

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Women's Herstory Project

Personal Experiences

O. H. 745

SALLY CARABALLO

Interviewed

by

Danna Bozick

on

December 11, 1987

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

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INTERVIEWEE: SALLY CARABALLO

INTERVIEWER: Danna Bozick

SUBJECT: Hispanic Enrichment Center, medical school, self-images

DATE: December 11, 1987

B: This is an interview with Sally Caraballo for the Youngstown State University Oral History Program, by Danna Bozick, at the Women's Resource Center, on Friday, December 11, 1987.

You are a student at Youngstown State University. You are in what year?

C: This is my last year.

B: What is your major?

C: I'm in biology premed.

B: So, you do plan to go on to medical school?

C: I do. I just started getting some letters and positive responses back. It looks good.

B: You have to search out the schools and make applications. Is that how it works?

C: You have to search out the schools, financial aid, prospect of jobs in different areas. You really have to find out what school is kind of tailor-made for you.

B: It sounds like you're not thinking of NEOUCOM?

C: No, basically because the practice that I want to get into . . . Their school is more focused on family practice and things of that nature, whereas, I would like to go into psychiatric medicine; so I want a school that is a little bit more credible in that area.

- B: Let's just go back and do some general stuff. Could you just tell me a little bit about your family, where you grew up, and that sort of stuff?
- C: First of all, I am the first generation in America. My family is from Puerto Rico. I've got three siblings--two brothers and a sister--and two are older than I am. My parents are pretty strict. I'm sure you have heard of Hispanic parents.
- B: They want to know where you're going?
- C: Yes, to this day, I'm 23 years old, and I still have to have a little report submitted every time I want to leave the house, because I do live at home. They're pretty strict.
- B: How does that feel?
- C: I don't know. Sometimes, I am really grateful for it because a lot of people in high school, and the guys, treat you with a little bit more fear. (Laughter)
- B: They knew they had to go back to the . . .
- C: Yes. But it's kind of good though, growing up with your culture. I know I did grow up feeling my culture. The first language I spoke was Spanish, and we would go back and forth. So I grew up a little bit here, a little bit there. To this day, sometimes I'll say, "Oh, I'm going back home," and they're like, "What do you mean?"
- B: You make trips back to see your family there?
- C: Yes, because the only people that are here are really only my nuclear family, which, here, is just your mother, father, brothers, and sisters.
- B: You don't have other relatives, aunts and uncles?
- C: Not really. I have one uncle and aunt who are here from my father's side.
- B: Is that kind of unusual? It seems that in some families I know, one will come and then they'll help somebody else come.
- C: Yes. Basically, I have just one from my mother's side; her half brother is here, then my uncle from my father's side. We're closer to my father's side of the family, which is also very traditional in a Hispanic family.
- B: Yes.
- C: But as far as cousins and everything, we have a lot of older cousins who really stem from back home. My grandparents,

my cousins, the rest of my aunts and uncles, they're all there.

B: Did they come here for jobs?

C: Yes. Youngstown was big in the steel industry. My dad was living in New York before he married my mom, and then he decided that Ohio would be a really nice place to raise a family. He married my mom when he was twenty-one, and my mom was fifteen.

She was here for, I think, two years but they met back home.

B: She was fifteen when they got married?

C: Yes, that's not unusual. My grandmother was thirteen when she got married.

B: And how old before she started having babies?

C: My mother had a couple miscarriages; she started right away. Her first son wasn't born until after two years.

B: When she was a whopping seventeen.

C: Yes. (Laughter)

B: How about your grandmother? Did she have babies right away?

C: Yes, she had thirteen living children. I don't even know how many . . . They would be born, then grow up for a year or two. They didn't keep track in those days. They could die pretty easy.

B: Is your grandmother still living?

C: Yes, my grandmother is, thank God. She's a very strong woman.

B: How old is she?

C: I think she's eighty-three. I was there for her birthday, but she didn't tell us how old she was.

B: She probably never worked outside the home.

C: Well, with thirteen kids. . .

B: That's what I was thinking. After I said it, I thought--Well, she did plenty of work in the home all day long, from dusk until dawn.

C: Yes.

B: What was life like, then, for your grandmother? What was her life like with all those children, do you know?

- C: I used to ask her those legends that you pass down in a family, generation to generation. But from what I know, my grandmother came from a pretty wealthy family and then her brother took her birthright. So she led a very . . .
- B: Do you mean she didn't get any inheritance?
- C: No, she didn't get any inheritance when she married my grandfather, so it was a big change. I guess it was pretty drastic for her.
- B: How were they able to afford thirteen children?
- C: In Puerto Rico, they have an old saying, "We live off the land." And they do. It's tropical, so there are tons of fruit trees. In those days, if you were willing to work hard, you could live off the fruits of the land.
- B: Did they put in big gardens too?
- C: Yes, gardens--what they call fincas--are like plantations, I guess you would call them.
- B: And did they own land?
- C: Yes. Now she lives in a pretty small house. My grandfather is deceased, so now she's just on her own.
- B: What did he do?
- C: I really don't know.
- B: You didn't know him?
- C: No, not as long as my grandmother. He died pretty early in my life. I was about six.
- B: Your father, then, came for a job in the steel mills?
- C: Yes.
- B: Was that a hardship for him when they shut down?
- C: Well, yes. He just recently retired when LTV shut down. It was pretty rough.
- B: Forced retirement, right?
- C: Yes, it was pretty hectic. To say the least, he was very grumpy and very, out of sorts, disoriented because he was used to being the breadwinner.
- B: Especially with the cultural background, right?

