

An Interview with
Genevieve Gibson Newman

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

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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.

Blanche Touhill: Would you introduce yourself.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes, my name is Genevieve Gibson-Newman Newman.

Blanche Touhill: Talk to me about your childhood. Talk about your parents or your grandparents or your cousins or your playmates, how did you play. What was your childhood like?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Okay. I was born in Louisiana in a very, very small town, population maybe 600. It was rural. The basic crop was sugarcane. I lived with my mom and my older sister. My mom and father were divorced when I was really young so I don't remember the initial small years of my father but I remember my mom, who I think was the smartest woman that I've ever known and she only finished 4th grade. Her mom died when she was really young so she cared for her sister and her brother. So we grew up as a kind of extended family. My sister is seven years older than I am so I had, like, two moms. My mom was Mama; my aunt was Mother because she had a son and because we lived together, I would call her N'nan because she was my godmother but her son started calling her N'nan so then I started calling her Mother and so we had a mother and a mama. My childhood was kind of basically simple up until probably the 6th grade. It was a very small school. It was basically three rooms. We had 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th and that was just about the school. About that time, there was an order of nuns, the Sisters of Ursuline and they came to visit our little small school and just kind of gave us some testing and decided that I should go to their academy. So I went to the academy from that time on and, because it was such a small community, even though I went to a different school than the rest of my neighbors, we were a community kind of and so even though I was Catholic and went to a Catholic school, all of my friends were Baptists and went to the public school but we all got along together. They came to my church, I went to their church. So it was a really good growing up period.

Blanche Touhill: What town was this, that you grew up?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: It was during the '50s.

Blanche Touhill: No, but what was the name of the town?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Oh, Jeanerette, Louisiana.

Blanche Touhill: Jeanerette. And was it near a larger town?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Louisiana was based on parishes, so we had St. Mary parish and then we had Liberia parish, and Jeanerette was kind of in the middle of those two. Now, Jeanerette had a population probably of, like, 700 and then Franklin, Louisiana was the largest, nearest city. The next largest city would be Lafayette, Louisiana.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, yes, okay. I know where you are then.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Right, so it's the southwest section.

Blanche Touhill: Yes, and you're really in the area that was settled by the...

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: The Cajuns, right.

Blanche Touhill: The Cajuns, yes. Where was the Ursuline convent?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: It was in Baldwin, Louisiana.

Blanche Touhill: And how did you get there?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Bus.

Blanche Touhill: By bus, okay. Was it a school bus or a public bus?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: It was a school bus but it was for those three schools: for the Baldwin school, for the Jeanerette school and for the Franklin school, so it was like the circle.

Blanche Touhill: Did they just pick up the students going to the Ursuline convent?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: No.

Blanche Touhill: They picked up public and private schools?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Right.

Blanche Touhill: And then they dropped them off accordingly?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Right.

Blanche Touhill: That's very interesting.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yeah, and our little section was called Four Corners so the buses would stop at one of those four corners so if you missed your first one,

then you ran and ran to try to catch the second one because you couldn't go home because your mom would spank you if you missed the bus. So, yeah, that's the way it was. So then, after that, I participated in school. I kind of taught the kids who weren't up to the date, especially because, going to the Ursuline school was smaller, had more teachers and the public school had larger classes and sometimes the kids didn't even understand or know their homework so they would all come to my house and want my help and I would help them do their homework.

Blanche Touhill: Were you Catholic before you went to the convent?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: So your family were always Catholic?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: And the other people were mainly Baptist?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: That's very interesting.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: Did your family come out of that Cajun movement?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: No, my great grandparents were Haitians.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, they were Haitian, okay. And they were French then?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: So they had that Catholic background?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Right.

Blanche Touhill: Yes.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: And we all had a dialect that they taught us as a second language and so the dialect is gone so no Cajun.

Blanche Touhill: Do you still speak the dialect?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Not very well but whenever I go to Louisiana, I can pick up most of the words but not fluently.

Blanche Touhill: That's really very interesting, yeah. Did your mother say you were smart?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: My mom always said I was smart. My mom read everything and so I read what she read. I read the True Confession magazines and Perry Mason and the Foxes of Harrow and so she was an avid reader so I read a lot.

Blanche Touhill: So you had a good public library, or a good school library, one or the other?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: A good convent library, yes.

Blanche Touhill: And you could check out books and your mother read them and you read them?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Right.

Blanche Touhill: Did your mother's relatives read them that lived with you?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Not as much.

Blanche Touhill: Did your mother work?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: My mom worked. There was a sugarcane factory kind of thing so she was the person who did the analysis on the sugar to see whether it was the right temperature, all those kinds of things. And so she worked there until I graduated from high school because her goal was always to have her own restaurant. So she had, it probably would be linked to a diner, she and her sister had it until she died. My sister wasn't all that interested in the restaurant so she didn't want to carry it on after that.

