

**Oral History Interview of
Judy Sitton**

**Interviewed by: David Marshall
May 15, 2014
Lubbock, Texas**

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Transcript Overview:

This interview features Judy Sitton and her experiences as a records manager and being married to Jon Sitton, who is blind.

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David Marshall (DM):

The date is May 15, 2014. This is David Marshall interviewing Judy Sitton at Texas Tech, Southwest Collection. So Judy, if we can begin with some biographical information, if you could tell me your date and place of birth and full name?

Judy Sitton (JS):

Okay, my full name is Judy Vasek Sitton.

DM:

How do you spell Vasek?

JS:

V-a-s-e-k.

DM:

Okay.

JS:

My parents, well my dad is first-generation American. His dad came over on the boat when he was eight years old from Czechoslovakia.

DM:

From Czechoslovakia.

JS:

Yeah, so we all were born—I'm one of seven siblings.

DM:

Okay.

JS:

All girls. So I was born on April 1, 1955.

DM:

Okay.

JS:

And since I'm girl number five, the doctor told my parents that I was a boy, and that was the first April Fool's joke I got, and I've had many through the years, and Jon knows not to play April Fool's jokes with me, because I don't really like to celebrate April Fool's. But then they said oh,

April Fool, it's a girl, and then there were two more girls after me, so. I was born in Richmond, Texas.

DM:
Okay.

JS:
Which is one of Texas's Historical Places, Steven F. Austin Three-Hundred families there. But we were in Rosenberg, which is the more commercial part of the county as opposed to Richmond being the more historical part of the county. But I grew up there, and spent my whole life there, and I'm a records manager, so my birth records are there. When Jon and I went to get our marriage license, I said we have to go to Richmond, because I want our marriage license to be in Richmond.

DM:
Oh, okay.

JS:
Our house records are in Richmond, and when Emily was born, I said we've got to find a hospital in Fort Bend County, so that Emily's birth records can also be in Richmond, so.

DM:
I like you, that's neat.

JS:
So Emily doesn't have to go to a lot of counties, she'll have to go where Jon was born in Lamb County, but then she can go to Fort Bend County and have everything there.

DM:
Okay.

JS:
So, that's where everything is.

DM:
Okay.

JS:
But when we went down to Richmond, since I have so many siblings, and we were waiting to get our marriage license, my sister worked for the sheriff's department, she was a matron at the jail.

And then I have a sister that worked for the phone company, and a sister that, whatever. So, Jon didn't know he was walking into this, we didn't really date for very long before we got engaged, and so we went in there and went up and said we want to do our marriage license. And the first person said "Oh, are you Sarah's sister?" Yes I am Sarah's sister. "Oh, I know Sarah from blah, blah, blah, blah, blah." So then, someone over in the other part of the county clerk's office said "Are you Susie's sister? I worked with Susie at the phone company." So Jon's starting to look real suspicious at me then. And then, I'm not kidding, the phone rang and they answered the phone. They said "Are you Judy?" Yes, I'm Judy. "Well, your sister Joy said that duh, duh, duh, duh, duh." And so by this time I think Jon was ready to just pack it up and go, but he stuck it out, and so he knew. And so the first thing I brailled up for him was all of my sisters.

DM:
Okay.

JS:
Because I don't know braille, but Jon got the sheet, and so Jon had a stylus that I could use, so I brailled up for him my sisters, their husbands or ex-husbands, and their children, so that he would have a cheat sheet when he came to the family, to know who was who, and who went with who.

DM:
Right.

JS:
Because when you're in a big family like that, it's kind of hard.

DM:
Oh yes.

JS:
But fortunately, Jon is one of five children, so Jon's a fifth child, and I'm a fifth child.

DM:
Ah-hah.

JS:
So that's very unusual I think. And so I think that's one reason why it's so easy for him in our big crazy family, is because even though his family is very calm compared to ours, at least he's used to being part of a big family, and he understands family relationships.

DM:

Oh, that's interesting.

JS:

Yeah.

DM:

I want to hear a little bit more about you before we talk about Jon, most of this interview will be about Jon and his family, and I have to ask this because of the historical interest in it—you're grandfather then came from Czechoslovakia?

JS:

Czechoslovakia.

DM:

Did he arrive at Galveston?

JS:

Yes he did.

DM:

Did he, okay. That's interesting, have you looked at the immigration records?

JS:

I haven't.

DM:

Okay.

JS:

Silly me, I don't know why, being the good records manager I am, I don't know why I haven't gone and looked at the records.

DM:

It would be a good little trip down there.

JS:

Yeah.

DM:
Yeah.

JS:
Yeah.

DM:
Oh it's close to you anyhow.

JS:
It is, yeah.

DM:
Being in Sugar Land.

JS:
Of course it is, we go to Galveston all the time, I just never thought of it.

DM:
Yeah, they do have those records, that are easily accessible. Well, okay, now what about education—where did you go to public schools?

JS:
I went to Lamar Consolidated School District all my whole career.

DM:
Right, okay.

JS:
And named after all of the famous Texan people, went to Travis Elementary, I went to Smith Elementary when they opened up a new one, and it was Deaf Smith, the great scout.

DM:
Right.

JS:
And so that was real interesting, and then to Lamar High School, which you know Lamar was the father of education, and so we went to there, and so. And then I went to Wharton County Junior College right after school.

DM:
Okay.

JS:
And when you're in a big family like that, sometimes it's time to get out of the nest.

DM:
Sure.

JS:
So after my associate degree, I left and went out and got me a job, and moved to Houston, which, if you live in Rosenberg, oh you're going to the big city, oh. So I went and moved into the big city and everything. And then after Jon and I got married, I actually went back to Our Lady of the Lake University – Weekend College, and finished my degree.

DM:
Okay.

JS:
So yeah, he was very encouraging to me about that.

DM:
And then you launched a career. Can you tell me just briefly about where your career has taken you?

JS:
Yeah, I literally—and I do a speech on this, because I do a lot of public speaking—but I do a speech on how did you get into records management.

DM:
Right.