C: Yes, it was like, "No wife of mine is going out to work." Fortunately, mom didn't listen to him.

B: Had she worked before?

C: No. She's pretty headstrong. My mother's not the typical Hispanic woman. She taught me well too.

B: What had she done then?

C: She basically said, "Hey, we're not going to live off the soup." She said, "Well, I raised my kids and I kept my house, and now I can go and work."

B: She didn't work until you were all pretty well grown.

C: Pretty old, yes. I was in my third year in high school when she started working.

B: What kind of job did she get?

C: Right now, she's a housekeeper.

B: In the Youngstown area?

C: Yes.

B: So your father was forced into a forced retirement. Were they able to talk it out or . . . I'm just wondering . . .

C: Like I said, my mother is pretty forceful. To tell you the truth, she's the kind of person who will make you talk if you don't want to. My father isn't very talkative; he's kind of introverted and silent, machismo type. My mom used to really make him express his feelings and make him talk to her about it. They would get into discussions I would call arguments about different things.

B: That's a really stressful time, though, for everybody who was involved when they shut down the mills, just very difficult.

C: It's pretty tough. And then who's going to hire a fifty-one year old guy after retirement, even though he put in close to thirty years.

B: Has he made an adjustment now?

C: Yes, now he's working part-time, just doing odd jobs and things like that. He's also volunteering time with the sheriff's department; he's a deputy.

B: That's great.

C: He's not sitting around the house, not doing anything.

- B: I know that you're in a sort of nontraditional field for women. I don't know how many women are in medicine now. I know there are more than there used to be. I was going to ask you how you got the idea of being a doctor and where that started from, or if you can remember some point back where you said, "Gee, this is what I want to do."
- C: All through high school--even in grade school--I used to love biology. I just loved the natural sciences. I did a lot of other things in high school. I was involved in a lot of plays and drama. A lot of people thought I was going to get into that.
- B: Where did you go?
- C: Ursuline. I graduated from Ursuline. All the while, I was always fascinated with biology. I just loved the challenge of learning. It was about my freshman year when I really started thinking seriously about what to do with myself. I basically identified myself as being a physician because I like the idea of healing, of learning, and of teaching, and combine it like that. I thought that's what the ideal physician should be, a teacher, a learner; it's a personal field.
- B: Did you have some model that you looked up to?
- C: It's kind of strange because no one in my close family really made it in medicine, distant relatives, yes.
- B: I was thinking about if you knew some doctor who had . . . Do you know any doctors who are teachers? I like the ideal and I think you're right.
- C: I don't know. That's what I thought it should be, and that's what I wanted to pattern myself after. I guess I was just looking toward myself and seeing, "Well, this is what I think the world needs." Also, maybe another thing that did affect my decision was that in Puerto Rico there is a great need for doctors. Now, they do have one very good, reputable medical school. But some of the others are still kind of iffy so there's still a need there, and I always do feel that I should, somehow, fulfill the need or at least try to.
- B: So you're thinking that you may go back to practice?
- C: I may. I've always wanted to return. That was the thing that I'm basing it upon, and I really wanted to study in Puerto Rico. Now, however, I really want to stay in Ohio because their schools are superb; they're excellent. I would like to learn here, get my education here, and if anything, go back home and practice what I really want to practice after several years.
- B: It sounds sort of like a dream to go back and help people. Is that what I'm hearing?

- C: I guess. Basically, because I really didn't have any person who I was looking up to. My physician, I can't even remember his name; that's pretty bad. So I really didn't try to pattern myself after anyone. I don't know if that's good or bad.
- B: Now you're even interested in a branch of medicine, psychiatric medicine?
- C: In grade school and high school, everyone always used to tell me their problems. I would always be the kind of person who people could talk to, so I thought that was interesting. Then when I did a little more research on the career, I thought I would like to combine the molecular level with psychotherapy, and just a lot of different things. I enjoy biology, but at the same time I like the abstract. I don't know.
- B: What about the human contact?
- C: I'm leaving that unsaid, but to me that's essential. I love to talk, to be with people, and I love to always try to figure out how the human mind is working, how my mind is working, how it's affected someone else, and how their attitude and their way of life is affecting me. I really get into that.
- B: Are there a lot of women doctors in Puerto Rico?
- C: No, not very many. I'm sure there are more now than ever before, but not very many.
- B: What about women psychiatrists?
- C: In fact, psychiatry, not too many people look kindly upon that profession.
- B: Are you aiming toward psychiatry rather than psychology?
- C: Yes. For psychiatry, you have to go through medical school and everything, so you're a general practitioner before you specialize. With psychology, I wouldn't have had to go to medical school. In Puerto Rico, it seems like there are not that many psychiatrists, let alone women, in the field.
- B: Do you think that you'll have a problem being accepted in the field there?
- C: Probably. Anywhere, though. I sincerely think that I'll spend most of my time here, then later on branch out and go back home. Even here in the states, I know I'm going to run into problems, a little prejudice here and not so little sexism there. Even now, in school, you see it. People say it's not fair, but . . .
- B: What sorts of things?

