going to watch that when I get back.

Blanche Touhill: Is it your company or...no...you just work for the company?

Christine Belden: No, it's not my company. I just work for them, yeah.

Blanche Touhill: And will they then put that out on a record?

Christine Belden: Yeah, yeah, they will and the company is small. It's an independent record company. It's a record company and publishing company and a management company and it has offices all over the world but it's small. It's not like a big Warner Brothers Records, it's not like that. And so we have our logo on all of the ads, like in the New York Times, it will say "Soundtrack available on Network Records" which is the name of our company. So it's a big deal and no other record company in the world does this business. It's brand new and we're starting it and we're the only ones who do it. There are a few finance companies that do it but not music companies who do it. So it's unique.

Blanche Touhill: And is that what you're doing now?

Christine Belden: Mm-hmm, yeah.

Blanche Touhill: And you're going to keep doing that...

Christine Belden: Yeah.

- Blanche Touhill: ...until times change?
- Christine Belden: I love it. It's really, really fun because you get to do film and you get to do music and you're on the production side and the creative side as opposed to the agency side where you're just kind of arguing with people all the time, which doesn't really interest me. And you're creating something, you know, and you get to see the finished product. And in music, if you ever see a film and they take the music out, you would be astonished.
- Blanche Touhill: No, no, since childhood, I always thought to myself, I'd like to be the person that chooses the music during the movie.
- Christine Belden: Really?
- Blanche Touhill: And sometimes I can tell you what's happening just by listening to the music.
- Christine Belden: Yeah, yeah, then that means it's good.
- Blanche Touhill: Yeah. It relays the idea...
- Christine Belden: Yeah.
- Blanche Touhill: ...of what's happening in the film.
- Christine Belden: Yeah, and it's a brand new thing. I'm building it for this company so I'm the one who gets to do all of it and I love it. It's fantastic.
- Blanche Touhill: And is your husband still in a band?
- Christine Belden: He's a song writer for film and television. He just wrote all of the music for...William H. Macy directed a film and he wrote all the music for that and he just finished writing some stuff for TV and he also writes for a production library.
- Blanche Touhill: How long did it take him to write the music for a film?
- Christine Belden: Probably about three or four months. This is not score though. These were songs so he read the script...
- Blanche Touhill: He's the music and the lyricist?
- Christine Belden: Yeah, wrote it all. So he wrote all the songs and then he would give them to William H. Macy who's the director and they would sit down and he

would say, "I like this but maybe could you change..." ...and so then he would go back and change it and then after they did the songs, then the songs were given to the actors and my husband coached the actors how they were supposed to sing the songs and then they recorded them singing the songs and then they recorded and mixed the whole soundtrack and then they put that out as well.

Blanche Touhill: Now, do you have your offices in your home?

Christine Belden: He has a writing room and a recording studio in our house. My office is actually in Hollywood. So I go to work all day and do all this and then I come home and he's like, "Hey, come down and listen to this" and we sit and we listen to the stuff that he's written and sometimes I say, "Oh, you need to change that" or "You need to move this over here," and sometimes I say, "Oh, that's great." So we do a lot of stuff together that way.

Blanche Touhill: What makes you be able to do what you do?

Christine Belden: Well, part of what makes me be able to do what I can do is my mother because I think that my mother has always been supportive but, like I was telling you before, it's very subversive. It's just, I always thought it was my own choice but when I look back, it really wasn't. I mean, she's really the one who's always kind of guided it and has always said, "You should do whatever you want to do and whatever it is that makes you happy. If you want to be a lawyer, great; if you want to be a street sweeper, great," and I really believe that she believed that. I don't think that that was false. I really do think she genuinely believed, if you like what you're doing and you're happy, great. And music is something that I've always loved and I've also always loved movies and the other thing is, as you get older, your taste in music sort of changes and I don't want to be in a bar at midnight. I'm in my 40's. Twenty-year-olds can do that, I want to do something else. And so moving into sort of the film aspect of music is a more grown up way to do it, for lack of a better word. I think the other reason that I can do it is because my husband is an artist and because I've been with him for 14 years, I understand how artists think and how business people and artists interact and the problems with that because they see the world differently and because of that, I think I have better relationships with artists and other creative people, because I have him and I know exactly how to talk to people or how not to talk to people in some cases.