Blanche Touhill: Did your sister go to the Ursuline convent too?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: No.

Blanche Touhill: She went to the public schools?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: She went to the public school because she didn't want to...

Blanche Touhill: She wasn't that interested in the academic (route?).

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Right, and after 10th grade, she decided that she didn't want to go to school anymore and she was going to go to work. Well, that didn't last very long so she did finish with high school and then she went into...it was called the LPN, a nursing...

Blanche Touhill: Oh, yes, of course.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: So she did that.

Blanche Touhill: And she worked in the neighborhood hospital?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: She worked, yes, at a hospital and as a healthcare person. They weren't called that then but that's what she did, yeah.

Blanche Touhill: Did you get to New Orleans at any time during that period?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes, there were four girls and we were really close friends and one of the girls had an aunt who lived in New Orleans so for the Mardi Gras, we would get the bus, the Greyhound and go there. It was amazing and we were really young, it's amazing that we could do those kinds of things and weren't afraid to do them.

Blanche Touhill: Did you spend the night in New Orleans or did you come back the same day?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: No, we would leave, like, that Sunday because Monday was not a school day because it was Mardi Gras and Tuesday wasn't a school day so we would do that and we'd come back on Wednesday.

Blanche Touhill: But you rented a hotel room?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: No, no, we stayed with one of my friend's aunts.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, wonderful.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: So that was particularly nice.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Right.

Blanche Touhill: So she probably met you at the bus or you got to her home?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes, right.

Blanche Touhill: Well, that was wonderful.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes, and it was fun and it was so much larger. We were so awed, it being this really big city with all these people when we were so used to a very small, compact neighborhood. And it was basically a foreign kind of area because we had...I'm going to use this word kind of loosely...it was integrated because we had white families who had property and we had black families who had property.

Blanche Touhill: Where you grew up?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Right, so other than going to mass, there wasn't any other...no formal interaction but everybody was a neighbor kind of.

Blanche Touhill: Was the school integrated, the Ursuline convent?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: And was the public school integrated?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: No.

Blanche Touhill: So in the public school there was a school of Caucasians and a school for African Americans?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: But in the Ursuline, it was a mixture?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Right, and it was all girls.

Blanche Touhill: Because the farmers were all mixed?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Right.

Blanche Touhill: Well, that's interesting. So now, when you were in elementary and high school, in either the public or the Ursuline convent school, were you a leader?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: Talk about that.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: I never thought that I'm a leader. It was just that if something had to be done...for instance, helping all the kids with homework. It was

because I'd read so much, that I was a little bit ahead of them because at the academy I was a little bit more, so they would have problems and they would complain to their parents that they couldn't understand what the teacher was saying and they didn't know how to do it and my mom would say, "Well..."...and she called me "Baby" ...she said, "She can help."

Blanche Touhill: Well, you were her baby.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes. So it started, like, helping and my very best friend who was two grades ahead of me was having a lot of trouble with school.

Blanche Touhill: And you were able to help her?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: So I helped her and I think it just started that way and it just continued and I was at home recently and she was talking to her granddaughter and she said, "I would have never gotten through high school if it wasn't for Baby," and I thought that was pretty cute, yeah.

Blanche Touhill: In the school, did you do something?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes, I was always the president. One time I was the secretary and I decided that secretary wasn't what I could do well so I was the president of all of my classes, including high school.

Blanche Touhill: Wonderful.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: And Louisiana...I don't know if they are still having that...we had a competition with math, science, history and each school...this is at the high school level...chose three people from each group to compete. First we did it with the local school and then it was all schools, all Louisiana schools, whether they were integrated or not.

Blanche Touhill: Public and private?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: And public and private and if you made it through that area, then you went to the region which meant all of the parishes competed together and then you went to Baton Rouge to the college and you competed there.

Blanche Touhill: To the university?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes, and then I got the scholarship for math and for science but not history.

Blanche Touhill: And where did you go to college?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: I had a dual membership. I got the scholarship to LSU.

Blanche Touhill: And they were integrated?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Kind of.

Blanche Touhill: What do you mean?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: The housing wasn't integrated.

Blanche Touhill: So you had to live with a family?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: No, so I lived at Southern University which is an HPC.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, yes, okay.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: So I had all my classes at LSU. I lived on Southern's campus and in early '60 it changed and I could have lived at SLU because they integrated some of the dormitories, but I just stayed on Southern because there was a shuttle bus that went from one to the other and I took most of my classes...the math and science classes at SLU but the arts, the history, other things...