- C: You know, an instructor will say, "Honey," or somebody will look at me. I'm the only girl in the class. I feel really silly at first when I walk in, but then I've got to learn to ignore it.
- B: Do you feel like you have to prove yourself?
- C: Sometimes, but more often than not, myself. I'm very hard on myself. Some people accuse me of being a perfectionist.
- B: Why, do you have high standards?
- C: Fairly high. Yes, I do.
- B: For academic . . .
- C: Academic, personal, you name it. That's just the way I was brought up. You set a goal, and you just don't back down until you get that goal.
- B: How about being cute. Is that . . .
- C: (Laughter)
- B: I see it gets a reaction. Let me tell you what I was thinking of. I have a friend who's short. And she's very cute. She explained to me that she got so tired of people telling her. . . she found it really hard for people to get past that, and to see anything else.
- C: And be taken seriously.
- B: She's in her thirties, and people still think of her as a young girl. They still call her cute. She's told me, "If one more person calls me cute, I'll smack them." She's to that point and I was just wondering how that feels for you.
- C: It gets on my nerves sometimes, because I'm very serious in certain things. When I'm studying, once I put on a lab coat, don't mess with me, I'm there to work. Sometimes I can be very ridiculous, and my friends tease me because I have this boisterous laugh. I like to laugh a lot. I like to joke around a lot. I love comedy; it's one of my favorite hobbies. I like to sing. So there are two different sides of me. One, I let myself be cute, and the other one, I hate it because then people are not separating, "Well, this is work, and this is play. She's allowed to be cute here, but now let's get serious." Sometimes instructors do that, and other fellow students think, "Oh, she's so cute." And I'm like, "Wait a minute, what about whatever I was talking about." I might be talking about a paper or something, and really getting into it, and they'll say, "Oh, doesn't she look cute when she's serious." And it drives me up the wall. And being short, I hate it, no qualms about that.

I walk anywhere, and right away, "God, she's so short." It really upsets me that people are so naive. It's a fact, you know, that I do have ears. I can hear you. But I guess sometimes I like the fact that I am noticed.

B: Do you get mistaken for a teen?

C: Yes. One of my favorite stories is from one time I was on the bus, coming to YSU. A little old man said to me, "You're going to YSU? Doesn't the high school have school today?" I said, "No, this year, I'm going to YSU." He was my bus driver and I said, "No, I start YSU this year." He just couldn't believe it. I had one other older person ask me one time, "Sweetie, are you one of those geniuses?" (Laughter) I just said, "Oh my, I wish I was." And apparently there was some kind of a movie out with that little guy, Gary Coleman, about him being a genius, so she compared me to him. And I'm like, "No, ma'am, I'm twenty years old. I'm not a genius." Yes, I still get that, depending on how I'm dressed. A lot of times I'm dressed in my jeans and a T-shirt or sweat shirt. I try to avoid the "cutsie" look, but what can you do? I walk into a department store, and I have to go to the girls' section. People, a lot of times, will say nasty little remarks. Sometimes, they're mistaking it, but in a little sweet way, sometimes they're being downright cruel. But I guess I've learned a lesson about it. I think it's funny now.

B: Same thing with my friend. You know, it was really funny; she pointed out to me that she was short. And to me, I noticed her personality, because I thought she had a strong personality. And she told me that. I noticed it after she told me. Do you find that some people don't react to you that way?

C: I don't know, to be honest. That first impression is always . . . I mean they're looking down to you. I'm very short. I'm not even five feet tall. (Laughter) We're beyond petite here. Let's be blatant; this is short. There's no way to hide it. Sure, there are a lot of people who take me seriously. My friends go beyond it, but there is still always that kidding. But I do think that first impression is always, "She's so short."

B: I wanted to ask you about some jobs and stuff. Are you very careful, then, about if you're going somewhere and you want to make an impression, to watch how you dress?

C: Sometimes, depending where I go.

B: To an interview. Have you done any interviews yet?

C: Yes. I want to make sure that I don't come off as a teeny-bopper. You don't want to look "cutsie".

B: Do you have any good interviews? I'm looking for some good interviews. Do you have any good interviews you could tell me about?

C: I don't, no.

B: No? Nothing that stands out?

C: Nothing really great.

B: Did you work while you were in high school, or have you had any jobs along the way?

C: In high school, basically, I had always been able to private tutor.

B: In the sciences?

C: In the sciences and math, English, and basically anything when I was in high school.

B: For other students?

C: For other students.

B: Younger students or same age group?

C: No, same age.