JS:
And I'm just one of those people who literally fell into it. I went to a temporary accounting job at LoVaca Gathering Company, which is now Valero in San Antonio, which is hilarious, because accounting is the farthest thing in the world from what I want to do. And I was across the hall from the engineering records department. And this guy came over one afternoon and said "Hey, you look like a hard worker. They need someone in engineering records, you ever thought about doing anything in records?" I'm like nope, but I need a job, so I went over in records, and my boss was a past president of the professional society I've been in for thirty years now. And he

came over and he said "Come over." And he took it as a real profession, there was another woman in there with me, and he basically mentored us and at the time companies could only have a certain number of memberships, and so he had to ask someone to give up their membership so that Linda and I could be in ARMA, Association of Records Managers and Administrators, and so they did that. And he said, "But if I ask them to do that, you have to promise me that you will be involved, because I can't ask them not to be in it, and then you not do it." So, while my membership was being processed, I edited the newsletter for ARMA, and then have been on every committee and whatever. I've served on the board of regents for the ICRM [Institute of Certified Records Managers] which is my professional certification. And then a couple of years ago I actually was president of the Houston chapter, which is the largest chapter in the association and stuff, and I tell you, records management's been very, very good to me. Because before that, I really had no clue what do I want to be when I grow up. But because he mentored me and everything, and I got into this wonderful professional organization, I just was able to go and advance. And even before I got my degree at Our Lady of the Lake, I was able to get my professional certification, because I had been in it long enough.

And then just went up there. And so now—I worked at Compaq Computer—for many oil companies, and then for Compaq Computer Corporation, and then I was doing the newsletter again, I did it many times. And I got a phone call from someone at MD Anderson in medical records that wanted to run an ad for a job, because they were looking for alternate credentials from the medical record credentials. And they said "Do you know anyone who would be interested?" And I said, "Yeah, me." I knew it was a close field to me, that that is a once in a lifetime thing that you would get an opportunity to go into management in medical records, without a medical record credential.

And so I went to work at MD Anderson in medical records as assistant director. Had seventy people under me, and it was such a learning experience. But MD Anderson is a wonderful, wonderful cancer hospital, and so I learned a whole lot there. And then they had in their history, the first layoff in their fifty year history. And of course since I was the alternate credential—if it would have been me, I would have picked me, because it was like you know. So I went to work as a consultant for Pacotech. One of my ARMA friends had developed this company, who just celebrated their twenty-fifth anniversary last year. And she said "Oh yeah, come to work for me, anybody would be glad to have you." And so I've spent nineteen years as a consultant going company to company, and talking to them about their records and doing that. Then this year, I mean just actually two weeks ago, I had an opportunity to go—I do information governance now is what it's called, and so I had an opportunity—Kinder Morgan, the energy company, said that they were opening their information governance up, so it's a brand new position at a great company, with a person that I have known in ARMA for years, and so I'm thrilled to make the move, and these two weeks have been great.

DM:

That's incredible.

JS:

Yeah, I mean it's just like the opportunity was just amazing. And, just so you'll know how I even heard about it, is I was doing an archive work day on a Saturday, and the person who is my boss wasn't even talking to me and mentioning the job. I just overheard him talking about it to someone else, and called him and said, "Hey, I would be interested in hearing more about that." He said "I would never have thought about you, you've been at your job for all these years." And I said, "No, something's really interesting about that." So I'm off to a new adventure.

DM:

Okay, so those archive work days can really pay off, can't they?

JS:

I tell you what, they can. If people want to come and volunteer at an archive, I would recommend it.

DM:

I guess you won't be doing as much public speaking then?

JS:

Oh, yes I will.

DM:

Will you, oh, okay.

JS:

Yeah, this year has already been off to a—it's cyclical, how people act me to speak, but so far it's been every month this year.

DM:

Oh wow, okay.

JS:

And I've done vital records, and information governance, and records retention, and whatever. And it's just amazing who'll just pop up and ask. I've spoken to the CPA group, and I spoke to another professional association, and then just a couple of weeks ago I spoke at the ARMA Houston Spring Conference, which is a big conference, and did that. So I love it, I love doing it.

DM:

That's great.

JS:

Yeah.

DM:

That's great, and by the way—

JS:

And my book is coming out.

DM:

Oh, when is it coming out?

JS:

Any day.

DM:

Oh really?

JS:

Yes, it was [mentioned] in the journal that it's out now, but I've gone to the bookstore and it's not there yet.

DM:

Okay.

JS:

So I imagine—

DM:

Give me the title and—

JS:

It's "Managing Active Business Records," and the woman who was my records management professor at College of the Mainland—who knew?—she's a very popular author of records management books. And they asked her to re-do her book, and she told them that she wouldn't do it unless she had a co-author, and that I was the only one she wanted to do it with.

DM:

Oh, is that right?

JS:

And now she has bequeathed the book to me.

DM:

Oh.

JS:

She is retiring, and she doesn't want to, and so she said "I picked you because I knew you would carry it on."

DM:

Right, okay.

JS:

How nice is that to just land into something like that?

DM:

I know.

JS:

So I'm just real excited about that.

DM:

Now I hope that when this comes out you'll send me some information, so that we can purchase this book.

JS:

Oh, well I imagine that you'll get an author's copy.

DM:

Oh, wow.

JS:

Yeah.

DM:

How much does that autograph cost? (laughs)

JS:

Yeah, we'll see about that, we'll see about that.

DM:

That's wonderful, and I want to say on the record here for anyone who will listen to this in the future that I have links to some of your articles as well, and we will have a file on you.

JS:

Oh man.

DM:

Yes, and so additional information that you have written will be available, if that's okay with you?

JS:

Oh, yeah.

DM:

Okay.

JS:

Great.

DM:

Okay.

JS:

Great.

DM:

And now, what does Jon think about all this?

JS:

You know Jon's just—

DM:

It's just incredible.

JS:

Yeah Jon is just such a great guy.

DM:

Yeah.

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JS:

I'm so lucky to be married to him, he is such a great guy.

DM:

You're a busy person.

JS:

I am, and he understands that. I think that's the thing—I dated a lot before I met Jon, and dated nice guys and everything, dated some jerks too, but dated mostly nice guys. But that was just something I think that most of them just couldn't even get. I dated one guy who couldn't even understand me wanting to drive, okay, so it's like "okay." But that's not an issue with Jon, he loves the fact that I can drive. And so way early in one of my very first speaking things in ARMA right after Jon and I got married, he came to watch me rehearse, and the person I was co-speaking with at that time was like, "Oh, spousal support, spousal support." And I really began to understand that that's just not that common.

DM:

No.

