SWE GRASSROOTS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Bernice Brody and Jeff Brody Interview

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This oral history interview was recorded November 9, 2012 at the Society of Women Engineers Annual Conference in Houston, Texas as part of the SWE Grassroots Oral History Project. A copy of the audio recording of the interview has been deposited at the Walter P. Reuther Library and Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University. The interview may be used for research and educational purposes only.

Bernice Brody retired from IBM in 2016 as an infrastructure delivery project executive at IBM, where she had worked since 1979. Brody spent the first seventeen years of her career in hardware manufacturing and development of multilayer ceramic chip carriers. In 1998 she moved into IBM's Global Services Organization as a project manager. She received a degree in chemistry from St. Joseph's College in 1979, and received PMP certification in 2000 from the Project Management Institute. Bernice is a Fellow of the Society of Women Engineers and a founding member of the SWE Mid-Hudson Section, in which she held numerous leadership positions. She served on numerous SWE national committees and on the board of directors, including as the Society's first speaker of the senate. She was also the founding co-chair of the IBM East Fishkill Women's Network Group.

Jeff Brody is the program manager for university relations, faculty awards, and Ph.D. fellowships at IBM, where he has worked since 1978. Earlier in his career, he was an engineering manager and project manager in several organizations within IBM. Jeff received a bachelor degree in applied physics from Stockton College in 1978, and a master degree in computer engineering from Syracuse University in 1990. He has been involved with the Society of Women Engineers since the founding of the SWE Mid-Hudson Section, formally joined the Society in the early 2000s, and served on the Society's board of trustees from 2006 to 2009. He is also a member of the Society of Manufacturing Engineers and served on the Commission on Professionals in Science and Technology board of directors.

Bernice Brody and Jeff Brody Interview

In their 2012 SWE Grassroots Oral History Project interview, Bernice Brody and her husband Jeff Brody describe how they became interested in engineering; their college experiences; the process of finding jobs as a dual-career couple; the progression of their careers; how they negotiated family life and childcare while working full-time; their experiences in SWE; and what they hope the Society will accomplish in the future.

- July 2016

TROY ELLER: Today is November 9, 2012. This is a SWE Grassroots Oral History Project interview with Bernice Brody and Jeff Brody. The interviewer is Troy Eller. We are at the Society of Women Engineers Annual Conference in Houston, Texas. Bernice is a Fellow and senior life member of the Society and has served in various capacities at the local, regional, and national levels, including serving several years on the SWE board of directors. Her husband, Jeff, is also a member of SWE and has served on the board of trustees and several national committees. Bernice is a global infrastructure delivery project executive at IBM. Jeff is the university relations program manager at IBM, as well.

Thank you for joining me today. To begin with, Bernice, can you tell me where and when you were born?

BERNICE BRODY: Sure. I was born in 1956 in Woodbury, New Jersey. [00:01:00] That's a small town in southern Jersey, near Philadelphia.

TE: Okay. And can you tell me about your family growing up?

BB: Sure. I'm a second generation Polish American. So we had an extended family. My grandmother, who was an immigrant from Poland, lived with us. And then I had my mom and dad, my dad who was an engineer, and my brother and I.

TE: Okay. And Jeff, can you tell me where and when you were born?

JEFF BRODY: I, too, was born in Woodbury, New Jersey in 1956, about two weeks before Bernice in the same hospital.

TE: (laughs)

JB: And, you know, we lived outside Philadelphia in a small town called Deptford, New Jersey.

TE: Okay. And can you tell me a little bit about your family?

JB: I, too, am second generation American. [00:02:00] My grandparents were from Lithuania and southern Germany. And my dad worked for a couple of—actually, three jobs. He was a warehouse manager for a plastics corporation, he was a bartender on Sundays, and he worked as a welder at night in Philadelphia for a company. And I have three other siblings, two brothers and a sister.

TE: Okay. Okay. So, Bernice, can you tell me how you became interested in chemistry and engineering?

BB: Well, when I went to school—which is why I'm so passionate about SWE, because when I went to school there were fewer options presented to me as career paths. It was, of course—1974, I graduated from high school. [00:03:00] It was just when women were beginning to realize that there was more than just—how can I say?—you know, limited opportunities. So, I was always told, "Well, go be a teacher, because then you'll be home when your children are home," and things like that. So, I considered that as a use, and I considered a couple of other things.

But when it really came down to it I was faced with—I knew I was going to go into a science, so I had a choice: physics, chemistry, math or—there's another one in there—biology. And so I took an advanced bio course and I was like, "I hate this. I hate this more than anything in my life. (laughs) Memorizing all those—I don't care about it. I don't want it." (laughs) And math, I knew I wasn't going to be able to do that. And so, chemistry was kind of, like—I loved it, I really was excited about it, I enjoyed studying it. So, I said, "Okay, I'll go be a chemist person." Which probably wasn't the best match for me, and an opportunity in engineering wasn't really presented to me at all. [00:04:00] And so that melding of—you know, I'm not a researcher. So that melding of the science and the application of that science in engineering—it was a much better fit for me.

I did get into engineering when I worked—I worked as a research chemist for a while at Arco Chemical, but then—and you can play that story later. But I eventually ended up as a process engineer at IBM, and so had this massive career change, which was the best thing that ever happened to me.

TE: Excellent. Did you receive any encouragement or discouragement when you were in school?

BB: It was interesting. My parents said to me—I'll never forget the day, I was standing by my sink at my mom's house and I was wiping the dishes. And she told me, "I don't know why we're going to send you to college. You're just going to get married and not work." [00:05:00] And I looked at her, and I said—you know, I just could not believe what I was hearing. I went, "You sent my brother to school

and you're not going to send me? I don't think so." (laughs) And that was kind of the only conversation I had from that. I think I got a lot of encouragement in school to excel. And, you know, the issue that I had was that I was the top dog in my high school, right? I think I was third in the class or something. But, you know, when I went to college that was a whole different story. So, I really wasn't prepared for that piece of it. But be that as it may, I was pretty much encouraged except for my own family, who thought I was going to waste my education.

TE: Okay. (laughs) Jeff, how did you become interested in engineering?

JB: Well, I always loved problem solving, particularly Sherlock Holmes. I read the entire [Sir Arthur] Conan Doyle set of books from cover to cover. [00:06:00] And I knew that I wanted to be involved in a scientific field that was related to problem solving. And initially I went to college at a small university in New Jersey for marine science. And I was working—actually, I have enough credits, probably, to have almost a major in marine oceanography. And so, I was looking at jobs. So, all of a sudden it became obvious that unless I got my Ph.D., I wasn't going to get a job right away in that field. So, I looked around at the college and the only thing available was applied physics, which is one step away from being in engineering. And so, I switched over to applied physics, and eventually got a job with IBM when I graduated, after doing some studies on solar energy and a couple of other things in robotics, way early before robotics was even robotics, so. [00:07:00]

TE: Were there many women in your program?

JB: There were twenty of us, and there was one woman, and her major was chemistry, so. And it was a very small program. In fact, there were twelve graduates, I think, in physics that year. It was the beginning of—the college, it was only five years old at the time. They had just graduated their first senior program.

TE: And what years were you at Stockton?

JB: Nineteen seventy-five—four. Four, I graduated in ’74—through 1977. So I only spent three and a half years there, into my program.

TE: Okay. [00:08:00]

BB: I do have to point out, dear, that you do have a degree in engineering. A master’s.

JB: Well, that’s true, I do have a master’s in computer engineering.

TE: Okay. Bernice, can you tell me about how you made the decision to go to your university, and what your experience was there?

BB: I kind of didn’t really have a plan for university. I did not do a lot of, like—my family was really not into that whole—I mean, I had to take control of my own career, even at that age. So I had limited resources on what I could actually explore before I—because, I mean, now you get all these campus visits with your parents. That was not done when I went to school, okay. And so I had actually had a chemistry experience that was at the campus. And so, that was a huge

influencer. And at that high school—two things I did. I was there and then we did a Boy Scout, kind of like an Eagle Scout—now they would be called “Explorers,” you know, more middle, high school-aged Boy Scouts. [00:09:00] And of course that’s a co-ed program. And I was able to participate in a chemistry program at DuPont, as well. And those two things kind of solidified my experience.

So, I think I applied to three schools. And of course I was accepted to all of them, because I didn’t really apply to any big, big schools. And I chose my first choice, which was St. Joe’s. And the fact that it was a Jesuit school had a little bit of an influence on me. I thought that that was—and I also specifically chose a liberal arts school over an engineering school because I felt I really wanted a well-rounded education. I really, really felt strongly that when I got out of college I wanted to be a more well-rounded, educated person and be exposed to things that I may not have ever chosen to do on my own. [00:10:00] And there were things that I hated. I mean, I sort of remember thinking, you know, "Is a chair a chair because it’s a chair, or there’s similar qualities as a chair? Or is it because you think of it as a chair?" I’m like—ugh. You know. But I was exposed to things that I would have never have been exposed to if I hadn’t chosen that particular school, so.

TE: Okay. What was it like being a woman in the chemistry department?

BB: Well, that’s an interesting question. You know, I always felt, even at that age, that being a minority in a program, being a woman in a male-dominated program was in some ways a good thing. Right? I mean people remember you. You can

succeed, I think. Your accomplishments are more obvious. [00:11:00] Your failures are more obvious, too. But I always was drawn to this male-dominated environment. And so one of the things I think I felt was important was that there was a fewer number of us. It wasn't like there was only one, right? I mean, there was like, I don't know, six I guess that I remember. And we really helped each other. And I also created deep bonds with the men in the program, and it was never considered competition.

I think there is—and I've heard people in my group, you know, in my age group say that when they went to an engineering school that part of the process was winnowing out people in the first semester, that the objective was to see if you could get people to drop. And that was never the culture in my college, so I never really felt that type of pressure that said, you know, "Is this really for me? Maybe it's not for me." [00:12:00] You know, I was always supported by the professors and the people who were in the program. So, it was very much a collaborative culture back then in my particular experience.

