

Marianne Lassman Fisher
Oral History Interview
Interviewed by Claire Lobdell
August 24, 2015

LOBDELL: **00:00:02** All right, today is August 24, 2015, and my name is Claire Lobdell. I am here with Marianne Lassman Fisher who is a probate court judge for the Windsors. And we are at her office at 1199 Sullivan Avenue. So I was wondering if I could first ask you when and where you were born and grew up.

FISHER: Springfield, Massachusetts, and I grew up in Hampden, Massachusetts.

LOBDELL: Okay. And who are your parents, and how many siblings did you have?

FISHER: Four siblings. Margaret Fisher and Lane Fisher are my parents. And I have four siblings. One recently died.

LOBDELL: I'm sorry to hear that.

FISHER: Margaret Mitchell, James Fisher, and William Fisher who just recently passed away.

LOBDELL: Where were you in the order?

FISHER: I was second.

LOBDELL: Second. Yeah. Do you have any favorite stories from your childhood?

FISHER: (laughs) Well, we had a country—a country childhood. So we kind of grew up different than this generation. We were out in the woods and floating down the river and—

LOBDELL: **00:01:20** Really?

FISHER: Yeah. We were from a small town and—

LOBDELL: Oh, so did you not grow up in Springfield?

FISHER: We grew up in Hampden.

LOBDELL: Oh, okay, right.

FISHER: Yeah, so it was—there was just four thousand people in the town, and we were kind of on our own for the daytime, like all the other kids our age. And we'd float tubes down the river, and then we'd disappear in the woods all day and go skating—ice skating—on our own. (laughs)

LOBDELL: Was that the Connecticut River?

FISHER: Yeah, it was the Connecticut River.

LOBDELL: So you've lived your whole life up and down the river.

FISHER: Yeah, we'd never let our kids do that now (laughs)—but it was little tributaries of it that landed right in front of our house. Yeah, so it was different. Thornton Burgess lived in our town.

LOBDELL: Oh. Were your parents—were they there because they were farming, or what did they do?

FISHER: **00:02:14** No, no. They were—they had just moved there from Springfield, part of the suburban move out of the city.

LOBDELL: Yeah. What schools did you attend?

FISHER: I originally attended school in Springfield. I was in an elementary school until third grade. And then we moved to Hampden, so I attended the Hampden Elementary School. And then they—our middle school was actually sixth, seventh, and eighth grade, which was the back of the Town Hall, because we didn't have a middle school. And then we went to the neighboring high school, which was Wilbraham.

LOBDELL: Okay. I noticed on your LinkedIn page that you got your Bachelor's and Master's in speech pathology and audiology?

FISHER: Um-hm.

LOBDELL: So how did you get interested in that, and then how did you make the switch from that to law?

FISHER: I worked as an audiologist for ten years. So after about maybe three or four years, I realized that, in order to really make a living at it, I needed to either get my PhD or change careers. So I looked into different careers, and I decided on this because I could, for one thing, take the courses at night and still work full time in my career. So that's what I ended up doing.

LOBDELL: What branch of audiology were you in? Were you mostly working with—?

FISHER: Clinical.

LOBDELL: Yeah. With adults mostly or children?

FISHER: Adults and children. I worked for a surgeon in Holyoke.

LOBDELL: Do you still have any connection with that?

FISHER: **00:03:57** Not really, no. No, because I've been out of it for a long time. So I don't really, no.

LOBDELL: And how and when did you meet your husband, Mark Lassman?

FISHER: I met him in law school. As I was going into school—I was entering night school. And he was finishing day school. So he was a day student, and I was a night student.

LOBDELL: What branch of the law is he in?

FISHER: He's teaching now. He quit the practice.

LOBDELL: Oh, okay.

FISHER: But he was a general practice attorney for eighteen years.

LOBDELL: So how did you decide to have your last name Lassman Fisher instead of Fisher Lassman? You know, a lot of times—

FISHER: Oh, right, yeah. So that's an interesting story. So we—we were both living in—let me get the time right—I was living in—maybe Agawam, because I was working down there. I was in an apartment. So we were getting our marriage license in Springfield, and we went into the Town Hall. And the clerk asked what my name would be. And I was—we didn't have any clue. We'd never thought about it. So I looked at him, and he looked at me. And we just—it didn't dawn on us that I was changing my name. So I just said, "Lassman Fisher." (laughter) And because I had a—I was pretty far along in law school, and I already had a career, I didn't want to change my name completely. You know, I didn't want to change my name because I'd already been known in my career as Fisher. So it wasn't like I was in love with my name, but I already had a pretty clear identity as a profession as Marianne Fisher. So that's how it ended up—we put it in the middle. So I'm not hyphenated. It's Marianne Lassman Fisher.

