

An Interview with
Judy Meader

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?

Judy Meader: I'm Judy Meader.

Blanche Touhill: Talk about your youth, Judy, where you grew up; obviously you had parents but did you have siblings; did you have cousins; grandparents; with whom did you play; the neighborhood kids; your relatives; the people at school; your elementary school; your secondary school. Who in your home group encouraged you to go on and do things in life and be a leader and who, in the schools or your church or some religious leader or something encouraged you outside the home, said, "You really have ability and you should figure out what you want to do and then just go do it"? So just talk in general about those early years.

Judy Meader: I had a wonderful childhood. I had wonderful parents and wonderful grandparents. My mother and father were both one of six children. I was always closer to my mother's side because my mother's side...I think that always happens, closer to the mother's side than the father's side. But I grew up in St. Louis. My first two years I lived in Fulton, Missouri when my dad was in the navy but I don't remember much about that. My mother decided, when my dad went to sea, that she needed to be back in St. Louis so we moved across the street from my grandmother, my maternal grandmother and grandfather. And at that time, two of my aunts and uncles were still living at home because they were in college so I grew up across the street from my grandma and I can remember at a very early age, waking up before everybody and running across the street and having "coffee" with my grandma, and actually, while my dad was at sea, my aunt and uncle lived with us. And I have a brother who's exactly 17 months older than I am and we've always been very close and so he was always my big protector. He always forged forward. He went to kindergarten first and broke the ground and so I had no qualms going to kindergarten. And at age 7, we moved away from my grandmother. We moved up to Normandy, to Bell Rieve Acres and to the house that now, where the chancellor of the University of Missouri lives. That was a great spot. There were just tons of children at Bell Rieve Acres at the time and I guess there still are and there were a lot our age, a lot in my high school, a lot went to the Catholic schools. I went to Belnor which is now closed, unfortunately and then to Normandy Junior High and then Normandy

Senior High. But growing up, we'd come home from school and we'd go play. I remember right across the street, at the Lecito's house, we would go and everybody would gather and we'd play tag, we'd play football, we'd play softball. It would depend on the season, what sport we were playing and we'd come home when it got dark. Sometimes in the summer, we would not get home until 9:00 o'clock but our parents knew where we were. They could hear us probably most of the time. So, as I say, it was really great and I enjoyed Belnor. I had a wonderful 5th grade teacher, Mrs. Lacy and at that time I was into women's movements and she made the prediction, she said, "You might become the first woman president." Well, I never got into politics.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, but she thought highly of you?

Judy Meader: Oh, yes, she did. I was one of the presidents of the class. We changed presidents of the class each semester and she was just really a very outstanding teacher. Then in junior high, I had a speech teacher, Miss Truelove who was also very encouraging and saying, "Hold your shoulders back. Do this; do that; you can do this," very encouraging. And in high school I was on the student council and I was a corridor officer. I don't think they even have those anymore but we patrolled the halls during the class changes. That was in junior high, of course. Senior high, you're too old to do that. As I say, Normandy Junior High was a three-year one. Then I played on the hockey team and volleyball and the same thing in high school. I was active in the Vikingettes and the Trihigh Y.

Blanche Touhill: What's the Vikingettes, like the cheerleaders?

Judy Meader: No, the Vikingettes were the girls who were in the sports. If you lettered in sports, if you made one of the sports...

Blanche Touhill: And what was your sport?

Judy Meader: Hockey and volleyball.

Blanche Touhill: So you had two sports?

Judy Meader: Two sports, yeah.

Blanche Touhill: And was hockey on ice?

Judy Meader: Oh, no, it was field hockey. Now, they don't do that anymore.

Blanche Touhill: No, they don't, no.

Judy Meader: We would play at other schools. I can remember playing at University City and Mary Institute.

Blanche Touhill: Yeah, when I was young, the girls played field hockey.

Judy Meader: Yeah, and it was fun. It was great camaraderie and as I say, the Vikingettes, we all kept together. We were all the sports girls. And then, when I decided to go to college...well, I didn't decide to go to college. From the time I was...as long as I can remember, my mother said, "When you and your brother go to college..." ...it wasn't, "Your brother is going to college"; it's "When you and your brother go to college, you're going to study something so you can have a career and you're going to be able to support yourself." Now, I thought that every girl was being told that by their mother. That wasn't true, I found out later. In later years, you talk to your high school friends and they say, "No, my mother was saying, 'No, you need to graduate from high school, get married and have babies.'" So I knew I was going to have to go to college. There was no question about it. Part of it is my mother, being the oldest of six children, my grandfather had said, "No daughter is going to go to college." So she won a scholarship and went to Fontbonne. Now, she had enough influence on my grandfather but by the time her two younger sisters were old enough, they went to college. Of course, the boys all went to college. Of course, one of her sisters got married at 17 so she didn't go to college. But she broke the ice for her younger sisters. So when I started looking at colleges and thinking of careers, my dad was a doctor and fortunately my brother had decided he would be the doctor because I thought, when I had to write an essay in high school and I thought, the three things I put down to be, it would be a lawyer, a sports writer or an office nurse and my dad said, "Skip that office nurse. They're just doctors' slaves. You don't want to do that," and at that time, women sports writers, they didn't exist.