JS:

That he's there with me going, "Yay, yay you, and you go for it, and whatever you need, oh boy here we go."

DM:

Isn't that cool?

JS:

It is.

DM:

That he supports you being who you are?

JS:

And I know I'm where I am because of his support.

DM:

Yeah, you get to be who you are.

JS:

Yeah.

DM:

That is so neat, and Jon's just that way.

JS:

Well he's such a great guy.

DM:

Yeah.

JS:

I feel so lucky to be married to him. I feel so lucky to have even met him.

DM:

Let's talk about that a little bit, and also I guess a good place to start would be how you became involved with these activities with the blind.

JS:

Yeah, because you know his aunt asked me that when she first met me. And she asked me something about volunteering with the blind, and I was like, "What?" And it kind of took me back because all I did was go out to play baseball. I played softball, here was another softball team to go to, it's just the people on that team just couldn't see, okay, so.

DM:

So you loved that sport?

JS:

Yeah, I was a pitcher, softball pitcher for my company team.

DM:

Okay.

JS:

And stuff like that. Wasn't real athletic growing up or anything, but I can pitch. I'm a good pitcher, slow pitch, and I'm a good horseshoes player. Anything with a pitching too it, I'm really good at.

DM:

There's a link here it seems like—when you are interested in something, you're really enthused, I mean it's like your job—the more the better, you want to give this talk, and you want to be involved here.

JS:

Right, exactly.

DM:

You want to edit this newsletter, and then also now with softball it's like hey, I want to be there. So the blind are playing softball, I want to be there.

JS:

I had this mug that said "Who cares about tomorrow, let's play ball."

DM:

I love it.

JS:

So it's exactly what you're saying.

DM:

It's perfect.

JS:

Exactly.

DM:

It's perfect.

JS:

And so how I even knew about beep baseball though, is, my friend Donna is deaf.

DM:

By the way this is beep, b-e-e-p baseball.

JS:

Right, beep baseball—the balls beep, the bases buzz. And my friend Donna was working at one of the medical institutes in the medical center, and working with a woman whose brother was blind. And as silly as it is, they said "Oh, deaf woman, blind guy, let's get them together, hey." And so she brought him to—he was Jewish—but she brought him to our Christmas party, which is how my friend Donna is, and instead of going for her, Ed decided he was interested in me. And Ed will tell you that, so it's not a secret. And so he invited me to go with him to the banquet they were having at the end of the season that year, and then he called me all summer, or all whatever it was until baseball started again. And he would call me every few weeks, "Beep

baseball's going to start in two months, you coming?" "Okay yes, I'll come." Okay "Beep baseball's going to start in a month and a half, you coming?" "Yes, I'm coming." So he found out I was interested, so he took me out there, and I went and I had to go through an orientation though. I did have to learn how to be a sighted guide.

DM:

Oh, okay.

JS:

And all of that kind of stuff, and that was kind of interesting. And so I went through that training, but that's really the only blind part of it. Went out to watch a game—like you said, I'm kind of enthusiastic—so, whenever somebody hit the ball, I was like, "Go, go, go, go, yay, yay, this is wonderful." So someone came to the stands, and put their arm on me and said, "You know, they're listening for the beep and for the buzz, could you just not talk? You can cheer after, after, but not while they're running, not while they're fielding, because these people are listening."

DM:

That is tough.

JS:

Oh, oh, it was, it was so tough. So I would be out there going—and then I could say yeah. So then I got in there, and they need people who can see, because if you could see at all, and you're playing—because not everybody is totally blind—so if you can see anything, you have to be blindfolded so that it's an even playing field.

DM:

I see, yeah.

JS:

And so you have to have people who can see, so that they don't run into each other.

DM:

Right.

JS:

Or run over each other.

DM:

Right.

JS:

And I will tell you, there's a reason that Jon got nicknamed "Captain Crunch," because he ran over everyone. But, so, I had to position people in there. And how the game works is, the pitchers pitch to your own batters, you're not trying not to let them hit like in a regular softball game.

DM:

Right.

JS:

You pitch so that they can hit.

DM:

Right.

JS:

But they're blindfolded, so they can't see the ball. And by the time they hear it beeping, it's already past them, so you have to have this timing. You say ready, pitch. And you have to know their swing enough, and set them in the batter's box. So I was the catcher, so I knew how to position them in the batter's box, because we had a guy who had been a minor league ball player and then he went blind late in life. Well he had a powerful swing, and his swing was always faster than the ball, so I had to position him way back.

DM:

Right.

JS:

So that his swing would come around.

DM:

Golly, that's interesting.

JS:

And so I had to learn the players, and whatever. And then how they fielded is, they're zoned, and then you call out a zone number, and you can only call it out once.

DM:

Okay, right.

JS:

And so they have to know to hit the ground, and then they listen to the ball and they hope it hits them, which is kind of—

DM:

Because it's soft—

JS:

Yes, huge, Bell Laboratories developed it.

DM:

Is that right?

JS:

And it has this little peg that you can put in it to stop it from beeping, but you take it out and it “beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep.” And it helps catch it, and then if they hold it up before the person who's listening for the base runs and touches the base, then it's out. But if you get to the base first then it's a run.

DM:

Right.

JS:

So it's a real interesting game. And so one of our fun laughing things, I said to Jon, “Well let's go practice.” And he's like, “You're nuts if you think I'm going to go out and practice, because what am I going to do? I'm going to go in the park next door, be standing up all of a sudden and then say ‘plop, and fall down on the ground?’ People are going to think I'm nuts, no, we are not going to go practice me playing beep baseball.” So we had a good thing. Well I liked Jon right away, and Jon is a likeable guy, but what was so cool about this team—and people asked me, “Well why did you go out there?” And I'm like, “Because I was single and there was a lot of hot guys on the team. A lot of single, young guys? Shoot, who wouldn't be there.” And they're like, “Oh, very altruistic Judy.” So I never thought about this as working with the blind, I was out there playing baseball with some hot guys.

DM:

Having a great time too.

JS:

Having a great time, yes. And the feeling was mutual—everybody, every single guy on that

team, every *single* guy, and a couple of the married ones, asked me out, except for one guy. One guy. And I guess you know who that is.

DM:

Captain Crunch.

JS:

Captain Crunch, yes. Jon Sitton. So I had to ask him out, I had to say wait a minute, I was used to guys asking me out. I'm like, "Why is this guy not getting it? I'm giving him all the regular hints. It's worked for me before." I tell you, he was clueless, he was just clueless. But first I had to get in line to take him home, because people who are blind need rides home.