Blanche Touhill: ...you took at Southern?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: At Southern.

Blanche Touhill: And your degree, though, is from LSU?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: What was your major?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Math.

Blanche Touhill: Math?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Right, and I decided, because I had always done the teaching thing, I decided I was going to be a teacher, a math teacher.

Blanche Touhill: Did you get your certification?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: I got my certification, I got my degree and right after that, got married and moved to St. Louis.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, my goodness. Well, how did your mother react to your success?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: My mom was so proud. I was valedictorian and my mom was really shy and she didn't like...

Blanche Touhill: And the valedictorian in high school or college?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: In high school...and so that was her first time coming to school and all the people, because she was really kind of shy, and she was so proud. When I was giving my speech, I looked at her and I felt sorry for her because she was really nervous.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, you were used to it?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yeah.

Blanche Touhill: You had spoken to the student body before?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes, and I also was a cheerleader so it was kind of balanced.

Blanche Touhill: Well, you were proud of your mother too?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Oh, I am, I've always been.

Blanche Touhill: Is your mother still alive?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: No.

Blanche Touhill: So you got married and did you marry a...

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Someone I met from Alabama but we met at college.

Blanche Touhill: Was he LSU or was he at Southern?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: He was at Southern.

Blanche Touhill: And what was his major?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Geography.

Blanche Touhill: And he wanted to teach?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: No.

Blanche Touhill: So why did you come to St. Louis?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Because he applied for the job at, it was called ACIC's defense mapping now it's called, NGA.

Blanche Touhill: Of course, and did he work there?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: No, we moved here and he had to wait. We moved here in June and he would have had to wait until January for him to join the group so he got a job with, it was called the Urban Corps in St. Louis. So that's what he did and I stayed home because we didn't have any relatives and I had the kids.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, you had kids?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: So that I stayed home with them and in the meantime, I went to St. Louis U to get certification for teaching in Missouri.

Blanche Touhill: Yes, and where did you live?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: When we moved, we moved...it was in an apartment on (Caveny?) and maybe Union. And so we lived there until...

Blanche Touhill: Yes. And where did your children go to school, in the neighborhood?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Well, there was St. Rose.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, St. Rose's?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: And they were pre-schools at that time and then we moved to U City and my oldest one was...they had 1st and 2nd grade at (Persian?) and then my husband got a job, it was called Western Electric at that time and he got transferred to Springfield, Missouri.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, my goodness, so you moved to Springfield?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: And you were still a stay-at-home mom?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes, but once we got to Springfield, the Western Electric had a strike and so he had to go to New York for, like, six weeks...maybe eight weeks and so the kids were then in grade school so I decided I would go to Southwest Missouri and get my Master's while I was waiting.

Blanche Touhill: In math?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: In education.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, yes, okay.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: So I did that and then the year after that, I started teaching at Kickapoo High School in Springfield, Missouri and I taught math. I taught algebra and geometry and then I taught in astronomy, a module of earth science kind of module and I lived there for five years.

Blanche Touhill: And how did you handle the children?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: They were in school by that time.

Blanche Touhill: So you all sort of went to school together and came home together?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Right, and Springfield was much smaller at that time.

Blanche Touhill: And then your husband came back?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes, he was just gone...he would come home, like, every third week.

Blanche Touhill: And so you stayed in Springfield?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: We stayed in Springfield for five years and then he got transferred back to St. Louis.

Blanche Touhill: Still with Western Electric?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes, and I was kind of concerned because Springfield was kind of small and he was coming back to St. Louis and I didn't know anyone so I just sent resumes to everyone and got hired at Parkway and taught earth sciences at Parkway.

Blanche Touhill: Was that in the '60s or the '70s?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: That was in the '70s.

Blanche Touhill: Okay, because Parkway was a new system really...

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: Were you in that building boom?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: Where did you teach in Parkway?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: At Parkway South.

Blanche Touhill: Yes, in the high school or in the junior high?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: At the junior high at first because Parkway South, the senior high was just being built.

Blanche Touhill: Yes, yes, I remember all of that.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes, and it was great and I loved teaching.

Blanche Touhill: And did your children go to the Parkway School too?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes, except my middle son, by the time he was in 8th grade, he went to De Smet.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, yes.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: And the other kids went to Parkway South and Hanna Woods at that time.

Blanche Touhill: How did he like De Smet?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: I think for him it was perfect because he needed the structure. He needed to do the basic and so he...everyone had their goal and his goal for school was that he had to keep everything above C level. The oldest one, Shawn has always been very bright; he would catch on very well. He his whole thing in two minutes and kind of drives me crazy because it's five minutes to 7:00, here's the bus and he's working on his paper, kind of person and Rodney is just an over achiever. So Thomas needed the structure and he needed De Smet. He was good for both and so that's why he...