TE: Okay. You had mentioned earlier that you had been "top dog" at your high school, and that it was very different at the college. Can you talk a bit more about that?

BB: Yeah. I think that the discipline and study skills that I think people pick up today as a routine was not something that I needed to develop, until I really got—and really, it was beyond college when I really kind of found that particular skillset. So, I think that I'm still not very organized. I know that in school today, when my

kids went through it, learning how to be organized is part of that curriculum. [00:13:00] And I never needed it, because I was able to deal without it. And I never learned those skills, and I still don't really have as many skills in that area as I would really like to have. But yeah, so, it was a very interesting experience that I really had to study. I was always a good writer and I still am, so that wasn't the issue. It wasn't the reading, the writing, or anything like that. It was the discipline, organizational study habits that said, you know, "You will keep up with your studies. You will do it this way. You will keep your assignments like this," and stuff like that, that I really didn't learn until I went into my job.

TE: Okay. Did you have any mentors or supporters in your program?

BB: I had an advisor who I think went above and beyond the traditional college advisor role. He really encouraged me. He would tell me, "Well, you ought to go in industry." [00:14:00] You know, "You really don't need this particular course. You can take other courses." Because he knew I wanted to into industry. And so he helped me be successful and pick a path that wasn't necessarily total research, because we both knew that that wasn't what I—and that I wasn't going to go and be an academic. So, I would say that of my key mentors—. But overall, my father being an engineer in my life was probably my best mentor, overall. And that was really key, as he supported me. He really understood what I was going through, if you know what I mean, and I could always talk to him. But as far as my college, getting out of college successfully, the biggest supporter I had happened to be my faculty advisor. Which again, in a small liberal arts Jesuit

school, they took that role very seriously and he was instrumental in my success there. [00:15:00] And then, of course, I was dating my husband and he was really good. He helped me get through physics. (laughs)

TE: How did you make decisions for your future? How did you decide that you wanted to go into industry?

BB: Hmm, that's a good question. I was part of an internship program with Arco Chemical and I think that was very instrumental in knowing that that was the kind of environment that I wanted to be in. I think that there is this intuitive sense that I have about myself that I was really was able to say, you know, entrepreneurship wasn't for me. And I didn't realize it until later, but, you know, there is a certain personality type that's very good in a large corporation or an industrial environment, and that is that you're comfortable acting out a role, right? [00:16:00] Here's your piece, here's your spot on the org chart, you know? And if you feel comfortable supporting up and out and down in that, then that's a good spot for you. And that's kind of the way that I had this intuitive feel, that it felt right to me. And I didn't know why, and a lot of it was naiveté. I mean, when I think about the person that I was when I graduated from college and the person that my children were when they graduated from college—I mean, I was so, so naïve and such a sheltered person. I mean, when we went to college they would tell you how to write out a check, okay? I mean, I literally I didn't know how to wash my own clothes, I didn't know how to write a check, I didn't know anything. You know? It was much different, and I think much better today. (laughs)

TE: Okay. [00:17:00] Can you tell me about your job search, once you finished your degree?

BB: Actually, I went to work for Arco Chemicals pretty easy, and of course at that time it was very easy to get a job. But the complicating factor was that my husband had accepted a—. Well, you know, we were definitely getting married by this time and he was looking at his career options and he really wanted to take this job up in New York with IBM. And so, I was like, “Yeah, do it.” So, he went to New York and started working at IBM. And then we got married and then I followed. So, I actually left my job at Arco Chemical. And then I was faced with looking for a job, right? And there was a couple of things that happened. First, I was procrastinating. And then my father goes, “Ha, she’ll never go back to work." Well, hah. (laughs) I put my working cap on and I started sending out my letters, and stuff like that. [00:18:00] And there was—at the time Texaco Research Center was in the area and I, you know, certainly worked in a oil refinery research facility. So I was looking at, seriously considering, looking towards perhaps getting an interview there.

And then Jeff and a friend of Jeff’s said, “Well, aren’t you going to apply to IBM?” And I thought, "What do they need a chemist for at IBM?" You know? And they’re like, “Oh, are you kidding me? Apply.” So I’m, “Okay, I’ll apply.” Right? So I applied and IBM called me in for a job first. And they were really into—they had chemical processes all over the place and there literally weren’t enough chemical engineers to fill the demand. So I was a woman and had chemistry in my name.

And I had work experience, because I had worked at Arco Chemical. So, those are the three key things that they were very interested in. I took the interview—and I wasn't stupid. I mean, I knew that IBM would create a lot of opportunity for me that might be very different than what I had experienced in Arco Chemical, or a Texaco research facility. [00:19:00] And so, I was interviewing with an African American manager. I'll never forget that, because they were very rare. So, that was kind of like, "You know, I think I can fit in here."

And he—I'll never forget that interview. I thought that they were making chrome, copper, gold wagons. I mean he was talking about chrome, copper, gold, and it was semiconductor manufacturing. So, it was like he would draw the chip, which was like a cross-section so it looked like a rectangle. And then they would have these little—they would put chrome, copper, gold, and then evaporate lead tin solder on the balls, right? So, we had flip chip technology back then. And I was like, "Oh, that's interesting." I mean, I was really—(laughs) anything to get through the interview and be offered a job, right? And so I had literally no idea what I would be doing. [00:20:00] And I was—like I said, I was naïve, but I was also confident in the fact that, you know, what's the worst that can happen, right? And so Jeff had worked at IBM. I kind of knew a little bit about the culture. So I was like, when they offered me the job I accepted it. And then Research, Texaco Research called after that. And I said, well, I had already accepted a job at IBM. And so that was it.

I mean, I've been very fortunate as far as, you know—I had a grand plan in the fact of my life. And I think this is really important. I did not go through my life, like—I knew what I wanted to do. I knew I wanted to go to college. I knew I wanted to get a job. There were a lot of people in my generation who really didn't have that plan. And even, you know, certain personalities, they don't have that plan. It was very clear to me how I was going to map out my life. I was going to get married. I was going to have kids. [00:21:00] I mean, I knew what I wanted to do and it really all came true for me. And so, I feel very fortunate in that way. But did I, you know, interview at ten places and select a particular location? No. No, that was not my experience.

TE: Okay. Jeff, can you tell me why you wanted to work for IBM? What drew you to that company?

JB: Well, I applied with Hewlett Packard in Pennsylvania, and I applied with IBM. And I got an interview with IBM, and I got a, "Thank you, but we're not looking for anybody from—," (laughs) particularly because I had an applied physics degree. And so, I went up to New York to interview with IBM in a reliability lab, physics and reliability lab, which was the beginning of a long career. [00:22:00] And again, like Bernice said, I had no clue what I was doing. My first introduction to IBM technology was a brand new box they put out to collect data. It was a central-based box, and I was into real-life applications of collecting data from various points, and that was—. I mean, in high school we had an IBM 1130 computer that we were allowed to use as part of a class and that was that

introduction. But to what I wanted to do with my life, which was real-life applications, I didn't have an introduction until I think it was three months before I graduated from Stockton at a seminar that I went with one of the faculty for—. We were doing some solar energy data collection, and we wanted to go hear what IBM had to say about center-based data collection. And here we are today, with a smarter planet, collecting data off our iPhones and iPads and every other thing. [00:23:00] So, that was what really drew me to IBM, was a computer company that, you know, we knew a little bit about back then, because we had our punch cards that we were typing up every day.

BB: Yeah, punch cards, right.

JB: Yeah, so.

BB: I think it's important to say that IBM hired, like, massively in that time period that we were looking. And so, when we came in there were a lot of other engineers our age that came—at least two hundred, maybe more. I mean, they hired a lot of people in the location. And so, you know, we went to where the opportunity was for us.

JB: Yeah.

BB: And it really worked out. I mean, it really did work out very good for both of us.

TE: Okay. And then, you graduated at the same time, or close?

BB: He graduated first.

TE: Okay.

BB: Yes. [00:24:00]

TE: So, and then you were planning on getting married. How did those discussions go, about where you would move, and who would find a job first, and—?

BB: Well, you know, I think we kind of discussed Jeff's opportunity at the time, because I really didn't want to move away from the area. But, he went up and had the interview. It was, like, a snowstorm, or something.

JB: It was. It was about the worst snowstorm in 1974. (laughs)

BB: (laughs) And he came back, and he was like, "Bernice, I really want to do this. I really think it's the best thing, the best opportunity that I have." And so, I was like—I don't know, I guess I thought I could get a job. There was Texaco up there and stuff, and I thought, "Well, you know—." I just—it was really, basically a decision at the time for him and his opportunity. And so, we've always done that through our entire careers. What is the best—you know, who is at the point where it will be a tipping point on their career path? [00:25:00] And it pretty much has worked out that, you know, there were times when Jeff's career was on the top, and that I was kind of like coasting in my career, and he was advancing and had opportunities that he took. There were times when, you know, he was coasting and then my career kind of took precedence, and he sort of supported me as I did crazy things to advance. So, it's really—and I'll tell you, he did a lot more to support me than probably I did to support him. (laughs) You know, I

would sit back and coast, but I mean he really had to put up with some real bad stuff, so. (laughs)

TE: Okay. Can you tell me about your first position at IBM, and how you've progressed to your current position?

BB: Oh, you know, that's easy. And I joined IBM. I was a single contributor. I was given responsibilities for a wet chemical processing line, and I was a process engineer for that line. [00:26:00] Very early on, within two years, I was taking over new product introductions into the area. And that's when I really started my project management experience. And for some reason I was able to really work on downstream risks and consider what was happening outside of my own little area. Like, figure out what would happen here or there. I was told that, you know, I needed to learn more about how the applications were going to be actually used. But as far as, you know, if I make a decision here how is that going to affect somebody else? I was always really very good at that, so.

