

An Interview with  
**Gayle Bradley-Palmer**

at *The Historical Society of Missouri* St. Louis  
Research Center, St. Louis, Missouri

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interviewed by Dr. Blanche Touhill  
transcribed by Valerie Leri and edited by  
Josephine Sporleder



**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?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: My name is Gayle Bradley-Palmer.

Blanche Touhill: Gayle, would you talk about your early life: your siblings, your cousins, your grandparents, the playmates that you had, how did you play in the neighborhood when you were a child, when you went to elementary and secondary school. Was there a teacher or somebody who said to you, "Gayle, you really have ability," and then I'd like to know, is there somebody in your family that said, "The world is changing. You can be what you want to be" and we'll start there.

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: Well, I had an unusual youth. I went to seven different elementary schools. My father was in the military. I always looked at that, now that I can reflect upon it, as an opportunity because it gave me so many different people, places and customs that I learned and my youth was idyllic. I always lived near the ocean pretty much. We lived in Europe for a short period of time so I had exposure to a lot of different cultures and we were there '59 so this was really the Cold War start and I was exposed to the stress my father was under, being involved in that. I didn't really get it until later but I really get why he was the way he was. I have one sister. My family is relatively small. My father's a native St. Louisan. My mother was from New York and met my father in St. Louis. So we have that connection with St. Louis. After living all over for seven different primary schools, then I went to three different high schools and I think you learn very quickly that you have to sink or swim. You had to learn to get along. You had to learn to give up but at the same time, you've learned how the system worked and I think that was really helpful for me, looking at my daughters that I have now. I was able to really reinvent myself every time I went to another high school. So, I think I had it pretty lucky in that way.

Blanche Touhill: Who told you that you had ability?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: My father was my greatest cheerleader. I don't think I realized, obviously, until later, that he was the kind of man that would actually sit down, tell you you could do anything and support you and was never negative. So that, I think, had an enormous part of my ability to see things in a way that's positive and never negative.

Blanche Touhill: Did he demand that you do certain things or did he guide you?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: He never demanded; neither did my mother. They always felt...and I actually think, looking back at myself as an older parent versus a young parent, which my parents were...they just sort of thought it would all work out and it basically did. I was thinking about this, trying to figure out if there was something that held me back. I think moving in different primary schools, you had different lessons that you either had to relearn or you never really got it. Some of that was apparent to me later. I know you asked about who were my favorite teachers. My favorite teacher was Miss Grace in 4<sup>th</sup> grade in Germany and she was the first teacher who told me I could do anything anywhere anytime and at 64 years old, I can't forget Miss Grace.

Blanche Touhill: Isn't that wonderful.

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: So I never had that feeling that I couldn't and I think I was very lucky. We weren't an affluent family. We had food on the table. My mother did not work outside of the home so I had a very blessed life that way and I think, having all those school experiences made you understand there's a bigger world than just one school, one spot, one town.

Blanche Touhill: How old was your sister? Older? Younger?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: My sister was exactly three-and-a-half years older. It's so wonderful to have an older sister.

Blanche Touhill: Did she guide you?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: No, we were really very competitive and she actually, now reflecting on this, was a much more educated person. She took that on as one of her goals and actually used it in a great way. So we were very competitive and she chose, really, in her later life, to live in Europe for almost 35 years.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, my goodness!

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: So, we had a lovely relationship. Obviously we loved each other but we weren't really close until, I would say, probably five years ago because she chose to be in Europe and that's where her goals were, working with the Army.

Blanche Touhill: Did she come back to the States?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: Two months ago.

Blanche Touhill: Two months ago? Was that hard on her?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: I think she decided it was the perfect time. You know, you wake up sometimes and realize, I'm done with that and she was done with that. She had taken care of so many people and so many soldiers. She is married, has one child...that I think she was done so she wants to do absolutely nothing now.

Blanche Touhill: Does she live in Washington?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: She lives outside of Washington where my mother still lives. So she was very much, I think, a product of being a first child, wanting to achieve the very most. I think that, because I had such a blessed life, I decided I had a basket of options.