Blanche Touhill: Did they all go to college?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes, they all did.

Blanche Touhill: And what do they do today?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Shawn is an aerospace engineer. He lives in Phoenix; Rodney works with St. Louis City Child...what's that called...the child advocacy in the...

Blanche Touhill: Oh, yes.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: ...in the legal department.

Blanche Touhill: He's a lawyer?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: No, he's not a lawyer.

Blanche Touhill: He's like a social worker?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes, he hassles those guys who aren't paying their child support and those kinds of things and I said I could never do that but someone has to.

Blanche Touhill: Because somebody has to, yes.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes, and my middle son, Thomas, who went to...after all this struggling with keeping above C level, he actually made the dean's list and he graduated from Southern in Louisiana.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, isn't that nice.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes, and my youngest one, Rodney, graduated from Southwest Missouri State also and Shawn went to USC and then he transferred to Arizona. He has this thing about not liking the winter so he never wanted to come back but he's married and he has two daughters, two bright, beautiful daughters and my son, Thomas, really successful. He works as an account executive with Verizon and MCI, beginning, and he had Lupus so a year-and-a-half ago, he died...

Blanche Touhill: Oh, my, I'm sorry.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: ...from complications.

Blanche Touhill: I'm sorry to hear that.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: And I really miss him.

Blanche Touhill: How old was he when he died?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Forty-nine.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, my, terrible.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: How did you get into Zonta?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: I met this lady who's really an outgoing person and we met on Facebook and she would always say, "Why don't you be my guest at the Zonta?" and I would say, "Oh, I don't have time," because, by that time, I wasn't teaching; I was supervisor with the National Geo Spatial Intelligence Agency and I just didn't have the time but she kept in touch and five years after she invited me initially, I went to one of the meetings and I loved the women, and at that particular meeting, the lady who was the speaker was from McDonnell and she was talking Amelia Earhart and aerospace engineering and I was really interested in that and they were friendly and I thought, probably I needed to expand my friendship because, working at NGA, it was predominantly male and predominantly ex-military people, and because of the classification, you never had to take any work home so that gave me the time to do other things.

Blanche Touhill: Yes. Teaching, you always have to take something.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: How many years did you teach?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Ten.

Blanche Touhill: At Parkway?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: No, five at...

Blanche Touhill: Oh, and then five at Parkway, okay.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Right.

Blanche Touhill: And then you went with the...

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: NGA, yeah, because at that time I was getting a divorce and so, I loved teaching and I still do, I always will, but it just didn't pay me enough to...even though the boys got scholarships, you just need more money all the time. So that worked out for me.

Blanche Touhill: Did you travel then and use the Zonta membership when you traveled?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: I didn't use the Zonta membership because I only joined Zonta five years ago so it was about the time I was retiring but I did travel to the

western D.C. area and the places where we had offices. I went to London once.

Blanche Touhill: Did you use the Zonta membership?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: No.

Blanche Touhill: What do you like about Zonta?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: I think because I'm just...at first when I joined, I was just a member. You pay your dues and you go sometimes and you didn't go but then after I retired I started going to the meeting and learning about what Zonta really was. I liked it because of the values that they have and then I learned to see those values in action. So what I like most about them is the scholarship and the helping women that they do.

Blanche Touhill: Yes, and they do a wonderful job of that.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yeah, and the way they...the application form, it's non-biased so anyone can apply for it. You don't have to know one of the persons to do it and so I really like that.

Blanche Touhill: Yeah. As you were in the Parkway School or the NGA...was that the name of the organization for the federal government you worked for?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: What did they do?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: National Geo Spatial Intelligence Agency? They used to call it The Mapping Place.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, yes. So you ended up in the place that your husband was going to work in the beginning...

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Right, yes.

Blanche Touhill: ...in the beginning?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: Tell me about that. How many years did you work there?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: I worked there 27 years. I can't tell you everything because then I'd have to kill you.

Blanche Touhill: Yes, I understand.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: No, I'm just kidding.

Blanche Touhill: No, I do know that they've done a lot of very secret things and I don't want to know anything else, but in general.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: In general, what the agency task is is to make maps but make maps for guided missiles, make digital maps, using the computer, using information, create a town using information, using pictures, using history, using dialogue, using talking to other agencies. And so you create a place and then you support the military activity. If there's something going on in, let's say, New York and there has to be a flight, then you have to know the tallest buildings so the airplane doesn't crash into the building. If there's something going on and you need to know about the water system, then you'd create that map. If there's a hurricane, you can get the pictures and create what's happening now and then you can kind of project it to what's going to happen in five days. So it's a lot of computer, a lot of details and a lot of research: digging and trying to find out, is this a school or is this a hospital, those kinds of things.