And I have to say that there was a unique synergistic relationship between my career here at SWE and my career at work, because one of the things, I think, that's a tipping point as you go up your career path is—at least it was for me—is the ability to do real strategic work. [00:27:00] I really was kind of—like, I knew I wanted to do more strategic work. I didn't know what that sounded like or what the name of it was. But as I moved up to learn, to kind of get away from that single contributor—I did eventually get to be a manager early in my career, like four years. I took a management job. And I wasn't that great at it. I took, like, two

years to get good at it. And then I was really good at it. People really liked working for me, and still do.

And then I did that for about nine years, and I eventually decided that it was clear I wasn't advancing in the management ranks. And for some reason, I didn't know what it was, but I thought, "You know what—." And at the time IBM was giving you support for career changes. So, there was a career counselor who, you know, would have been hundreds and hundreds of dollars at that time. [00:28:00] I always wanted to take advantage of every opportunity given to me. (laughs) So, I was, like, "Oh, IBM will pay for this? I'll sign up! (laughs) How do I do this?" And she helped me understand that project management was probably a good way for me to advance at that point.

So I go on up. I was a manager. I got promotions. I went out of management, and now I'm at a senior technical level, right, in the organization. But I'm thinking, "This isn't a good match for me." I don't like to write, I don't want to do patents and publishes, and all that stuff that you do if you're going to be an engineer. And so, I was looking around and going, "Look at all these people and what they're doing." And I'm, you know, who moved my cheese? [Referring to the book *Who Moved My Cheese? An Amazing Way to Deal with Change in Your Work and in Your Life* by Spencer Johnson.] You know, what's the landscape? Am I in trouble? No, but what do I want to do here? We came up with this project management role, which would allow me to manage people but not do the paperwork, which I was terrible at. [00:29:00] And then, it would also allow me to

grow strategically in the corporation and do some really cool things. But there wasn't a lot of opportunity. There was some, but not a lot in the organization I was in.

So, I had to move to another organization at IBM. That was very interesting, because I went from an organization that had 15 percent women to an organization that had over 30 percent women. And that is like night and day. And when I got to the new organization, I started picking up more higher-level responsibilities in SWE. So, I got more responsibility at IBM, I started getting more responsibilities in SWE. Now I'm on the board of directors [of SWE]. And I'm getting trained for strategic thinking on the board of directors. [00:30:00] And I was starting to get involved in strategic items, and it was critical for my career path that I really get good at strategically implementing ideas instead of tactical. And so, I was able to implement those ideas. And then I started taking strategic training within IBM, which I brought back to SWE, so now I got more responsibility. So really, my whole career with SWE and IBM sort of intertwines and dovetails, and I call it—like, it's almost like a spiral. It starts at the bottom and it goes up. And then once I hit that strategic training and synergy, it kind of took off on both ends.

And so here I am, thirty some-odd years into my career, and really it's almost time to say, "What am I going to do next?" Because I feel like I'm very comfortable, and that's not the best thing for you. But I also feel very satisfied that I've done things to—I've contributed to the corporation as much as I can. I've

contributed to SWE. I've learned a lot from both of them, and I hope that I've given back to both. [00:31:00] So, that's kind of where I'm at right now.

TE: Okay, thank you. Jeff, can you tell me about your first position in IBM, and how you've progressed to your current position?

JB: Oh, that's easy. I started in a physics and reliability lab for memory devices, when memory devices had not even a thousand bits. And we were looking at new technology. And my job was to figure out how to automate testing for those devices, so we could do reliability testing over thousands of hours and come up with projections on life. [00:32:00] And I had no clue, either what I needed to do or what physics and reliability devices were at the time, because I hadn't taken any semiconductor courses. I had had basic modern physics, but that only gives you a smidgeon of information. So, I was learning everything from scratch. I had worked in the laboratory at the college in the back room, and I did a lot of repair of devices and equipment. So, I had an idea of, you know, some things, but nowhere near the sophistication of what I was dealing with. So, I got a lot of training from peers in the laboratory.

And within a couple of years that program moved from the East Fishkill plant in New York to Burlington. And I had learned a few things over time and actually taken over some reliability testing for a program. [00:33:00] And that went to Burlington. So, I was left with a choice of going into another area that I had no knowledge of—it was ceramic technology—or I could go into something where I had some idea of, and that was manufacturing engineering. Because my dad,

you know, worked at a manufacturing plant and I had some idea of how you produce devices. And so I shifted over into manufacturing engineering in a visual inspection area, which was totally fascinating from a technology standpoint because it didn't exist anywhere in the world except for in IBM. And it's still leading-edge technology even today, thirty-four years later. And so, I worked from that into manufacturing engineering. [00:34:00] I was an engineer on the line for a while.

Then I progressed. I knew I wanted to be a manager. And so, I became a first line manager in the same area, taking over that role. And then over a couple of years, the area progressed. It grew, my responsibilities grew, we were working three shifts. I had first shift engineering responsibility, so I had to make sure all three shifts were capable of running. And then that progressed into a timeframe when IBM was changing management. They asked me what it would take for me to go out of management, and I told them, "Well, I'd love to get my master's degree, and oh, by the way, I'd work in the development organization." Well, that happened overnight. So, I had to apply for my master's degree at Syracuse University at the same time I had to move into this ceramic organization that I didn't want to join in the first place. [00:35:00] But now I'm into the development area as a technical leader, doing electrical testing information. And so, I had that—those two things going on. So, I moved into a development organization.

And a couple of years later, actually a year later, I was acting manager for a department that they needed to put a manager into. And for a while—so, when I

finished my master's degree, I ended up working in the systems level group doing some testing and analysis. And then I came—there was an issue with a failure mode, and I said, "You know, we ought to be working on this more." And they said, "Well, your job's back in East Fishkill." And basically, I went back to a testing and diagnostics area, and I ended up managing that area again. [00:36:00] And as we progressed through this technology stuff, I went in and out of development. I was in designing device—actually designing semiconductor packaging ceramic stuff, which I had nothing, no knowledge of. And we were automating that, so we were doing—how do you automate four thousand-point measurements in a city(??)-type structure, in a hundred layers of ceramic? And I ended up doing that for a while.

So, I'm in and out of technical jobs, in and out of management. I ended up with a yields and diagnostics group for a while. I ended up with a computer science—the IT technology for the entire site, and just progression to all these things. So, over the course of twenty years, I was in and out of these management roles. [00:37:00] In fact, I had the same department four times, as we went into and out of crises modes with different product levels. And in the progression I had technical, so I had some publishes in technology and good recommendations. I never left a first-level management role, but I moved in and out.

And then about five or six years ago an opportunity came up to go look at and establish some information warehouse and web-based presence for our university relations program. And my manager told me, "You should look at that

job. It looks like your dream job." Because it was working with colleges and universities, and I'd been in and I'd helped the recruiting team for the twenty years that I'd been a manager, on and off. [00:38:00] So, I took that role. And now I manage two of the major philanthropic programs for the corporation, and I still manage our information warehouse for all of our dealings with colleges and universities globally, so. But again, you know—.

BB: When this whole thing was going on we were both in management, and sometimes we were in the same organization. And so, some of the weird—some of the funny stories are that, you know, so I was going to take this job. And there was a big discussion, apparently, before I was given this job that Jeff was going to be to the supplier of service to one of my—. So, he would be, like, the prior person in the line in the chain of manufacturing. And so, "We can't get in the middle of—." (laughs) Their fear was that we would fight over work in our private life. That was the big fear. [00:39:00] "How can you have two people who are married, you know, managing two sister departments." You know, blah, blah, blah, so. And we managed it very well, but it was this whole big brouha. And then I remember he had the diagnostics lab, and little beknownst to me, I didn't even know it—apparently he had given word to his lab that, "If Bernice comes in and asks for anything, I don't want to hear it at home. So, just make sure that she's taken care of." (laughs)

JB: Take care of it.

BB: So, I would go in and everybody would be like, "Oh, that diagnostics lab. I can never get anything done in there." And I'm like, "What do you mean?" And I never knew. I said, "What do you mean? They always do everything I want. When I want it, I go down, I talk to them, they get it done, you know?" So, we had some very interesting stories between—you know, there was a lot of consternation that because we were married in the organization, how are they going to manage that?

And then, it was a joke, because he got hired, I got hired. I got a higher salary when I came into the corporation. [00:40:00] Over time, he always made more than me. Always. When we were in that organization, he always made more than me, no matter what happened. And it wasn't until I got out of that organization, into the 30 percent women organization that there was no more salary competition. And quite frankly, my salary, because I was being mentored by a—I actually walked up to somebody and said, "I need you to be my mentor." And I called him on a couple of things, and he was actually instrumental in me pursuing another advancement that I would never have pursued on my own. And so, because of that my salary is now, has gotten more than Jeff's and has sustained that. But only in the last few years. I mean, it was very clear what was going on. It was evident to me. I mean, I never—he always made at least a penny more than me. Always.

JB: I think it was twenty cents.

BB: Well, I remember pennies! (laughs)

TE: Can you talk more about the differences between the IBM organization that had 15 percent women and the organization that had 30 percent, what the differences were? [00:41:00]

BB: Yes. I've heard, and mainly through my SWE environment, that 30 percent is like a tipping point, once you get an environment that has 30 percent of a particular constituency, right? So, if you were African American, if you were in an organization that was 30 percent African American, the whole environment becomes naturally more accepting of that type of work style. Now, you know, this is bell curve stuff, right, so—and I'm pretty much bell curve. Actually, I'm a little bit non-bell curve. I've never really fit into a pure engineering role, because I'm this very emotional person and this very logical person. And that's a very limited amount of the population, anyway. And in engineering it's really underrepresented. [00:42:00]

But I worked in, you know, a technology company and I would say that when you're in 15 percent women, you are sitting in a room where at times you're the only woman in the room. At times you're one of three or four. Oh, they have the men's golf league. That was a big deal when we were early in our career. And one of the reasons we chartered a SWE section, because the men had their golf league and what did we have, right? At that time, there were no women affinity groups in the corporation. So, there was a perceived, in some ways a perceived competition between women. In a few instances I experienced that, where I would expect a woman to be more supportive of me and it was clear that they

viewed me as a competitor for recognition or whatever. [00:43:00] And the decision-making style is very biased towards the dominant culture. Very, very biased toward the dominant culture. And I think that was one of the problems I was having, is that I was not fitting into that dominant decision-making style at all.