B: And you got paid?

C: Yes.

B: How did you set that up? Was it through the school, or did people just come in and ask you?

C: No. If I was doing a play or something--I was always doing a play in high school--and somebody would say, "I'm falling behind in math," or something. I would say, "If you need any help, let me know." I wouldn't come out and say, "I'm hiring for tutoring services," or anything like that. But usually--if it was a really good friend, I wouldn't charge--I got something, nothing really big.

B: Like a couple dollars an hour?

C: Yes, sometimes not even an hour. I would just say, "Give me ten [dollars]," after a week or so.

B: Was it based on whether or not they passed?

C: (Laughter) No.

B: Did they pay you whether they passed or not?

C: No. No, I made money, regardless.

B: And then you came straight to YSU?

- C: After high school. But I did have other jobs. I had worked, as I said, in the Hispanic community center for a couple of years, the day care center, also as a tutor for them in biology and English. I worked for the city once and I've done a couple other things.
- B: What could you do at school?
- C: Locker attendant, different kinds of little things, cleaning up the shelves. That work wasn't a very glamorous job, but it earned some money. I think that was my second job.
- B: Why did you work, to buy clothes?
- C: No, I don't know. I'm still not like that. I don't work to buy clothes. I work to save it. I'm usually very practical; people hate that at my house. They're like, "You always have money saved." I'm always just saving it and then when something big comes up, like if I need something like books or contacts or my glasses break or Christmas is coming up, things like that, that's when I spend my money. I also enjoy taking trips on my breaks. I like going to Puerto Rico or to visit my sister in Arizona. And people tease me, like, "Oh, she's going on another vacation." And I think to myself, "Well, if I saved the money, I deserve it." Because I don't go run out and buy a new sweater or new shoes every . . . I shop for clothes maybe once a year, seriously. If I see something that's on sale and it's really great and I've wanted it for a while, then I'll splurge, but I'm pretty thrifty, I guess you could say.
- B: How do you think you got to be . . . It sounds like something you would develop, sort of an attitude.
- C: Maybe because of the hardships that happened in the family. I always thought, "It can happen to me." So I learned very young; I was always saving money. People used to always borrow money off of me. I say borrow, it was never returned. (Laughter) My brothers and sisters would just . . . Just from a very young age, I would always save my money. It was just something that I think my mom . . .
- B: That was my next question. Do you think your mother started it?
- C: She would tell me, "Well, if you do want to go to school, you know we can't afford all this, so you have to start saving." So I think that very young, I knew that if I wanted to get anywhere, I had to depend on me and not depend solely on my parents or someone else to give me something. I'm pretty much like that now. I still save to this day. I don't have that much--not as much as I would like--but I do save, because I'm always thinking about my education. I like to be the one who's paying for it. I live at home so I get room and board, but outside of that, I buy my own books and I go with scholarships. There are a lot

- of scholarships I've signed up for, and fortunately, I got a lot of them. So that helped a lot.
- B: Your mother sounds like an interesting person.
- C: She's great. She's so dynamic. Right now she's studying for her high school diploma.
- B: That's exciting.
- C: Yes, I'm very proud of her. I made a bet with her. I said, "You get your high school diploma, and I'll put you through college."
- B: Really?
- C: I mean it. If the Lord smiles on us, and on me, and I really make it through medical school, I wouldn't mind. Heck, they put up with me for twenty-three years. I would pay them back, yes. She's very intelligent. Even though she never had a chance to show it with books or anything, she's very creative. She likes interior design and she likes to create things. She's a very fascinating lady. She's a real inspiration for my sister and myself. A lot of other families, the mother is always . . . She does whatever her husband says, but in our family, no. They always have those--I like the way they call them--family discussions. My mother is not quiet. In fact, I think we have a lot in common. We're both a little bit on the loud side for Hispanic people. Most people expect us to be quiet, docile. She's a character. She's short too. She's short, has red hair and green eyes. She just looks different. She has Spanish blood, that's where she got the green eyes. Don't ask me where she got the red hair.
- B: Do you think she will go ahead and be a student?
- C: I think she will because it's been a year and a half now that she's, slowly but surely, going up the scale. She started off, I think it was the third grade level, and now she's doing seventh grade. She's just progressing every day. She comes home with her homework, and sometimes I help, although I don't have that much patience. When it comes to your mom, it's just really different trying to tutor your mom. She'll sit there and argue with me. She'll say, "Don't talk back to your mother." And I'm like, "Okay, fine."
- B: You've got two different relationships going there.
- C: Yes, it's pretty hysterical. But she's making a lot of progress. I think she'll do it. My dad, in the past, wasn't too crazy about the idea, but now he's coming around.
- B: That sort of changes things, right?
- C: Yes, because he got his high school diploma and he even went to

college for a semester or two before he came to the states. So he knows the value of education. It's just that, like I said, that machismo attitude, like, "Why do you need education? You've got me."

B: And the house.

C: Yes, but my mom realizes that she's not going to go out and take the business world by storm, or anything like that. She's doing this for herself.