Blanche Touhill: Is there a lot of tension in that job?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes. Not all of the time, because people are assigned different areas, like, the last five years I worked, I was assigned the United States. That wasn't as tense as it is now but there wasn't very much tension there. You work with electric companies, you worked with telephone companies, you work with cell phone, making sure their towers reach is a minimum, but if you're working in, let's say, Afghanistan, then it's a little bit more tense because you don't have as much information, for the first time, and then you're trying to figure out, what is the composition of building and what kind of roads do they have and what kind of wiring do they have. So it's that kind of thing.

Blanche Touhill: Was there another agency that would have that information that you could get the information from them?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Well, for instance, the NOA, for instance, the water agency, you can get information from them. For the United States, you can probably get some information from the USDA, assisted with the CIA, so you get information from everywhere.

Blanche Touhill: How did they get the information in the days before the computer?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Mostly military, on the ground and there wasn't very much detail. You just had maps with contours and a little dot that says this might be...and it might be this tall.

Blanche Touhill: Did your math background help you?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: That's why, I think...it was a snow day and I was at home and they had this ad, and I thought, wow, this is twice my salary. Maybe I'll just check this out and they were looking for computer people and because of my math background and because I always kept up with the computers...even when I was still teaching, we had to do classes and I always did my classes in math and computer.

Blanche Touhill: Sure, you put your grades on the computer and notes to the students and I'm sure all of that.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: I must tell you, I had two relatives who worked for the map center. I can't remember what they called it in those days.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: It was called Defense Mapping Agency.

Blanche Touhill: That's it, and they both liked it a lot but they were both people that were sort of artists and they could look at the maps and do the map part but what you're talking about too is human geography.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: And I have a Master's in geography.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Oh, really?

Blanche Touhill: Yes, but it's the human geography; it's not the...I wasn't artistic. I couldn't do the map drawing or the contours or anything of that nature but I certainly could do the human geography.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Right, and now it's easier because you can do the contours by using the computer.

Blanche Touhill: Using the computer, absolutely.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Right, just pinpoints, yes.

Blanche Touhill: I can see that, yeah, but that's why I was asking, what did they do before then? I know they drew the maps before but I didn't know how they got the human information.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: I would always tease the guys at work that I had one human geography course during my whole college years.

Blanche Touhill: Yes, of course, and most people who took geography took more of the map aspect of it rather than the human aspect.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Right.

Blanche Touhill: I found human geography very interesting.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: I did, too. I had to have a graduate course and it was on a Saturday so I took it and I really enjoyed it.

Blanche Touhill: Did you take it at St. Louis U?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes, and I really enjoyed it.

Blanche Touhill: And was it Mr. (Conoiyer?) or was it a woman?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: No, it was a woman.

Blanche Touhill: Miss Baker.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes, yes.

Blanche Touhill: I never had Miss Baker but I had Mr. Conoiyer.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yeah.

Blanche Touhill: And he was a wonderful, wonderful teacher; a wonderful teacher. What I always remember about Mr. Conoiyer is he said you could have the best agricultural land in the state but if it wasn't your road, you couldn't get it out, it was worthless.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yeah.

Blanche Touhill: And I thought, that says it, you know, and he would always maintain that if you were a mountain person, you were different than the people that lived on the ocean. It affected you, the geography affected you in

different ways: what you ate; how you built your house. I didn't realize they had the human geography component. I would have gone down and applied for a job myself because I was very interested in it at one time.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: Well, are you glad you moved from being a teacher to the mapping center? You'd rather teach?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: I would have rather, yes, but then, the people at NGA were really great and I got to do some things and saw some things from a different point of view that I probably wouldn't have with teaching because teachers kind of a stay together kind of group and I got to work with...because I was in math and science, my department was kind of men-dominated too and that kind of prepared me for being at NGA which was also male-dominated but good guys, most of them.

Blanche Touhill: Are any women moving up the line?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: It's much better now. It is so much better. Before I retired, we had a woman who was the director, the first woman director and I kept saying, "It's way too late to be having first, anything" but that was really good and she was really good.

Blanche Touhill: What year or decade was that?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: That was 2000.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, my, that is late, although it's that math/science. There aren't a lot of women in math/science.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes, right, that is the one thing, yes, and she was an engineer.

Blanche Touhill: Well, did you have trouble getting hired?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: No because at that time, it was all paper. You just filled in all the blanks and if you qualified, you'd know how many points you had automatically.

Blanche Touhill: Was there a list and they would say to you, "I'll call you when you get to the top of the list"?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Well, what they would do, it was kind of like a six-week course in DMA so they hired as much as 20 people at one time.