LOBDELL: How many children do you have?

FISHER: **00:06:15** Two.

LOBDELL: Did they take both names as well?

FISHER: No, just Lassman. I didn't want that confusion. Having worked in a doctor's office, I know it's confusing when the kids have hyphenated names, and so I just wanted them to have the one name.

LOBDELL: How did you decide to move to South Windsor?

FISHER: Well, my husband was from South Windsor, so we first moved to East Windsor. And then—we were living in an apartment then, and then we started looking for homes and ended up here.

LOBDELL: Do you live near his family? Like did you live right in the same neighborhood?

FISHER: No. No, we didn't. We lived a little bit away.

LOBDELL: I mean, it's not that big of a town so—

FISHER: No, it's not that big of a town. No. But I liked the town. I actually liked it more than he did. (laughter) But I liked the fact that it was bigger than the town I grew up in and had a lot more services than when I grew up. You know, when you come from a really small town, you don't have great library programs and great pool programs and great—all of that—which I found—when you grow up in a small town like that, you have to drive everywhere. And I like the convenience of this location and that it had a lot of organized things for kids and—and I liked that.

LOBDELL: About what year did you move here?

FISHER: **00:07:51** I think it was '83.

LOBDELL: Okay. So you got—how did you get involved in Democratic Party politics?

FISHER: I was involved in a local issue, and they approached me and asked me if I would run for office.

LOBDELL: What issue was that?

FISHER: It was an issue involving a school closing. They ultimately closed the school. Then they reopened it. (laughs)

LOBDELL: Really? Which one was it?

FISHER: It was the Wapping School.

LOBDELL: Oh, okay.

FISHER: Oh, no, which did it close?—it was school closing—it might have been redistricting. It was redistricting at the school.

LOBDELL: And the office that you ran for, was that when you ran for mayor? Or was that—?

FISHER: I ran for Town Council

LOBDELL: Town Council?

FISHER: I believe they asked me to run for a seat on the school board. And I declined that. And then they asked me to run for a seat on the Town Council instead, and I said, “Okay.” And I won that year. I came in eight out of nine.

LOBDELL: **00:09:07** Okay. So is it—it’s a system where—?

FISHER: You can’t run for mayor here.

LOBDELL: Okay.

FISHER: It’s the top vote getter of the majority party.

LOBDELL: Oh, wow. I didn’t realize that.

FISHER: So you can’t run for mayor here. No, you can’t.

LOBDELL: Huh. So how many years did you serve on Town Council?

FISHER: So the first year I ran, I just squeaked in. There’s twelve candidates, and they reelect nine. So I think I came in eighth or ninth, whatever it was, so I just got in. And then the next year—every two years you run—I came in first.

LOBDELL: Wow.

FISHER: But my party didn’t come in. So that was two more years. And then the next year, I came in first again, and my party came in, so I was mayor.

LOBDELL: Wow.

FISHER: And then the next year—two years after that—my party came in, and I was first. So I was mayor again. So I was mayor for four years then. Then I think the next—it seems like I was mayor for four years and then not four years.

LOBDELL: **00:10:26** And during the not four years, were you still on Town Council?

FISHER: I was still on the—yeah, I was still on—I was still the top vote getter but not mayor for those four years. And then I resigned to become probate judge.

LOBDELL: Okay. And what—do you know what years that was that you were mayor—or the Town Council time?

FISHER: I think it was—let's see—I think it was—it was from '91 back. (laughs)

LOBDELL: Okay. (laughs) What were some of the main issues that you faced during your time in office?

FISHER: Well, we acquired a lot of—they first started acquiring open space land. So we acquired the Priest property and different open space parcels. That was the first time they had done that—was those years—where we purchased with the state the land that people had sold to the town. So that was a big thing. We had—Evergreen Walk came in. We redid the pool. The Veterans Memorial Park was completely revamped. That was done over, and that was under my thing.

LOBDELL: So before you started, it was still a pond?