DM:

Right.

JS:

After practice.

DM:

Right, right.

JS:

And there were a bunch of people on the team, and there was always a line of people to take Jon home, because everybody liked Jon.

DM:

Yeah.

JS:

So I had to wait my turn, I didn't just get to go up there and take him home. So I would have to take whoever else home, and get in line to take Jon home. And so when my turn finally came up, then I thought, "Well okay, let's pursue this a little bit here." And so I said to Jon, "Well"—we chatted about each other for a while and stuff, and so I ask him, "What church do you go to?" And he said he went to South Main Baptist Church, which was a big church in downtown Houston which I never wanted to go to. I'm from Rosenberg remember, and it's a small town.

DM:

Right, right.

JS:

And so, I thought, oh man, cute, single, Baptist, and he goes to church? It's like oh, home run.

DM:

The total package.

JS:

If you want to go and just keep it with this. The total package, exactly, total package. And I will tell you, and he also looks really good in baseball pants, I will tell you that. So, I was like, "Great." So I lied, let me just say it right out here, I'm a very honest, but I really lied to try to get Jon to take me out, because I had tried other stuff, and I said, "Oh, oh, I've always wanted to go to South Main Baptist Church." Because I know as a Baptist it's evangelical. If someone wants to go to your church, you have to take them, you have to.

DM:

That's right.

JS:

Jon said "I hope you get to go sometime." I'm like, "Okay." (laughter)

DM:

Now was Jon shy, or just didn't—

JS:

I asked him later, and I said, "Jon, buddy, I couldn't have been clearer here, what was the deal? Obviously you like me, we're dating now, we're married—what was the deal?" He said, "I couldn't get it." He said, "I had had so many rejections, I couldn't understand that someone was asking me out." He'd ask people out, and they'd turn him down.

DM:

Wow.

JS:

That's hard for me to understand.

DM:

Yeah, yeah.

JS:

He's such a great guy. But he couldn't understand that someone was asking him out. Well I

didn't have a problem with that. I grew up in the seventies, you know, "I am woman, hear me roar." I didn't have a problem asking people out.

DM:

Right, right, yeah.

JS:

But I usually didn't have to, but when I did I was used to getting yes, okay, sure. But, so it was like, "Okay," then I had to go to plan B. I pulled out all the stops, everything, and finally, finally we did go out. And we went out a couple of times and stuff, and amazingly, Ed Rumsey, who when he found out that Jon and I were engaged, he said, "Oh, you are very similar." Not compatible, but he's right. We really have the same background.

DM:

Wow.

JS:

In music and everything.

DM:

Right, right.

JS:

When we talk about stuff in church, we did the same thing.

DM:

Okay.

JS:

I just did it at Second Baptist Church Rosenberg; he did it at First Baptist Church Idalou.

DM:

Right.

JS:

We went to the same young meetings, we went to the same whatever, and it even went farther than that—he and his brothers sang, Carol and her sister and I sang, and we were doing the same activities at the same time, just in different places.

DM:

Isn't that interesting; that really is interesting.

JS:

And so when we talk about stuff, we don't have any disconnect.

DM:

Right.

JS:

It's like we know. We sang the same songs. He's a year older than me, or not really a whole year, he's August to April older than me.

DM:

So there's that connection, that age connection.

JS:

And so we have that same age thing, but the church thing, even the churches we grew up, had the same activities.

DM:

Right.

JS:

At the same time and everything.

DM:

Probably used the same Sunday school quarterlies and everything.

JS:

Exactly, we did, we learned the same lessons. We went to training union. His parents were real strong in the church, his dad was a deacon and stuff. My parents never went to church, but we lived on this real small street that was three blocks from Second Baptist Church, so my sisters and I, every Sunday morning, walked down to church. Every Sunday night, walked down to church. Every Wednesday night, walked down to church. That was where we were, and that's where my friends were. My sister-in-law now, Carol, who I match-made to Don, her mother was our GA [Girls in Action—a Baptist girls organization] teacher. Well of course, Don, and Jon, and Lon, were in RAs [Royal Ambassadors—a Baptist boys organization].

DM:
Right.

JS:
We had the same structures.

DM:
Yeah.

JS:
We had the same everything.

DM:
Yeah.

JS:
Ed was right, we are very similar, and there's not things that we have to think about.

DM:
Right.

JS:
We don't drink.

DM:
Same values pretty much.

JS:
The whole thing.

DM:
Right.

JS:
I understand like—

DM:
Isn't that nice?

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JS:

Yeah, it's just, yeah.

DM:

That's real compatibility.

JS:

It is really compatibility, and we never had to talk about where we're going to go to church, or whatever, we just have this really strong bond there, and so.

DM:

Now what about the triplet thing? I wonder, despite the blindness, forget the blindness. But just the idea that you're married to one of a set of triplets—is that a different dynamic than you have in different relationships you think?

JS:

It is, my older sister Joy was married to a twin.

DM:

Right, okay.

JS:

Which is kind of ironic.

DM:

Yeah.

JS:

Because our family, it's Alice, Joy, Susie, Amy, Judy, Sarah, Vicky, okay. So the two J's end up marrying to the multiples. And so she kind of had that dynamic with her husband and his brother that I saw when I was growing up. But there's such a closeness between these guys, and it's so close that we'll even call each other and we're having the same thing for dinner as one of the other ones are.

DM:

Oh really, okay.

JS:

And it's just kind of comical every once in a while—

DM:
Yeah.

JS:
About stuff like that, because they really have such a good relationship with each other, and very common bond. And I like all of them, well I like his whole family, they're just such a great, gracious, nice family.

DM:
Isn't that nice? I mean you really stepped into a great thing.

JS:
I did. I'm not kidding. We got married on the twentieth of November, which was just before Thanksgiving. And his mom had said something about getting married the twenty-fifth, because that year Thanksgiving was on the twenty-fifth, but I didn't realize that his parents—if I had known this, we would have done it, because okay I'm a records person.

DM:
Right, right.

JS:
But his parents got married on November 25th.

DM:
I see.