B: You'll have to bring her down and introduce her to the non-traditional students. One woman who I interviewed didn't start school until she was fifty-five. She raised fourteen children and she's looking forward to getting a degree now. She wants to be a social worker. So it's a nice group of people. Sometimes the people around you will say, "Gee, why do you want to do that?" But when you meet other people that have that desire, and are doing it, it's nice to know that you're not the only one who would consider such a crazy thing as going to school when you're whatever age.

C: She still has a lot of good years ahead of her. She's only forty-five. She's very young.

B: She would fit right in.

C: It's sort of my little dream. I really wish she would go to college. It would be great.

B: What do you think she would want to be?

C: I think she would probably go into design. She's really serious about that. If you would walk into our house including the paintings, the walls, she has this really neat little design going through the house that she painted herself.

B: Hand-painted?

C: Yes, it's not really like a painting or anything; it's more graphical, little designs that go through the house on the walls. She's basically really into home designs. She does our furniture, the curtains, and everything. She really likes doing things in the home when it deals with doing things with her hands and her mind.

B: It sounds like she's very talented.

C: She really is. I might be blessed, but she's the only woman I know who can do curtains without patterns. And she does other things. She does Christmas decorations. She'll just think of something, and she'll go out to the store, buy all this stuff, and put it together. She gets mad when I say, "Where

did you buy that?" "What? I made it." But she's that kind of person. She'll just think it up in her head, and then she'll do it. It's pretty interesting.

B: You have a job here at the university, right?

C: At the Student Enrichment Center. It's my second year. At first I started off tutoring, and then I found out about the job at the S.E.C., peer assistant.

B: That's a little bit different than tutoring, right?

C: Yes.

B: It's more personal, isn't it?

C: It's more personal, and you deal with the students on an academic level, but not constantly. That's not the basis of the relationships. You're there to help the student with academic problems, some personal, and even some career questions that they might have. Not to say that I know anything about career counseling, but basically, my job is to be like a resource person. If I don't know about this certain question or about a career, I refer them to Career Services or someone on campus who I know would be a good person to talk to about that. I think of it as kind of like a support group too, just to know that being a freshman is not fatal. You do survive to your sophomore year.

B: Do some of them bring you some pretty intense problem situations?

C: Sometimes. This year, things seem pretty mellow, but last year, I did have students who had big crises. That's when you are more like a friend instead of an advisor. You really have to be on their level and guide them to counseling services or something like that. You've got to be careful not to overstep your bounds. I'm not a counselor. You have to make sure that whatever you tell them, you tell them that "this is just my opinion." It could be wrong.

B: If you respond, how is the responsibility with that?

C: A lot. You do feel responsible. You do feel that great sense of responsibility. If they do badly in a class, you feel bad for them. But sometimes it goes beyond that, and you just have to tell them more about the university services. You do feel responsible. And then personal feelings come up and it goes with you. I take it home sometimes; it's bad, but you can't help but worry about their feelings, like if their father is an alcoholic. If they found that you're the only person who they could tell such a big problem to, you start thinking, "Who can I refer them to who is going to be a little bit friendly?" and "Who do I know, personally, who's going to

- really be able to help them?"
- B: Do you have to watch that you don't invite them home, like, "Oh, well, come home, I'll make you some chicken soup."
- C: Yes, you do.
- B: Is that a temptation?
- C: Sometimes. Some of them become your friends, and it's okay after the year's over and they're a sophomore, and you see them on campus. It's okay to be their friend and go out with them to a football game or something. But during that year, you've got to be careful because they might tend to lean on you or think, "She's my friend so I can ask this of her and that of her," or, "She's going to get me out of this pickle, or something." So you've got to be careful about it. Fortunately, it hasn't happened to me. Even with the ones who were a little bit more on the personal level with me, I try real hard not to let it go too far. It's a great effort to have to put up a barrier and say, "Okay, don't cross this line."
- B: Sort of like a profession? You have to stay professional?
- C: You do exactly. You have to keep that level of professional. You can't let them cross over. In certain things you can, like chumming around and that type of thing. But you can't let them take advantage of you.
- B: Do you think that's good background for you in the field that you are choosing to go into?
- C: I think it's good background for anything. If you're planning on dealing with people, then that's good background.
- B: It sounds like you've learned a lot.
- C: You learn what to say, what not to say. You learn a lot about the university: Who is what, who can do what. You learn how to be a resource person.
- B: Who can do what? That sounds like we're talking structure here.
- C: Well, you learn about red tape. You learn how to get around it. You learn about how to deal with people in a business-type setting.
- B: Political sorts of situations?
- C: Yes, you learn how to talk to certain people. You learn a lot about it. You might come in as a freshman and think, "The almighty univeristy." Believe it or not, a lot of students feel like that. They're scared, afraid of the person at the