Blanche Touhill: That's right, they didn't exist.

Judy Meader: They didn't exist and I thought about a lawyer for a long time and then my grandfather was a banker. He was president of a bank in Maplewood and I was always treasurer of one organization, all through high school, I was treasurer of whatever organization happened to be around and I thought, well, I should go into business. So I started looking at business

schools and I kind of liked Northwestern and I thought about Washington U and I got into both and I can remember, the interviewer for Northwestern, when I went...you know, they would come to St. Louis and interview you, it was at the Chase Hotel and he said, "Well, you know, business school is not secretarial school" and I thought, I didn't think so because I can't spell and I thought, I don't know if I'm going to get in there or not, but I did and it was interesting because I was either going to go to Washington U or Northwestern and I said to my dad, I said, "If I go to Washington U, can I live on campus" and he said, "No," and so I said, "Okay, I'm going to go to Northwestern." So really a good reason to make the decision that way.

Blanche Touhill: I think in those days, that was really sort of the thought. Girls didn't have apartments of their own when they graduated from college. If you wanted an apartment of your own, you sort of had to move out of town. There were these social blinds.

Judy Meader: Well, I was a daddy's girl. He was not happy to see me go to Northwestern but he was holding firm on, I had to live at home if I went to Washington U. So I was so excited. I went there and my first freshman class at Northwestern, I still didn't think it was unusual for a girl to be in the business school. Well, when I walked in, there were four girls and four hundred guys in the first class and I thought, wow, I think I made the right decision. And, you know, the guys would look at me and this was business history; every freshman had to take it and one of the professors, Mr. Leavengood, was just fantastic. He thought it was great to have the young ladies, as he called us, in the class. But he kind of shepherded me through and when I didn't do well on one of the second exams, he said, "Don't worry about it. You'll do all right. Don't worry about it." But it was interesting, some of the professors actually would get up in class...and this would have been 1962, '63...would say, "Women don't belong here," but, to his credit, there were two of us in that one class that this professor got up and said that. We had the highest grades in the class and he gave us both A's so he didn't discriminate against us, which was good.

Blanche Touhill: Did he ever say why you shouldn't be in the class?

Judy Meader: He just thought women should be at home. That's where they were supposed to be. They weren't supposed to be there. And actually, one of

my high school friends also went on, she went to Bradley and she got her CPA. I think out of our whole class of 400 and some, several went to college but I think we were the only two who studied business. And my sorority sisters at Northwestern, they were in teaching, they were in speech therapy or a couple were in journalism or they were just in liberal arts. Of course I ended up being treasurer of the sorority too because it made sense.

Blanche Touhill: Did the four girls band together?

Judy Meader: No. We studied together.

Blanche Touhill: But there weren't firm friendships?

Judy Meader: No. I've lost track.

Blanche Touhill: You made your friends other places?

Judy Meader: I had my friends, you know, my roommates, my sorority house and I probably had more friends with some of the fellows in the class because it was very often that I'd be the only woman in the class and you just didn't...as I say, one of us, we studied a lot together because we happened to live in the same building our sophomore year. But otherwise...

Blanche Touhill: Did all four of you graduate?

Judy Meader: Yes, and there might have actually been more because some of them transferred in in other years so I'm not sure how many but some of them did drop out.

Blanche Touhill: Well, at UM-St. Louis in '64 and '65, I came here in '65, there were very few women in the business school, very few, which is another story that one of the girls complained because she couldn't get in the honorary fraternity because the national group wouldn't allow the women.

Judy Meader: Really? In Beta Gamma Sigma?

Blanche Touhill: Whatever it was.

Judy Meader: Because I got in that at Northwestern.

Blanche Touhill: Well, she came and complained and the senate recommended that the national group change their charter or, after two years, we were going to withdraw our money, student activities money from that fraternity and we did. Two years later, we did. Now, when the national charter changed, they got back on as a recognized club. They were able to get money. So that's interesting. I can't explain that.

Judy Meader: Yeah, because Beta Gamma Sigma, as I said, there was no question about it. It didn't even come up.

Blanche Touhill: That's very interesting. I'm going to raise that with the business to see...

Judy Meader: Yeah, to see which one it was because Beta Gamma Sigma was actually headquartered here at Washington U.

Blanche Touhill: Yes, it was and I knew the people that were involved in that administration of that organization. But go on. So talk about your...well, there were professors that encouraged you but there were professors that, while they didn't discriminate, they really didn't encourage.

Judy Meader: They didn't think we should be there. They tolerated. Of course, you stood out in every class because you were the only woman there so every professor knew you which was either good or bad. But, for the most part, most of them were encouraging. They weren't discriminating. Of course when it came time to look for a job, they had a great placement office and you would sign up on the board for interviews and I remember going to one and it said "No women apply," and then I had signed up for another one...actually, I signed up for one of those where it said, "No women apply" just because I wanted to and actually, the guy interviewed me and, after I gave my case of why women were just as good as man, he said, "You know, we may have to reconsider our policy" and I can't remember what company it was but at least I thought, well, good, at least I...he's not going to give me a second interview. But then I also had signed for Laclede Gas and I got a letter from the placement director, in fact, you all have a copy of this. It says, "We have to cancel your appointment with Laclede Gas. They say no women," which I think is kind of ironic because now they have a woman CEO but this is back in 1964, '65, they would not interview women. And I did interview at some of the banks and there were some who interviewed, and actually, one of the banks, Harris Bank in Chicago was starting a women's program and so I

was one of the first people who had interviewed for that and they had even offered me a position. But by that time I decided I wanted to go to graduate school. So I wanted to apply to Northwestern because they had at that time where, if you'd been undergraduate, you could get out in a year.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, because you had the courses?