FISHER: It was—yeah, like a pond. And it was closing every other day because there was bacteria in the water. So we did the whole thing over. It took us a couple of years to do it. And 9/11 happened on my watch, which was huge.

LOBDELL: Was anyone from South Windsor in the towers?

FISHER: Some family members of people in South Windsor were in the towers. And we had collections and things going down there. I guess it was ten years—I knew we had a lot of stuff. Oh, Timothy Edwards Middle School--we had several referendums on that addition that came in to our Council.

LOBDELL: **00:12:49** Was that contentious?

FISHER: Yes. Oh, and we put the fuel cell in the high school. That was a good thing. So that was on my thing. And that was a big—that was a big project for me, because we had to

really—I had to be really involved in that—contracting with the state—because they—the state gave us all the money for it. And we had to make sure that it was—when it went in there—it was—we wouldn't have any responsibility going forward. But when we had all the power failures, the high school was on. So we had everybody in there, all the seniors and everybody—we were the only ones on, because we had the fuel cell.

LOBDELL: Wow. Yeah.

FISHER: So it was a big deal back then. Now they're more common, but back then they weren't. I think a lot of the things that came up—I'm trying to remember what else—

LOBDELL: Now, when you were mayor, was that—did that become a full-time job, or did you keep your law practice at the same time?

FISHER: Oh, no, we can—we are what they call figurehead mayors. So we have a Town Manager that manages the day-to-day stuff. And then we run the meetings, and we sign—we try to set the policy—is what our job is really—to set the policy.

LOBDELL: Is the Manager an elected office too or is that—?

FISHER: No. No, they're the paid—they're the paid manager of the town.

LOBDELL: How is that relationship, between you and the manager?

FISHER: **00:14:33** So when we—when he came in—the manager is hired by the Town Council. So just prior to my tenure, we had a huge issue here—which is probably what put me from ninth to first back then—which was that our tax office was privatized. A private company came in and took over the tax office, which turned out to be very controversial. So two of us fought it and eventually got rid of the private tax collector. And the Town Manager under that—during that period—and the CFO [Chief Financial Officer] under that period left. So we had a new manager come in, etc. So it was right after that I became the mayor, and we were cleaning up that whole—we had the FBI in here and everything else.

LOBDELL: Really? Wow.

FISHER: Yeah, it was a huge thing. So we had that. That was my first tenure. (laughter) I think that was—I was the mayor then. I can't remember. But whatever it was, it was messy, and it took a long time to clean it up. So that manager came in then. So we hired that manager. So we elect the manager—we hired the manager, the nine of us. I can't remember if I was the mayor then or not, but that was one of our big issues, was the whole issue of privatizing municipal services and what services really should be privatized and what services shouldn't. And certainly that shouldn't have been.

LOBDELL: Right.

FISHER: And it never was again. And there was only our town and one other town that did it. Nobody's doing it now. (laughter)

LOBDELL: Learned their lesson.

FISHER: Yeah. So that was a big issue. But that is a difficult position because of course the manager has an agenda, and the mayor sets the policy for the town and is supposed to speak for the town. And sometimes they're not on the same page, particularly with economic development, because what the manager tends to see is—they generally have economy backgrounds, and they see that, oh, this is a good economic thing. And they tend to side with the side of business and the side of economic growth and development and money in. And our side is to take a look at that and say, "Yeah, but that has to be tempered by what the long-term vision of the town is. Do we want ugly buildings? Do we—?" We have to take into consideration what the view of the place is and what people will tolerate in their town. So there's always some friction there, and we do speak from two different places.

LOBDELL: **00:18:14** Yeah.

FISHER: I always found that it was better not to be the manager's friend.

LOBDELL: Really?

FISHER: Yeah. Yeah, and we got along just fine, but it wasn't uncommon for me to be in there having arguments with the manager.

LOBDELL: Right. Now, with the way that the Town Council and mayor is set up, where the top vote getter becomes mayor, do you think it's more of a—do decisions end up being made more as a group rather than like in a—like in other towns where maybe the Town Council and the mayor are more separate branches?

FISHER: Well, we all have an equal vote. It's just that someone has to be the single representative of the different things, so the mayor has the more inside track, as it were, I guess. So I think in other towns, the mayor actually runs the town. And they're paid, and they manage the staff. And that's a whole different animal that we just don't have.

LOBDELL: So the Town Council and mayor are unpaid?