Blanche Touhill: Oh. Now talk about your options. Did you go to college?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: I did go to college.

Blanche Touhill: Where did you go?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: I went to Marymount, which was a college, a two-year college. I worked through college because that's how you paid your tuition, so I worked full-time during college for the university, which is now a university.

Blanche Touhill: Marymount is in New York?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: Marymount original is in New York. Marymount, Arlington, Virginia, is a 65-year-old campus and I was fortunate enough to meet the woman that started it in Washington and go to school under her tutelage so I always thought she was an amazing woman, to build up a university similar to yourself. She recently passed away, about eight years ago.

Blanche Touhill: Did she encourage you?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: You know, she was an amazing woman because she was a nun of the Sacred Heart and she wanted nothing but the best and the most for every woman on that campus and it was during the time of burning bras.

We lived in Washington. That was obviously four miles away from Washington. We were involved in all of the protests, all the anti-war protests. She encouraged us all to be involved, to take care of people during the riots. We were all trained to take care of the tear gas victims. So she was really a little bit ahead of her time. I think she was just one of the more amazing women I've ever seen. You need a parking lot, somehow it appeared. I don't know how she did it. She prayed a lot. She had a lot of supporters. You needed a gym, it was done. So, she was actually, I would say, one of the women I looked up to.

Blanche Touhill: Are you still friends with people that you went to school with in elementary or secondary or high school or college?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: I am actually friends with...two of my friends I went to high school with. College, not much, no. Marymount, at that time, was, I would say, more commuter and then it became much larger and I did live in a dorm actually but it was mostly commuter and, no, I'm friends with people who I've been involved helping maybe raise money or do things for Marymount and I'm actually still involved. And it actually was the place that made me realize that the fashion, merchandising was what I wanted to do.

Blanche Touhill: How did you realize that?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: Well, for some reason, I'd always sewn and Marymount had quite an extensive design department so I went to college with that in mind.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, you did?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: You chose Marymount for that reason?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: I did. I was accepted to many colleges but I have to say, I took the way out that was more convenient for me because I had traveled so much, I was done and I was not going to get into Georgetown but I loved Marymount. I loved what they had. American University didn't have that department. GW was a different academic slant and I just loved it. So I learned a lot and went on after Marymount to American University for another year, but very honestly, I was offered a job with a large department store.

Blanche Touhill: Which one?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: Garfinckel's...

Blanche Touhill: Oh, I knew Garfinckel's.

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: ...which, if you had the box and you opened it, your heart started beating in a certain way.

Blanche Touhill: Yes, it was like the Tiffany box.

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: It was the Tiffany box. So that's where my career started, was in the retail business and I was trying to go through themes of my work background and I enjoyed everything but if I were a woman of today, at 20 years old, I would say I had more sexual harassment in every job I had except for my last one and I was thinking about that this morning. It didn't really make a difference in my life movement. It was just something I remembered with each job that I had.

Blanche Touhill: Yes, there was somebody.

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: There was someone somewhere. So in 1972, when I was asked to be in the management program for Garfinckel's...and I was married. I did marry early...I was asked, "How long do you think you'll be here?" and I said, "Actually, I have no idea" ; "I'm not sure you want to do this because you're just going to have babies and leave us and it's a waste of our money." I said, "I can't answer that," and, plus, you're 21...22, you have no idea what you're supposed to say. You're just thinking, this is so unfair but you didn't quite know how to react. But that was fine because...

Blanche Touhill: Did they put you in the program?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: Mm-hmm, but Garfinckel's then had a wonderful young woman that worked there who went on to become an enormous retail success. She and her husband started a company called Le Sac, which is a purse that many of us have all bought. But she was the person that brought a class action suit against Garfinckel's because John Brown was being paid two dollars more than Gail Bradley.

Blanche Touhill: She won?



Gayle Bradley-Palmer: Yeah, they had to have equal pay so it was really quite amazing actually.

