

An Interview with
Kit Whittington

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.

Malaika Horne: We've already met. I'm Malaika Horne. I work here at the university. I'm director of the MSL Executive Leadership Consortium and this is an oral history project. We call it Women as Change Agents and we're seeking to interview women like you. You're a change agent. And we want to have a conversation with you about your life, your career, anything else you want to talk about. I'm going to ask some kind of semi-open-ended questions and you can say whatever you like.

Kit Whittington: Okay.

Malaika Horne: So, you ready?

Kit Whittington: I am ready.

Malaika Horne: The first question is to talk about your youth, your family, what elementary and secondary schools you attended, anything...your youth, your family, the schools you went to.

Kit Whittington: I went to Bristol School in Webster Groves, was the elementary school that I went to and after that I went to Steger Junior High which was quite a change because there were a lot of racial things going on in the time I was growing up and I was the minority. So there were three white kids and the rest of the kids were black. It was a great experience. It was really awesome that I was able to be in...I didn't think it at the time all the time because I was small and I got beat up every day, and then I had someone that took me under his wing and he's still my friend today. We've been friends for 40 years and he protected me at school. Anyhow, he helped people, all of us learned to respect each other. So that was a great period of time for me, in my junior high. Then I went to Webster Groves High School and I graduated in 1977. I had dynamic parents. They were very interesting parents, as I look back. My father died when I was 14 and they were of the really big party '60s time and tried everything. I mean, they drank a lot, they smoked pot, they did a lot of different things and I was an observer and I remember being an observer and feeling sometimes sort of frightened by some of the antics and things that they did. They had some big parties. My father was in the advertising business so they had a lot of swanky parties. Anyhow, he died at the age of 39 and he was the third generation of males in my family to die of alcoholism. One of my things that I'm very proud of, jumping a little bit ahead is that I made some choices in my life and I have two sons and neither of them are

anything but social drinkers. So they're the first generation of men that I have heard of in our family on my father's side that haven't had an issue with drinking. So I'm very happy to be able to say that at this time.

Malaika Horne: So, one of the things you talked about is being a minority in a majority different ethnic group. Just briefly, what insights can you convey? What did you learn from that experience?

Kit Whittington: I learned so much. Well, first of all, another dynamic thing about my parents is they were very Republican and very opinionated and I've voted Republican before but I learned that there was a different way to be because I'm not sure that they realized what I was going to learn going to that junior high school but I kind of turned into a rebel, I think, because I decided that I had friends that were not looking like everybody else, like their friends and I was never taught anything negative about any certain kind of religion or ethnic group or anything but I realize, in some of the discussions that I had, that I had a different opinion than some different people in my family.

Malaika Horne: Because they let you enroll in the school.

Kit Whittington: They enrolled me. I was right out of 6th grade. They enrolled me a public school. So anyway, I learned to get along with people. I have a business today where I employ over 200 people and the majority of those people, I would say, are a different ethnic group than I am. We have Bosnian, we have black, we have Asian, we have all different and I am so happy about that. It just excites me and I'm not sure that my parents would understand that. They're both not living anymore. I think they would be proud of me but I'm not sure they'd understand my excitement.

Malaika Horne: You mentioned the people you employ. Tell me about your company or your organization.

Kit Whittington: It's a private duty homecare agency. I started it when I was 28 years old. So my parents were gone. My father was dead. It was his mother. My mother was still living. They had been divorced so my mother was not around to help out. I was very close to my grandmother and I think she's the one that inspired me so much and she was diagnosed with stage four breast cancer...oh, it still gets me apparently...so I just thought I'd help her out and she asked me if I would help her and I said I would and I decided I would just hire some people out of the back of the paper. I was

working full-time in the advertising business like my father and I hired some people out of the back of the newspaper, independent people that said they would drive her to chemo and said that they would feed her meals and bathe her and so forth. My routine was that I would go to work and then I would go to her house and then I would pick up the children at daycare and then I would go home. Well, I found myself staying at her house very often because the people weren't showing up and she wasn't getting a meal and she wasn't getting the chemo and I would find her on the floor and she and I were distraught. We were very sad about that and I talked about it and she asked me if I would quit my job and take care of her and she would pay me what I was making at my job. And I said I would. And so I got to take care of her for about a year.