JS:
Which was Thanksgiving. And if I had really understood that's what she was telling me, I think we would have gotten married, but the twentieth has been a really good day for us, so I can't say that that's bad. So we came home the first Thanksgiving, so it's holidays—that's always hard. Well it wasn't! His mom's dressing was the same as my mom's dressing. Because I was like, "Oh man, I'm going to have to eat the dressing," and I was like, "Yay." And his mom was such a good cook, and so now Emily makes my mom's dressing which Jon loves, because it was his mom's dressing. So it's kind of the generational thing. But I'm going to tell you, I walked into a movie because everybody came home and they had met them at the wedding, but Jon and I really didn't date very long, and they didn't meet me until we were almost engaged and stuff, and so I was just really still getting to know them and everything. So here we are, and his mom says to Lon, "Well go to the piano, Lon." So Lon goes to the piano, and here everybody [follows], and we all gather around the piano, I'm not kidding.

DM:

Immediate close family, huh?

JS:

Yes, we all gathered around the piano.

DM:

Oh that's neat.

JS:

And the guys sing, and then everybody's doing requests, and everybody sings, and we got all the same songs that we know and everything. And ironically, at one of my jobs just before I met Jon, we had to do this quiz, and it was: set a goal, and then you had to outline the things that you had to do to get to that goal. Well I dated people for a long, long time. I dated guys for three years and all through high school and whatever. And so, but never got the engagement ring, okay, so I just that day said I'm not going to set a career goal—I wrote it down: time to get married, okay. What do you have [to do] to get married, what do you need? So first thing I said is: find a guy who wants to get married, I mean it seemed logical to me, and then I went to these other steps. And then, as a result of that, I kind of had—I probably wrote it down, I'm a records manager—but, the list of what I really wanted in a guy.

DM:

Right, okay.

JS:

Because if you're going to set a goal that you want to get married, then you need to not just go and throw it out to the wind somewhere.

DM:

Right, right.

JS:

And so I had said here's the things that I have to have—

DM:

Yeah.

JS:

Good Christian—

DM:
Yeah.

JS:
You know, whatever, and then the things that are nice to have—smells nice, that kind of stuff. And then there were the icing on the cake things, and the icing on the cake was singing. Because, like I told you, I was in choir. And I grew up singing, and whatever. And so kind of one of those things that I never expected to have was someone who sang. I kind of thought that was just not in the equation.

DM:
That was kind of a—

JS:
Because all these nice guys that I dated, they didn't sing. And most of them really couldn't even understand why I really liked to sing. Because I like to sing all the time. And so after this weekend with this whole singing family, it was like the Von Trapps, we were there singing, we were in a movie. I cannot tell you. I said to Jon, "Jon, you're just what I've wanted."

DM:
Even the icing on the cake.

JS:
And he said "Oh, I'm so glad!" But I just couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe that everything I had written out—I mean, it seems really silly to look back on the fact that I wrote everything out, but to just be able to go down the list.

DM:
Yeah, check, check, check.

JS:
Bing, bing, bing. And here he was, in the flesh.

DM:
Right.

JS:
I mean down to looking good in his baseball pants.

DM:
Yeah.

JS:
Nice smile, good sense of humor, kind, quiet, smells good, I mean. And then sings! And not only sings, but *sings*, I mean a singer. I mean they could have gone professional, his family could have gone professional. And his mom really said a lot of people talked to her about that, and suggested to her that she should, and she really I think wanted to keep them normal. And to have that, I was just like I just can't believe this. I was just in awe of the whole thing. And then of course his family was just so welcoming to me, and just, from the beginning, his mom goes "Well, I guess my son loves you." Boom, that's all it takes for me, here you go.

DM:
That's great.

JS:
And I'm like oh.

DM:
That's great.

JS:
And she said that she had prayed for—she was a real praying woman—and she had prayed that every one of those guys would end up not only married, but with a sighted wife. And so she prayed for that. She didn't believe it was going to happen, because I was kind of a shock to her. She was like, "Well you know I prayed that Jon would marry a sighted wife." And I'm like, "Oh, really?" And she said, "And here you are. But I really didn't think they would get married, how could they get married, they can't drive. How could they date, they couldn't drive." Well remember I told you, I didn't have a problem with driving.

DM:
Right.

JS:
I had a problem with the guys that I dated saying, "Don't drive."

DM:
Oh yeah, of course.

JS:

So it was a good thing for me. And so I'm like well that's kind of a leap to say you can't drive, you can't get married. So we talked about that, but as soon as we got engaged, she really started working on the other two guys.

DM:

Oh, okay.

JS:

She was like "Hey, Jon's got a wife, you go get one now! It can happen!" And so these guys, Don and Lon, were just great to me, because they were thrilled for Jon. And everybody was thrilled for Jon. He was in the choir at South Main Baptist Church—the whole choir rejoiced—I would say broke out in singing when they found out he was engaged. My side of the story was not that great, because people did not think it was a good thing for me to marry a blind guy.

DM:

Oh, really, yeah.

JS:

Yeah, they were bad; they were pretty hateful to me.

DM:

Yeah.

JS:

Because I would get things like, "Well, you're going to have to take care of him for the rest of your life."

DM:

Oh, I see.

JS:

"We only wanted the best for you."

DM:

Oh, they just can't see it.

JS:

"How could you get this not perfect man?" But I read the list, he was perfect. He is perfect.

DM:

Yeah, exactly, exactly.

JS:

But people can't get past that sometimes.

DM:

It's a sad misconception.

JS:

You can't see, so that doesn't mean whatever.

DM:

Right.

JS:

And my whole philosophy is we all have something. You don't know what it is a lot of times. Jon's was right out there, and there are other things I have and he has and whatever that don't have anything to do with he being blind, or me being able to see. But that's why I think it was really good that we did not date for a long time, or even be engaged for a long time. When we went to his mom, we had started dating memorial weekend, we were in a beep baseball tournament, and I was just like I finally got him to pay attention—Hello, here I am!—and so we dated, and then we decided it was time for me to meet mom, and that was like, "Whew." So in August is when I went to meet his mom, and, like I said, she welcomed me from the very beginning and everything like that. But she said, "Well, if you get married, when do you think you'd get married?" And we were like well, you know, and we thought we'd better put it out far, because she was a good religious woman. And we thought we better not say, "Real quick." We probably needed to have a long engagement and whatever. So I think we said February, because that was when holidays and stuff like that, and she said, "Well why wait that long?" So I told Jon later of course, she didn't want me to get away. She said, "Okay Jon, you got somebody now, you go for it." And so we said okay, so we told her the date we really were thinking about, which was November, and she said, "Great, that's great, let's do it." So she was real supportive, and she was so happy for Jon and everything. And the people finally came around. I mean I will tell you, talk about career, the job I was working at, at the time, people came to me and said, "You're never going to go anywhere married to that blind guy." And they just couldn't get it.