Blanche Touhill: So the music business is a little different. Well, you're dealing with artists...

Christine Belden: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: ...and artists are like...well, they're like all professionals. They're going to do it their way.

Christine Belden: Right, right, and directors are artists; producers are artists, and even what we do is also creative as well but you have all of these personalities trying to converge on this one way to tell a story and everyone has ideas and there's all kinds of power struggles and at least as far as music goes, my job is to manage all of it and make sure everyone's getting what they want. There's all kinds of things. Most of it, I've discovered throughout my career, is just communication.

Blanche Touhill: Let me ask another question which relates to how are you able to do this: You certainly are able to jump when you see one industry as sort of fading, you can jump to the next.

Christine Belden: Mm-hmm.

Blanche Touhill: A lot of people can't do that.

Christine Belden: I know and the last jump that I made was very hard. I didn't really want to because CAA is one of the most amazing companies. It is the most amazing company that I've ever worked for. It's huge. It's very powerful but there are so many incredibly smart people there and there's amazing opportunities to see people speak and to learn different things and all the different departments within the agency that you can sort of work through but it became so big that I felt like what we were doing didn't really have an impact and I started to feel like I was set up to fail and I had a great mentor there and I was treated incredibly well. But it wasn't working and I felt like I was spinning wheels and he actually helped me figure out this next thing and so now that I've been able to do it, he calls me three times a week and he's now sort of become my agent and helps me find films and calls me about things that have happened...because CAA is a talent agency so they have directors, actors, writers, musicians, sports players. They represent Steven Spielberg, Nicole Kidman, Meryl Streep, like all of these people. So I still have all this access to all of that information so I sort of have the best of both worlds but it was not an

easy thing to do. One of the reasons I did it was because the first time, I waited too long. I should have left two years before I did and I don't regret it, per se, but I told myself I wasn't going to do that again and I also think some of it is just evolving. For me, I've noticed the pattern in my career is, whatever the main business is, mine's always the orbiting thing. It's never inside the main thing. It's always something that kind of orbits around and it's always more than one thing. It's not just, okay, you're going to find bands and make records. It's bigger than that: you're going to go all the way through to the art part and the mixing part and the touring part and the radio part, and the same thing for CAA when we were looking for music for film and television, it was, okay, but now I'm going work...because we represent General Motors, so I'm going to go help the Cadillac people with music, or I'm going to go help the Chipotle people with music, and this is the same thing. It's just, it always is more than one part of music and it just sort of evolved and when I was at CAA, there was a finance company that was doing something similar to what I'm doing now and they were doing it terribly and the reason was because they weren't in the music business and they weren't in the film business. They're just money people and they upset everyone in the film and TV business and I crossed paths with them several times. And at CAA, I said, We can do this and we can do this better because we can do it with the knowledge of film and TV and those relationships and how you can sort of put all the pieces together and make sure everybody's comfortable and not have this sort of scorched earth which is how they do it. And we tried and we weren't able to get it going and then this opportunity to do it at another company came and so I took it.

Blanche Touhill: Go back to when you were young because I'm interested in how people play. Did you play in a structured kind of environment or did you play in an environment where you got on your bike in the morning and you came back at 6:00 o'clock or something like that?

Christine Belden: We had some activities, like when I was really small, we went to ballet classes and some horseback riding classes and things like that, but for the most part, in my neighborhood, there were lots of kids.

Blanche Touhill: This is University City?

Christine Belden: Correct. So there was me and my brother and there was another kid next door and then the family next door to them had five kids and we were all

friends and then there were a few more and a couple a few blocks down, a few blocks up and we were all within, I'd say, a five-year age range and we all played together.

Blanche Touhill: The boys and girls?