Malaika Horne: So what year was this?

Kit Whittington: This was 1987. So I took care of her for about a year and when I wasn't caring for her, she would send me to her friends' homes, Ida, Alice and Pearl, and I would go over and help them. In this year of caring for her, I realized that it really was my passion, to take care of people. There was a company around at the time called Kelley Girls. It was a secretarial temp service and I remember thinking, I can do this, and I do have a history of entrepreneurship in my family, some men, and it just came naturally. I thought, I'm not afraid. I can do this. And so I started working nights and days and hiring people and family was helping watch the children. Then I hired other people and about five years into starting the company, I decided that I needed to get a nursing degree because I wanted to advocate better for the elderly and it was before a lot of doctors communicating by computers and they were taking, it's called "polypharmacy," they were taking so many medications of the same kind. And so I enrolled in Meramec and I was going to go to school there and the waiting list was so long, I did my pre-reqs and Merrimack and then I enrolled in Deaconess College of Nursing and got a Bachelor's Degree in nursing. It really paid off to do that because it helped me learn about disease process. It helped me learn just more about leadership and Zonta was a huge help with that because they helped me with daycare. They helped me with a mentor. They helped me in a lot of ways. The way that I found Zonta is I just looked up women's groups and I wrote out a resume and I presented my case and I said, "This is who I am and this is what I'm doing" and it was a wonderful program.

Malaika Horne: So were you part of Women's Another Chance?

Kit Whittington: Yes, the WAC program, mm-hmm.

Malaika Horne: Well, you mentioned leadership and there's a question that we wanted to ask when you were younger. Were you recognized as a leader?

Kit Whittington: I would say I was recognized as a change agent. I was recognized as a leader, a person that didn't have to go along with. For instance, I was the first female in my family that wasn't a debutante.

Malaika Horne: Really?

Kit Whittington: Yes. I was the first female in my family to start a business. I was the first child in my family...first female, to do a lot of different things and I think it all took me down a wonderful path. So, being a leader, sorry. I was talking about being a leader. It wasn't always easy but whether it was a fashion statement...and I wasn't a big fashion statement but I wore what I wanted to wear and not necessarily what the uniform was. So it may not have been the kind of leader you're speaking of. Things came full circle. I had a lot of flak from my family, a lot down the road but it came full circle even as I was a young adult that people came back and said, "I'm so proud of you. I'm so proud of what you did. I'm so proud that you stood for what you believed in."

Malaika Horne: Well, it's important for you to have your own personal definition of leadership too.

Kit Whittington: Yeah, that's a good point.

Malaika Horne: That you view yourself that way. You may have touched upon this already but who encouraged you inside the home and outside the home to pursue your own path?

Kit Whittington: Other women, my grandmother; a very dear friend of mine, his mother. I think that watching my parents, I learned how to socialize. I learned some things but I'm not sure that they were encouraging me so much in the way that I'm thinking that I encouraged my children but I learned from watching. My grandmother was very important to me.

Malaika Horne: How do you encourage your children?

- Kit Whittington: Oh, I should say, they're 37 and 32, but I would say by being there for them, doing homework with them, attending their sports events or Boy Scouts, being a den mother, doing different things like that. That didn't happen in my family growing up. In my family growing up, what I was taught in my home...the women, my mother, went to Washington University long enough to meet my dad and then, for whatever reason, she didn't finish her degree. There was a whole lot of emphasis put on having a husband and taking care of your husband and entertaining, and maybe that's just the times. Maybe that's what was then and I did not really...that wasn't for me.
- Malaika Horne: Times changed...
- Kit Whittington: I guess...
- Malaika Horne: But you were ahead of your time.
- Kit Whittington: Yeah, I maybe wasn't a women's libber but I definitely didn't feel comfortable and part of the reason I got the flak because I didn't really go with that flow.
- Malaika Horne: Let me ask you this: Who influenced you in college? Did you have any leadership positions in college?
- Kit Whittington: Well, I should say now, I was an adult when I went to college so I was 29 when I started.
- Malaika Horne: When you went to nursing school?
- Kit Whittington: Well, I did my pre-req. I started nursing school probably when I was 29, close to 30. So I was a very interesting student, sat in the front row. Encouraging me were other women, mentors, friends. I was with other students, every age. I was a big study person...and teachers. They were so proud of what I was doing and happy that I was starting a business for the elderly and available to help any student that needed help, with what I was learning and what I was doing, and I was even able to teach a class as part of my schooling. I sort of wrote my own curriculum and before that, before I was taking care of my grandmother, I did have a couple of jobs, as I mentioned and I created my own job position in those jobs too.
- Malaika Horne: So, 50 years earlier or 40 years earlier, what do you think you would have been doing?