DM:

No.

JS:

They just really couldn't understand. And I'm really glad to say, the job I just left, my boss there was like, "If you ever divorce Jon Sitton, I'll fire you, because that's the best thing that ever happened to you, and we all know it. We don't know what Jon could be thinking, being married to you, but we get that you need to hang on to him." And so the new job I went to too, that I've just gone to—like I told you, I've known the person who's my supervisor now for a long time, for about twenty years, and of course he knows Jon. It was just so nice, because it's really funny with him, because people know him, they love him, but this blind thing kind of gets in the way of stuff.

DM:

Right, right.

JS:

That people are just like "oh."

DM:

First of all, they don't understand it, because they don't know anyone who's blind.

JS:

Right.

DM:

And it's fear of the unknown.

JS:

Right.

DM:

And then it's the thought of a burden.

JS:

And it's got this like stigma, or whatever.

DM:

I guess, how sad.

JS:

And they just have no idea. When we were at South Main Baptist Church—we did go to South Main Baptist Church—and when we were there, the first Sunday that I went—and like I said

everybody's saying, "You're going to take care of him for the rest of your life," and whatever. South Main has this huge staircase when you come out of the sanctuary that comes down to this really pretty fountain and whatever, and so I was going to help Jon down the stairs. Well I tripped on the top stairs, and he caught me and basically saved me. And so I'm like, he's basically been rescuing me from stuff from that day on. So the people who said, "You're going to have to take care of him for the rest of your life," should have talked to him and said, "Jon, you sure about this, you're going to have to take care of her for the rest of your life." But there were people who just, I think there was just, the era he was born in just grew up with such a stigma.

DM:
Right.

JS:
And I still see it some—

DM:
I imagine.

JS:
Today. But not when they know him. Not when they really know him. A person who was on my same van pool at that company when Jon and I were dating, got engaged at the same time that we did, and people were openly discussing it. I'm like, "Hello, I'm sitting right here," but they're like, "We've been talking about what's the difference between Roxanne and Gary getting married, and you and Jon getting married, and what are the differences going to be and stuff." And I'm like, "Okay, this is real interesting conversation." But people wondered what it was going to be like for me marrying this blind guy. How different it was going to be for her not marrying a blind guy and stuff, and it was just like okay, it's the same, it's kind of the same.

DM:
Yeah.

JS:
So it was real interesting. And then it was one of two things, it was like, "What's wrong with Judy that she's marrying that blind guy?" And then the other side was "Oh, Saint Judy, because she's marrying that blind guy." And then, of course, like I told you, I also had a deaf friend. So I had another friend that said I hope I'm your old friend, because you have a deaf friend, a blind husband, whatever, and until they pointed out to me, I was like, "Really?" And I guess it's just not something that ever mattered to me. People are people. But I don't know.

DM:

Aren't you glad it didn't matter to you, I mean it's made for a very good life.

JS:

Can you imagine? I can't imagine not being married to Jon.

DM:

Yeah.

JS:

And like I said I dated nice guys. And so I've kind of reflected back on that, of what if I had married them and not— some of them made a whole lot more money—Jon's a government worker—some of them made a whole lot more money, but they spent their money on them. Jon doesn't make a lot of money, but he spends it on me.

DM:

Yeah, Jon's priceless though, I mean can you put a value on that?

JS:

You cannot, you cannot. It's just like, we just have this wonderful stuff together. And I can't even imagine people sitting back—the fact that they would even think about it, “Let me think about this.” It's like every marriage has something, so let's talk about you, what about that? And it's like okay, but they would call me and tell me this about, “Oh I saw this movie with somebody in a wheelchair who couldn't walk, or whatever, and I thought of you and Jon.” Okay Jon walks. Oh our neighbor, I have to tell you about our neighbor, our first neighbor in our apartments. She flagged me down one day—she's a little old biddy, I have to tell you—and she flagged me down one day, and she said, “You're married to that blind guy.” I said, “Yes I am, yes I am.” And she said, “You know they can teach them to do stuff now.” And I said, “Yes, I know that, my husband has a degree from Texas Tech University. He works at Social Security Administration.”

DM:

What did she say? How did she react?

JS:

She said “Oh he does? I have a social security question I need to ask him.” But I know she had in her mind making brooms. I know she did. “They can teach them to do stuff now.”

DM:

Golly.

JS:

Yeah he has a university degree from a major university. Yes, he's gainfully employed. We have a life here.

DM:

Golly.

JS:

But Jon did say that when his mom got the maddest at him is—because Lon is totally blind, and Jon and Don can see some. And as a kid, you know how kids are, he told Lon that he was going to have to sell pencils on the street corner, and his mom was not happy about that.

DM:

Oh, wow. How old was he when that happened?

JS:

Oh I'm sure very young.

DM:

Because his mom was very big on normal life.

JS:

Oh yes, absolutely, and how dare you [say this to] his blind guy. And it's just, everything has its degrees.

DM:

That's right, exactly.

JS:

It has its degrees. If you're a little bit blind—

DM:

Right, it's different.

JS:

You have this over someone who's totally blind. If you can see this. But you can see, and my friend Donna and Jon have discussions all the time over Donna saying "I'd hate to be blind", and Jon will say "I can't even imagine being deaf." It's like everybody has their own thing. And if you just sit around and listen, it's like, "Hello folks, we all have something."

DM:

Exactly.

JS:

Oh, the discussion I had with Emily when she was in kindergarten. I drove Emily to school every morning. And I didn't have Emily until I was thirty-seven, and so we were driving to school one day and she pipes up from the back seat seven o'clock in the morning, which is what you love to hear, "Mom, all my friends say that you're fat." I said, "Oh, oh really Emily?" She said "Yeah." And I said, "Well God made everybody different, some people are thin, some people are fat, some people are old, some people are young, some people can see, some people can't." And she said, "Well, I know why you're fat." And I said, "Why is that?" "Because you're old" My friend, so and so's mom, is real thin and she's really young.

