



Janice Bastoni

Interviewer:

All right, so this is Emily. I am here with Jan who's going to tell us a story. So go ahead.

Janice Bastoni:

My name is Janice Bastoni. I live in New Bedford, Massachusetts. My family came from Canada to the United States to work in the mills. My parents did not work in the mills, they each had a trade. My family felt that I needed to go to the commercial course at New Bedford High School, and I wanted to be an elementary teacher. Because there were five people in my family, five children in my family, I had to follow my parents' directions. So I took the commercial course at New Bedford High.

Interviewer:

What was the commercial course?

Janice Bastoni:

Oh, all right. When I was at New Bedford High, it was kind of yucky. Well, they were... I don't know how to explain it really. That's the way it was. They had the commercial side and the college side, and you didn't mix. Not only that, like I went into the office to talk about... They say, "What do you want to be?" And I told them what I wanted to be. "Well, you can't do that because you're in the commercial course." It was that kind of thing, which irritated me no end. It was before things got a little better, let's put it that way.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Janice Bastoni:

And they had no money to send me to college. But because they sent me to the commercial... You're not recording? Are you recording?

Interviewer:

I am recording.

Janice Bastoni:

Okay. Because they wanted me to go to the commercial course, I graduated high school with the ability to earn a decent living. So I worked two years at that living and took extra courses at night because commercial courses did not have some of those courses. And I paid for my education at Bridgewater and I worked at Bridgewater also. After I graduated, I taught elementary grades 1, 2, 4, and 5, depending on the town in which I lived. And I didn't always live in New Bedford, but now I live in New Bedford. And after retirement, I did a lot of volunteer work. Volunteered at church and volunteered in my community and at the Whaling Museum. And I have enjoyed the Whaling Museum enormously. First Friday morning doing the children and the courses with the children. And then when my husband's schedule changed, I came Friday afternoon and here I am.



Interviewer:

Great. Can you talk a little more about your time as an elementary school teacher?

Janice Bastoni:

Okay. As an elementary school teacher, I loved it. And my husband worked long hours, so I didn't always... When the children were grown and they were at college, all of them went to college and they all have advanced degrees, when they were grown, I didn't have to be home at dinnertime because my husband worked long hours. So I used to stay at school and get my work all done at school because everything was there. But I loved it. And all of my activities were not necessarily school related, but a lot of them were. And it was just great. And then after I retired, I decided coming to the Whaling Museum was just the perfect adding to it.

When I went to Bridgewater, they were starting to do less stringent things and they allowed you to have plays in the classroom and do all kinds of things like that. And I just ate that up because it was just perfect. And there were three of us, at that time they came to the campus to interview us. That was really something. And Quincy, at that point, told us they had a very progressive education department. So three of us decided we were going to Quincy. When we got there, we found out they had one school that was progressive and they put each of us in one of the other schools. And I was assuming, at that point, they were thinking that we were going to make those schools progressive.

I only stayed two years in Quincy because, at that point, I thought, "Okay." And my mom said, "Oh, your sister is getting married and I need some of your pay," because she was giving half her pay home. So I came back to New Bedford and went to work in Fairhaven. And they had no kindergarten, so first grade was people straight from home. So I taught first grade and I loved it. I did all kinds of plays and we just had a lot, a lot of fun.

Interviewer:

Great.

Janice Bastoni:

So I continued to teach and raise my family. And here I am.

Interviewer:

Great. How long were you teaching in Fairhaven for?

Janice Bastoni:

Let me see. Probably probably five years.

Interviewer:

Five years.

Janice Bastoni:

You couldn't teach if you were pregnant.

Interviewer:

Oh, okay.

Janice Bastoni:

So I became pregnant in January. That was funny because in Fairhaven, at that point, they would not let their



teachers sit down. You would have to be on your feet all the time. And so I got... A new principal came in, it was a woman principal. She came in one day with a bar stool. And in January she said to me, "Sit down." She said, "I think you are pregnant." And I said, "I don't think I am." And so she said, "Sit down." And sure enough, I was pregnant. And I had to stop teaching if I showed.

Interviewer:

Wow.

Janice Bastoni:

Fortunately, I didn't show until the end of the year. And so then I went home. And in and out of teaching. And until then, when I wanted to go back, teaching had really closed up a lot, so I had to go back through Title 1. And I did get first grade, so that was my favorite place and stayed there.