Kit Whittington: Forty years earlier than?

Malaika Horne: When you were younger, did you imagine what you'd be doing now?

Kit Whittington: No. I didn't imagine what I'd be doing. The only thing I could imagine was what I was told I'd be doing and that would be being married and having children, the dream that I was told, that should be the dream. I didn't imagine that I would go to college and finish college. Now, there were other people in our family that did that but it didn't seem like something that I was going to be doing. I looked at that question, the pre-questions so I thought more about 50 years from when I was born, which would have been, like, what, 1910 or 1920 or, I don't know.

Malaika Horne: Well, you can speak to that.

Kit Whittington: I probably would have been on a stagecoach somewhere traveling out West. That's what I think I would have been doing, is exploring and leading some sort of expedition.

Malaika Horne: And you've probably talked about this in various ways already but just to make sure we get these important questions in, was there anyone else who influenced you regarding your career? You talked a lot about your grandmother, in particular and the experience of her.

Kit Whittington: You mean, in shaping my career?

Malaika Horne: Yes.

Kit Whittington: My clients. I love taking care of my clients and they were always so happy with the services that I provided and that the people that I hired provided and even still to this day, so when they give big compliments like that, it pushes forward because when you're a single mom and an entrepreneur, there can be some long nights and some long days. I think God, God was a huge, huge influence, yes, because I always say when I've been in other interviews that I was divinely guided. That's what I believe, is that I was divinely guided because I would have never come up with the idea to have a private duty homecare because nobody was doing that. There were some nurses or aides that might go from a hospital and privately see people but it wasn't an organization and a corporation.

Malaika Horne: Did you say the name of your organization?

Kit Whittington: It's Seniors Homecare.

Malaika Horne: I saw that on your (shop?) there but I wasn't sure, Seniors Homecare.

Kit Whittington: Mm-hmm.

Malaika Horne: Anything else about your life and your career that you'd like to share?

Kit Whittington: Well, I would say also that my children were very influential. They were very much the cheerleaders for me and, even though they were young, they were very happy to see me going through school. We went through school together and it worked out well. I was off of school when they were off of school. So I think that they had a big influence because they helped a lot: small children doing laundry, cooking, helping out around the house so that I could study, and doing lots of chores. They just took that on and I feel very proud of them for doing that.

Malaika Horne: And more than likely, they're non-traditional in their own households right now, I would think.

Kit Whittington: Yes, they are, non-traditional in that they cook and they clean and they do laundry and they're very involved with...my son that has children, very involved with his children. And my other son is very involved with his nephews.

Malaika Horne: What do your sons do for a living?

Kit Whittington: My youngest son works for PNC Bank and he's in Wealth Management and he does very well. He's won lots of awards and taken trips and I'm very happy for him. He worked in my business while he was getting his Master's Degree and he said that he really did not want to work in a family business but that he wanted to help people and that he really felt like helping people manage their money, regardless of the amount it was, was his way of giving back and his way of helping.

Malaika Horne: Very important.

Kit Whittington: And my older son works with me. He graduated from college...they both went to college...he graduated from college with a horticulture degree in Life Sciences and he started a landscaping business and then he sold that and came to me one day and took me to lunch and said, "I'd like to work in the family business" and I said, "Well, then I think it would be good if

you started as a caregiver.” So he did, he started as a caregiver and then he graduated to working in the office during the day and being a caregiver at night and now he’s my business partner.