So, when I left into the other organization—not because I wanted the other organization that had 30 percent women, it was just that's where the opportunity for project managers were at the time. I was like—because I experienced both, and it was like night and day. I went from one place to the other. I was like, "I cannot believe this is the same corporation." And when I go back and I talk to people who are still in that organization—and they're still at, like, 15 percent, 17 percent—it is like night and day. It is really the—suddenly, there's a wider acceptance of management styles. There's a wider acceptance of decision-making styles. [00:44:00] There's an appreciation of different viewpoints on the floor. You don't have to struggle as much to get your—.

Like you know, typically, even today, especially with cultures, there are certain cultures that are very considered to be, "I shouldn't say anything. I should be recognized for the contribution that I make." Which is not the dominant American corporate culture by any stretch of the imagination. And so, you're constantly helping people understand that they have to be able to articulate their accomplishments to their management, articulate and start to work on being recognized for their contributions. And I still mentor people in that organization.

You don't have to do that as much in a culture that's more accepting, because that's where you get people reaching out for contributions and more—kind of, how can I say this? They're more conscious that those contributions are not really from one or two people. [00:45:00] They're more, you know, from the organization as a whole. And they try to reach down and make sure that people are getting the recognition, and when one person gets recognized they're sure to make sure that everybody who contributed is recognized. And that's, I think—and I don't know. I mean, maybe that's changed a little bit, but I think that those are the big—. It's really in the inclusion, the feeling of, "I can be here, and I can be my authentic self to some degree."

You know, I'll never say that—I do put on a mask at work a little bit in certain situations. And I think that will always be true for me in a corporate culture, because I'm really not—you know, there are women executives out there that are really good at what they do, and so I try to emulate that. So, it's not necessarily a bad thing. It's just that I'm not naturally like that. [00:46:00] So, I have to kind of put this mask on at some times. But I do try to remain authentic to myself, to my value system. I'm more confident of speaking out on what I think is perhaps not consistent with the IBM values that I want to portray. And I'm heard more on that end, so.

TE: Okay. Can you talk more about your experience as a leader in the company, as a woman engineer and a leader?

BB: I went through three iterations of IBM culture. You know, the first was, "We need to get women into technology, and so we're going to hire women, perhaps more women, or as many women as men." [00:47:00] And then I went through—I even had a woman in IBM who was a Fellow, an IBM Fellow, and she said, "Something happened in the eighties. I didn't get those assignments anymore." So, in the eighties in IBM, there was a huge—how can I say, backlash? Not backlash. I'm going to just say limited growth opportunities for women in general. I thought it was me. Obviously, there were other women who experienced the same thing. I was also working in the 15 percent corporate culture, not in the 30 percent corporate culture.

So, in that environment it seemed like there was a lot—. The nineties is when we developed the SWE section to kind of provide support for women to be successful in that environment, and to provide a support mechanism for that. Be that as it may, I've always had a lot of support to advance and I was a manager, and I never felt like I was overshadowed for anyone else because I was a woman. [00:48:00] I believe that I was evaluated on the work that I did. I may not have fit into the culture, and therefore I wasn't evaluated as highly as others who did, but I never felt that I was, you know—I think I was fairly evaluated for the culture that existed.

And then I started working for a person who really was an advocate. And I realized I learned a lot from that relationship. And one is that it's okay to be an advocate. It's perfectly acceptable. I mean, how can I say this? Like, he would

know someone that perhaps had a job that was in jeopardy and he would hire them. You know, things like that that women, I think, in general and I before I got into this relationship, I would have thought, "Oh no, you have to make sure that they're a good fit, and the best candidate, blah, blah, blah." You know? [00:49:00] And you have to be fair, fair, fair, fair, fair. But there's an element of loyalty that I think men understand much better than women do. And it's okay to be an advocate for somebody. It's okay as you advance to bring the person to be your manager. It's okay to do that. And, you know, because that provides a person to be able to blossom.

And I will tell you that my innate abilities were—you know, I gained a lot of confidence from that experience. I mean, I remember I had the worst year of my life because I said I wanted to do a particular job and he did everything—and I call it, I was drug through the keyhole, you know? And it was painful. I sat at my desk, you know, I would be brought breakfast, lunch and dinner at my desk, seventeen-hour days. I would cry. [00:50:00] I mean, it was just painful to go from this person who was tactical to this person who was strategic. And he really did that for me. He pulled me through that keyhole. At the end of that year I was working at a very different level in the organization, and it was a very good experience for me. And without that type of support, confidence that I was able to do that, and my loyalty to him—that I owed so much to him that I would put up with anything to do what he wanted me to do—was really beneficial to me.

And I also learned about loyalty, about how you—. And I learned in SWE, too. It was a very painful experience in SWE. It wasn't as painful at IBM. But, you know, what does it mean to have somebody's back? I mean, I understood the concept, but I didn't really understand it. That, you know, if you're on a board with someone or if you're on that team with someone, you are an advocate for that team. [00:51:00] You are an advocate for that board. And if somebody's saying something that isn't perhaps as flattering to a person you call them out for it. You don't let that go, and you don't shut your mouth, and you certainly don't start saying, "Yeah, yeah, yeah." You know? And that was a huge life experience for me, that concept of, you know, there are certain situations in life where because you're there you owe a sense of loyalty and commitment to that group. That makes you an advocate for that group. And you need to speak out and you need to step up and do something. You can't just sit back and you cannot complain publicly. You just cannot. [00:52:00]

TE: Okay, can you talk about some of the big career successes or challenges that you've had, and what you have learned from them?

BB: Yeah, I think one of them was this. I wanted to go from what we call band 9 [salary range] to a band 10. And it was this male mentor who said, "Ask for a promotion." And I went, "Wait a minute, I just got promoted to band—I came in to this job, what do I want to do the next job for?" He's like, "Shut up. It's $40,000 a year in your paycheck. Just go and ask for it." Very—you know, okay. So, I went to him [the boss] and he said, "Well, you're going to be doing another job totally

than this one, if you want to be a band 10." And that was my year of misery. But in the end I was a band 10, and I still am so it was worth it in the end. First of all, I think I was two or three years into the corporation, and I was meeting with some people from corporate and I was going through a project. [00:53:00] And you know, they were saying that for me to be just three years in the corporation, that they couldn't believe it. That I was running this program and that I was able to be so competent at it, that they were very pleased. So, I think that that was, you know, an early success.

And you know, with most careers—I don't know about some careers, but my career was a lot of early successes, which built on and built my confidence. Because, like I said, I was very naïve, right? And there weren't a lot of experiences for women to gain that self-confidence. It was always what we call the imposter syndrome, you know. They're going to figure out that I'm not really as good as they think I am eventually, you know? And that was very much my whole career until I started learning that there is an imposter syndrome. Once you have the facts, you can overcome it. But, you know, so I had these successes. [00:54:00]

I went into management early, but—and I went into an area that was perceived to be very controversial, you know? Like, you could really get killed in this job if you're not—because everybody just points at it. It seems like my whole career was there, you know? It's never fast enough. It's never cheap enough. Everybody just hates that position, you know? And so, you're in the middle of it

trying to deliver something, and they're all like, "This isn't good enough." You know? And I've been able to do that. And I think I've been able to do that partly because of my natural, like, being true to my authentic self, which is a collaborator, you know. I am a collaborator, and I can build coalitions. And so, once you build a coalition with the suppliers and your deliverers, then you can—. I always say it's all about relationship. If you're in a relationship you can be better and they appreciate it, or you can be a little bit behind and they'll give you a little slack, right, and so you can catch up. [00:55:00] So, that kind of collaboration, I think, has been a success factor along the way.

I did Y2K for the corporation, and I went from—that was my big first management job. And I learned a lot. I worked with consultants, which I learned a lot from working with the consultants. But I was very successful in that, and I got an Outstanding Technical Achievement Award for that. I tend to get a lot of recognition—or I used to, anyway—just because I was such an advocate for SWE within the corporation. And so, that was considered a synergistic benefit. So, mentoring other women, being involved with SWE was always a differentiator, right? You're all good, so how do you differentiate? "Well, Bernice does this, too," you know, kind of a deal. So that was always a success factor.

And then I decided to go into—I was working in a job where I wasn't really being utilized to my—I was kind of working on side jobs. [00:56:00] And I was like, "You know, this is risky." If this boss leaves, I could be like, "What am I doing in this organization?" Right? So I kept on saying, "I want a client-facing role. I want a

client-facing role. I want a client-facing role." And so, I got a client—they finally, after two years, gave me a client-facing role and I was very successful at that. And again, I think it's because I'm a collaborator. It's because I build those relationships, because I really, really understand the client's perspective and what their issues and concerns are, and I act on that knowledge. And I am their advocate within the corporation. I mean, I don't give anything away, but I am their advocate. And so, I found a lot of success in this role as well as delivery project executive.

So, you know, I think there's a common theme of being a collaborator, being a manager who supports their people and promotes their people and advocates for their people. [00:57:00] And then an understanding of issues outside of my own level, and never ever working just for my own success and not worrying about whether that impacts other people's success. Always looking at the big picture has been a success factor for me.