DM:

The things that kindergarteners will say.

JS:

Well thanks, thanks Em. So we've had that discussion, and one of the things too—Jon has gone out and spoken to a lot of school groups about being blind.

DM:

Is that right?

JS:

And he did it before Emily ever came along, because I have lots of nephews, one or two nieces now, but back then when that—so Jon got this presentation up of doing this talk about being blind, for these same reasons of everybody having this thing. And so he has this cool braille watch, and of course his cane, and all of this stuff, his brailler and all of this. And so he would go out there and do these things, and we have some really good letters that I'm trying to find to give to you—

DM:

Okay, good.

JS:

Where the kids have written and said, "Oh, you read with dots, and I read with words." And you could see they really got it. And I said, "Jon, I'm so glad that it's you going and talking to them, so that they can see." Because he would say stuff to them, they would ask him questions, and they'd say, "Well how do you get dressed in the morning?" And what they really wanted to find out is how did he pick out his clothes? If you can't see, how can you pick out your clothes? So

Jon, being the comedian that he is, said, "Well, you know, I ask my wife and she says 'Oh leave me alone, I'm tired! Let me wake up first, and then I'll tell you.'" And so they got a sense from him answering their questions like that, that it's just like his dad, and his mom.

DM:

Right, exactly.

JS:

And there. And so he showed them not let me show you what it is to be blind— Let me show you that I'm just like you.

DM:

Exactly, good for him.

JS:

And we got such wonderful letters. Well my nephew, Kevin just had a baby, him and his wife just had a baby, a couple of years ago I guess, Oliver's about two. And Kevin asked for books for Oliver at his baby shower, and so we had this book for Jon that he took around and read to all the schools, and it's called "Miss Nelson Is Missing!" and it's about this teacher, I don't know if everybody's seen that one, but it was a print braille book, and so he could take it and whatever, and so we had that book, and it was a really good book, and he's a good reader. And so, we said oh, we've got to get "Miss Nelson Is Missing!" for Kevin's child. And so we got this book, and we ordered it from Seedlings [Seedlings Braille Books for Children], and we got it. And so when Kevin opened it at the shower, he said, "Oh Jon, this is the book you read when you came to my school." And his brother said, "Well that's the book he read when he came to my school." And my other nephew said, "Well that's the book he read when he came to my school." And they're like, "I love that book." And we had forgotten that Jon had gone to all these schools, because all of my siblings, and all of the—he kind of got on this speaking tour for a while about this. Because he had showed them how braille, and he had a chart with the six dots, and his brailier. And when Emily came along he did it at her daycare, and he did it at her school when they studied about Helen Keller, and "Oh, that's a Perkins brailier, Helen Keller went to the Perkins School." Well no, I didn't know that, but suddenly the kids could all make the connection.

DM:

Right, right.

JS:

And we donated some print braille books to the library and stuff. Whenever he went to speak, he would donate it to the library when he went so that the kids could go back and study it and stuff like that.

DM:

That is neat.

JS:

So I think that he has done his part to kind of help people understand the similarities.

DM:

And I'm so glad you mentioned that, because I have not picked up on that in any of these conversations that he's done that kind of thing.

JS:

Yeah, and he was so good, and they loved looking at his watch, and his cane. There was no questions that were off-limits to him. And that he just answered them in just your normal way for them. And so he took vacation days to do that, because he works every day, and he's been at his job thirty-seven years. And so he took vacation days to go and do this. And it really I think was important for him to do it.

DM:

How nice.

JS:

Yeah.

DM:

You know, a lot of what you've said this morning really reflects on Jon's personality, great personality. And, I picked up similar personality traits from Lon, and I haven't met Don yet, but what about differences in their personalities? I mean they went in different directions career-wise.

JS:

Oh yeah, they were really different.

DM:

So, I'm sure they have a lot of similar interests, but—

JS:

They have, and I met Jon separately from the other guys. I didn't know Jon was a triplet when I met him. I really didn't even know it—didn't even meet the guys—until we were almost engaged. And so it was really funny with that, because I did hear about them from Jon, but in my mind they have such different personalities.

DM:

Well good, tell me about that.

JS:

And Jon's mom said that when they were in school—and they had the banquets at school and whatever—they always had dates to the banquets and stuff like that, but the people who went with them didn't care which one they went with. To them, they were the Sitton boys. Just like my singing group were: the girls. They were the Sitton boys, and so it didn't really matter to them. They grew up with them. They all were kind of in together, okay. But since I met Jon separately— It kind of was different to me when I met the other guys, because to me, they're so different. Yes, I love all of them, they all have that wonderful sense of humor—his aunt Lois who has gone to glory as they say, told me when she first met me—and I had not met the guys yet—she said, "My nephews are true gentlemen." And they are, they are kind, and they are nice, and they are soft-spoken, they have a good sense of humor, but they were raised really well. They eat what's put in front of them and they say, "Thank you". They are just pleasant to be around. I never have to worry with Jon saying the wrong thing to the wrong people. People love Jon after they meet him, because he's just nice. He's interested in them, he's fun, he's just a nice guy. And all of them are. But Don is the first-born. Even of the three of them.

DM:

Even by minutes, huh?

JS:

Yes, even by minutes. And you can tell that first-born trait in Don—he was very close to his mom, he took care of his mom, he's a true West Texas boy, and he stayed here. From when they were kids, Don wanted to be in radio, and he realized his dream, and he is at work all the time, and he works hard and he is really good at his job, and I love to listen to Don on the air. They all have such wonderful voices. And I love to hear them. And Don is really in where he should be, he has such a great radio voice and everything. And I've talked to Don about being in radio, and he's come to visit me at my jobs and stuff, and my bosses have talked to him, even talking his radio name—he didn't, he took Don Sitton. And so he was explaining to someone "Well, some people just don't have radio names, so they have to take other names." But he said he was lucky, he had a radio name. And so he's really hard-working, they all are, but they're differently focused in it. And so Don is the workaholic, I would say. Jon is a very hard worker, he is at work every day, he goes to work whatever, I mean, and he has a thousand hours of sick time built up, because he never takes off, and neither does Don. But Don is up there in the middle of the night, and recording commercials. But, that's what his job demands.

DM:

Okay, yeah.