- top. Once you meet those people, you realize that they're just people too. I've met a lot of people in administration and a lot of people in the offices. I enjoy that because it helps you to relate different aspects of the university. When you get into the business world, you're going to have to be able to use that.
- B: That's why I was suggesting that you bring your mom down. I think that some older people, too, have an idea of the university as this big, overpowering structure, and they're afraid of it.
- C: Yes and they think, I can never do it. I'll be crushed by the system.
- B: It sounds like you're doing that in your job, helping people see that that's not the case. Do you have any other ideas of good ways to reach women who are not sure of themselves, who could do it, who have the capabilities, but they don't know that they can do it?
- C: I think that the best way is just talking with people that you meet and letting them know, "This is the way I lived my life. You could do it too. Or you can do whatever you want." If you see someone and they express to you, "I would like to try this," you can give them the positive reinforcement and say, "It's not impossible. By the way, I know how you can." I think that's one of the greatest assets to get any message across, make yourself learn and make it known that this is the way you think. Other people can learn by the way you live it.
- B: By example, using yourself as an example?
- C: I've got people who come in and say, "How do you do it? You're a student and you're working. How are you getting decent grades?" I study too. I set a time; I budget my time like I budget my money. They're asking, and I'm sharing my knowledge. I'm not telling them, "This is what you have to do." I'm just saying, "This is what I do. If I can do it, you can come up with some kind of plan that will work for you." As far as other women, the majority of my students are young women and mature women and some are "nontraditional," over the ages of twenty-five. I try not to push that though. I think that if they feel they're nontraditional, then they're nontraditional. But when they come in, I always make references as to what's available on campus. If they've got questions, I tell them about workshops. Basically, that's all I can do is let them know what their options are.
- B: I wanted to ask you how you felt about the amount of time that it's going to take to go through medical school. That's a long time there, isn't it?

C: Yes, it is.

B: After your time here, you have another six years?

C: Four; another four years in medical school, then I'll have to do an internship.

B: So we are talking six to eight years, for psychiatric, I would think.

C: Yes. I'm keeping an open mind. I just have to look on the bright side. My fiancé's not too thrilled.

B: So you have a commitment already?

C: Yes. I've been dating him for three years and we finally got engaged this past July.

B: Does he have career ambition?

C: Yes, he also is studying biology. He would like to see if he can get into medical school. If not, he has good business sense, so maybe he'll go into hospital administration. He likes dealing with children, so he's got a lot of things open to him.

B: How does he feel about you spending so much time in school?

C: He's not too happy. He knows though--because he does have high goals himself--that my goals are important and he takes them very seriously. He's pretty good about that. In fact, when we first started the relationship, I just came right out and said, "You know, my priority is medicine, and if anything else comes along, it's second." That's just the way I feel about it. It's still that way. I feel that I have to be true to myself first. It's a lot of time. Hopefully, if we get accepted to the same school, we could probably work out something better, but if we both get sent to different sides of the earth, it's going to be difficult. But anything worth having is worth working for.

B: What about a family?

C: My mother gets mad when I say this, but I really have never thought of myself as having two or three kids. Maybe one child, but I don't know if I would even have the time to devote as much as I should if I'm going to be a mother.

B: Well, that's good that you can see that as an option. That must be difficult though in a Hispanic background too, right? I'm sure that's very highly valued, right?

C: Yes. Grandmother keeps asking me, "When are you going to get

married? Aren't you getting a little bit old?"

B: Are you able to speak openly with them, or do you just sort of put it off?

C: No, I tell them. Everyone in my family knows that I certainly didn't even have plans on getting married.

B: Oh, this just sort of came along.

C: That just sort of happened. You can't control emotions. But everyone knows that I never had any intentions of becoming a mother or raising a family. I've always been kind of like a loner I guess. But I'm not the only one in my family who was like that. My sister was in the Air Force and just got out after seven years in the service as an architectural engineer.

B: So she's a strong woman too.

C: Yes, she is. And she just started to have a family. She waited a while.

B: She's older than you?

C: Yes, she's twenty-seven.

B: And she's also in a nontraditional field for women.

C: Yes, and now that she's out of the service, she's going to go for her civil degree in engineering. So I'm not the only one.

B: So you're building a new family tradition here?

C: I guess so, yes. It's kind of funny though because my brother became a steelworker, like my dad. And the girls just sort of took off in their own little directions. My brother, fortunately, is still working, has a family, and is doing well. It's just curious. I just looked at that and thought, How strange.

B: Back to the strong mom?

C: Yes, pretty much.

B: How do your friends feel about your career choice? Do you get support?

C: Yes and no. Some of them, my old friends from high school, just can't believe that I'm going into, "Ooh, biology," as they put it, because they're theater majors. They're in Dana School of Music, and they just think that I'm wasting my time. They think, How could you waste your time? Well, I feel that medicine is a talent too. I still like music and acting as a hobby. So, my old high school friends don't give me that much