Judy Meader: Because you had the courses and it was the same professors and everything. The only difference was the graduate school was downtown in Chicago whereas undergraduate was at Evanston, on the main campus. Well, the thing was they said, "No, we don't let women in the graduate school."

Blanche Touhill: In any graduate program or the MBA?

Judy Meader: The MBA and I said, "Well, why not?" and they said, "Well, it's downtown Chicago and women can't live down there and we don't have any housing for you," and I'm like, "Well, I can live in an apartment." Well, the dean, Dean Reverenstein, I remember well.

Blanche Touhill: Did you go to see him?

Judy Meader: Oh, he knew me. There was what's called an "executive committee" of the business school and I was the only woman on the executive committee. I met with him quite frequently and he called me "the thorn in his side." So, I didn't get to go to Northwestern but they did change the policy the next year.

Blanche Touhill: What did he say to you when you went in and said, "I want to get into your business school"?

Judy Meader: He just said, "We just don't allow women because we don't have a place for you to live and it's not safe to live down there." I said, "There are people working down there," but he said, "Well, it's not in my hand. It's not my decision" because he was the dean of the undergraduate but evidently I caused enough ruckus that they decided that that was not a good policy.

Blanche Touhill: And they changed it?

Judy Meader: And they changed it the next year.

Blanche Touhill: But not in time...

Judy Meader: Not in time, and, you know, I'm always glad I didn't go there because it would have been the same professors, basically the same thing. Washington U came up to interview and I thought, oh, okay, I'll go back to St. Louis and they said, "Since you have good grades, we will give you pre-empt for 15 hours and then you can go to summer school so you can finish in one calendar year."

Blanche Touhill: Terrific.

Judy Meader: So I said, "Okay."

Blanche Touhill: So they wanted you?

Judy Meader: So they wanted me, yes. George Robinson, I remember, he was associate dean at the time and he said, "Oh, this will just be great," and so I started and I didn't even go to Northwestern graduation because I started my MBA program before and by now I was ready to live at home. It made my dad happy so I could live at home. The only thing he was unhappy about is he had to buy me a car because the first couple of weeks I was using my mother's car and she complained bitterly about that, that she had no transportation. So I managed to go to summer school. At Washington U, there were 70 in the MBA class and I ended up being in the second year MBA class because I kind of zipped through the summer and then joined them. There were, like, 70 and there were 3 women.

Blanche Touhill: Three women?

Judy Meader: Three women, and actually, over the years, I have talked to them off and on because I do fundraising for Washington U so I'm always soliciting my classmates so we catch up. But Washington U, it was different professors but it was all the same material. But I figured, being a woman, having been through the interview experience, that I needed every advantage I could have and an MBA might help.

Blanche Touhill: Yes, of course.

Judy Meader: So Washington U was great and I'm always glad I came back to St. Louis because I've stayed very active with Washington U and it's provided great connections, both business-wise and friends. It's nice to be in the same town as your school so you can really get to know the people and stay in

touch. Unfortunately, most of my professors...there's still one. I just saw him a couple of weeks ago at the Christmas brunch and we were chuckling about our time back in the '60s.

Blanche Touhill: Now, is the MBA new at Washington U?

Judy Meader: No, it's been around a while, a long time, very long time.

Blanche Touhill: Was there a time when they didn't admit women to their MBA?

Judy Meader: No, because I've met women who graduated, like, in '48. They never had anything against women. They just didn't have many of them.

Blanche Touhill: I have an aunt who was a 1917 graduate of the Bachelor's Degree program at Washington U. That's early, 1917. She entered in 1914, right at the time of World War I. I don't know when they started to first admit women but it must have been at the turn of the century or maybe just ahead of the turn of the century.

Judy Meader: I don't know about Washington U. My grandmother, my maternal grandmother went to Drury and she had a college degree and her sister went to Maryville and got her degree from Maryville. My grandmother wasn't strong enough to convince my grandfather that my mother should go to college but, as I say, she showed him anyway. But anyway, so then, at Washington U, of course they had interviewers coming in.

Blanche Touhill: For the MBA, after you graduated?

Judy Meader: Yes, because I was doing what my mother told me, you get an education, you get it in something where you can support yourself and you get a job so you can support yourself, because I had worked during the summers at the bank that my grandfather owned so that was fun, except my last year, between junior and senior, my brother and I went to Europe for two months, which was really fun, on a student tour. But the interviewers...I had decided by that time to go into investment banking and so I interviewed A.G. Edwards and Demsey-Taggler and Goldman Sachs and it was interesting because Goldman Sachs said they really wanted to hire me but they could only offer me a secretarial position and it was funny, the person who did that, Charlie Liebens who was head of the office, I would see him in later years, he said, "Oh, I think we made a mistake." So I was thinking about whether going with Demsey-Taggler,

A.G. Edwards and I can remember my interview with Ben Edwards and he didn't want to hire me. He told me, "We don't have many women and the women aren't going to like you."