Blanche Touhill: To go through the course?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: And you went through the course and that kind of did the second elimination. First you just had to score the points and you had to have...because I was in the top percentile of my class instead of starting as a 5, like everyone else did, I started as a 7.. So it was because of points. They'd just look at the points. They didn't look at people. They just looked at what you had on the paper.

Blanche Touhill: Well, did some people take the course and drop out?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Some people did, not many because one you did the paper thing, then you were almost in.

Blanche Touhill: You were pretty screened?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Right. Then the next step, you'd just have to do the work and if you did it very well, then you got promoted and if you didn't, it just took you longer but you would get promoted eventually.

Blanche Touhill: Yeah. Well, the federal government is good to work for or would you say not?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: NGA was a good place to work because it was one of the cutting edge. They could afford to do some things that a larger agency couldn't do probably because we had, like, maybe 5,000 people and that's pretty small compared to all of the larger agencies.

Blanche Touhill: What do you think about it moving out of that area?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: I think that would be so good for St. Louis.

Blanche Touhill: You do?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: I really do.

Blanche Touhill: For it to move out?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: No, no, just to move...they are thinking about moving to North City.

Blanche Touhill: Okay, where in North City?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: There was something called Pruitt Igoe.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, yes, okay.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: To that area. I really appreciate cities and I appreciate that St. Louis isn't going to be a good city until it gets its resources together. People have to want to be there and unless you put NGA in that area, then everything else builds. You have hotels because we had an office in Arnold after the flood, what was that '70-something?

Blanche Touhill: Were you affected by the flood?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Right, because we had...

Blanche Touhill: The '93 flood is the one I'm talking about.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Right.

Blanche Touhill: The hundred-year flood, yes.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Right, so because of that, we got an office in Arnold and that whole area around Arnold has expanded and has grown tremendously, on Richardson Road, and you would never know that it's there because it's on a hill and it's all the way back and it's got trees over but if you look very carefully, you can see this ugly white building that's there. And so that whole little area grew. So I thought if they moved to North City, maybe the same thing will happen there because right on the highway, there's the hotels because people are always coming in from Washington and having to stay someplace, and restaurants, grocery stores, housing. I think in two years, Arnold must have built another city within Arnold.

Blanche Touhill: Really?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Because of the housing need.

Blanche Touhill: What will happen to Arnold when you move out?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: No, that's our other office. Our main office is right across from Busch Brewery.

Blanche Touhill: Yes, I know that, and that's the one they're closing?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Thinking about moving, not closing, just moving.

Blanche Touhill: Sorry, moving, and they're moving because, why?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Because they've outgrown that place and the parking is awful because the brewery brought up all that land for their parking and they won't let us park on their area so parking is really bad.

Blanche Touhill: And they're expanding?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Expanding, yeah. We have an office in Washington also and they just built in...

Blanche Touhill: Washington, Missouri or D.C.?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: No, D.C., and they just built a complex there and it's just expanding and I think if they aren't allowed to build or if they don't choose to, then they would probably move because that office in Washington can hold them.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, oh.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: They used to rent a building in Reston and then they decided to build and so they have all of that space there. They can expand.

Blanche Touhill: In D.C.?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yeah.

Blanche Touhill: Is the area where they're planning to move, I know you said is where Pruitt Igoe is. Is that vacant land?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: I think so, I'm not sure.

Blanche Touhill: Or at least it's available?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: It's available and it would be close to perhaps the stadium that they're thinking about building also.

Blanche Touhill: Were there many women working when you were? Not many?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Not many. In my department when I first started, there were 12 sections within that department and there was one woman and then after she retired, for, like, five years, there were no women. There weren't even women managers for a long time.

Blanche Touhill: My goodness, but now you're saying they've perked up?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: But they didn't have leadership positions but now at least they have one leader?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Right. I'm not sure why it was so difficult for women to get...they had the tenure and didn't have the military background so people would think, well, they don't have the military background.

Blanche Touhill: Well, you didn't have the military background.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: No, I didn't.

Blanche Touhill: But you're saying most of the men, or a lot of the men had the military background?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Right, they had the military background but didn't have the degree and they still were put into the supervisory positions.

Blanche Touhill: Let me ask you another question: If you had been born 50 years earlier, what would your life be like?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Oh, my gosh, 50 years...

Blanche Touhill: Fifty years earlier.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: So that would mean I would have been born...

Blanche Touhill: That would be older than your mother probably.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Right, in the 1900's.