Christine Belden: Boys and girls, and we all played together, I remember that, and, yeah, it was riding bikes or going to the park or playing kickball in the street or sometimes playing at people's houses, but most of it was outside and it was outside until the street lights came on and then everybody's parents came out. It sounds so idyllic to me but everyone's parents came out and said, "You got to come to dinner" and everyone's yelling, "Can we have 10 more minutes?" But, yeah, it was always the same group and it was for years and years and years and we all knew everyone's parents and everyone ran in and out of each other's houses and there were slumber parties and things like that. I walked to school every day, all the time I was in elementary school and, for the most part, everybody lived pretty close together. There were a few people that we had to drive to their house but not very often. And it was great. I thoroughly enjoyed it and we all had a good time and everyone was very close. I imagine it's quite different now. People don't seem to go outside very much.

Blanche Touhill: No, they don't, and they don't play on the blocks, I don't think...

Christine Belden: No.

Blanche Touhill: ...like they did, with boys and girls and all ages.

Christine Belden: Yeah, and we did, very much so, yeah.

Blanche Touhill: How's your life in LA?

Christine Belden: My life in LA is great. I really am happy with where my career is. My husband's really happy with his. We have a good time together. We have friends. We just sort of are living our lives and it's great. It's weird, I would say 2014 is one of the first times in my life that I can actually say that I'm sort of living the dream, so to speak because all the pieces are in the right place, and I think that's probably true in previous years but also because we bought a house, I think it just feels more like, this is what I thought my life was going to be and it is.

Blanche Touhill: Did you really think that someday you'd buy a house and have a happy marriage...

Christine Belden: It's what I wanted, yeah.

Blanche Touhill: ...and have a wonderful job?

Christine Belden: Yeah, that's what I wanted, yeah, and there were plenty of times when I didn't think it would happen, and I'm sure there's...I always say to people, particularly if they ask me about my back, it's fine and I can't complain but sometimes I still do and it's kind of the same thing. I surely can find something to complain about but just before we came to St. Louis, we were waiting for some friends...my husband's British and so some of our very good friends are also English and they had some relatives coming in from the UK and they were coming over to our house for a little dinner and so Simon and I are just sitting in our house, all the Christmas lights are lit up, you can see all the valley lights and treetops from our deck and it's just me and him and we're sitting in there, drinking champagne and I was like, "It's not a bad life, is it?" and he's like, "No, it isn't." So, yeah. I'd like to travel more. I can't really think of much else. I'm very happy with everything now and I'd always hoped that it would happen and it wasn't until after you have all the pieces and then you think, oh, it happened.

Blanche Touhill: Well, let me go in another direction: If you had been born 50 years earlier, what would your life be like?

Christine Belden: I think if I had been born 50 years earlier, that most likely just because of my back problems and things, my life would have been shorter, I think. Had it not been shorter, I wonder...so my grandmother's age, right?

Blanche Touhill: Yeah, roughly.

Christine Belden: Because I'm very fascinated by everything that happened during World War II and my grandmother actually worked a lot. She didn't get married until she was 26. She worked in the Wrigley factory in New York. She went to DC and worked for the Australian consulate during the war. So she was actually quite independent.

Blanche Touhill: Was she a secretary?

Christine Belden: Yeah, she was...

- Blanche Touhill: [Inaudible 42:15].
- Christine Belden: Yeah, like where they translate whatever the stuff is that's coming through.
- Blanche Touhill: And she spoke Austrian? Or she spoke German?
- Christine Belden: No, she didn't actually. No, Australian...not Austrian.
- Blanche Touhill: Australian?
- Christine Belden: Yeah, Australian. No, she didn't know. She is Austrian though but I've never heard her speak German so I don't think she did. But she was quite independent and since my mom is too, I'd like to think that I would be as well. But that would have been a fascinating time to live though, I imagine.
- Blanche Touhill: So she was a working woman?
- Christine Belden: Yeah, until my mom was born, yeah.
- Blanche Touhill: And then she stayed home?
- Christine Belden: Mm-hmm, and then she stayed home, yeah.
- Blanche Touhill: And did she ever go back to work when your mother got older?
- Christine Belden: No, because she had four other daughters...five kids and my grandfather was a life-long military...he was in the military for his whole life so they went all over the world. My mom lived in Japan and in Paris and they settled in Ohio when she was, like, in high school. But, yeah, no, she didn't work again. She was a painter and she sewed. She was an artist. So I think she spent her time doing that after they retired.
- Blanche Touhill: You don't sing, do you?
- Christine Belden: I don't. I couldn't carry a tune to save my life but my husband's a great singer.
- Blanche Touhill: And you don't act?
- Christine Belden: No.
- Blanche Touhill: So you're really a manager?