FISHER: Yeah, we don't have any—

LOBDELL: Any stipend or anything?

FISHER: I think I got seventy-five dollars a month, yeah. (laughs) But it was—but we don't have to manage the staff. Our job has nothing to do with the staff. So we are arm's length with personnel, which is better I think.

LOBDELL: **00:19:48** Yeah. What do you see as your main accomplishments during the time you were on the council and mayor?

FISHER: That's funny. I really hadn't thought about that. I guess—I think probably—I think putting that fuel cell in the high school was a big accomplishment. We got it, and nobody else did. And it did promote clean energy. They had a big—they have actually a class on it that they used. And it helped the whole clean energy. It was made in our town. And it helped that whole industry.

I think redoing that pool was huge because it's now used by thousands of people, and it's open all summer. And it made a big difference for a lot of children and adults.

I think for me personally—the biggest impact for me personally was that I just was able to meet a lot of people in the town. And what I found since then, and even now, is, for whatever reason, the people that I still meet, and did back then, had a sense of security that I was in charge of the town. And they had this perception that—at the time, there was a lot of fighting on the Council. There was a lot of—it was a very contentious body. So there was fighting between Democrats, and there was huge fighting between Republicans and Democrats. And there were really only two of us that weren't engaged in it: me and my deputy mayor. And it was very disruptive to the community, but the two of us were seen—and since I was the mayor, I was the more focused—as the calming voice, as the person that was going to get the job done and make people accountable to the community. And that was the most gratifying part of the job, that people really did believe that. So when I knocked on the doors and campaigned, etc., they would feel very comfortable with me, and they'd say, "Oh, come on in, Marianne." They knew me by name, and they'd often say that, that they felt like I was taking care of the town when things around me were a mess. And that was the most gratifying part of it for me, that people had that confidence that I could control the environment for the citizens when everybody around me was disruptive. And they had confidence in it.

LOBDELL: Who was your deputy mayor?

FISHER: Ed Havens.

LOBDELL: Oh, okay. And when I was looking back at the list of past mayors in South Windsor, it seems like the seat flips back and forth between the Democrats and Republicans—

FISHER: Right. Yeah.

LOBDELL: **00:24:05** —even though I think Democrats outnumber Republicans something like two to one in this town.

FISHER: Um-hm.

LOBDELL: So how do you see party landscape in this area, and has it changed over the years that you've been here? Why do you think it is that that all—?

FISHER: So what—who all—who outnumbered who? I forget.

LOBDELL: I was looking at voter registration, and I think, at least now, Democrats outnumber Republicans about two to one.

FISHER: Right. Right. So what I always say is, the biggest party is the party that isn't a party. The Independent party is the one that always elects here. What I think on the local level is that historically people primarily vote for the individual in these elections over party.

There is a percent of people that will, in these local elections, pull a party lever. But I'd say over 50 percent will vote the individual if they know the individual. And if you're an avid campaigner on a local campaign and you reach out, then you can make contact with a lot of people. And if they like you, they'll vote for you. So it does seem to me that there's a flip-flop of party politics, but this is not an extreme town, and really there's not a lot of political controversy, as it were. But Republicans are Republicans, and Democrats are Democrats.

LOBDELL: Do you think the town has become more liberal or more conservative over the time you've lived here, or do you think it has stayed—?

FISHER: I haven't seen much of a difference. I haven't. But, I mean, the Republican Party supports its Republican candidates, and the Democratic Party supports its Democratic candidates. The party itself is still alive and well.

LOBDELL: **00:26:29** How much interaction or contact would you have with people from the state party or the national party when you were running? Any? Or was it fairly local?

FISHER: When I was involved in politics, we had significant contact. And certainly when I was mayor, I had plenty of contact. They seek you out when you're a figurehead in the town.

LOBDELL: Now, what does that look like? What sort of—I mean, are they—is it providing support for the campaign? Or how does that—?

FISHER: Well, when you're a—when you're a figurehead political person, then, for example, from the state level, if you're running a state campaign, you're going to ID only a certain number of people. And if you're a Democratic mayor, you're going to be identified as one that will attract other Democrats. So you're going to be selected to help support state campaigns or federal campaigns, etc. You're expected to—you're going to be wanted and needed to help on the larger campaign trail. And you have more access to these people in those positions as well. And on the Council level as well, I mean, you get to know all these folks. And

people who are simply involved in the political parties as well. I mean, if you get into politics, you get into politics. You don't have to be elected. You can just be part of the party. And it's not hard to do. Most people don't do it. (laughs) I never did it until somebody asked me to run for something. I had no idea that it was like this.