Blanche Touhill: You mean, the clients?

Judy Meader: No, not the clients, the other women at the firm.

Blanche Touhill: Because they were secretaries?

Judy Meader: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: I see.

Judy Meader: "And you're going to just leave and get married," he said. "If you had a big wart on your face or something..." ...I remember he said, "If you had a big wart on your face, maybe it would be more likely you wouldn't leave and get married." This is Ben Edwards. I wish I'd recorded it. I could have sued if it had been...like, 30 years later. So I said, "But Mr. Edwards, if I were a man, I might get drafted. I won't be drafted at least."

Blanche Touhill: That was a good...because all the men did get drafted.

Judy Meader: Well, yes, there were a lot of them, yeah, several from my MBA class ended up going to Vietnam. But fortunately, I had opportunities to go to work in either the corporate finance department, the research department or the bond department.

Blanche Touhill: Of Demsey-Taggler?

Judy Meader: No, of A.G. Edwards.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, of A.G. Edwards.

Judy Meader: A.G. Edwards, yes. At Demsey-Taggler, they had said they'd hire me for their investment banking part but I really thought that Edwards was a strong firm. Unfortunately I was right since Demsey-Taggler went out of business. The good friend, Charlie Ford, was a good friend of my father's, was there and so he took me aside and he said, "Corporate finance is just a new department. There's only one person and the guy head is for women. His wife was an accounting and she'd worked."

Blanche Touhill: So he understood?

Judy Meader: He understood so his wife was always needling him and saying, "You should hire a woman." And the other two were, he didn't think the...the chance to move forward wasn't good. He said, "Corporate finance is new. They're growing" so I decided to go into corporate finance.

Blanche Touhill: Because it was growing?

Judy Meader: It was growing and I had a boss who was for women which actually happened because I became the second person in the department and the third person in the department, Ben Edwards kept wanting to promote to assistant vice president and Carter said, "No, if you promote him, you have to promote Judy too." And so they waited.

Blanche Touhill: So Ben didn't control the hiring really?

Judy Meader: He let them hire me but he was kind of in the promotions. He wouldn't let promotions go through and, what was even more interesting, when I started, they said, "Well, we can't start you above a secretary's salary because it will make the other women too upset." Now, at that point in time, I was living at home; I didn't care.

Blanche Touhill: You wanted a foot in the door?

Judy Meader: Yeah, I wanted a foot in the door so I said, "Okay." Well, the head of the placement office at Washington U said, "We couldn't even put your starting salary on the chart. Everybody else was up here and you were down here."

Blanche Touhill: So when they even set an average of their graduates, you would bring the average down?

Judy Meader: It wouldn't even go on the chart; it was too far down, because it was, like, four thousand dollars and everybody else was starting at, like, eighteen to twenty. But I got my foot in the door and I got a desk. The good thing...because in corporate finance, what we were doing was we were working with companies that wanted to go public and so the brokers at the time who were all over mainly the Southeast and Southwest would send in the proposals or call and say, "I want to do this" and to my boss' credit, some of the guys would say, "I don't want a girl working with my clients. They won't be happy," and he said, "Well, then, you just have to wait in line until somebody else...Judy could work with you now or you

can just wait in line.” He supported me. But fortunately there were a lot of brokers who really enjoyed working with me and the clients, I never had a client who was upset. I remember one client, I got off the plane in Oklahoma City and the guy said, “Oh, my God, they sent a woman. They must not care about me.” But, we ended up taking them public and so he said, “I guess I was wrong” and other said, “Well, you know what? You’re smarter than the men and you’re much more enjoyable to have dinner with.” So, at Edwards, it was always...I just kind of joined in. By this time, I was more comfortable in a room full of men. Get me in a room full of women and I was a nervous wreck because I had gone through undergraduate, graduate school and working with all men. It’s funny, today, still, I play ping pong every Wednesday night and people say, “Well, there aren’t any women there.” I said, “Really? Oh, yeah, I guess not.” The story of my life, you know.

Blanche Touhill: How did you get your salary up?

Judy Meader: Well, that was interesting. At that time, at Edwards, if you were a salaried employee, you could also sell stock and be on commission. So pretty soon I was making more in commission than I was in salary and then they made the wise decision that, really, we don’t want our salaried people also selling because if a broker is calling in with a deal, “we don’t want you trying to be on the phone selling stock. We want you to pay attention to them so we’re not going to pay commission anymore.” So I went to him, I said, “Look, either you raise my salary to what I’m making plus more or I’m going to go into straight selling” and by that time, they valued me enough, they said, “Okay.”

Blanche Touhill: Did you ever get parity?

Judy Meader: Yeah, I did get parity. My boss saw to that eventually.

Blanche Touhill: And did you ever get promoted?

Judy Meader: I did. I became their first woman vice president at A.G. Edwards.

Blanche Touhill: What did Ben say to that?