Blanche Touhill: What year was that?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: '72.

Blanche Touhill: Because we had a woman on this campus who sued in about...I'm going to say '75...'76, so those suits began...the Civil Rights Act was '65 and the Title Nine was in the early '70s; I'm going to say maybe '72 or '73 and all those changes...

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: Right.

Blanche Touhill: Women were then protected in the workplace.

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: Just starting.

Blanche Touhill: From '65 to about '72, Civil Rights made us a part of the protected group and '72 or so was the...what do you say, the redoing of the Title Nine or the Civil Rights, protecting us in jobs.

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: Right.

Blanche Touhill: It was right at that time.

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: It was quite an interesting time.

Blanche Touhill: Things began to change, yes.

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: Yes, it was very interesting. I will say that most of the people in Garfinckel's that were buyers were women and women, God love them, are the hardest people to work for because they judge you from the minute you wake up until the minute you end. There's never really any wiggle room and that was something I wasn't used to. But anyway, I hung it out and realized later on that I did not particularly like the retail business as far as where I was and what I was doing and, you know, it's gut work. It's counting buttons; being of great service, but I will say it was the foundation of everything I did later. So I didn't like it then and I decided I would leave and I was never a particularly good secretary because I was a terrible speller, terrible speller.

Blanche Touhill: You missed that as you were going through grade school?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: I missed that in my seven grade schools, yes, but I did, however, go to work for a law firm that was very small and turned out to be a firm that had one illegal client that was dreadful and well known throughout the United States and I had no idea that he was a gangster, really. So there comes in the harassment again and the other client was, God rest his soul, Colonel Sanders...

Blanche Touhill: Oh, my goodness!

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: ...who was truly one of the most...almost a predator. So that was interesting. That only lasted, probably seven months but during that time, that was another layer of understanding men's attitudes toward a blonde. That's sort of the way I looked at it. So you had to work harder for that. It really was the crutch you basically could have leaned on or could have been a detriment. So that lasted a short period of time and then I went to work in a brokerage firm, just simply because someone told me that would be great and I was what they called the cage where you would bring your stocks. I would put them in. So I did that a couple months. Then I became the office manager for 40 brokers and then I became a broker. So that was a wonderful experience. That was financial, money emotions that are in everyone's sleeves, the pounding of trying to make the sales every day, supporting all those people, and at the same time, making sure they did their job. But I was the only office manager that was asked to become a broker. So I was sent off to New York for three days and, out of seven of us, I was the only one that got my license because the rest were out hooting and howling and having a great time; they had a great time. For me, it was a feather and it was really a wonderful experience. But talk about sexual harassment: I feel that the brokerage industry has always had that because it's always been a man's area. The women that were in it were highly successful and pretty much they stuck to themselves because if you sat around the water fountain talking, Pete would get your idea and your idea would be gone. So you really protected yourself at all times.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, how interesting!

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: Right, you know, whether you're telling them they look great and then you go back to the office and buy the silk company that made the tie, you know, that kind of thing. So it was really an interesting experience; loved it; it was great.

Blanche Touhill: Has the brokerage business changed much?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: Well, I do have friends that are still in the brokerage business. Yes, I think it has. I think it's much more open.

Blanche Touhill: Is that because women have money of their own?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: I think that's absolutely spot on; I do. The women that made money in '79 to '80 were considered tough and not successful like John and Pete and Randy. So there certainly was an era of, you're not equal because you make the same amount of money, you're still a woman, and that was fine. I never lost a lot of sleep over it. It was just something, when I go back over my notes of my life, I notice those things and they were helpful because it was a detriment; it was a problem that I just reversed.