LOBDELL: Did you have to visit the State House much for issues related to—?

FISHER: As mayor, I did, yeah. I did. Yeah. And I was part of the lobbying group of mayors, so I had to do that for the—we lobbied as mayors. So I did that. So we were down there quite a bit.

LOBDELL: I guess it's not that far from here.

FISHER: No. No, it wasn't that far.

LOBDELL: Now, you've served a number of terms as probate judge. Can you explain what a probate judge does and what do you like best about your work?

FISHER: **00:29:22** What the probate judges do is they handle estate matters, conservatorships, children's matters, termination of parental rights, removal of guardians. We handle matters concerning children and adults with intellectual disabilities, name changes. We handle matters concerning people with mental illness, and under Connecticut law, probate judges have jurisdiction over who has the rights to the body after death, if there's a dispute over that, and advance directives resolution—orders involving advance directives.

LOBDELL: Now, you were talking about parental rights and stuff. In some areas, that would be handled by a family court, right? Or is that—?

FISHER: Juvenile court. If it's involved—if it involves—sometimes these matters are handled in family court, but if it involves—that it's between husband and wife or parents. But if it involves abuse, neglect, etc., that can be handled in juvenile court or probate court.

LOBDELL: Is there a juvenile court around here, or is there not a—?

FISHER: Yes, there's juvenile court jurisdiction all over. There's juvenile courts—right in Hartford would be ours. And there's also consecutive jurisdiction with the probate courts. So we have what's called the Hartford Children Court is our—that's where we handle these matters now. We have our own children's court. And then there's juvenile court as well that handles those matters.

LOBDELL: And when you started, you were—was it just for South Windsor? And now it's all the Windsors?

FISHER: Well, it was South Windsor and East Windsor. And there were 125 courts. And then there was a restructuring of the courts, and they were reduced to fifty. So it became South Windsor, East Windsor, and Windsor. So we went from a population serving 37,000 to 65,000.

LOBDELL: Wow.

FISHER: So the court is here, still in South Windsor, and they went and expanded it size-wise and added more staff.

LOBDELL: **00:32:18** What do you enjoy most about your work do you think?

FISHER: It's interesting work, and it does—it does give people resolution on issues that are difficult for them. And I think that's the best part of it, particularly with matters involving children. I only see the matters involving children who are in distress. I do believe we get them out of bad situations and put them in better situations.

LOBDELL: It sounds like that would be difficult—over time it would be difficult.

FISHER: Yeah, it's stressful.

LOBDELL: How do you manage that?

FISHER: Well, at first it was more stressful than I thought it would be. (laughs) It was much more difficult than I thought it was going to be. I really didn't anticipate the amount of stress that came with it. But after a while, you just adjust to it, and you just—really just think about what needs to happen. And you just go into it with a—you have to logically think these things through and apply the law, and apply what needs to be done to what can be done, and take in all the information and make the best decision. And that's all you can really do.

LOBDELL: Do you have much of—much contact with other probate judges in the state or other judges of other courts?

FISHER: Yeah, we meet regularly, and we can call back and forth and get opinions. And we also have attorneys at the probate administrator's office, which oversees all of us, who can give us advice.

LOBDELL: Is it the type of thing where you've ever had to be worried about your own safety? Is that—has that never come up? You know, just every once in a while, you hear in the news people being upset about a decision and making a threat against a judge.

FISHER: **00:34:44** We have had actually a couple of situations where—or more than once actually—several times. We don't have security in the probate court the way they have in juvenile or family court. We don't have sheriffs there. So we are kind of on our own. And we've

had to rely on the police department here. And needless to say, when you're involved with particularly—oddly enough—we're involved with children at risk, which can bring out problems—but oddly enough it's the matters involving the estates that have been the most violent.

LOBDELL: Really?

FISHER: Yeah. You can get a really bad cast of characters fighting over the money, and we've had to have people here. We've had to have the police in here.

LOBDELL: Do you find that happens more when there is a will or when someone dies without leaving a will?

FISHER: It doesn't matter.

LOBDELL: Really?