TE: Okay, thank you. Jeff, I think you mentioned that you have done some recruiting on behalf of IBM. Can you talk more about your experience recruiting and what you're looking for, whether students are prepared, and the role that diversity plays in your recruiting efforts?

JB: Well, IBM has several programs related to recruiting and diversity recruiting. [00:58:00] And I've been involved with diversity recruiting since I first became a manager in 1984, and looking at competencies, one, for each one of the

candidates. We have—what is the program Bill Lawrence manages? I can't even remember now.

BB: Something blue? Something blue? [IBM's Project View]

JB: No.

BB: All right, whatever.

JB: But anyway, the underrepresented minority programs that we hired from. And, you know, looking at the different candidates and their resumes, and the first thing that you see about a student is their resume, typically. So, looking at the resumes and comparing them side-by-side, looking for differentiators. [00:59:00] I mean, most students we look at have a high GPA in the first place, so now you're looking at what differentiates one student from another and whether they have teaming skills, because everything you do in engineering is related to teaming. I mean, it's not one thing you can look at where you can say, "Well, you did this all by yourself." You have to work with other people, right? So, presentation skills, communication skills, teaming skills. Looking for all of those things and trying to find those, not only on a resume but, you know, in an actual interview.

I mean, once I went to the University of Texas in Austin and I had three hundred candidates to look at, and I did over a hundred interviews in a two-day period, and looking for individual candidates to see who would fit and who would not fit. And even trying to determine—helping them try and determine what their differentiation is in amongst themselves, because there's so many things that can

differentiate people. [01:00:00] Especially when you're working in engineering, where you could be working under a highly stressful situation. So, trying to determine whether people would be able to work under stress or not work under stress. And there's just so many different characteristics, and you don't do that—.

I mean, I remember the first time I interviewed with somebody. Yeah, the first time I interviewed with somebody. I was trying to figure out what they wanted me to do. I mean, what the job was all about. And I do that even in an interview today. So the first thing you'd do is get to know the student, and try and understand what they do and some of their projects. And students do a lot of projects today that can differentiate them from—. Do they take a leadership role? Do they sit back and follow everything? Do they actually work on things? [01:01:00] And you can see that in the interview process, between—. When you're sitting across the table you've got thirty minutes or less to do this. And when we're in career fair you've got five minutes, you know? So, students trying to make themselves known and understood to you within five minutes. So, trying to get through those questions and trying to figure out who you want to talk to, who you don't want to talk to, and who has differentiated themselves well enough, and how to do that, whether they're a good candidate fit. So, doing a lot of coaching, and those kind of things.

But over the years, let's see—hiring women. I don't think there is a management position that I held where I didn't either have 40 percent of my department were women—or actually more in some cases—or I wasn't hiring women or a minority

into a position, especially internships. [01:02:00] That's one of the things where I always tried to do—is find a woman or an underrepresented minority and fit them into an internship and give them an opportunity, because that's one of our key pool areas, that we use internships to look at, you know. Do they fit? Do we want to offer them full time? And a lot of companies are doing that now, especially in the skills mix today, with the service of sciences and STEM and engineering, and trying to get more people involved in our sciences, computer science and engineering, math.

BB: But I think another key point, Jeff, is that once you hire them you were one of those managers that really, really created an environment for women to succeed. [01:03:00] And all of the women that you hired are eminently—that work for you—are eminently grateful to you for your support. And a lot of them went on to be managers and second-level managers and you were advocates for them. Yes. Yes, yes, yes.

TE: Do you think that having your wife be a woman engineer and engineering manager influenced your recruiting at all? Or do you think that it was you were encouraged by the IBM culture, or—?

JB: No, actually. You know, being that the top three people in our high school class were women, okay? And even today—and I talked to the Army, the commander of mechanical engineering. [01:04:00] He's retired now, but he had opened up women in the Army academy in West Point. And we were discussing this at one time and he said, "The women that are in the program are eminently more

qualified and smarter than most of the men that we have." And, you know, I take that comment—that's my paraphrasing of what he said, basically. But you know, you look at it. Women are better in math and science, and that doesn't change as you go. You know, they're eminently qualified to do these things. And it just goes—you know, Bernice and I have always been in this competition of who's going to do better, looking at our careers in math and science. And we competed in high school—

BB: Friendly competition. (laughs)

JB: —Yeah. [01:05:00] And now, you know, it was a family competition for a while there. Now we both—well, it's thirty-four years. We don't need this anymore.

BB: (laughs)

JB: So, it's just—well, actually, it was maybe twenty years. Not even twenty years, right? We were like, "We don't need to do this anymore. This is—you know, we don't need to compete against each other." Trying to just, you know—

BB: I never thought it was a competition.

JB: —meet our careers. It wasn't really.

BB: So, you supported me. (laughs)

JB: I did. I always supported you.

BB: You did.

JB: And that was the thing. It was really one of support and helping, you know, helping see that she's successful in her career and very highly competent in what she does. And that didn't really—you know, I knew women are highly competent and capable of doing things.

BB: But don't you think from me you got an understanding of how difficult it can be for some women—

JB: Oh, absolutely.

BB: —to be successful? [01:06:00]

JB: Oh, yeah. Well, even managing a couple, you know. It was very hard back in, you know, when we first started because a lot of young women who got their engineering degree—even their husbands weren't supportive, right? Because there was the view of, who's the breadwinner? Which was the competition of why I had twenty cents more in my paycheck than Bernice did, because, you know—

BB: Back then—

JB: —back then the male was considered the breadwinner.

BB: The breadwinner.

JB: And that role is changing over time. And I think it's changed big time. And so, that was one of the things. But helping Bernice and being supportive has always been key. And then we had two daughters. And it's like you want them to be very

successful, and supporting them in what they do, and have a role model in both aspects, both father and mother. [01:07:00] So, I think those are the important things.

And supporting all of my employees was always important, no matter what they do. You know, when they look at you, “Well, I need a mentor.” And people ask me today even for mentoring, and I go, “Look, I will mentor you to a certain level. Then, you have to go find other mentors at the level that you want to be. So, if you want to be a vice president, or the chairman of the board, you need to go find a mentor that can help you with that. I'll help you through this phase, because this is where I’m good. Once we get past that point, you’re—I can’t help you anymore. I can help you find one, but I can’t help you.” And I even do that with our corporate rotational assignment program where I had eight women come over. And I think I’ve got four men that actually worked in our rotational assignment program, within our corporate programs. [01:08:00] Which was all a learning experience for them, because they got to see the large picture of what IBM is, as opposed to little niches that everybody works in for most of their career. So, I think those are the important things.

BB: I always said there are some managers who get it, and some that don’t. And it’s not gender, and it’s not position. It’s just, some get it, and some don’t. And Jeff is one of the ones that gets it.

TE: Can you tell me about how you first got involved with SWE, and—

BB: Oh, sure! That's one of my favorite stories.

TE: (laughs)

BB: So, way back when, the guys had their golf league. And we were all these women in IBM. And we were—there was a lot of us. And we had gone—Marge Inden, who is a trustee now, chair of the trustees, she was giving a speech at the Professional Women's PB—Professional Business—PBA—PWA? [01:09:00] Anyway, Professional Women in Business or something. And she was giving this speech and we just—somebody, one of our friends, colleagues, said, "Oh, Marge is speaking, and so we should just go." So, we signed up and Marge didn't even know we were coming. So, there was, like, four of us in the audience. And there was, like, ten of the other people. So, she had a following.

And she talked about—at the time, and this was late nineties—she talked about how Purdue's program for supporting women in engineering was yielding more women staying through engineering and graduating than other universities that did not have a similar program. And basically how supporting women throughout the entire process is important in order to improve the numbers. And why we needed to have diversity in the sciences and engineering. [01:10:00]

And so, we left that and we stood around in the parking lot on this balmy April evening talking. You know, and we were just talking. And I just finally said—it was me, I will admit—I said, "You know, we don't do enough for each other. We, as women, aren't supporting each other enough." And so, you know, back then

there were no women affinity groups so we said, "Okay, let's—." So, Marge, the great organizer, says, “Okay, we’re going to meet for lunch on Thursday, and everybody bring someone to that lunch. And we'll see if there’s interest in doing something to support each other through this, through our careers and stuff, professionally and in our private lives.” So, okay.

So, we get together and we have that lunch. We had another one where everybody was supposed to bring someone. We finally had our twenty-five people coming to lunch, these networking lunches. [01:11:00] And we were starved for this. I mean, we were starved for it. But we realized that at that time it was frowned upon that, you know, more than two employees getting together could be a union. And we were managers. Some of us were managers and we were like, "We've got to figure out what we’re going to do here." Right?

So, we ended up—Marge finally came up and introduced us to SWE. I had never heard of SWE. But she had been in SWE as a student, and she knew about the professional organization and she kind of said, "You know, it is a supported corporate—you know, we're corporate members." IBM was a corporate member. "It’s a supported organization within the corporation, and I think that will give us that umbrella needed that will legitimatize what we were doing here." And she kind of promoted why SWE was the right choice for us. And, you know, we decided to charter a section.

And I was involved in the local section, and then I went to a region meeting. [01:12:00] And I thought, “This is interesting.” And then, I became president of

the section, I think. At some point, I became president of the section. And I went to the Chicago ’93 conference—I think it was the ’93 conference. And I remember that the region governo—region director at that time—took me around. I was meeting the past presidents. I was in the president’s suite. I mean, I was just like, "Oh my God, this is so fantastic." I’ll never forget walking into that ballroom for the first time with a sea of women. I mean, literally, I was the only woman in my organization when I started at IBM. I mean, there were two of us and Sheila worked over there somewhere. And so, to walk into a room—and at that time, it was only like, I don’t know, two thousand. But still, that ballroom and that breakfast. I was, like—I’ll never forget that feeling. [01:13:00] It was so awesome and amazing. Women in technology will tell me when they had their first experience. It’s very similar. To say, "These are all women in technology, and they’re all here, and I’m not alone." You know? (laughs) It was truly fantastic, and I think that really sold me.