Blanche Touhill: What was in your character that you reversed it?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: I never thought anything was bad. I never grew up negative. I always grew up knowing that you could make it better, whatever it was, always, and I think that was really my parents' attitude too: "You can do it. Don't worry about it. If Mary or John or the playground, there's a problem, walk away; be a better person" and those are just life lessons that not everyone gets that opportunity. Nothing's fair but it doesn't mean that you can't rise above it. So, I think the brokerage business was really quite an eye-opener and then, by chance, a woman walked in the office that ran a temporary help service and she said, "I want you to work for me. I am a woman-owned business. Come work for me. I will make money for you." So, at that point, I was married, I got divorced, no children. That was very traumatic for a woman and for a man, too, but met my future husband. He had two children. That was fine, I didn't want children. That was great; got married, went to work for this woman and we basically opened three offices. I trained a staff of 15 salespeople and that was actually my favorite job that I ever had because I traveled, visited about 20 clients a day, to make sure they used our company versus someone else's and that was the best, and, as I say, working for women is tough but I've gone through so many things. That was like the light bulb went off. She was a mother; she knew what people went through; she got it and she facilitated the groundwork for us to be successful. So, that was my favorite job, as I said, but then I'd say my best

job is what I call the “FF,” the family facilitator. I am a family facilitator and I have two step-children, two natural children and eight grandchildren and I think that’s been the hardest job I’ve ever had.

Blanche Touhill: Why is it hard?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: Well, because, first of all, I think having step-children was...not being a maternal person, didn’t think that I would have children, I didn’t really know how to do that and then I realized, relax, just go with it; they’re just people. So it was hard to make sure that each family was taken care of, that I wasn’t their mother; I was their friend. You know, you’ve got a husband that you hope and want to support, whether he’s doing the right things or not with his children. He happened to do a fabulous job but those were hard things to go through because you think you have an opinion about things but they’re really not your children. So that was very difficult and it all worked out beautifully but my oldest step-child...I’m just going to go back to the women...she actually was given a scholarship to UCLA to be the goalie for their soccer team and that scholarship did not come until her second year there because she sued the school under Title Nine.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, my goodness!

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: So she’s really my hero. She gathered her teammates and said, “We’re a club sport. We don’t get to use the field; we don’t get this; we don’t get that”...

Blanche Touhill: What year was that?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: ’92.

Blanche Touhill: Okay, because we didn’t have a lawsuit but this campus didn’t have any women’s sports until, I’m going to say, probably the early ‘70s and then they hired a woman to have four exploratory sports, getting ready to enter intercollegiate activity and then within three years, they launched into the intercollegiate but that move by women into athletics was very, very important. Did you think it was important?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: It was so important that I actually think the two daughters that I have that are 34 and 30 were completely and totally inspired by her forever and have been and what she did is she raised money. She did the

right thing, she raised the money first. She paid the lawyer, the proper lawyer, the big dog lawyer, the lawyer that UCLA knew and said, "Give it a shot," and he brought the lawsuit and they never went to bat. So they said, "Fine" because they knew.

Blanche Touhill: Well, at the university, when our faculty woman sued, the university gave in before the final verdict.

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: Yeah, it was fine so she did have a two-year scholarship then, after that.

Blanche Touhill: Well, that was the fight, too, on this campus, would they get money from the campus, really student activity money to support their academics in order to play sports and they did get that too. But what I'm interested in...that was '92; that was late.

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: It was late and it was interesting that they had the ability to understand it was still relevant. They could use that law. They could do it. I wasn't aware of it. I mean, I played sports but I wasn't like my step-daughter and, as I say, she influenced my daughters to play sports from four years old through college but not on her level. So, it's been really interesting. My husband and I had met in the Washington, D.C. area and I had no interest in quitting work until I realized...and I think this is another issue women deal with all the time; it's so relevant...that my salary was comparable to my nanny and the nanny is not as reliable as a mother. Well, let's hope, the mother is reliable. So after great financial columns and sighing and heaving and hawing, I decided I was going to stay home with after my second child. I worked with my first child. So I stayed home and it took me about 18 months, I think, to become a human being, to realize that I was relevant and I would say to women now that you read these articles in the New York Times about the women staying home and it's great or "how can you do that?" or whatever. I think it's really a balancing of not only your children but also becoming involved in something bigger than your family. It doesn't work if you can't use the experience you've had with your family or your work, to help someone else because there's always someone else that needs it more than you do, needs time, needs effort, needs your volunteer.