FISHER: No. Just—you just—what you're bringing together is an assortment of people that might necessarily not be together, or family members who have been estranged, and they're estranged for reasons that they didn't get along. And what I have found over the years is that, if there's a lot of emotion and volatility in the family, oftentimes the family figurehead, the mother or the father, has been keeping them all at bay. When that person dies, everything blows apart, and all of the old hostility surfaces. And when they all come into one room, it comes back out over nothing really.

LOBDELL: Yeah. Now, your practice here is estate planning. Is that right?

FISHER: It's real estate and estate planning, business, that kind of thing—part time.

LOBDELL: How has your work as a judge informed the rest of your practice?

FISHER: **00:36:48** I'm better at the estate law. (laughter)

I think that's—that probably is—gives me a better insight into some aspects of estate and real estate. And I think the private practice is more informative to the probate, though, because that's such an isolated practice. But it helps to know about other areas of law going into the probate, because you're really trained to be a probate judge, but they don't really train you in the other areas of law that are going to affect it.

LOBDELL: Did you—when you started out in your practice, have you—had you always had a focus on real estate and estate law?

FISHER: I did general practice. I did divorces, family law, civil litigation. I've been through superior court trials and things. So I did everything. So I had a pretty much general

practice experience, which I think was good to have. And because of this job, I've limited it, because you just don't have the time to pursue all that.

LOBDELL: Right. Is there anything like—I mean, do you have continuing ed requirements for the law the way you do for other practices?

FISHER: Yes, you do. You have continuing ed, and then you have a lot of education requirements for probate.

LOBDELL: Did you have to go back to school at all before you became a probate judge?

FISHER: We had to go to judge school. So that was—that was a lot of classes. (laughs) It seems like I was there a lot. Yeah, we had to go through quite a bit of classes. And we still do. We have—I don't know how many hours a year we have to go back.

LOBDELL: Is that something that the state runs, or is it like you go to a private law school that has the judge—?

FISHER: The state runs it.

LOBDELL: Okay.

FISHER: **00:39:00** Yeah. And they bring in different—different groups to do it. It's very interesting, some of this stuff.

LOBDELL: I'm sure.

FISHER: And then we have an update on the new law every quarter, so as the law changes, we get updated.

LOBDELL: Does the aspect of the law that affects you in your court—is that a part of the law that changes frequently or not much?

FISHER: It changes a little bit every year. So there's certain rules that affect us, and taxation affects us, things like that.

LOBDELL: Yeah. That makes sense. So during the time that—I mean, you've been in public office on and off for more than twenty years now. Is that correct?

FISHER: Yeah.

LOBDELL: And male officeholders still outnumber female officeholders. Has your gender ever been an issue in any of the campaigns you've run? And do you think it's any harder or easier for women to run for an office now than it was when you first became involved in politics?

FISHER: Well, when I was first in, there weren't that many female mayors. So when I went to the—when I went to the meetings of the mayors, there would just be a certain number of us that were female mayors. And I felt that we were more practical in our approach. And people responded to female mayors, which was kind of a surprise for me, because you see—you saw so many males. And there seemed to be an element of—I don't know if it was trust or confidence or—it was surprising that people responded to a woman leader so easily, because there weren't that many of us. And that—I mean, that was twenty years ago. So that did surprise me a little bit. I never felt any real discrimination. I was a female lawyer, and I did see the difference between male and female lawyers immediately.

LOBDELL: **00:42:14** How—in what ways?

FISHER: Well, the—we used to joke about it—the female lawyers, particularly in the litigation arena. We used to say—our biggest joke was—“Oh, thank God, it's a woman on the other line,” because the male lawyers tended to—particularly the litigation lawyers—tended to posture and bluster a little bit and carry on. But the women would just get on the phone and say, “Okay, what do you want? Let's talk.” And that was just more typical. So I did see that in the legal world, and of course there are a lot of people in the law in politics. But in the world of politics, I didn't see it that much. I really didn't see it. But I did see that people really responded to women politicians. And I wondered why it took so long. I guess that was the surprise.

LOBDELL: Did you have any role models—female role models—in politics or other areas that you really looked to when you were coming up or no?

FISHER: Hmm. There really weren't any. (laughter)

LOBDELL: You were your own role model?

FISHER: Well, there weren't really any—there were only peers for me, because all of the people in higher office were men. I mean, Barbara Kennelly left. She was the only female. I didn't know Rosa DeLauro. Nancy Wyman—she was the only role model we really had. And she was a good role model.