- support, but my new friends that I've made here at the university, I get a lot of support from. Once in a while, if I'm making a new acquaintance and they just learn or happen to find out that I am in , they'll look at me and they'll say, "Oh, you're too nice for that," or they'll say something totally off the wall, and you're like, "What kind of stereotype am I supposed to be?" I guess it goes back to being "cute!"
- B: Yes, I would think that plays in there. Did you let people in high school know that you were interested in medical fields?
- C: No.
- B: You just sort of had the idea in your own head and just let it grow?
- C: Yes.
- B: Did you get any sort of career guidance in high school?
- C: Yes, that I did. I had a chemistry instructor who was a great source of inspiration, and he kind of taught me that whatever it is in your head that you want to do, you can do it. He didn't really push me one way or the other. He was the kind of instructor who would say, "Sally, you can do it, whatever it is that you decide to do."
- B: He had faith in you?
- C: Yes.
- B: He must have recognized your abilities and your talents.
- C: I don't know what he saw, but he was always there. I would talk his ears off. He was a lot more than just an instructor; he was kind of like a mentor, a friend. I had a Spanish teacher who was also--I enjoyed arguing with him--a good sounding board I guess. So I did have some support in high school to go ahead with my academic career.
- B: What about when you came to the university? Were you encouraged to go into medicine?
- C: I think I had a lot of support from people like Mary Ann Echols. She was one of the first people I met, when she was still working in Tod Hall. The minority services and things like that, they always gave me support. As far as other students, I don't know. I guess it was kind of unspoken, but I would see people in the hall and they would kind of give me that look like, "Go ahead."
- B: What about academic advisors?
- C: Academic advisors, on the other hand, I don't know. My first

academic advisor kind of tried to give it to me gently, that type of attitude like, "Yes, this is what you need, but don't set your heart on it," that type of attitude. I didn't appreciate it too well because most of the people in the biology and chemistry departments were men and the fact that I'm short, a minority, and a woman is not . . .

B: Triple whammy?

C: . . . is not the best thing. My first year here, I had a little accent. It was so hysterical. When people would talk to me they would say, "What?" And I never even thought I had one. It was kind of peculiar. So I had a couple of strikes against me, I guess you could say. As far as academic advisement, it wasn't that strong my first year.

B: Do you think they thought maybe you should be a nurse?

C: I'm glad you brought that up. Yes, they would say, "You're interested in medicine? You're going to be a nurse." They wouldn't even say, "You should [be a nurse];" they just automatically assumed that this was what I wanted to be. A lot of people in my family too would ask, "Oh, are you going in for nursing?" I'm like, "No," because that's the traditional woman thing to do. But you're right, my first year, a lot of people would assume that. Some of them wouldn't even give me that benefit of the doubt. They would say something like, "What are you going to do with a biology degree," as if they couldn't conceive of me doing anything with it. I had one instructor in a chemistry lab . . . I'm sitting there doing my work with a little stool because I needed it. In order to do my work efficiently, I had to see what I was doing. So he came by and I guess he got a big kick out of it. He thought that I shouldn't be there and he told me so.

B: How did that feel?

C: Oh, I was mad. I've got a temper. I've learned not to say things at inappropriate times.

B: You didn't come back . . .

C: I didn't say anything to retaliate at the moment. I finished my experiment first, handed it in, got the grade on it, and then I mentioned it to him. But I've learned that you can't let your anger get out of control. You do have to leave it alone at the moment and bring it up again at the right time.

B: That's funny. We were just talking about that last night, how you really have to hold your anger.

C: Yes, you do. And I have a very bad temper, and that's one thing that I've learned.

B: That's discrimination, don't you think, pretty blatant?

C: Yes.

B: How about discrimination as a minority? Has that come up for you?

C: Strangely enough, it's like being a minority among minorities. I was at a little conference for students interested in medicine, sponsored by a reputable Ohio school--I won't mention any names--and that woman was giving a talk on how minorities can make it in medicine. When I went there, most of the minorities were black minorities, and there was an Asian person, myself, and my boy friend--then he was just a friend--sitting with me. So there were two Puerto Ricans and an Asian and the rest were black minorities and we were discriminated against because we weren't dark enough. That was really strange because you're going there for support as a minority and then you get double-whammied for not being the right kind of minority.

B: Yes.

C: I remember her saying that, "Well, if you were born on the mainland, it's not as good as if you were born in Puerto Rico." I thought to myself, If I was a little bit darker, had a thicker accent, or an accent period, I couldn't help the feeling that then they might have done something for me.

B: But as it was, you didn't fit?

C: No, I looked too white. I didn't appreciate that because on the other hand, you don't get accepted either way. So it's kind of difficult.

B: How about in Youngstown? How is it being part of the minority community in Youngstown? Do you feel that you fit in the minority community in Youngstown?

C: I don't feel like I fit. A lot of times, I think it's because I'm educated, you know. Your own people tend to look at you and say, "You're not one of us anymore."

B: And you've sort of crossed over to the intellectuals?

C: "You don't even talk the way you used to," which is true. When I think of it, I used to have people call from the university to my house. They would talk to me at home and when they would see me the next day they would say, "You know, you talk funny when you're back home." I didn't even realize it. And now, if I sit down and talk to one of my cousins or something they'll ask, "Why are you talking so fancy?" And I think, "What, is good English a crime?"

B: That's really interesting. I just had a discussion with another woman last night, and she was describing the same thing to me, how you sort of balance between two worlds.