Christine Belden: Yeah, kind of, yeah.

Blanche Touhill: But with a deep musical knowledge.

Christine Belden: Yeah. I can tell when things don't sound right or when they're not arranged right or when they don't fit to something. Yeah, I can tell all those things, I can play a little bit of guitar and maybe a little bit of flute but not really and I can't sing, I don't act, I can't draw. I can't do any of those things but you spend enough time watching how things are done and you see enough things...like, I can read a script and tell you if it's good or not. When I read the script for the movie Julianne Moore's in, that script is brilliant. It doesn't mean the movie will be great. It depends on the other elements and actually, what I do is almost exactly what I did with records at the beginning of my career. You're looking at all of the elements, just like when you go see a band, to see, do they have songs; are they good performers. It's the same thing, you're reading a script, is it written well; is it a good story; who's the actor that's going to be saying those things; who's the director; who's the producer; when is it going to come out, and if all of those elements seem like they might work to make a great film, then that's something that we'll try to be a part of and if I don't think it will, then we'll move on to the next one. And you're not always right.

Blanche Touhill: Have you gotten any awards that you're really particularly proud of or, if you haven't gotten an award, have you gotten something that, as a result, you have to say, "I did a good job"?

Christine Belden: I got a Phi Beta Kappa when I was in college.

Blanche Touhill: Well, that's pretty good.

Christine Belden: That's a long time ago though. I forgot about it until just now.

Blanche Touhill: There aren't very many Phi Beta Kappa's.

Christine Belden: Yeah, I did get that so I was pretty proud of that, considering that I was a very poor student before entering high school and it wasn't until the last couple of years of high school so that when I went to college that I was able to do that. That was kind of a big deal, yeah.

Blanche Touhill: It was a big deal.

- Christine Belden: Yeah, my mom was very happy about that one. I forgot.
- Blanche Touhill: So you're very smart?
- Christine Belden: Well, I don't know.
- Blanche Touhill: You put the effort in?
- Christine Belden: Yeah, I do, I do. I think it's important, yeah. Yeah, I do. I think it's important to read and I think it's important to know about the world and politics and art and culture, everything...science, culture, art, all of it. I think it's all important and I'm always miffed by people who don't seem interested. I find that surprising.
- Blanche Touhill: If you were going to travel, where would you travel?
- Christine Belden: I would love to see the great migration in Africa because I hear there's only about 25 years left before that won't happen anymore. I'd love to go to Australia. I've never been there. I went to school in France for a while. Paris is one of my favorite places so I'd always go there.
- Blanche Touhill: Was that in college?
- Christine Belden: It was, yeah, and I would like to go to some of the Eastern European countries because when I was traveling in Europe, it was still split. So I haven't been to a lot of them. I've never been to Croatia. I'd like to go there. I'd like to go to Iceland and I'd like to go to Scandinavia.
- Blanche Touhill: Well, those are all reachable.
- Christine Belden: Yeah, yeah, I'm working on that. Africa is the big one because I think that will take a big chunk of time, to actually do it, you know, two weeks or three weeks or something like that. I think all the others are very easy to do and with my job, some of those I'll be able to do for film festivals and things.
- Blanche Touhill: Well, Africa, you could go back several times too.
- Christine Belden: That's true.
- Blanche Touhill: Well, just like Europe, you go back several times.
- Christine Belden: Yeah.