Blanche Touhill: Now, did your mother volunteer? Where did you learn to volunteer?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: Well, that is kind of an interesting thing. My mother was a naval officer's wife and I would say her job was raising the children and stabilizing my father's career and it sounds so easy and he could have done everything by himself. He was a great dish washer, great maker of beds, great grocery buyer, great everything, but she chose to do it for him and I think they thought it was a team effort. So for her it was a natural. She did work later in life as a tour guide in Washington which she adored: big buses; thousands of people coming. She loved it and she was a natural at it, but she never really had a career. She had it a few years before she married but not one to speak of. But she always encouraged it. She thought it was a natural thing and expected both of us to have a career. It was never thought of that we wouldn't.

Blanche Touhill: When you talk about your mother as a naval officer's wife, did they volunteer to help other people?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: They always had to, yes, because...

Blanche Touhill: That was part of the culture?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: It was part of the culture. It was part, the officers basically were in charge of helping a certain group of new recruits coming in, training, they had thrift shops, they had all of these things. So she did a lot of that but it was a dual job and I always thought she did it well and I always thought she was something else.

Blanche Touhill: How did you find your way into the volunteer world, because I know you've done a lot of volunteer.

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: I've done a lot of volunteer in Washington but I have to say, my meaningful volunteer work has been here in St. Louis.

Blanche Touhill: Yes. You know, St. Louis is really open to people from out of town who want to become involved.

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: Right, but I think you said something really interesting. It's open, people out of town, since I've been here 13 years, you have to work it and get in there and push your sleeves up. You are not a person that has all this experience. They don't want to know that. They want to know what you can do for them, and I think that is so important in a volunteer organization. I really don't care that you are a brain surgeon. I want you

to stand here and do this and that and please raise money for x. So it's kind of a humbling thing.

Blanche Touhill: Because you have to reinvent yourself every time you have a new volunteer.

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: Thank you, yes, and then you need to prove yourself. So in volunteer work, there's always money involved. Somebody has to raise some money. I don't mind doing that. I might have minded that 20 years ago but if it's a just right cause, I like that.

Blanche Touhill: What was your first volunteer activity?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: I, for some reason, was asked to be on the Washington University Women's Society board. I personally think, looking back on it, I was new blood; that's fine. I was from Washington. Maybe that sounded sexy or something and that was an education unto itself because that's when I learned about St. Louis and all the different...where you're from, what you did, who your father was, what your mother did. I'm not saying it's not the same in every town but when you're in a level of that group of women raising funds, it's a raising funds for scholarships, you were told immediately where they came from, what they did and how they evolved and I thought it was sort of amusing because I think that's pretty much fuel to understand how you can either go forward, work with them, or surpass them. So it was a great opportunity for me, to be there. I met a lot of people and it really narrowed and winnowed my scope of what I wanted to do which really pretty much turned out to be the Children's Variety, which is such an enormously fabulous story, just one that I could go on and on about but that's dear and near to my heart. I'm very involved with BJC, the hospice for children and we're hopefully opening a facility here in the next year. So I love that.

Blanche Touhill: In the area next to BJC?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: It will be in West County.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, it's going to be in West County?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: Yes, and we've tried to replicate some of it from my family experience in Arizona, which my sister-in-law started it there.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, how wonderful!

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: So that's great, and I'm also very much involved in this city library downtown.

Blanche Touhill: I know you're interested in the city library.

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: And I think that is just a jewel that hasn't really been cleaned yet. I mean, the façade is divine; the inside is great, but now it needs to shine because there's so much there to give. So, I just feel amazingly lucky to be involved in that but I don't think I would have been as effective if I hadn't had all these steps, all these people that affected my life, whether it was negative or positive, but basically all positive because, as I've always said to my girls, the people you meet in high school that you walk down the hall with, you're going to meet the same people in all your jobs, in all your volunteer activities. They really just don't change. They're all the same. So you know what that girl's like. She's not going to change and you know what that man's going to be like and he's not going to change. So that was my saying to them, that's where you're going to learn the most, in the halls.