LOBDELL: Tell me who she was.

FISHER: She's our—now she's our lieutenant governor.

LOBDELL: **00:44:23** Okay.

FISHER: So we had her, and she was a good role model. And I felt she was very effective. She was coming up through the ranks. But we were all kind of on the same level—not Nancy Wyman. She was—she wasn't the secretary of state then. She was a state representative then. There was a female state representative with us. There weren't any higher office people—that I knew of.

LOBDELL: In South Windsor was—I hope I have the name right—was Barbara Murray—was she mayor of South Windsor?

FISHER: She was the first—she was the first chairman of the Democratic party, I think.

LOBDELL: Okay.

FISHER: Yeah.

LOBDELL: And she was—was that before you—?

FISHER: That was before me. I knew her for a long time, but she had sort of retired from politics before I got into it. So she was—she was not in office—I guess you might say.

LOBDELL: Right.

FISHER: There were two other female mayors, but they were long gone before—there's only been two other female mayors.

LOBDELL: Really? Even since—since you?

FISHER: Yeah.

LOBDELL: **00:45:52** Now, I know that—

FISHER: There was a female state representative, Nancy Krensky, who served at the same time as I did.

LOBDELL: Okay. From here? From this district?

FISHER: Yeah.

LOBDELL: Okay. I know South Windsor used to have a selectman form of government. I mean, it actually sounds sort of similar to what you're saying about—

FISHER: Oh, like in East Windsor, yeah.

LOBDELL: Yeah. Was that quite a bit before you served?

FISHER: That was before me. Yeah.

LOBDELL: Okay. How did you get involved with Wood [Wood Memorial Library & Museum]?

FISHER: Somebody called me. (laughs) I think Sue did. Somebody called me and asked me if I would serve—

LOBDELL: Sue Shepard?

FISHER: I don't know who it was. So I said I would.

LOBDELL: And so serving on the board was your first real involvement?

FISHER: I think so, yeah. I think it was.

LOBDELL: Yeah.

FISHER: I didn't really know much about Wood. I always get into these things that I don't always know— (laughs) I don't know how that keeps happening.

LOBDELL: Do you live over on that side of town?

FISHER: No, I live in the completely opposite side of town so, really, my kids didn't go to those programs. They didn't really—it sounds silly, but we're over on the Vernon line. Now I realize how close it is, we can go over 291. But when we were—when the kids were growing up, 291 wasn't there. So we're over in this complete corner, and they're over in that corner [indicated distance with hands], so to get to there would be a twenty minute drive.

LOBDELL: Oh wow.

FISHER: And we'd have the library right here [South Windsor Public Library], so we did all our stuff at the library here. We knew about Wood but we didn't really pay much attention to it. We didn't know much about it. It was kind of far away, so. But as I, you know, we got interested in more of the adult programs, and started going to those, and that's when I got interested in... But it's a, you know, it's a nice environment there, it's good to have something.

A through the, being the mayor I noticed it was a line item on our budget, so that's when I started to look into what was going on over there and thought, "Oh what are they doing over there?" And started taking an interest in going to some of the events. That's how I got to be

informed about it. But then someone asked me to be on the board; I didn't volunteer over there for any of that.

LOBDELL: So what is—what does your future hold, do you think?

FISHER: Well, I'm going to continue to be the probate judge, and I have another election in three years, so I hope to be reelected. And I just want to continue with that and just continue working till I retire.

LOBDELL: How long are your terms?

FISHER: Four years.

LOBDELL: OK. That's probably nicer than running every two years.

FISHER: (both laugh) Yes. Yeah, yeah I think so. I don't have any burning desire to do anything else, I mean, I've kind of done what I want to do career-wise. I'd like to spend some time with my kids and grandchildren, that kind of thing, so.

LOBDELL: How many grandkids do you have now?

FISHER: Two.

LOBDELL: Okay. Do they live nearby?

FISHER: Yeah, they live in Ellington.

LOBDELL: Oh, that's good.

FISHER: Yeah, so we're enjoying it, and you know, just doing what we're doing.

LOBDELL: Are there any questions you think I should have asked or topics that you'd like to talk about?

FISHER: No, I don't think so.

LOBDELL: Well thank you very much for your time, I really appreciate it.

FISHER: (Laughing) Okay!

[00:50:06 END OF AUDIO, END OF INTERVIEW]

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