Judy Meader: Well, what was more interesting is when I decided to leave. I had been there seven years. I had become a vice president and I looked ahead and I thought, where am I going to go? I don’t see where I’m going to move up

in this organization. The market was beginning to get shaky and business was changing and I thought, it's not going to be as much fun. So I told my boss that I was going to leave and he said, "You can't do that," and Ben called me into his office and said, "You can't leave. You haven't accomplished everything you could here," and by this time, my boss had decided that he was leaving. Actually, he was getting fired but he never really admitted that but he was getting fired and I said to Ben, I said, "Well, would you ever let me run the department?" He said, "No," and I thought, well, then he'll never let me run the firm if he won't even let me run the department. So I said, "Well, then, what is there here for me?" He said, "Well, I don't think you've accomplished everything that you could here" and I'm like, "Yeah, but you won't let me move up. What else am I going to do?" So he said, "Well..." ...this was in March and I hadn't decided what I was going to do, kind of stupid. I just kind of said, "I'm going to leave" and so he said, "Well, can you at least stay a couple of months, at least three or four months?" and I said, "Sure," because that gave me time to decide what I was going to do. By that time, I thought, well, Ben was really beginning to appreciate me, maybe, a little bit, but he still...I always said, I hit the glass ceiling before it was defined.

Blanche Touhill:

Yes.

Judy Meader:

He would not let me run the department and he'd been always enamored...by this time our department was up to, like, seven people and the number three that was hired, Ben always wanted him and I told him, I said, "He is not going to be good running this department." Well, he put him in charge of it and he lasted about six months. A.G. Edwards was a very male-dominated field or firm. It always has been but I think I did have some influence because a couple of the women said, "We never would have made it to vice president if you hadn't broken the ground to start with." And then Ben said to me, he said, "I don't know why women get promoted here and then they leave." I said, "Because, Ben, you're not going to let them go any higher. You're going to let them go to a certain level and that's all." And you know, it was interesting, they always thought that I was going to have so much trouble with the secretaries and everything and I never did because I think it's how you treat them. I was always...I wasn't bossy, I always got along with them. So they always perceive it as something else, I think. And I know some women who have had trouble with other women who were lower but it depends on how

you treat them. I always treated them as kind of equals. I didn't care. They knew.

Blanche Touhill: Well, I think they recognized that maybe if you could move up, maybe they could move up.

Judy Meader: Right.

Blanche Touhill: Because I did know people who went to A.G. Edwards and who had other jobs, not stock brokers but they got their license and sold. So they can do that now or not?

Judy Meader: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: Yes, they couldn't do it in your unit.

Judy Meader: They couldn't do it as a salaried employee. No one as a salaried employee could also sell.

Blanche Touhill: This one woman I know did move to the commission and did very, very well, stayed with them for years.

Judy Meader: On commission, you don't have anybody telling you how much you can make. It all depends on how hard you work and that's why I was willing to tell them, "Hey, you don't want to pay me enough, I'll go out and just sell."

Blanche Touhill: So what did you do when you left?

Judy Meader: Well, it was interesting. When I had decided I was going to leave, there was a company that I had talked to about going public who had gotten back through to me that "if you ever decide to leave, come talk to us." So I went to talk to them. This happened to be Intrav, Barney Ebbsworth and the position, they wanted to go public maybe and he had these specific projects that he wanted done. I said, "Well, you have a great VP of Finance and that's where I would fit so you don't want to lose him," so I said, "Why don't I start my own business and you can hire me and I'll do these projects" and he said, "Okay, come back with a proposal." So I went home and figured out my monthly expenses and came back and said, "Okay, I want this much a month and a year's contract" and he said, "Fine." So my immediate thought was, too low; I should have gone higher. So I started my own consulting business and there was a company

at Edwards that I was working with in St. Petersburg, Florida, that we were in the middle of selling the company and they said, "No, we have to stay with you." So I negotiated with Edwards so they got part of the fee and I got part of the fee so I took that client with me. So I left Edwards on June 30th and I started my consulting business July 1 with two clients and my overhead covered so that's what I did. Of course, I didn't think it was unusual for a woman to start her own business. Then I found out that there weren't many of us out there.

Blanche Touhill: No, and in that particular field, that was a new field too, wasn't it, the buying and selling?

Judy Meader: Well, I was doing buying, selling of businesses, valuation of closely held companies, any special project. I helped set up pension plans, profit sharing plans for companies, just about any kind of project. When Intrav decided to move, I ended up coordinating their whole move. It's just like, anything that needed organizing, whether it was finance-related or the other...because I had gotten kind of tired of just being in finance. I liked doing all sorts of things, not finding many women in business. I can remember, it was late '60s, early '70s, Charlotte Cohen, who had started one of the first...

Blanche Touhill: Oh, yes, I remember Charlotte.

Judy Meader: Yeah, she got all the women she could think of that owned their own business together for lunch and Eunice Farmer was there who just recently died and Marsha Smith who had Marsha Smith Design and a couple of others.

Blanche Touhill: What about Martha (Rounds?) or somebody...

Judy Meader: Oh, Martha Rounds, yes, Martha Rounds was there. But there just weren't many. So in 1979, when I found the Women Business Owners Organization, I was all excited so I became one of the first members of it because I thought, oh, here are other women who are in business. So I became very active in that. We joined the National Association of Women Business Owners and I served in every office.

Blanche Touhill: NABO.

Judy Meader: NABO, yeah. NABO is still around.