Malaika Horne: Well, I was thinking, that’s probably one of the keys to your company’s success, is that the personal experience of yourself, your son and perhaps others in your company, that they really understand what the patient is going through and how to relate to them and to serve them. Is that one of the keys?

Kit Whittington: Oh, yes, it certainly is, and my husband, I have to mention him. We’ve been married about nine years and he works with me too. He has his own business but he also works in my business and he’s a huge supporter. It can be difficult having a family business and not talking about business during Thanksgiving or Christmas but we’ve all made an agreement and we talk about work at work and we have fun with our family there. But I know that I am not someone who would be able to do this by myself. I have to give all the credit to the people that I work with: 13 people in the office and 200 in the field. If it weren’t for them, there would be no business because they are the ones that provide the day-to-day care. I just had the idea and I really believe in surrounding myself with people that are smarter than I am, that know how to do their specialty and I’ve been blessed that way. I think that people really take it seriously and they enjoy it and we have fun while we’re working.

Malaika Horne: I have two questions and so let me ask the first one and then the second one. The first one is where did your sons go to school?

Kit Whittington: My youngest son went to UMSL, so he went here and played hockey and he had a great career in school here. His Bachelor’s Degree is in psychology and his Master’s is in business. So he went to Webster University for his Master’s. And my older son went to, I think its Indiana State in Terre Haute. There are two colleges there and I’m not sure, but he was in Terre Haute and his wife, who was his girlfriend at the time went there.

Malaika Horne: My other question is about your employees. You’ve spoken about them in different ways. What is it about them that makes your employees be unique or different or special, anything that jumps out in terms of the

culture of your organization and the people who work in your organization?

Kit Whittington: Well, I would have to say number one is the level of compassion so when we hire people at Seniors Homecare, we hire for culture more than we do for skill. So I'm not saying they're not skilled; they're very skilled but we can teach skills and the compassion is what is so important. So every single person in our office has worked in the field and they've come out of working in the field taking care of people, to work in our office. And the people that work out in the field taking care of all these clients in their elderly age...and we do have some people that are younger than that that have maybe been injured or in a car accident or something...we have testing that we do and we also have people that interview that just can tell...we have certain questions that we ask to make sure that it's their heart and I just...we don't often run into people where it's just a job, just a paycheck and when the orientation is done, I go down and I talk to people and I say, "Anybody that's here now that has learned that this is not for them, please go ahead and go or call us and tell us that it's just not for you. Its okay, but sometimes it takes being in orientation to figure out that it's not something for you and I respect that. What I don't respect is if you're set up to go somewhere and then you call in and you don't show up, or don't call in and don't show up."

Malaika Horne: And what is your management style or your leadership style? Are you hands on, are you more indirect with your leadership?

Kit Whittington: I am learning to not micro-manage and I'm proud of myself because this business has been my baby and, as I have gotten older and as I have a business partner and people that can handle it, I have been learning that I don't have to be there all of the time. I don't have to be hands-on. I think that I was told in lots of different ways, "We've got this; we can handle this." And it was really, really scary to let go but I am learning to do that. In fact, my husband and I just bought a house in Florida and so we're taking some trips there and I'm not checking my e-mail all the time and it is relaxing. I haven't experienced this level of relaxation before and so it's a wonderful feeling. So I would say my management style is evolving. It has been very close and I didn't go to business school, I didn't go to management school, I did most of this from my heart and my passion and with my nursing degree and, me, as a nurse, I am hands-on so I've just

had to learn in the business side not to be and I haven't done actual nursing, hands-on nursing in 10 or 15 years.

Malaika Horne: Do you think that women's approaches or leadership styles are different from men's?

Kit Whittington: Generally, yes, I do. I don't think always, just like my sons are non-traditional, there are non-traditional men leadership styles and non-traditional women, and as I see more and more women getting into the business world, I can see a change that maybe they're becoming more like men, some. To me, generally, men might be more giving out orders whereas women tend to care more about the person's quality of life and maybe work/life balance as far as making sure that the whole family is balanced instead of just focusing...and I think we're wired differently. I think that's part of it, is that what I know of men, raising men and being married is that men are able to more compartmentalize projects and things and not see outside the box, which is a great asset when you're working on a project, but people aren't projects. So I do see that good women leaders tend to be able to look at the whole picture. Now, my son is becoming the leader and will be the CEO of our company and I've really learned a lot from his leadership and he is a very compassionate leader and it might be because of the environment he was raised in.