And then, as I got involved with SWE as an organization, I was passionate about—and I found myself grousing a little bit about how things weren’t working right. But I’m always a person that says, "Okay, if I don’t like the way something’s working, you know, I need to fix it. I can’t just grouse." So, they asked for participants to do something with the COR (council of representatives), and I felt like that I had some ideas and I was very passionate about that. And so, I ran up to the president—I think it was Gail [Mattson] at the time—and I said, “I want to

be on that committee. You know, I want to be on that committee." And she wrote my name down. [01:14:00]

And I was called to be on that committee. I was very—of course I thought, "I'll never get a call." But I was called to be on that committee. And that was really the tipping point, where I got into leadership. And then I went on to be region governor. And then as a region governor—region director at that time—I was on the board. So, I had that taste. I ran for election. I was not elected the first time. I ran for election again. I was elected. I spent a total of eight years on the board of directors.

And then my last position was speaker of the senate, which again was a transition thing. And, you know, I hope I put that thing on the right setting. In other words, that the culture of that new body was the one that would be best for SWE. And it was a difficult decision, because it was change and not everybody likes change. And we, as women engineers, we tend to focus on the things that aren't going well—so that the things that are going well. [01:15:00] And so I tried to make sure that it was a very positive relationship between that body and the other bodies of the organization.

And that was how I got involved with SWE and leadership. It was very, you know—if you're going to complain, you've got to be part of the solution. That was basically the whole thing, right? And also, this great satisfaction that you get, and acknowledgment and support. There was one point in time where it was the only place I felt acknowledged. I wasn't getting it at work. I wasn't getting it at home. I

wasn't—you know. And one time Jeff looked at me and he goes, "I don't know about SWE." And I looked at him and I said, "Don't make me choose between you and SWE." (laughs) I don't feel that way anymore, but at the time I was like, this is where I'm validated. My work is validated. My contributions are validated. This is where I'm validated. [01:16:00] I'm not validated at work, working in a 15 percent organization. I'm validated here. And certainly at home I'm not validated. I'm always not doing this well enough, or that well enough. Here is where I'm validated. And that's kind of that. You know, that was a drug for me that I had never experienced before. And so, I set on that for a very long time.

TE: Can you talk about some of your memorable projects and experiences on the board?

BB: Yeah, okay.

TE: Some of the big decisions that were made when—

BB: Well, one of the things that I think I'm most proud of is, I was involved with the organization as we went through this decision of what did an inclusive SWE really mean and look like? And I will tell you that I was always an advocate of, you know, making sure that everyone felt welcomed, but I really didn't—I'll be the first to admit I didn't understand what that meant and how to do it. [01:17:00] I didn't know how to do it. And actually, I screwed up a lot. I mean, I'll be the first to admit I made a lot of mistakes. And, you know, although I was passionate about it I didn't understand it. And so, we made some significant decisions in the

organization to figure out how to become an inclusive SWE and to see if—with the hope that as a result of that, you know, we could create an environment where people, where women engineers of all ethnic groups and of all economic groups could advance within SWE. That this was a place for people to be validated, no matter what culture or ethnic background you had. [01:18:00] And that that would result in people—that the board and the leadership would look like the people who are members, right?

So, I was fortunate enough to be in the organization when that discussion was happening. And I mean, I am extremely passionate about that project. And I was very lucky to be able to promote some inclusion and cultural awareness training that we had the board through, we had some of the senate through, we had some of the leadership through. It's very expensive, and so it's hard to maintain. But I think we are committed to it. And I got to be the reputation of sort of that advocate, the diversity inclusion advocate at the board level. And I'm very proud of that. And I think that one of the things, one of the top things getting off of the board was, I don't think that job was done, you know? [01:19:00] And it was hard to let go and have trust that that initiative wouldn't fall by the wayside. But I said, "No, I have to trust that this organization really has adopted this and that this will, you know—they don't need me." They don't need any specific individual to make that successful. That's part of the fabric of who we are. And I think that's true when I, you know—. So, I decided to get involved in other ways, and I'm still a passionate advocate of that.

The other piece that I thought I was very fortunate to be—I was the task force chair of the public policy and governance task force before it became a committee. And that was, like, that was great. (laughs) I mean, the whole thing. [01:20:00] I went to Washington a couple of times and I listened to the ASME talk about the future, of why we needed STEM education, and how the budget relates to that. I mean, that was just—like, oh my God. And I got so excited about that. I'm not as good an implementer, but I'm really passionate about the fact that SWE made the decision to do advocacy work on behalf of women in engineering, and that we advocate on behalf of the profession. I'm very happy to see.

I mean, when Obama says, you know, a hundred thousand STEM teachers we have to hire—I mean, I remember because of my involvement in SWE I was invited to a symposium at IBM. And there was—the GEM [The National GEM Consortium] person was there and we were kind of, like, huddling together. And one of the recommendations we made—and this was with Nick Donofrio. One of the things he did before he retired at IBM, he was a very big advocate of women in engineering, and won the Rodney D. Chipp Memorial Award from SWE because of his advocacy of women in engineering. [01:21:00] And he was very instrumental with creating an environment where women succeed, especially globally. I mean, they made sure that we had women in leadership positions around the globe, once they were successful in the US. So, anyway, but he had this big award, he was there.

And one of the recommendations from our team was, we need to hire a hundred thousand STEM teachers. And I'm—like, somehow that all gets rolled up now, as the president is talking about it. And if we weren't out there advocating that whole—I mean, it just wouldn't coalesce to the same degree, you know? I'm—like, that is so awesome, and that I was even involved with it for a small piece of it. And I was working on the decision to hire, or to share our public policy staff person with ASME. I was part of that decision so I'm very pleased with that. [01:22:00]

And then the last piece that I worked on and I was very happy to see is I worked with the professional development. I was part of the professional development, and we had a couple of workshops to get a vision of how professional development should work and this vision of how we could provide. Now, there were other people who created these wonderful webinars that we saw. But from there I think my piece was, you know, we need a leader's competency model. Something that says, "This is what it means to be a leader at SWE, and these are the skills that you need to be a leader at SWE." And standardizing that and driving it through the organization. And I worked with Peter [Finn] on that and with staff, and they were awesome. And I was able to work with Peter his first couple of years when he was in the organization. And I think we fed off of each other and encouraged each other. [01:23:00]

And then I kept on saying we need to be able to come to the conference and get PDUs [professional development units] for things. Not just pay for CEUs

[continuing education units], but get PDUs for attending our conference, you know? And this year we're doing it, you know? And we talked about lifelong learning and how that you would be able at SWE to consolidate your professional and your private education, so that you would have a permanent record that wouldn't disappear when you left your company or moved from company to company, but you would have a record within SWE. You know, all those visions that we had and all those ideas that we had and trying to provide professional development, no matter where in your career you were. I thought those were all kind of cool things, and that's part of the satisfaction I have from working in leadership at SWE. I hope I answered your question.

TE: Absolutely. Jeff, can you talk about how you came to join SWE and how you took on some roles nationally? [01:24:00]

JB: Let's see. Bernice, you know, when they started this section it was all about the women in engineering, right? So, we participated in a whole bunch of events. Teaching teachers science in high school, a program. We were doing that. We were doing other things. We were doing National Engineers Week. And yet my membership didn't come year one, because—it's fifteen years old now, the section?

BB: Twenty.

JB: Twenty. Fifteen, twenty—it's been a long time. I didn't really get that involved and become a member until six years in, 2006. Yeah, six years, or so. [01:25:00] And

my involvement from a national level really came, was joining the board of trustees when we were—Marge and Bernice constantly talked about things that needed to be done and what we were doing, and we need to change models up, and this and that and the other thing. And one day we were together and I said, "Well, why can't I be on the board?" And Marge said, "Why not?" So, I put my name into the ballot and ultimately got elected.

Became a member of the board for a couple of years, and worked on the conversion in the model and how we're managing, the board of trustees are managing the funds and procedures. And I did a couple of procedural changes and put together procedures between the gift procedure, and worked on that with the treasurer in time and got those done. [01:26:00] And then, last year Melissa [Tata] asked me to be the audit committee chair during her tenure and I said yes. (laughs) And last year led the audit committee. This year I'm just a committee member. But, again, participating at the national level and the audit committee, trying to get that done, because that's another area where we really do need to focus and maintain our focus on how we do that. It's important that we have that available every year.

BB: I think it's key that we all recognize that men, and white men in particular, do lend the particular—they have strengths, you know, that they can bring to all of us as well. And we can learn from them and they can provide feedback just like, you know, we would have other underrepresented groups in our leadership positions.

[01:27:00] But Jeff is the first elected male to a nationally elected position, and I'm very proud of that fact. (laughs)

TE: What feedback did you receive when you took on these national roles? Did you receive any negative feedback?

JB: I haven't had any negative feedback.

TE: Okay.

JB: In fact, the sections made a big party out of it for the last few years.

BB: Nobody did—

JB: Made a big deal, the region. Not the section, the region. But the section maintains—I mean, they keep me involved on the nominating committee. I've been a member of the nominating committee for the last five years or so.

BB: I think there were some, like, "Why do we—"

JB: And of other things we do.

BB: "—you know, why should we be electing in the men." But not—by far, not what we thought. [01:28:00] No. By far, not what we thought. So it's been—.

JB: It might have been different if I was going for the board of directors, or something.

BB: Well, that would have been—. (laughs)

JB: But the board of trustees, right, it's a hard area to fill. And, you know, finding someone that's interested in helping manage the endowment funds, because it does get to be tedious after a while, in working on those things. So, I do have a role that I play and certain skill areas that—and then the usual things.