- Blanche Touhill: So you see the great migration once and go see something else.
- Christine Belden: Right, exactly, but, yeah, I'd love to do that. My mom did it. She said it was amazing. I bet that would be cool.
- Blanche Touhill: What makes you what you are? Do you have a theme in your life? You're obviously an entrepreneur. You're obviously organized. You're obviously smart. You're obviously knowledgeable about music. You obviously get along with people...
- Christine Belden: Yeah. A theme in my life? Hm, I don't know. I mean, I think that music in film and television and being a part of that in different ways, career-wise, is the theme of my life but also just being around creative people because even my mom was an interior designer so I'm fascinated by all that: furniture and lighting and architecture and all those kinds of things and my husband being a musician so I think I've always been drawn to creative, artistic things and it's what I'm the most interested in. So if I had a theme in my life, I suppose that might be it in some way. I've never really thought about that.
- Blanche Touhill: So your interest is really the arts?
- Christine Belden: Yeah. I mean, I'm interested in history and science and...
- Blanche Touhill: And how do you put it together.
- Christine Belden: Yeah, but I think that arts are always a sign of the times so they sort of intersect with all of those other things: science and history and all those things.
- Blanche Touhill: Were you one of the first women in the industry or were there other women in the industry? Are there many women in the industry? I know nothing about it.
- Christine Belden: Not very many. I mean, there's been one president of a film studio, which is Sherry Lansing who I told you went to school where I went to school. There's now Amy Pascal who's the chairwoman of Sony Pictures. That's it. I mean, there are a few women who are presidents of record companies but there are not very many and, in my job, every meeting so far that I've been in, I'm the only woman. It's all men.
- Blanche Touhill: Is that a problem?

- Christine Belden: No, it's not a problem. I mean, I don't think about it very much, to be honest. I think about it after the fact but I don't think about it going in because I feel like, if I did that, in some ways you're sort of giving in because it shouldn't matter, right? And, for the most part, when I'm going into these meetings that's with film producers or financiers, they don't know anything about music so I'm the only person that knows...
- Blanche Touhill: Do they know something about you?
- Christine Belden: For people that know me previously, yes, because they know about CAA but people that have never met me, they only know what my job is and what I do for a living but they don't know...music is a very dark art in filmmaking. People don't understand it. So it's mostly them asking me a lot of questions about how this works and how that works and what's going to happen with this and what's going to happen with that. So for me it's about being knowledgeable about how I can help them and giving them the best service and making them feel like they're protected musically for their project. But, so far, there's been no women in any of the meetings I've been in.
- Blanche Touhill: Well, it was hard to get started, but it really wasn't, was it?
- Christine Belden: No. The record company that I work for, I was talking to the president of the company and then one of the partners and they were saying, "We got this influx of venture capitalist money and we're trying to find unusual ways for a record company to be in a business" and I said, "Oh, we should do this," and I explained it to them and they were like, "Oh," and then they called me and said, "We think that's a great idea. Will you do it?"
- Blanche Touhill: How did you get that idea? From your college experience?
- Christine Belden: No, no, that's from when I was at CAA and there was a financial company that was sort of doing it poorly...
- Blanche Touhill: Oh, I see, and they failed but you watched them fail and realized that their idea was right?
- Christine Belden: Yes, the very, very basic idea of what they were doing was right but the execution of it was terrible.
- Blanche Touhill: So you, in essence, saw a good idea?

- Christine Belden: Yeah.
- Blanche Touhill: And were able to sell it to a group that had the money for that purpose?
- Christine Belden: Yes, exactly right.
- Blanche Touhill: Was that the company that you found your mentor who helped you up or was that another company?
- Christine Belden: No, that's the company where I am now, but it was at the company with my mentor where we experienced the bad financial people.
- Blanche Touhill: That's right.
- Christine Belden: Correct, yeah, and he said, "I know that you are passionate about this. Let's figure out a way for you to...if it's not working for you here, let's figure out a way for you to do it."
- Blanche Touhill: If you hadn't been so good at what you were doing, or you hadn't been entrepreneurial, what job would you have with the company? You'd just be a...
- Christine Belden: Oh, yeah, I guess I would just be an A&R person which is what I was at the very beginning of my career, which is the Artists & Repertoire or finding the artists. And now I think what I do is, it's A&R but it's movies instead of music.
- Blanche Touhill: But it's a higher level?
- Christine Belden: Oh, yeah, because we're literally building a business within that company from the ground up. We're doing the deck of how you pitch it; we're doing all the contracts; every template. I mean, we sat in there with yellow legal pads and we were writing stuff out and I said to one of the partners, I was like, "I feel like I'm in college. This is crazy" and he's like, "Well, it's a start-up" but everything had to be from scratch because everyone in the company I work for, they're all music people. That's it. They don't know anything about film or television, just music. They're life-long music executives and creative people. So I'm the sole person in the company that deals with film people and producers and that business and how that business works. I went to Vancouver in September and did a whole presentation to them so they could understand what we were trying to do and they've been great. I mean, they're showing quite a bit of

trust that I'm going to pick the right stuff. So we'll see what happens but it's great.