Malaika Horne: You mentioned a work-life balance. Do you consider that with your employees, young mothers, for example, the sandwich generation where they have the children on one side and the elderly on the other side and usually that responsibility is for the woman? Do you consider work-life balance? Are you aware of it?

Kit Whittington: Oh, yes, on both sides, not only with the employees but with our clients. A lot of them are adult women that it's fallen on them to manage their parents' life so we help that. But with my employees, I let them pick their hours. I just tell them, "You tell me what you can work" and then if they aren't sure, I help them manage that. We sit down and we work out an equation. We sit down and we think of all the different things, like a time budget, and they may think, "I can work days and I can work nights" and, like, "What about that three-year-old? What about..." "Well, his grandma..." ...or whatever and children grow up so fast that I try to educate them and it can be hard when you're living paycheck to paycheck or when you've just recently become a new mother. It's hard maybe to

work enough, to want to; you don't want to leave your baby. So we take all kinds of things into consideration and I like to do that. That's something that I really enjoy doing...

Malaika Horne: That's very unique.

Kit Whittington: ...is helping people.

Malaika Horne: That's very unique for an organization, to let the employees manage their schedules.

Kit Whittington: Well, we help them manage their schedule. Yes, we let them pick when they work and we help them manage their schedules. We'll send them a schedule every month or every week or whatever. But you know what? I just don't know any other way. To me, I figure if they're picking their own schedule, they're going to go to work.

Malaika Horne: Yeah, right. Any awards or recognitions?

Kit Whittington: Yes. I wish I had the list with me but there have been several Business Journal Awards. We are trying to work towards getting the Best Places to Work Award. We have entered that one year and we just didn't make it but we'll try again. We have grown so fast, we've been awarded for three years in a row the Inc. 500/5000 Award and my son and I have traveled to get the award and go to the awards dinner and it's just about tripling in size.

Malaika Horne: What was the name of that?

Kit Whittington: Inc. 500/5000 so what are the fastest growing companies in the United States. So that was three years in a row and some community awards and some writing awards. We have an awards wall.

Malaika Horne: What part of the region is your company in?

Kit Whittington: Our office is located in Webster Groves, a half mile south of Manchester in Brentwood. We serve the whole St. Louis City area. So our boundary, we go up to St. Charles. We don't go into St. Charles County, that would be west, and then east, we will go all the way into downtown, north we're up here and then in Florissant and then south down to South County Mall. So mostly St. Louis City and County.

Malaika Horne: You mentioned fasting-growing. Could you explain why your company got these awards? Why are you growing so fast? There has to be something external and internal that would have that happen.

Kit Whittington: Well, first of all, I think it really started growing when my son became our marketing person. He is dynamic in the way that he creates relationships with people. He taught me, I was old school, he called it because I believed in going into the hospitals or the different places and making a deal and closing the deal and moving on. He taught me about building relationships with people and I watched him and so with him out in the community...and he belongs to the Lion's and many organizations; I belong to the Rotary Club and the Zonta Club and Monday Club and different organizations also and I just think that his marketing skills on the outside are where are really helping, and I think good service and honest service is what has helped us to get such a good reputation in St. Louis.

Malaika Horne: Fantastic.

Kit Whittington: Thank you.

Malaika Horne: You mentioned Zonta that you presented your application or your request for support to go to nursing school, but then I know that they are always thrilled to have graduates or recipients join Zonta but that doesn't always happen. So why did you join Zonta?

Kit Whittington: I made a vow to myself that they helped me so much in so many ways when I was a WAC student that when I was at a place in my life that I could commit and show up and go, that I would join Zonta to give back what I feel was a blessing to me and so I joined Zonta.

Malaika Horne: That's important. Any activities that you've been a part of at Zonta?

Kit Whittington: I've been part of the membership committee. We started a new advocacy group this year and I was in that group where we would find a business or an organization and find out how we could advocate for them, how we could help them get to be known better. So this year was the first year we did that. I've been part of the WAC program and I have not been a mentor yet. I've only been a member of Zonta for two or three years, brand newbie.