Interviewer:

Around what year was this when you were teaching in Fairhaven, when you had your first child?

Janice Bastoni:

Okay. I was born in 1936 and I graduated from high school in '54. But I worked two years, so I didn't graduate from college until 1960. So two years in Quincy, and then came back and taught in Fairhaven.

Interviewer:

Okay, so in the '60s.

Janice Bastoni:

Yep. And things were opening up, but New Bedford was still kind of not being too advanced with the teachers at that point, so I was glad I was in Fairhaven. They allowed me to do a lot of different things. And that particular principal was great, so that made a difference.

Interviewer:

Great. Before you started teaching, before you went to college, what were you doing for those two years that you were working?

Janice Bastoni:

Oh, well, all the skills that I had learned in the commercial course. I got a job. I worked in city hall, I worked in an office in a warehouse. In fact, in 1954 I was in that office. I was working in that office and I lived up the hill. I walked down the hill to go to work the day of the hurricane. And I walked in and my boss said to me, "What are you doing here? There's water coming up, there's a hurricane." He says, "Go look out the window where your desk is." And I did. And the water was coming up, so I walked home. My family did not have a car. It was just now that I look back on it, it was just so primitive, but that was the way it was.

And then when I applied to Bridgewater, they were only having commuters, but I wanted to live there. And fortunately, I was able to get a dorm at the end. Just last minute I got a dorm. And then from there on it was good. As long as I only wore two shirts and two... No slacks at that point. Two skirts and two shirts, I was good. So I appreciate things that I have now.

Interviewer:

Wonderful. You talked a little bit about your volunteer work, because you mentioned that in addition to



volunteering at the Whaling Museum you do some other volunteer work. Do you want to talk a little bit more about that?

Janice Bastoni:

Well, I've taught at church. I've taught the CCD classes at church.

Interviewer:

What church is that?

Janice Bastoni:

That was St. Mary's on Tarklin Hill. And then St. John Neumann when I lived in Freetown. And just a lot of volunteering at church. And at the senior center too.

Interviewer:

Is that a senior center in New Bedford?

Janice Bastoni:

No, when I was in Freetown.

Interviewer:

Oh, in Freetown. Okay.

Janice Bastoni:

Yes. And I guess that's it. Plus everything with the children and babysitting for the grandchildren and things like that. Oh, I had to change my schedule in order to babysit. One of my daughters lived in Plympton and her son was in kindergarten, so I left my home in Freetown. When he was in the morning kindergarten, I would go to my line dancing in the morning in Freetown, and then I would go in the afternoon when he was... When it was that I should be taking care of him in the afternoon, I went to my line dancing first. And then I would go to see him. Because it was half a year and then half a year, then otherwise I would do it the opposite way.

But I had to travel through Lakeville to come from Plympton to my house, and I stopped at the senior center in Lakeville. And in Lakeville I met a lady who had just come off a trip where they had on the ship, they had established a Red Hat Society. And she was establishing a Red Hat Society at the Lakeville Senior Center, so that sounded like fun. Well, I joined it and became an officer and all of that. We had 50 people at one point. But she was in charge of the senior center, so we had a place to meet and everything. And it was a lot of fun.

Interviewer:

What does a Red Hat Society do?

Janice Bastoni:

Just have fun. Well, it's a way to meet people, number one. And of course they, in fact, recently... Oh, I know what it is. Acushnet Senior Center now has a Red Hat group. But for me, it was a good way of meeting a lot of different people. And they have senior trips, New Bedford has senior trips and everything. But our Red Hat Society would have a trip, the local people, and we would go to Boston or Lexington or whatever and then go to conferences, so that was nice. And I still have my red hats.



Interviewer:

All right. Anything else you want to talk about before we wrap up?

Janice Bastoni:

No, I think that's about it. Oh, the Whaling Museum at one point, there's another docent there, Dave and myself and some other people, put on a play in the mornings on Friday on the Lagoda and we just pretended we were having this journey. In fact, David goes on the Lagoda on Friday afternoon now. And every so once in a while we talk about the plays we used to have, so that was good.

Interviewer:

Great. All right. Well, thank you so much for coming in and telling your story. This has been-

Janice Bastoni:

Thank you for having me.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Janice Bastoni:

And I think I got everything.

Interviewer:

Great.