Blanche Touhill: The question is, would it be your grandmother? No, it would probably be between your grandmother and your mother.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Right. I don't know. Would it have been different? Not with the same mom and grandma, I don't think because it was their...if you want it and if you plan for it, then you'll get it. I never thought I wasn't going to college. I talked to people and high school is a big thing for them to get through and high school was a good thing; it was the first step; it wasn't the end. And so I don't know if I can answer that because, like I said, with my mom and my grandma, they would have pushed me then too, I think,

even though my mom only finished 4th grade, but that was because her mom died really early and she had to take care of her sister and her brother, I think. I'm not sure if there would have been...there wasn't that many systems in place. I don't know if there was...

Blanche Touhill: Do you think you could have gone to college?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: I don't know because I don't know. It would have been harder because I would have had to go someplace where there was, like, a high school...

Blanche Touhill: And a college?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: And a college. It would have been extraordinarily difficult.

Blanche Touhill: Because it might have been, in your mother's day, that a lot of people didn't go beyond grade school.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: That's right, a lot of people.

Blanche Touhill: Who were smart.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: But it just wasn't available.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: It wasn't available. There wasn't anything in place to do that except maybe high school because the nuns were always there.

Blanche Touhill: Well, would the nuns have taken you 50 years earlier?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: I think so. I'd like to think so.

Blanche Touhill: Okay.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: I think so because, on my father's side, I had an uncle, a great, great uncle who taught school and I'm not sure if that meant that he went to college. It just could have meant that he...

Blanche Touhill: Oh, that's right, that he had a high school diploma; it could have meant that.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Right.

Blanche Touhill: And then the question is, would a woman have been able to do that?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yeah, looking at (both of us?) that would have been awfully hard.

Blanche Touhill: Yes. You're saying you hope it was possible...

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Right.

Blanche Touhill: ...but you think it might not have been?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: It might not have been, right.

Blanche Touhill: So then you might have been working in your mother's business, the sugarcane business?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Right.

Blanche Touhill: And you might never have left Louisiana.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes, that's true.

Blanche Touhill: And you might never have met a man that had a college education?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: That's true.

Blanche Touhill: Although there were African American men that did have college educations, very few.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Very few, and mostly north maybe.

Blanche Touhill: Yes, maybe not south, yeah.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: Well, you were the first of many women following your path in a way.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: Do you ever think about that?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Sometimes I think about all my friends who kind of just stayed in Louisiana and some of them even moved but they've moved back and they did okay. They went to New York and Los Angeles, different places and they didn't go to college.

Blanche Touhill: And they considered Louisiana their home, really?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yeah.

Blanche Touhill: If they went back.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes, they did.

Blanche Touhill: But you never wanted to go back?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: No.

Blanche Touhill: Do you still have cousins there?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes, I have a sister and cousins. I have some of them who...a lot of them lived in New Orleans at one time but after the last hurricane, the Katrina and all that, they moved to Houston so they're relatively close but not in Louisiana anymore.

Blanche Touhill: Well, you were blessed in a way?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: Because your sister didn't make the progress you did.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: No.

Blanche Touhill: And did her children get educated?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Well, she had twin boys and they started at Southern but they dropped out but the one twin worked for that company that's cleaning up Louisiana.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, yes.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: So he's doing okay and her daughter...I don't know...I'm not sure what's going on with her, yeah, but she did also attend...all three of them attended at least two years.

Blanche Touhill: Well, I think that's positive because I think that means their children probably will go a little further. I think if you had gone, there's more of an inclination than to say college isn't a strange world, "I can do that."

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Right, that's true.

Blanche Touhill: If you had to say what made you what you are today, what would you say?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: My mom, my school. Going to the academy really opened my eyes to all kinds of things that I didn't...we always had books but we didn't have all of the other things. Even though all of the nuns thought that teaching was great, but there were other things too that you can consider and they had a lot of films of different countries, of different cities. New Orleans was my biggest world and seeing all of those other things and having those things available really did...you thought about other things other than just staying...not only do you want to teach in Louisiana, but you want to teach in college; you want to teach someplace else.

Blanche Touhill: And they told you that?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yeah, and it was like, you could teach anyplace. If you learned French better, because all of a sudden, after all these years of having French as a dialect, that's something you couldn't do because you couldn't live in a society if you had that broken French. All of a sudden it was like, you could go to France and learn French. You can go to different countries. You can go to California. I thought, oh, my gosh, you're going to fall off the earth, but I think that those years in the academy really opened me up to different things.

Blanche Touhill: Were your friends in the academy African American or were they Caucasian?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: They were Caucasian.

Blanche Touhill: So they were both?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Mm-hmm.

Blanche Touhill: So you really grew up in an integrated...in a way?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: In a way, yes.