BB: And Jeff has stepped up to other roles, where he was non-traditional. I mean, he was even in our church. And he's not Christian at all, but he held a leadership position on our church board. (laughs) So, you know. I mean, he's just the type of person that steps up and it's been very successful. And it's a joke, at some point. You know, funny stories to tell along the way, but—.

TE: Okay. Jeff, what has been your experience as a male member in a female association? What has that been like? [01:29:00]

JB: (laughs) Actually, it gets pretty funny at times because, you know, you start a meeting. You say, "Okay, ladies, let's get started." And I'll look at them and they're, "Okay, sure, let's get started." You know? So, sometimes it's funny. There are fun moments like that. But everybody is normal. I don't feel at all like a minority person in a majority of women, you know? It does not feel weird to me. And primarily because, you know, at home it's Bernice and two girls. Two women now, they're not girls anymore. And then at work, you know, having a good relationship with the women in the department as well as women managers. I worked for women managers for a lot of my career. [01:30:00] And so, it doesn't feel strange to me at all to work with it. In fact, once you get to learn that women don't think like men and men don't think like women, you know, you manage to

work those things out, have good communication skills between you. So, I think it's worked out.

TE: Okay. Can you explain why you thought it was important to join the Society versus just, you know, showing up at the events and helping out?

JB: At a point it became important for a couple of reasons, and being involved was important for a couple of reasons. One is, Bernice was going all over the world, and all over the country. [01:31:00] In fact when she was a region rep, I was driving everywhere on the entire East Coast, or at least in the Northeast region, and almost the East Coast, really.

BB: Mm-hmm. Yes.

JB: Pretty far south, when we were doing those regional things. And also into Region H, so we were going all over the place. And so, actually becoming a role model, actually, and becoming a male member in support of the Society. So, you know, you go to career fairs and you talk to folks. And you're at West Point. You're talking to the commanders, and you're talking to students that are female students, as well as male students, about what opportunities there are in engineering. And then you talk. So, becoming a role model is an important thing, especially as we continued, Bernice continued to work with the board of directors at the national meeting. [01:32:00] And then, getting involved, it became really an important thing to be a role model when you were talking to other men about

what SWE means to not only women, but to the national policy and to global initiatives, which we need more of.

TE: What do you think you have gained from your involvement in SWE?

JB: I've never been that vocal about things. Like, Bernice talks about making sure that you advocate for people or, you know, you get passionate about something. It's not my nature to be passionate about things on a regular basis. So, you know, learning and being here, helping to pass all of that passion to other people. [01:33:00] When we get to conference, I drag newbies around and show them around and introduce them to folks, especially because I work with a lot of universities. You know, we'd meet professors and the faculty, and some of them—a lot of them, it's their first time at being involved in a Society event. And, you know, meeting folks and chatting with them and talking things up is one of the things I do for a living. And so, connecting people with each other in various areas is one of my major roles at IBM and I do that here, too. So, getting people connected up and learning.

So, those are the things that were important to me, anyway. It's what I get out of it. And it's helped me do that more. [01:34:00] I mean, because before I would have never—. When I was with IBM, working with a vice president or a president or division president, I never thought of it much until, you know, when I was a young engineer I got zonked over the head because I told a senior manager that I would be over when I was available. (laughs) That didn't go over very well, which is probably why I stayed a first-line manager all of my career. But, you

know, when you're working with folks—so, being in Society and working with folks at the higher levels here, that's helped me be able to work with and progress with people all the time within my job and work within them at a higher level. Because I do. [01:35:00] I work with a big bunch of people that are much higher levels, senior executives within the company now, which I didn't do before.

TE: Okay. And Bernice, can you talk about what you've learned or gained through your involvement in SWE?

BB: Well, I talked about the confidence gained from being validated. Certainly my public speaking opportunities. I would never have come along without SWE. What else? Strategic thinking. Training and strategic thinking. Training and being a good board member allows you to—it's related skills back into the workplace. So, I got a lot of training from my involvement in SWE that I would not have had experienced with. [01:36:00] The diversity training was invaluable and life changing, to say the least.

And I just—I say that to everybody. That, you know, there are few major life events that you talk about. You know, the day you got married. The day you had children, that your children came into the world and you held them for the first time. And I feel that the day I joined SWE was just as significant as those other events. I am such a different person than I would have been if I had not been at SWE, and in a lot of good ways. You know, not in a bad way. But in all the good ways: more confident, more successful, more happy, more of a role model, a

better mother, a better engineer, a better wife. I mean, just really, really—it's that important to me, and a life-changing event. [01:37:00]

TE: Okay. You've been a member for about twenty years now. How has the Society changed since you first joined?

BB: Oh, my gosh. (laughs) That is really easy. When I first joined, we didn't even have an executive director. We had an acting—really, an office manager and a couple of rooms, crowded rooms in New York City. And we had—it was definitely perceived to be a grassroots organization. Volunteers did everything—and committed volunteers who really helped, really built this organization and made it what it is today. But, also not an efficient organization, right? Not something that was really—how can I say? Struggling to find influence in the profession. That's the way I would say it. [01:38:00]

So, now look at us. I mean, if we had two thousand people at a conference, it was considered to be very successful. And now we have six thousand people at a conference. And we have partnerships with industry and academia, that all I hear when I go to any of the CPC [corporate partnership council] members—. I mean, once I showed up at a conference and they're like, "Where's Karen [Horting]?" I'm like, "Well, you don't get Karen. You get me." (laughs) I mean, they just love what Betty [Shanahan] and Karen do for the organization and those relationships that we've built. To be able to say—they really perceive SWE to be the most, easiest organization that they can work with as far as that, as far as the diversity of organizations go.

And then the public policy arena. [01:39:00] I mean, we're really—advocating for the profession has raised our influence. We do things with Congress, and just—. I mean, those things you really—we would have never, even in our wildest imaginations, would have ever thought that that would ever be possible, that we would influence political planks in a campaign. That we would send out questions to—. I remember the first time Anne Perusek sent out questions to [presidential] candidates, we got one person responded and one didn't. The next time, both responded. And let me tell you, I've read those questions and it influenced the way I voted, right? And so, you know, the fact that you could pick up a SWE magazine and get the answers to questions that are important to you as a woman engineer—I mean, you know. And just really, really fantastic stuff has gone on, and our influence in the profession has gained. [01:40:00]

I think we have a little ways to go as far as advocating for underrepresented groups, but I think that, like I said, we know that we don't know what we're doing, which is a good thing. And the organizations that we need to partner with understand that we understand that we don't know what we're doing. And they're, like—they understand that group taking the right steps, and they believe we're taking the right steps to start to understand that. So, I think that that's all. And back in the day I think we were a little bit smug as far as being able to represent the issues for all women in engineering. And now, we're not so—you know, we really understand what the issues are and are willing to take those steps to learn.

So, much—you know, the way that our board meetings are run. And you know, the perception of how we're perceived from the—well, it's different. [01:41:00] And some things are—like, you don't have the [conference] networking night anymore, and there were times when we used to get to the beach on a beach party at a conference. And, you know, there were some things like that. But still, the core is that I come here and I come home. I come home to meet my friends and my family that I don't get to see as much as I'd like to. And that, you know, it's all about networks in SWE. It's all about feeling connected to the people that you have something in common with. And that's kind of what SWE does for me, so.

TE: Okay. I know that you want the Society to focus on diversity and inclusion more in the future. Is there anything else that you think SWE needs to strengthen our focus on?

BB: I think we need to really understand how to expand globally. And I think that we need to—I don't want to be—. I think it has to be said, the elephant in the room. I mean, I think that there's still some tension between actions that the board takes and the other pieces of our governance structure. [01:42:00] And I find that to be petty at best, destructive at worst. And I don't—I just wish that SWE would have a little tolerance and acceptance for different ways of doing the same business that we expect our corporations to be. I mean, we tend to have a dominant culture in this organization, and I think that we need to be—. You know, we need to have the strength of our leadership to really look at that and say, you know—.

And the way you do it is, you give people the benefit of the doubt. You don't assume anything. You always check it out to find out what's really going on before you make a conclusion or make a statement. [01:43:00] And that our leadership wouldn't be basically talking about each other, you know? It's that idea of loyalty, that it's more important to focus on the positive and not focus on the negative. And there might be ways—there's always things that can be done better, but the way you phrase that and the way you work to have that overcome is something that I think our leadership needs to work on.

TE: Okay. Jeff, do you have any additional ideas of what SWE needs to do in the future?

JB: Bernice just said I think the two biggest ones I see, is the leadership figuring out how to strategically work in a better mode, because—. And then, how we branch out together globally. [01:44:00] We definitely need, and our corporate partners are expecting us to lead in that area in some degree.

BB: Yeah.

JB: We really need to move a lot faster on how to do that, and how to do it in the fiscal constraints we currently have. And then, you know—. So that's a challenge. And I think that's not just a challenge for staff. I don't think it's a challenge for the board of directors. But I think it's a joint challenge between the board of trustees, the board of directors—

BB: Oh, yeah.

JB: —and staff. And I think those are the three areas they really need to discuss a lot more. And somehow work a little, even maybe work together on it. And, so—

BB: Really embrace it and get behind it.

JB: —yeah. [01:45:00]

BB: I think, you know, we have this idea that we're all working to the same strategic plan, but I don't think—. I mean, I think we're doing a lot better than we were before.

JB: Right.

BB: I mean, I'll never forget the first time I figured out that staff had one strategic plan and we had another. And I was like, "What?" (laughs) But now we all have one, you know. And now we have to just get everybody else on board with this. And it's all communications and I think that, you know, communicate times ten. And I was part of that. I'm not saying that—I'm not a great communicator, and I know how hard it is. And I'm just pointing out that it is very, very difficult to communicate in change, and we really need to focus on that, because we're—. You know, if everybody's working on the same thing we will get there. We will get there.

TE: Okay. What is your advice to aspiring women engineers?