Judy Meader 12-19-2014

- Blanche Touhill: Yeah, I went to speak to NABO the other night.
- Judy Meader: I saw that. It's still there and, as I say, I was very active in it in the '70s. It actually started in '79...the '80s and I served every office.
- Blanche Touhill: Were you responsible for that women's workshop?
- Judy Meader: The Smart Business, yes, yes, yes.
- Blanche Touhill: You put that on?
- Judy Meader: Yes.
- Blanche Touhill: Talk about that because that just grew like top seed, didn't it?
- Judy Meader: Well, it was very interesting, the SBA in '84...
- Blanche Touhill: The Small Business Association?
- Judy Meader: Small Business Administration...from Washington decided that several cities would have women business owner conferences and St. Louis wasn't chosen and we were kind of upset about that so a bunch of us from...at that time we were still business owners, went to Kansas City because one was there and we said, "Well, we're going to have one in St. Louis the next year." And so I was the one in charge of it. God, we met every week for almost a year. It was down at the...I guess it was Stouffer's then, down on the river front and we put together the first one and it was such a success that we did it from '85, '86, '87...I guess it kept going...I left NABO...I actually became the paid executive director of NABO because I really loved the strategizing and the organizing and marketing and doing fundraising and doing all of that and I got paid to run the conferences too. So that became part of my consulting business. We had conferences and we had people coming...we used our NABO connections because NABO had chapters all over the country and so we would bring in other women business owners from other cities and women from other cities all came into it too.
- Blanche Touhill: I remember there were just a lot of people there.
- Judy Meader: Yeah, we would have anywhere...I think in the early years, we would have...I think we had 300 the first year and we had a couple hundred...
- Blanche Touhill: But then it grew or what?

- Judy Meader: No, I don't think we got more than about 300 there but it was a goodly number and it was two-and-a-half days and we'd encourage everybody to stay at the hotel. It was just great networking: two or three days, workshops and exhibits. It was really good.
- Blanche Touhill: So women were beginning to go into small business where they needed to have legal advice and accounting advice and PR advice and human resources advice because going into business today, even though it's a small business, you have to be very well prepared.
- Judy Meader: Well, and most women didn't have any finance and no business background at all. But it's amazing, I was talking to NFIB, one of the people because I was also active in a lot of the political stuff and he said, "You know, one of the most unseen trends was the growth in women business owners" because in '73 they were less than 5% and by the late '80s, it was up to, like, 35%. I mean, everyone hit the glass ceiling and they said, "Okay, I'm going to start my own business."
- Blanche Touhill: And some of them that I knew had husbands who had full-time jobs and benefits...
- Judy Meader: Right.
- Blanche Touhill: And so while they didn't have much money to start the small business, they did have that back help...
- Judy Meader: Yeah, they had the support.
- Blanche Touhill: ...that if they stumbled, it would not be total disaster.
- Judy Meader: Right, and a lot of them started part-time. My office was at home, which was very unusual for a business back in the early '70s. I mean, it's so much easier to have your office at home now and it's just quite common. Everybody has offices at home with the communications. I didn't even have a fax machine when I started my first office.
- Blanche Touhill: One business that started out of that was the office services where you could rent an office and then you could reserve the conference room and the person who answered the phone would know who was ringing, depending on which button.
- Judy Meader: Right.

Blanche Touhill: Because I knew a woman here who decided she didn't want to be an academic and she really prepared the plans well ahead of time of what she was going to do and made contacts and then started her business and went out into one of those office suites.

Judy Meader: Right.

Blanche Touhill: So it was deceptive. If you went to visit her, you would think the company had all those offices but the reality is, she had an office and she had that secretary that she could pay for to type or whatever it was and she launched a very nice business and then it eventually grew and she went into a large corporation.

Judy Meader: I never thought it was strange to have a home business because I did have an answering service that answered so if I didn't answer, I had, it sounded like my own secretary because they would take good messages and the address was Oxford Hills. Nobody could really tell where it was. I rarely ever met with clients at the house. I always went to their offices so they didn't care where I was. Most of my clients, all they cared about was getting the job done.

Blanche Touhill: How long were you in that business, in your consulting business?

Judy Meader: I was in my consulting business until I actually bought the St. Louis Small Business Monthly in 1991 because I also had started managing Missouri Venture Forum during that time.

Blanche Touhill: Were you the creator of that?

Judy Meader: No, Larry (Kirkenbauer?) who has since left town, was the originator of it. He did it actually to help promote his business and it kind of grew out of that. I managed that but then when I bought the paper, that's when I finally had moved out of home because I couldn't have employees in my house and so we actually had an office and then I stopped doing the consulting, except I still manage Missouri Venture Forum so I guess I still have my consulting business but then it got to be too much. I needed to concentrate on the paper. Then by '97, '98, we started back managing Missouri Venture Forum again but by then I had other people to help with it which worked out much better.

Blanche Touhill: And what are you doing now?