Blanche Touhill: So you think in high school, you sort of settle into your personality?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: I think you see the world in high school walking down the halls and I think you either get it or you don't and my theory to my girls was, that's it, it's a microcosm of the world because it's international, it's boys and girls, it's hierarchy, it's everything. So that was sort of my way, I've always told my girls. One other thing I wanted to say because I think it's really important as a woman: I think the hospital facilities in the St. Louis area basically are incredible and I am a lucky two-year survivor of breast cancer so I don't really think it would have been with as much ease, with as much talent in a large metropolitan area like Washington, D.C. which I lived in for 40 years. This was where I was meant to be taken care of because of the ease of the town and the enormous quality of the physicians.

Blanche Touhill: Did you go to Siteman?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: I went to Siteman and that's another volunteer thing I'm doing also. Anyone that needs to know if you have an operation, breast cancer operation, I'm happy to tell you what I think you should do, not that we all don't know what to do, but there were a lot of things that I wasn't told other than through friends and I think I have some helpful hints. So, I put



my name out there in the clouds or wherever, always call me, I'll give you some ideas. So, pretty much, I have a whole lot of chapters I'm still working on.

Blanche Touhill: Let me ask a couple of questions that are off this line of questioning, but then I'll come back: If you had been born 50 years earlier, what would your life have been like?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: Well, I think I'm going to have to go back to my parents. I think, no matter what, my parents were positive. No one was rich so I don't really care about the riches. I think I would be as happy but I don't think I would have had the enormous amount of experience because of my opportunities.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, I see. So your childhood would have been different, substantially different probably?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: If my father had been a naval officer, probably not. I would have still had food on the table and moved all the time. We just would have moved slower. I mean, we drove across country seven times, in the back seat of a Buick with a mattress, by the way, not a seatbelt, but a mattress so we could sleep. So, maybe I would have been in a wagon going back and forth like an Army officer's family.

Blanche Touhill: But when you grew up, 50 years ago, if your father was still a naval officer, you would have traveled more slowly...

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: ...but when you grew up, would you have followed your mother into a naval marriage?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: Would I have?

Blanche Touhill: ...going to work or...

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: I personally think that, being a naval officer's wife then was much more of a privilege and a better life than it is now. So you might have aspired to that simply because I think that seemed like the best thing to do, to be in a situation where you were taken care of; you could take care of your children. It would have been a little easier to have been a naval officer's wife then. Would I have liked to work? Always. I would have

been an artist. I would have worked for Lewis, Comfort, Tiffany and his factory. That's where I would have been. That's what I would like to have done. So I think that that's a hard question. I'm not sure I answered that properly but I think pretty much this, you either wake up on the right side of the bed, thinking positive or you don't and there are lots of boulders that are thrown at you but if you can move quickly and think that you can get to the next stop, I think you have to have people that inspire you to do that and I was lucky to have my parents tell me I could navigate through anything and pretty much, I feel that I've done that and I think because of the age we live in now, we just keep going because, you know, we have at least 30 more years to live.

Blanche Touhill: Yes, that's true.

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: At least, so, you know, the reinventing, it's a no problem.

Blanche Touhill: Is being an organizer and moving forward, how does that relate to your interest in style and fashion and color?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: Well, actually, I think that it could probably be a form of OCD, if you actually think about it. It's an organized way of looking at something.

Blanche Touhill: So you look at the world in color?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: I look at it in color; I look at it in shapes.

Blanche Touhill: And ultimately what it's going to accomplish?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: Always, always. Everything I look at, my mind just keeps burning, trying to think, that probably should have been changed. I don't know where that came from. I think that's one of those genes you get. I think I inherited some of it from my mother who is an artist, who, at 90, still paints. That might be a new career for me too, painting. So, yes, I think I do look at everything that way actually, yes.