Blanche Touhill: In both, you grew up in both, didn't you?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: In the African American community but you also grew up in the Cajun community, didn't you?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: Which is another aspect to your personality.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: I think so.

Blanche Touhill: Do you cook Cajun?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: I'm not a very good cook but, yes, I can cook Cajun. My sons can cook much better than I can.

Blanche Touhill: And do they cook Cajun?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes, they do.

Blanche Touhill: Did you teach them?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: My mom did because when my middle son was in college in Louisiana, it was like, they were always sending him food or they were always picking him up and driving him home and then I go, "When I went to college, nobody sent me any care packages." They always liked it and every year we would go down for two weeks and they would hang out with their grandma and she would come and visit. One thing, they had this thing about rice. I didn't cook very much when I was at home so I had to kind of teach myself how to cook, so I put the water in the rice, I shake it up a little bit, I pull that water out, and then I put the water in and cook it. Well, my mom didn't do that. She washed it and then poured it out and then do it again. So my mom leaves and I'm cooking rice and the kids go, "We aren't eating that."

Blanche Touhill: Because they like the way your grandmother cooks it?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Right, and so she always put the [inaudible 51:31], the onion and the bell pepper and the celery and I didn't do it. I just put a little bit of butter in it. So I had to learn how to cook all over again, but, yeah, they like Cajun.

Blanche Touhill: Well, you've had a very interesting life and Zonta is a part of that.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes, yes, and this is my first year that I'm going to go to the conference.

Blanche Touhill: Where is the conference?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: In Minnesota.

Blanche Touhill: Wonderful. And are you going with the other Zonta people?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: Is it in Minneapolis, St. Paul or...

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes, it's in Minneapolis, St. Paul, is at the Hilton right at the airport.

Blanche Touhill: So that will bring you more friends.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes, and I've met some friends from different countries through Facebook that are Zontans.

Blanche Touhill: And will they be there?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes, they'll be there too.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, won't that be exciting.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes. So we're looking forward to meeting each other.

Blanche Touhill: Well, I always thought Zonta members, when they went overseas, would contact the Zonta people they knew?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: Would you do that if you ever went again?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: I would, yes, I would because my granddaughter, who is a junior this year, was in the running to go to China for a month of study and her mom was just going bananas and I kept saying, "It'll open up some other avenues for her" but I can understand her mom though, and I said...I know two people in the territory that they're going to and I said, "You know, I'll contact them and they would happily keep an eye on her" but she didn't make it but that would have been so much fun. So I contacted them and said, "You might have to look after my granddaughter" and they were excited about that.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, yes, of course they would be.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yeah.

Blanche Touhill: Just as if they had a granddaughter here, they would want you to look after the girl?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Absolutely.

Blanche Touhill: Where does the girl who's a junior go to school?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: In Phoenix, she lives in Phoenix, yeah [inaudible 53:45].

Blanche Touhill: Do you visit all these relatives of yours?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes, and sometimes it gets to be a little bit...trying to schedule time because they live in Phoenix. I always go at Christmastime and I go during spring break and maybe sometime in the summer and they'll come one time so at least four times a year.

Blanche Touhill: Wonderful.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yeah.

Blanche Touhill: Phoenix is a very nice town and so is Tucson.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Shawn's lived there for 20 years and it has grown so much and it is so beautiful early in the morning and I don't get to see it very often. I'm not an early person but we would go into the airport and it is just gorgeous, those colors, and then Shawn says, "Well, it's just those particles of dust in the air" and I'm like, "Oh, thanks a lot."

Blanche Touhill: What are you going to do with the rest of your life?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: I am going to mentor girls.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, so you're back to tutoring, really?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes, because I also belong to the National Council of Negro Women. I just got tapped.

Blanche Touhill: What advice would you like to give to your grandchildren?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: I have two beautiful granddaughters and they are very different. Cody is classic and smart and organized, always made good grades and (Kana?) is gifted and beautiful and smart but not book smart. She tells me all the time how much she hates school and I think she's getting to a point where she really hates school because Cody was so perfect and I think her parents, without realizing it, might put her in the same group. They want the same girl and she isn't the same girl but she's going to be successful anyway. It's just not going to be with the books. They always

say, "Which one do you love best, Grandma?" and I love them equally as much.

Blanche Touhill: And you wish they would both join Zonta some day?

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes, I do, because I'm Zonta has a "Z" club and I'm trying to find one that's near and I think Cody would really, really thrive in that...

Blanche Touhill: ...organization.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: Well, thank you very much for coming today and I know it was a rainy day but I'm glad you made it and I'm glad I made it and Brian and Zelli.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: I'm so glad I met you in the parking lot.

Blanche Touhill: Yes, I am too. So thank you very much.

Genevieve Gibson-Newman: Thank you.