- Judy Meader: Now I'm retired. The interesting thing is, I sold the paper in 2007 to two of my employees, a man and a woman and that worked out just wonderful and I actually retired. They didn't want to handle Missouri Venture Forum and I didn't want to handle it so they went off to someone else. Well, during that next year, all I got was calls saying, "Oh, God, we're having this problem, that problem" from Missouri Venture Forum so finally I said, "Oh, just hire me back" so I went back to managing, I got back to my consulting business role and went back to managing Missouri Venture Forum until last year and then I said, "Enough. It's interfering with all my other activities so I have to retire."
- Blanche Touhill: Let me change the subject a bit and ask you, is there some award or awards that you've received that you're really very proud of?
- Judy Meader: Well, I really like the St. Louis Forum Trailblazer Award. I think that's really a nice award. I love to be recognized by other women and St. Louis Forum is a great group. They were very supportive when we were doing the NABO and the smart business conferences. St. Louis Forum actually gave money to it and provided a lot of neat contacts into major organizations to get money for the conference. Again, I got the Founders Day Award from Washington U which I'm very proud of and the YWCA Leadership Award.
- Blanche Touhill: I think that was a very smart move on the part of the YWCA.
- Judy Meader: Yeah, I was back, one of the early days.
- Blanche Touhill: They did that years and years and years ago. I'm going to say, what year was their first award? I'm going to say it could have been, like, '80 or '85.
- Judy Meader: Oh, it was before that because I got the award back in the '70s and I was, like, in the third or fourth year.
- Blanche Touhill: And that was the award for women who were working and in professions.
- Judy Meader: Yes.
- Blanche Touhill: I mean, you had to do other things. They had different categories.
- Judy Meader: Yeah, like they had an entrepreneur category, they had a big business category, they had the arts...

- Blanche Touhill: But it was really to recognize that working woman where the Women of Distinction that comes in the spring, that really was for volunteers.
- Judy Meader: Right, right.
- Blanche Touhill: And that was really the woman who never really worked. They might have worked but that wasn't what the award was. It was really, have you done something in a volunteer nature and I always admired the YWCA for recognizing the professional woman.
- Judy Meader: Right.
- Blanche Touhill: I thought that was really smart and they must have 1,200 people at those luncheons.
- Judy Meader: At least.
- Blanche Touhill: I went...it was in December...
- Judy Meader: Well, the purpose is, is for each of the corporations to honor their women.
- Blanche Touhill: Yes, and they do, they do.
- Judy Meader: I also got the Small Business Hall of Fame. I'm in the St. Louis Small Business Administration Hall of Fame.
- Blanche Touhill: The other question I have is, if you had been born 50 years earlier, what would your life have been like?
- Judy Meader: Well, if I had the same parents, my mother would have still been insisting that I go to college, I have a career and I be able to support myself. If I'd had the same family, I don't know if I would have gone to Northwestern because I don't know, back then, if they were even letting women in but Washington U was.
- Blanche Touhill: Yes, they were.
- Judy Meader: And so I probably would have ended up at Washington U and I might have had even a harder time getting a job. I might have ended up being a secretary.

- Blanche Touhill: That's right. Actually, I know people who graduated in that time-frame and when they got out of school, they became secretaries, unless they went into some family business.
- Judy Meader: That's what my mother did. She wanted to be a lawyer but she knew she couldn't quite make it after getting her scholarship through Fontbonne so she started out as a secretary. She was Mr. Mack's first secretary, at McDonnell Douglas. She was in there very early.
- Blanche Touhill: Why was she so intent that you be able to support yourself?
- Judy Meader: She just thought a man should be able to support himself and a woman should be able to support herself. She treated my brother and I...we were equals. It wasn't that he was going to go out and have a great job and I was going to get married. She just felt that a woman should be...I think it was partly because she had worked and she had had ambition. She really wanted to be a lawyer and when they got married, my dad said, "A wife of mine is not going to work." So that kind of made sure that her daughter was going to work, if she wanted to.
- Blanche Touhill: But at the same time, if he had died, she would have been able to, with the degree, to have re-entered the workforce.
- Judy Meader: She could have.
- Blanche Touhill: More easily.
- Judy Meader: More easily, right, because my mother was very smart.
- Blanche Touhill: What happened to your brother?
- Judy Meader: He became a doctor.
- Blanche Touhill: Oh, he did become a doctor?
- Judy Meader: Oh, yes. I was always glad that he was going to be the doctor because I know I couldn't handle that but he's still practicing. He's an ophthalmologist in Phoenix and we're still very close.
- Blanche Touhill: And are you close with any of your friends you made through your life?
- Judy Meader: Oh, my high school friends, I just was on a cruise in January with several of my high school friends and college friends, we're having our 50th

reunion at Northwestern and it will be the first one I go to so several of my sorority sisters, we've all been talking. I keep in touch with a lot of my high school friends, college friends and then I have about, on my mother's side, probably about 80 cousins and a bunch of those come to my house every Christmas Day and I have become kind of the matriarch of the family. I do a family calendar every year of all the children and grandchildren of my maternal grandma and grandpa and I put them all on a calendar and put pictures on it and give them out to them all.

Blanche Touhill: So that's a wonderful historical record, of how they look as they grow up.

Judy Meader: Yeah. I try to put pictures and they all keep their calendars and one year I thought that nobody liked them and so I didn't do it and everybody said, "Oh, what happened to the calendars?" I said, "Well, nobody said 'thank you' so I figured you didn't care," and they said, "Oh, thank you," and now they all make sure they say thank you and tell me they save them all from year to year and they don't write on them because they don't want to do that.