Malaika Horne: Maybe that's why I've been missing you. And Rotary, I work with the Rotary Club of St. Louis and we do an ethics panel here on campus but the Rotary Club and the Monday Club?

Kit Whittington: Mm-hmm.

Malaika Horne: Why did you join those?

Kit Whittington: Well, the Monday Club is a group of women that really were ahead of their time and I am probably the closest to the youngest person there. My daughter-in-law goes with me and she's younger, obviously, than I am. But most of these women are in their late 70's, 80's, late 90's. We have a couple members that are 100 and they're all very clear-minded. The Monday Club started the first library in Webster Groves. They did an awful lot for the St. Louis community as well as Webster Groves and I wanted to be a part of that. And the Rotary Club, they do local work and they also do international work and I wanted to have a part of me that could reach people internationally. That was interesting because typically, when I started, there weren't a lot of women. I've been in the Rotary Club probably 15 years and there were a few and I think while I was there we had our first woman president and now we've had a few.

Malaika Horne: Is that the city one, or...?

Kit Whittington: I'm in the Webster Groves. Actually, the St. Louis City Rotary Club was our sponsor and I was going to say, we grew out of that club so our club has been around 92 years or something and I have been to the St. Louis club a few times and it was really fun. So I just feel like giving back is a really important thing to do and I've taught both of my children that and they are teaching their children that.

Malaika Horne: Hobbies, do you have any hobbies, and avocations?

Kit Whittington: This is something that I am learning about as well. Because I was working so much and being a mom...being a mother was one of the most important privileges I've ever had, ever and when my children were grown and out of college, then I had to figure out something to do and I just dove into work more. So I love advocating for the elderly. I give to organizations as far as financially but this house in Florida will be a good hobby, but I don't play golf, I don't bowl. I like to write. I'm a good writer and I've been working on a couple of books. One is a daily affirmation

book for caregivers, family caregivers, helping to care for elderly people in their family, and the other one is a book related to the elderly as far as how to help manage if there are a lot of siblings and so forth that are trying to get along. So I really enjoy that and my spirituality is very important to me so I spend a lot of time with God and the Bible and studying.

Malaika Horne: I heard you mention earlier about writing awards and I was just interested and then you talked about writing a book and affirmations but what do you think is one of the biggest issues in the industry that you're in or for the people who are ailing and need more support? What is one of the biggest issues?

Kit Whittington: Do you mean the clients?

Malaika Horne: Yeah, the clients and then you could talk about the industry too.

Kit Whittington: I think it's changed in the 29 years I've been doing this. In the beginning, the biggest issue I saw were the medications and all these people taking these different medications and not advocating for themselves and just believing whatever a doctor said and not trying to figure out or think through what they were doing and think about what might be best for them if it wasn't in agreement with what their doctor said, or clarifying, just saying, "Doctor, I don't understand. Can you explain that to me on a lower level, in laymen's terms," and so that was a big issue in the beginning. I see people being more educated now about things that maybe they look it up on the internet, something and their children help them. As far as disease process, I would say there is obviously a large population of dementia. I would say diet is also something else that is an issue, people picking good foods for their body.

Malaika Horne: Who are not eating as nutritiously as they should?

Kit Whittington: Yes, and I should say, I probably see that more in my staff, not directly but maybe they have not enough time so they eat a lot of processed foods. That does happen sometimes with the elderly in that people just drop food off and they might drop off 10 Lean Cuisines or something highly processed whereas one of my goals that I try to help with the elderly is having people go in and cook for them and maybe making meals and put them in the freezer so they're home cooked meals.

Malaika Horne: Wonderful.

Kit Whittington: Mm-hmm, and so that they're fresh. Did that answer what you were thinking about?

Malaika Horne: Yes, and you said something that really piqued my interest about the dementia. There seems to be an increase, is that what you're saying?

Kit Whittington: It does seem, to me, over the years that I've been doing this, that there is an increase. I don't know if it's because there are so many more people or if it's that there's something in our environment.

Malaika Horne: Because people are living longer.