C: It gets rough because you're not really totally accepted by either one, which is a strange feeling sometimes. You want to get support, and both of them are saying, "You're not one of us anymore." Then you have to kind of turn in toward yourself. I think it makes you a stronger person, but it's rough while you're going through it.

B: It's kind of lonely?

C: Yes.

B: How about one on one though? Do you see solutions that way, of ways of moving past seeing each other in categories?

C: The way that I try is that I try to keep involved in the Hispanic community as much as I can so that they know that I haven't just "gone over to the other side," as they say. I try to be involved and I try to keep doing things with my community. At the same time, when I'm doing something here at YSU, I invite people from the Hispanic community to come on in so that the university sees that there is a Hispanic community out there, and maybe they'll learn something from that. Recently, I was working on the Hispanic Awareness Week with the Special Student Services on that committee, and I thought that was a good start when we got some of the people from that community just to come down to YSU. It's such a big thing. Everybody thinks that once they come through the doors, then something's going to happen. It kind of goes back to what we were talking about before, about the "Almighty University." They just fear coming inside. They think people are going to laugh at them or something. I don't know, maybe that's it.

B: Yes, or feeling like otherness, like you're not involved, you're not a part, and you're not invited. I think it's really important that we move past that. I'm not quite sure of all the ways to do it.

C: The only thing I can think of is to try to get the community and the university to do a lot more things together. And they're going to have to sort of single out, make some special activities for a special sect in the community. If you know that there is a large Hispanic community out there, they're not going to come for an open house that's open to the general public. Then you're going to have to try to make an effort to come up with something else that's going to draw them in so that you both can mutually benefit from learning off of each other. The international students do that well. They hold those international nights. I'm in the club, the Federation of International Students, and we hold different little activities, and it's so good; it's so positive because

- that brings in that special sect of the community into the university, and then the university is learning and you're learning about the university. So you're not so much afraid, one of the other. And I think they have to do that more with the Hispanic community.
- B: Do you ever feel drawn in many different directions? I'm hearing a lot of involvement here.
- C: Yes, I have a lot of commitments. I like it though. I mean, it drives me crazy. I'll probably have ulcers in the future. But I do have a lot of involvement. I like it though.
- B: It sounds like you get a lot of rewards, and it sounds like you see some positive things happening that make it worth it?
- C: Yes, I do. Just being involved gets you feeling like you're doing something, and somewhere, someone is going to benefit. If not a bunch of people, at least someone that you talk to or that you meet is going to benefit from knowing.
- B: If you could give advice to some young girl coming up with a dream similar to your dream, what kind of advice would you tell her?
- C: Basically, don't do it for anyone else but yourself. You've got to be selfish sometimes, but along the way, don't forget, don't step on anyone, appreciate people that are there because even though you've got that kind of selfish dream and you're doing it for yourself, you're going to have to use other people's resources and you're going to have to allow yourself to be used. It's the only way that you're going to really grow and really learn. That's what I think higher education is about. It's learning, not just books, but learning how to deal with people, learning how to use other people, learning how to be used. I don't mean used in a negative sense, I mean being there.
- B: Useful?
- C: Yes, if other people would learn to be of use to others instead of just me, me, me, then I think that half the problems in the world would be solved.
- B: It sounds to me like with all your traveling back and forth, you have a larger sense of the world and community.
- C: I think knowing two languages, you know two different worlds almost. There are different connotations in every community.
- B: Do you think that we have similarities that we can build on now?
- C: Sure. I think that in any culture compared to any other culture, there are more similarities. I don't think assimilation is necessarily the best thing to do when you're faced with two

cultures, but just learning.

B: Do you think that we can appreciate each other's differences?

C: That means work and a lot of different things. But even the little things about college life, International Night, Awareness Week, Hispanic Awareness Week, Black Awareness Week, that kind of helps it along. It's going to be a long time coming. But maybe we'll get there. I can't say that we will, but maybe.

B: Sounds like you're willing to work on it though?

C: Yes, it gives me something to do.

B: Anything else about your life or your work, dreams that you feel that we haven't covered?

C: I don't know. There's just a lot. I was just really surprised when you even asked me to do this, because I thought, Successful, don't you have to have graduated to be successful?

B: Don't you feel successful in the work you do?

C: When I think of it, I think yes. First of all, putting four or five years of your life into education, that is a career. I think I've been successful with that. I think I've been successful about learning as much as I could have while I was here, because I'm graduating soon. But I think I've learned an awful lot about life in general, how people act, how to interact.

B: It sounds like you've changed a lot since high school too?

C: I used to be, believe it or not, shy. The only time, in fact, that I was not shy was when I was on stage. I feel like that got me out of my shell.

B: Gave you a way you could do it without really doing it?

C: Yes, I used to be shy. I used to think, What can you do? Even though I had my dreams, I used to think, Oh, come on, Sally, you'll end up getting married, having seven kids, and that will be the end of that. Now I think, This is only the beginning. God knows where I'm going to end up one day. I feel that I will succeed in whatever I do.

B: Good. I think you will too.

END OF INTERVIEW