Blanche Touhill: Well, it's your track record.

Christine Belden: Yeah. I mean, our first film could get an Academy Award so that's not too bad.

Blanche Touhill: What do you want to do in the next 10 years, 15 years?

Christine Belden: In the next 10 years, I would love to build this business out to be a really, really successful division of that company. I would like to end up being just the person that goes around and does meetings and helps decide what film it is instead of building everything up because it will all sort of be set and hopefully you can have other people that can do that, just go around to all the film festivals, see all the new movies, meet all the upcoming filmmakers and writers because those are the people that you want to align with, right, the people who are coming up, who are going to be the next Steven Spielberg.

Blanche Touhill: But how can you tell who's going to be good and who's not? It's like listening to a band?

Christine Belden: Yeah.

Blanche Touhill: You have to be able to tell.

Christine Belden: Yeah, it is and you can see some of their work. I mean, there was a film that we saw last year by a filmmaker who...it was his first movie and it was amazing. It remains to be seen. Like, he's making a second movie right now so we'll see but he's somebody to definitely keep an eye on and there are other people who just are great writers and it's the same thing: I mean, talent is talent, I think. It just has to be nurtured in the right way and they have to have the right people around them, and that's another element that you always are going to be looking for, who's around them, who's making this happen, what are the other parts, because it's not just a good story, right? You have to have all those other things around you to make sure that it's successful, and success is also relative. There's the big blockbuster movies but then there's also the really good, important ones like Still Alice, which I think is going to do well and it will be a great film.

Blanche Touhill: Will the art theaters ever come back?

Christine Belden: I don't think so. Well, I'll tell you this: I think that where the movie business is going to go is that movies will become events so it's going to cost \$100 to go to the movies in the future, but what it will be is, you will go in, you'll get this lounge chair; you'll get food served to you; it will be on these giant screens with all these effects and superior sound because movies will have to be an event because, for the most part, you have that in your house. So it's going to be a jump and actually, I didn't say that. Steven Spielberg and George Lucas said that.

Blanche Touhill: How important are movies and music for the American culture?

Christine Belden: I think they're extremely important. I think that...not just for entertainment but I think, like I was saying before, I think that pop culture always reflects what's happening in society. I think movies can be provocative. They can start conversations and debates between people. I think music is the sound track of your life. I know it sounds very cliché to say that but it really is true. I mean, if you look back and you listen to music, you will have vivid memories of certain times in your life and I think that film and music enhances your life. I think that it tells all kinds of stories. There are some great films right now, one called the Imitation Game which is about the Enigma Machine in World War II and Alan Turing who was the British scientist who cracks the code and people my age and even younger will never learn that in school. They'll never read that book and they'll learn about those things from films and I think that's incredibly important and I think that films and music also inspire people to be the next generation who will write and who will make films or do other things: become a scientist; become teachers; become whatever. But I think it's incredibly important and I think that a lot of times it's very dismissive because people just think of it as pop culture but I don't think that's true at all. I think it's changed a lot and I hope that all of the important films, in particular, still get made and I think that now that there's an equalizer with technology, I think that will happen. I think you'll see more dramas and intelligent movies and great filmmakers instead of just big blockbuster blowing up films, which are fine and I actually like those too but I think you need all of it and I hope that people understand that it's intellectual property and that we can get back to a time where people pay for it because you will get better product if people have incentive to create it, right? That's what copyright is and I think it's important that people understand that.

Christine Belden 12-29-2014

Blanche Touhill: Well, thank you very much. I enjoyed our conversation and I wish you well in the future.

Christine Belden: Thank you so much. I actually learned a lot. I did. There's a lot of stuff I've never even thought of.