Blanche Touhill: My other question is: Is there some award you've received or awards that have special meaning for you?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: You know, you asked me to think about that and not really, no. I mean, I've been acknowledged many times. This sounds so narrow but I really mean this with all my heart: I think the award is seeing your family do amazing things and it doesn't sound very sexy but it's pretty amazing.

That's my award. My award is, they have been survivors, thrivers and they are doing well.

Blanche Touhill: What do they do?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: My step-daughter, who I've had for six years who's 43, she was a physicist but then she...a soccer player but then she decided she would be a landscape architect. She has trucks and people that work for her, not a lot and she works in the bay area. I have a step-son who really didn't talk, by the way, for several years. I'm sure he was traumatized by his parents' divorce, and he went on to go to college and he runs a copying company, as far as storage facilities, very large company in the bay area and he's very successful. My first daughter from birth is a teacher, was always involved in the schools and all of the charter schools.

Blanche Touhill: In New York?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: In New York City, yes. She has a Master's in that. She's worked for Common Corps. She's just a very involved person. Now she has two children that are 16 months apart so that's her job right now. And then I have a younger daughter who graduated from college, worked in the political world and decided to go to law school at night because she didn't want to miss one inch of ground that she had accomplished working so she took her nights and did that and she's general counsel, doing well, about to get married. So those are pretty great rewards and, oh, by the way, it took a little time, I was married once for six years with no children but I'm working on 37 years of marriage now and that's a hard job, by the way, and a rewarding one.

Blanche Touhill: You know, it's interesting that both you and your husband, you're very American but you're also very international.

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: Yes. I mean, I feel that way. I never was brought up with color. My father grew up in St. Louis so he would have been 100 years old and he never once spoke about race. It didn't enter our family life and people that worked for him were from all over the world, were different nationalities. The same with my mother and she grew up in New York. It was very interesting and from their marriage, because they'd lived in Europe; they lived in Europe twice actually, they just never looked at anyone as being different. It was pretty fascinating, actually. And I feel the same way and obviously we're lucky enough to travel so that

influences me a lot also but I think that that just adds a layer of richness in looking at other people. I try really hard to look at it that way and it's so interesting you bring that up because I've actually always thought that way, the same with my sister.

Blanche Touhill: Well, you had an international experience as a child. I think most Americans today, if they work, they're going to be involved internationally in some way but that really wasn't true of this country...

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: ...in the working, yes.

Blanche Touhill: In the working, yes, and in the living. You really grew up...as you say, you grew up in a town, you grew up in a neighborhood, you went to certain schools, but most Americans do move a lot, I will say that, they do move.

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: They do. I thought I was unusual.

Blanche Touhill: Well, I think you were still unusual.

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: I think I am unusual. My mother moved 27 times but she just did it with aplomb. She just did it.

Blanche Touhill: Well, she knew that that would be her job.

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: It's her job. You know, that is a very difficult job. You either do it and you whine or you do it and you smile and if she had a problem, it wasn't really a problem because, as a naval officer or a naval officer's child, wherever you moved, you had a few people you knew. The only place I've ever moved where I knew no one was St. Louis but that was another opportunity.

Blanche Touhill: Now, your children, were they raised by the time you came to St. Louis?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: My youngest child was a freshman in college so she then had that experience of not going home for Thanksgiving or not going home for Christmas. So she would come here and actually, it was the best thing that ever happened to her because, instead of only going to XYZ, she would come here. Her life is now layered with St. Louis and she loves St. Louis. If she could find the right place and bring the man she's about to marry here, I actually think she would because of the people she's met.

Blanche Touhill: Are you thinking of staying in St. Louis?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: We are making this our home.

Blanche Touhill: You have other places?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: We're going to have Arizona where my husband is a native son, right.