Blanche Touhill: I'm sure that's true.

Judy Meader: I don't have any children. I was married, I had two step-children but I don't see them anymore and so my cousins are really my family and my brother, but he's in Phoenix but, as I say, I have lots of cousins here in St. Louis and around the country. I have a few cousins on my dad's side but my mother's side was the Catholic side, with six kids who had, like...some of them had seven and seven so that's why there are about 80 of them living. On my dad's side, they were the Baptist side and so they had one and two children and I was the second oldest on my mother's side and second youngest on my dad's side. But I keep in touch with my relatives on both sides, but there are very few on my dad's side.

Blanche Touhill: If you look over your life, what would you say your theme was? What's a constant reoccurring theme?

Judy Meader: Persistence, yeah, fighting to get this and fighting to get that. I always, if I'm given a task, I do it. I'm just very diligent at getting things done. You give me a task, I get it done and so persistence and trying to be consistent and keeping track of people. That's why I say "diligent." I put together a list of all of my sorority sisters and everybody's amazed of how I could do that. Well, I'd been in touch with several of them and I talk to some of

the others and they haven't talked to any of them. But, I went online and got all the data and you can find anything and so it's just, if I've decided to do something, I do it.

Blanche Touhill: Why did you take the business side again? I know you talked about that.

Judy Meader: I just always ended up...

Blanche Touhill: ...being the treasurer.

Judy Meader: ...being the treasurer and it came easy to me.

Blanche Touhill: Was math easy for you?

Judy Meader: Oh, yeah, math was always easy for me. I love math.

Blanche Touhill: Did anybody ever say to you, "Girls don't learn math"?

Judy Meader: No, none of my teachers ever said that.

Blanche Touhill: I guess you were in courses in high school that you were the only girl?

Judy Meader: Oh, no, you had to take all the math classes. Everybody had to take them: algebra and, you know, in high school, I didn't take any off the advanced math classes. I just took the regular math classes: algebra and geometry. I took more in college. I took about all the math classes I could and one of my professors, I said, "Well, this is my last math class" and he said, "Well, that's too bad because you're really good at this." But then, statistics...had statistics and accounting, I love accounting. I always liked numbers.

Blanche Touhill: Did you make the right decision in leaving A.G. Edwards?

Judy Meader: I always said, I'd made the best decision for mental because I don't think I could have handled it because I really got to do whatever I wanted as my own boss but financially I would have been better off staying there because everybody that stayed there, it became just a much bigger firm and they all did well and they all took early retirement but I don't think I would have had the experiences I had. I've just done such a variety of things and just been able to do whatever I wanted to do.

Blanche Touhill: What is the Missouri Venture Forum?

Judy Meader: It's a group that helps entrepreneurs grow their businesses. It's made up of entrepreneurs, lawyers, accountants, anybody that will help a business grow.

Blanche Touhill: Do they get paid?

Judy Meader: Well, if you hire them, yes, but the group meets and you network and you make connections and so, then if you decide you want to...

Blanche Touhill: Oh, then you just hire the lawyer or the accountant?

Judy Meader: Hire the lawyer, right, but the speakers who come in, a lot of them are successful business people that share their expertise. It's a good climate, a good group to get together.

Blanche Touhill: You've spent your life helping women in a variety of ways and building your own business and being an entrepreneur and persistent. What advice would you give to a young woman or any woman of any age who wants to go into business for herself?

Judy Meader: Well, first, I know a lot of women have been very successful starting new businesses in college. I've always thought you need to get some experience out working in the world before you start your own business and it helps to have an understanding...I would say you need to understand finance and money because if you can sell, that's great and you have to be able to sell, but if you can't keep track of the money, you're going to go out of business. So I encourage them to either hire somebody who can really help them in that area or learn enough themselves. But I tell them, "Being in your own business is great but be sure that you know it's something that you love to do because you're going to work a lot harder than you ever thought." The two that bought my business, they said, "We thought we worked hard before. We work a lot harder now." But when you're working for yourself, you're willing to work and it almost never goes away. It's not a 9:00 to 5:00 job and you have to be willing to do everything. You have to be willing to take out the trash; you have to be willing to...when I owned the paper...I was doing something the other day, my ex-husband, I was creating Christmas cards for him. He said, "How do you know how to do all this graphic stuff?" I said, "I learned how to do it because if somebody wasn't there, I had to be able to do it." Now, they always say, you get to a point where you have to be able to delegate and I was never really great at delegating but

if you want to grow the business, you have to be able to delegate but also there's something to being able to know every aspect of the business. I would say the number of women out there in business now is so high and you can just about do it in anything. So you can do it.

Blanche Touhill: Well, thank you very much. It was a wonderful interview and you've seen a lot of changes in the role of women in the American society, especially the financial area and so I congratulate you and you've been a well-known figure of women leaders in St. Louis all of my professional life and so you're infamous.

Judy Meader: I don't know about infamous but I always say I've been around. My people at the paper always say, "How did you know that person?" and I'd say, "Well, let me think, where was this?" Many years because, God, I've been working now for close to 50 years.

Blanche Touhill: Well, thank you very much.

Judy Meader: Thank you.