Kit Whittington: They are living longer, but I don't believe that dementia is something that comes with age. I think it happens to come at the same time but I'm not sure that it's...not every aging person gets dementia. So I think it has to do with taking care of yourself and eating the right foods and getting enough exercise. Back in the time when we were farmers, we did a lot of physical work and in the '50s and '60s...maybe the '40s, I don't know; I wasn't alive, but desk jobs became very popular. So we have to look for ways now to figure out how to get exercise and sometimes I think as a human we don't really look for that. It's an effort and maybe some people are different than others but as we age, I don't think the first thing we think of is going to the gym. Maybe we get busy with work or kids or grandchildren or taking care of the house, whatever people do but I've noticed that the people that walk...I have a former mother-in-law and she walked and walked and walked and she worked until she was 72. She's 93 now.

Malaika Horne: My role model.

Kit Whittington: Yes, mine, too. She is a role model and I asked her one time, I said, "Why didn't you take the elevator?" She worked at St. Mary's and she said, "Because I was in too much of a hurry and those elevators are too slow."

Malaika Horne: We're getting down to the end of the interview and I know that you mentioned about being on a stagecoach if you were born earlier, but I still think this is a good question, as we wind down here: What would life be like if you had been born earlier? What would life be like?

Kit Whittington: I don't know. Maybe I don't understand the question.

- Brian Woodman: Another way of thinking about it would be: What opportunities do you think you would have had or not had if you had been born that much earlier. Would you have the same opportunities?
- Malaika Horne: Take the early part of the 1900's since you were born obviously in the '50s or '60s. What about the 1900's to the 1940's or '50s?
- Kit Whittington: Well, I do not think I would have had as many opportunities because I don't think women...well, first of all, women were not allowed to vote.
- Malaika Horne: Not until 1920.
- Kit Whittington: Oh, is that right? Okay. Well, maybe I'm thinking of earlier because I know that...
- Malaika Horne: And it could be earlier. It could be before 1900.
- Kit Whittington: Well, not being able to vote, not being able to own property, different things like that, being heard is something that's important and I don't think that the opportunity to be heard would have been there as much. I mean, even when I was in school, in grade school, I think that if I ever talked about working, it was always geared towards, do you want to be a teacher or do you want to be a nurse, and neither of those sounded like what I wanted to do at the time. I wanted an adventure. I think that maybe, for me personally, there may have been opportunities at that time because I seem to like to do things differently than maybe going along with the flow. So I may have made my own opportunities but I definitely think that being born when I am now offered me the opportunity to make choices and to have more influence.
- Malaika Horne: And there were certainly women throughout the various periods in history that were similar to you, that wanted to be their own person, marched to the beat of their own drummer but it was still difficult. It's difficult now but it's getting better. So I commend you for taking charge...
- Kit Whittington: Thank you.
- Malaika Horne: ...of your success and being part of Zonta and all these other groups as well.
- Kit Whittington: I do remember one job that I had. It was in advertising and advertising was mostly men and I wanted to do it because my father was in

advertising and he was very, very popular and I thought, well, this is what I need to do, not to be popular but just because it was the family...it was several generations and I remember feeling very uncomfortable in that role because I was hired for certain jobs but it was more like an entertainment thing: take this guy out to dinner or go out with this party, and that just wasn't in my nature, to feel comfortable doing that. I was a serious business person. I wanted to do the sales and so forth but I found that I was asked to do things that I wasn't comfortable with, and again, maybe it was just that role and I did notice in my office and so forth, there really weren't, in the offices I was in, I did several jobs...but there were not many women.

Malaika Horne: Did you ever look at the series Mad Men?

Kit Whittington: I couldn't watch it. It was too close to what I lived.

Malaika Horne: So it did reflect some of the realities.

Kit Whittington: Very much. I watched one episode. I was one of those children in that show. I felt like it so I just couldn't watch it. I wanted to. My children watched it and they thought it was great.

Malaika Horne: So, is there anything that we missed?

Kit Whittington: No, I think you are a thorough interviewer. I was very comfortable with you and I appreciate it. I can't think of anything.

Malaika Horne: Okay.

Brian Woodman: Well, thank you very much.

Kit Whittington: Thank you.