Blanche Touhill: And he grew up there?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: Yes, his grandfather was first surgeon in the territory of Arizona in 1904. So he really believes in Arizona. I do, too, but I think you bloom where you have activity. If I don't have activity in Arizona, we will be here more often. So, we're not sitters, never have been. I think when you meet someone that you get along with, you have reasons that you do. You either like to sit and watch movies all night; you either like to walk all day; you either like to volunteer. You must have commonality and I think for women that are starting their lives, it's not the money; it's the camaraderie because I believe that marriage is a friendship that blooms from everything that you add to it but there's something core there and those are things I've tried to impart to my children and my step-children because it's a work in progress, you know? It just has ups and downs and turns and twists and this was a large twist for us, to come to St. Louis.

Blanche Touhill: Yes, it was.

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: But it added so much flavor.

Blanche Touhill: But that's interesting, when you came, were you a little cautious?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: Did I cry through the Appalachian Mountains for hours? Yes, I did, and did I really want to divorce my husband when he rented a house that he had not walked into? Pretty much, but I knew if I did it right, it would work out and because my husband, my partner is a funny person and an understanding person, we just kind of let it work...oh, but...and yes, oh, my God, I don't think any place I ever moved as a grade school or high school person was as traumatic as moving to St. Louis.

Blanche Touhill: Is that because you thought it was a small town?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: Of course I thought it was a small town and of course I didn't think they had any culture, but of course, little did I know, after several years, not only did they have culture, it's much more accessible.

Blanche Touhill: Yes, it is much more accessible. It is, and making friends, once you get into that...

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: Well, once you're humble...you must be humble because I didn't go to XYZ and my parents weren't Lewis & Clark or whatever, it didn't matter. I don't really care but I think when we talk about St. Louis now...this is sort of my mantra...with most of my Washington friends, by the way, I said, "We have a saying for St. Louis in my family," and they're like, "Oh, what, what?" and I always say, "Ah," and they go "What do you mean?" I say, "When we land from an airplane, we say 'ah.'"

Blanche Touhill: So you're home.

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: Mm-hmm.

Blanche Touhill: So let's go back to your volunteer activity. You do the Variety Club, you do Siteman. Are you still on the Women's of...

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: Actually, I just re-upped for it, yes, I did, yes.

Blanche Touhill: And for the board?

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: Then you do the public library.

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: Do you want to talk about your breast cancer because I know that women are very interested in that and I'm sure men are interested in a woman's approach when she gets that word, and then I'd like to know, what are your still live-long goals for the future.

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: Well, I think breast cancer, for every woman...and men, is something that really takes everything you've ever done and puts it in front of you. So then you evaluate everything you've done. Things are more important. Things are a lot less important. I think the most important thing people need to understand about breast cancer in 2014 is that we're blessed because 20 years ago, we would not be here and because we want everything solved now, because we live in this quick quick, pace pace age, you have to realize these things have actually gone very quickly and they're getting better every time. So there's hope, whatever you want to say. I just think it's really important to

communicate with all the women you see on the street and talk about it because you're going to help your fellow friends. My favorite story is, I would often go to a lunch with my wig on and when someone didn't know I had breast cancer or didn't know I had a wig on, that, to me, was my best day and then I would take it off because they needed to know, even if they thought I looked normal, I was still struggling but it works; it works! So, I think it works with what we have now. You're going to be okay if you talk about it. So that's important for me, breast cancer. And the next thing is, I don't think there's an end game to what I want to do. I just want to do everything, probably attain it now with a little bit more of how lucky I am to be here but I just think it's not an age problem anymore. It's an energy problem. If you don't have the energy and you don't have the intelligence to understand what people need, not necessarily the educational background because now you're talking about your environment and what's made you what you are, but if you look at those two things, you can pretty much do anything. So what do I want to do? Right now I want to make the library better. I want to polish off the jewel that's inside and let children all over the city know they can go there and become masters of the universe by the facilities they have for them and I want my family to be healthy. The health seems to be the most important thing right now. So if I can help them and be the best family facilitator, I will do it. Those are really my goals right now, non-ending.

Blanche Touhill: Well, thank you very much. It's been a wonderful interview.

Gayle Bradley-Palmer: Well, thank you. I've enjoyed it so much, appreciate it, appreciate the opportunity.