BB: I would have to say that hang on to your—hang in there. [01:46:00] It may be hard, but most things in life that are worth something are not comfortable all the

time. If you're comfortable, you're probably not growing. So, you need to think about being uncomfortable a lot in your life. And that there's people out there that will help you and support you, and you can find them. And that you do need male mentors in your life, because they understand. They have a different perspective that will help you understand some things, and you may want to adopt their advice on occasion. And they're invaluable to see—they're just invaluable. That perspective of the world is just invaluable for women, I think. [01:47:00] And that, you know, don't assume that you understand where someone else is coming from, because the best thing you could do is ask a question.

TE: Okay. And Jeff, do you have advice for aspiring women engineers?

JB: Be bold.

TE: Be bold.

JB: As Florence [Hudson] said yesterday, be bold. Don't be afraid to put your career plan in place, to seek out mentors in many areas. You need at least ten mentors, right? Isn't that the way a good mentoring network goes? But don't be afraid to really put that in place. And, you know, just go out and put your plan in place. What is it? Work your plan—

BB: Plan your work and work your plan. (laughs) [01:48:00]

JB: Plan your work and work your plan. And don't ever forget that you'll grow into what you need to grow into, as you're doing it. You don't get everything out of a book.

BB: And join SWE and stay a member. (laughs)

JB: Stay in SWE. Yeah.

TE: I'd like—

JB: And just speak up.

TE: I'd like to jump to a new topic. I don't usually get the chance to interview couples, so this is a great opportunity. Can you talk about—you both have engineering careers, managing roles that involve, you know—it's a lot of time. And you also raised two daughters. Can you talk about how you made that work?

BB: Let's see, how did we make that work? Well, I think first of all Jeff has been very supportive of my career throughout the—. And, you know, without having that—I've seen women who don't have that, and it is not a pleasant experience at all. [01:49:00] I think that Jeff and I early on committed to making it work. He really wanted me to stay home, you know, with the kids very early on. We had this conversation before we ever got married, you know.

JB: Ward Cleaver.

BB: Yeah. “My mom stayed home with the kids. I think you should stay home with the kids.” I’m like, “Well, wait a minute. I think I get to make that decision for myself. You know, you can’t really make that decision for me.” And I will tell you, it was a SWE event—we had a local SWE event where we had a panel discussion on people, on how they manage work, life, career options and stuff. And one of the women on the panel said, “You know, I like working with the fact that I’m a working mother, because I’m a better mother because I work. And if I was staying home with the kids, I would be a worse mother.” [01:50:00] And I was like—you know, that’s what you find at SWE. "Oh my God, there’s somebody like me." I mean, I thought I was the only one. I thought I was a bad mother, because I really, really, really wanted to work and have the kids at the same time. And I do believe I was a better mother and a better role model because of it. But I will say that there was, you know, I decided that—. My children are three years apart, and with my second one I was tired for three years. And I had gone back into management after—. The first one, I took nine months off. And for me, that was too long. The second one, I took twelve weeks off? Sixteen, fifteen weeks off?

JB: Yeah, it was twelve.

BB: Twelve weeks off, and that was way too short. And so, with the second one I was tired for three years. I remember people saying, “You’re always tired, Bernice.” You know, and I was like, “Yeah, I am tired.” [01:51:00] I think I was very—I was determined to make it work, and I also understood that my attitude was going to influence the entire family’s attitude. And so, what I couldn’t do is doubt my

decision, right? So, I was not the mother that was going, "Oh my God, I'm not doing everything right because I have to work." And I was not transmitting those doubts to my children. So, I had the event with my oldest daughter going, "Mommy, why don't you stay home with me?" And I looked at her, and I said, "How many people do you know—" because she had to go to day school. "I don't want to go to daycare. I want to stay home. Why can't we stay home?" "How many people do you know that stay home?" "Jacqueline." I said, "Jacqueline goes to day care three days a week." That was the last conversation we had on it, right? I wasn't getting into, "Oh me, how can I?" But I was really positive about it and I wanted it to be a positive experience. And I think I made that reality occur. [01:52:00]

There was a time, though, I'll never forget. We went—and this is really pretty funny. Jeff got a lot of the backlash at work. I remember being told that Jeff—I had to go pick up the kids. "Well, Jeff better take care of his responses." And I'm thinking, "Jeff does more with these kids and picks up these kids all the time. What are you talking about?" So, I did hear that. Jeff got a lot of backlash about having to go pick up the kids, or leaving early and stuff. What's the best revenge, Jeffrey? (laughs) You don't even know what I'm talking about. The generation later—

JB: Oh, (inaudible).

BB: Now, the people that we work with were laughing about Jeff, and how hen-pecked he was, and how he had to go pick up the kids and all sort of stuff. They

all had kids much later in life, right? So, it's like a generation—even though they're not that much younger than us. Then they were doing that. "Oh my God, I've got to go pick up the kids!" [01:53:00] And Jeff would just be there, going, "Yeah, now you understand." Now at the time we were much more the minority, right? So, and there was one day where I remember we color-coded who had to go where, and which day.

JB: Yeah, I think we tried that for, like, a week or two.

BB: Whatever. Because he was getting frustrated, because he was doing all the work. But we color-coded it. "Okay, so we have to pick up Allison and take her to blah, blah, blah, two to five on Sunday." And, you know, I had to do this. And it was all on his blackboard at work. We're doing this, figuring out who's got to go where, and where do we have to be? (laughs) And, of course, we had some church responsibilities so we had to give the kids to religious education. And there was, like, every religious education was eating at Wendy's. Like, you know, you drive through Wendy's and they're eating in the back of the car as you're going to the next stop. You know, you're picking up the kids, get them something, and just drive them to the next stop. [01:54:00] And you're just like, "Ugh." And then they want you to be this instructor. So you—ugh. It was just—it was a zoo.

But, on the other flipside, what did we do? I called them up and I said, "I'm going to be in Austria. Why don't you bring the kids out? I've got to stay there for four days. Why don't you come out?" Because I hadn't seen them in so long. "Why don't you come out to Austria, to Vienna, with me?" And so, he packed up the

kids and they came to Vienna, and they did the touring while I was working, and the kids got to see Vienna. So, you know, there's always a balance, a lot of opportunities that the kids would have never had.

JB: You bring up the ultimate. I think the ultimate was my manager, when I was a first-line and I would get up and walk out of highly technical, key discussions at four o'clock in the afternoon to go pick up the kids. [01:55:00] He harassed me for years. And then he became a grandfather. And then he had to go pick up his grandchildren from daycare. And that was the ultimate, because then he was like, "Oh my God, now I know." Because he had to get up and walk out to go get the grandkids on time, because his kids, his daughter would have been paying extra, you know. If they're five minutes late, I think they were charged for the full hour, whatever the bill was. So, he had to leave.

BB: And we had wonderful daycare for our children.

JB: We had great stuff.

BB: Wonderful daycare. And I always said, you know, if my kids turned out half as good as their kids—and I still think our kids turned out a little bit better. (laughs) But I mean she was—we had long-term wonderful, wonderful childcare, which helped a lot. We were very flexible. IBM was very flexible. That helped a lot. I took advantage of every program. I worked part-time. [01:56:00] I was a manager who worked part-time in the company, and not many people perceived—. You know, I even asked my boss this. I asked—even lately, I went to my boss and I

said, “You know, do you think I could work thirty hours a week doing this job?” And he’s, like, “Oh, no. We’re always blah, blah, blah, blah."

And so, then there was a cost constraint. And he was like, “If anybody wants to take time off without pay, let me know.” And I took every Friday off. And then I went back to him and I said, "Blah blah blah." And he says, “No, no, no, no.” I said, “Well, I would challenge—if I was serious about this I would challenge you, because I took every Friday off for two months and it worked out. And so, you can’t tell me that it can’t work. It has to work, because you have to be willing to make it work, and then I have to make concessions.” I mean, I’m not the type of person that’s going to say, “Well, I’m not working. I’m not doing it.” You know what I mean? "And if I can manage it, then you should be able to accept it." And that’s kind of the way I worked my whole career, is I took advantage of every program. [01:57:00] I tried to balance the negatives with a lot of positives. Luckily, I don’t think we were ever in real competition at the same time for a career advance move, except for one.

JB: Once.

BB: He wanted to go over to San Jose and I said, “You can go. I’ll be here when you get back.” And that was kind of like a hard line for me. I wasn’t going to move. Now I could kind of kick myself. It would have been nice to move. But at the time I was not emotionally ready for it. So that’s the way we did it. And I really wanted it to be successful, and I knew I wanted to work to be a—. And then I got involved with SWE, and that made even more time constraints.

And then I worked Y2K, which I was out of the country a lot. And then I did a couple of other assignments where I was traveling a lot, to the point where during Y2K Jeff says to me, “Look, you’re not—you’re just a visitor. [01:58:00] Your job is to show up, smile until you leave. (laughs) You’re just a visitor, okay?” Because I would be like, “What do you mean, this isn’t happening and that isn’t happening?" (laughs) "Look, you just show up and smile until you’re ready to go on the next plane ride.” So, we’ve had a wonderful opportunity, both with SWE and with IBM. There are stories that you could tell about being one woman in a sea of men, both as a manager and as a—. But, you know, in the long haul it’s been very, very rewarding and I wouldn’t have done it any other way, so.

TE: Okay. Is there anything else that either of you would like to add? [01:59:00]

BB: I think that there’s a—that I had to appreciate the sacrifices that people made to get to the point where I could join, I could be a woman engineer and not have to make as horrible sacrifices. I just think that people need to realize that there was a time when being a woman in engineering wasn’t as common even as it is today. And that, you know, somewhere along the line we have to figure out how to make it tip the balance, to get over that 30 percent, because that’s when it’s going to get better for all of us.

TE: Okay. All right, this is the end of the interview. Thank you!

END OF INTERVIEW