JS:

And so, Jon is a real hard worker, but when Jon comes home, he's not trying to do social security at home, although our friends do call him at night. You need to know someone in the business. And so it was funny when his aunt called Jon at home and said "Jon, if I get married, will I lose my social security?" And she was in her, I don't know, I think she was sixties, seventies, I don't know, when she was getting re-married, and he said "No." And she said "Oh, well you're the first to know, I'm engaged." So they have that. Lon of course has always been in the arts. And if you know, we know from Emily, the arts is a whole different mindset, a whole different field. Lon with perfect pitch and all of that, he has always been in the arts. Now he did assemble computers for Hewlett-Packard, which he said they would bring people by to show them the blind guy. "Here's the blind guy." And they would bring through work groups and they would come and watch Lon work to see the blind person assembling computers and stuff like that.

DM:

Which they were all skeptical about in the first place.

JS:

Exactly, they were, yeah.

DM:

Yeah.

JS:

Yeah.

DM:

I remember him saying.

JS:

And I think that Jon went with the government because they had a training program and all of that. And so I think it's been very good for him, because there're other blind people in the government because of diversity and all of that. Where industry was a little slow to pick up on that—and stuff. So, but with Lon being in the arts and stuff like that—and of course then he's been in church, so even when he was working at HP, he was a minister of music, and he was the first one to be ordained and stuff like that, so his schedule was different. He would be off singing at a wedding, or he would be off doing a revival, or he'd be off doing that and stuff. So, they just have different—

DM:

It's so intriguing, I mean, to someone like me who falls into the same trap of misconceptions:

“These are triplets. Therefore they’ll all be very much alike, and they all have a similar situation. They’re all blind, or partially blind.” And then all of a sudden, when you get to know an individual as an individual. It’s like wow, how different. All great guys, but all so very different.

JS:

Right, yeah.

DM:

It’s a real revelation.

JS:

They’re grandmother wanted them, when they came to Tech, she wanted them to room together. So they’re like “Grandmother, we have roomed together our whole life, really, we want to get out in the world, we want to meet other people. We want to have different roommates and stuff.” And I’ve met their roommates from college, and they’ve had some really great friendships from the people they met. And it would have been a shame if they had all roomed together and whatever. But I think the same about Emily too. A lot of her friends from high school went and got college and roomed with their high school friends and whatever, and so they just continued high school.

DM:

I know.

JS:

Emily was like, “Let me get out, let me meet all those new people, all those new things.” And I think that’s where Jon kind of is. He’s the one, like me, I went from Rosenberg to the big city. Oh well let me tell you, that was nothing, from going from Idalou to the big city, let me tell you. But Aunt Lois lived in Houston—now, she lived over in Town and Country, which was miles from where Jon lived, but at least she was in the same city, and I understand Jon’s mom wanting to know that, because I feel the same about Emily, and knowing where people are that I can call on. But to send her little baby off into the big city. Like I said, people who lived thirty miles away didn’t want to send their children into the big city, I think I just admire Ernestine Sitton so much for saying, “Okay.” And she came down, and she set up his apartment, and she left him to take care of his business. She made sure he had what he needed, but she expected him to go to work every day, she expected her guys to have jobs. She had high expectations for them from the beginning.

DM:

That sounds like the parents from the very beginning, because one of them was telling me, might

have been Jon, was telling me that their dad would say, "Alright boys, we're going to lay some irrigation pipe today, go get the pipe."

JS:

Yeah.

DM:

Okay well they'd go find the pipe, and I mean just the way that they were treated like, "You can do this, and you will do this." I think that's really probably very, very good for them.

JS:

Oh, yeah. I told him, I said you don't know how lucky you were. One, that you were one of three, and then the other, that you grew up on a farm. In the country. Because they didn't have to have this protection bubble around them.

DM:

Exactly.

JS:

Because like I told you, I was on beep baseball team, this was my first experience with blind people, and I went into it, I will tell you, same thing—oh there's the blind people. And I had eye-opening, if you want to call it that, because all of these people were different. And like I said, these guys were asking me out and whatever, and I went out with a few of them too, and they were nothing like dating Jon. They were, some of them, very needy, and clingy. I was like no, this is not what I'm interested in, I wasn't looking for someone who would be dependent on me. And so if Jon hadn't been independent— It wasn't like, oh let me go marry this blind guy because I need someone to depend on me. No. And so there's a big joke between Jon and me, because the first thing I did was give him a key to my car, because I wanted him to open the door for me. You open the door for me. Here you go, you need a key, here it is. So he was thrilled, the first car key he ever had. But all these people would just push stuff out of the way, and "Wait, let me open the door for you, let me get this for you, let me do this, oh, watch out for that." But I'm about to confess this— But I would say, "Carry this." "Get that." "Go open this for me." And he said, "I want her." So people were like, "you're so mean to Jon." "No I'm not mean to Jon, I'm treating Jon like Jon."

DM:

Right, exactly.

JS:

If he wanted someone to take care of him, there were plenty of people who were clamoring for that job.

DM:

You would strip someone's dignity it seems like to say, "No, let me do this for you, let me do that for you." And so it sounds like you handled it the same way his parents did. You do this thing because you can do it.

JS:

Well, I'll give you an example when Emily was born. I didn't have an idea, because Jon didn't confess that he was nervous about it, he really wanted a child, and we had waited a long time. Jon really wanted a child from the very beginning of our marriage, and Emily wasn't born until ten years in. Because I grew up in a big family with lots of children, I knew what children were, I had this little baby thing, I knew what they grew up to be. And so anytime Jon would say, "Let's have a baby," I would say, my sister has twins. I said let's invite the twins over, and they would bang Jon in the head with stuff, and at the end of the weekend, he'd say, "Why don't we just wait, why don't we just wait." So finally, finally when Emily was born—and Jon had been wanting this baby for a very long time—but still, even if you want a baby, you still can be nervous about it, but I thought babies come with dirty diapers, and other things. So the first thing I did—we had this changing pad, that had the high sides on it and stuff, and I had it up on a big, sturdy table and stuff, but Jon was just real nervous about that, and I was too, okay. So I said, "You know Jon, there's an expression, you can't fall off the floor." So we put the changing pad on the floor, I said here are the wipes, and I left. And he said, "Oh. I had to do it, because you thought I could, and I wasn't going to let you down. And I wanted to be a part of this." So he said, "I went through an entire box of wipes. But that baby had her diaper changed when I was done." And that is kind of Jon's whole philosophy of life—I may have to do it a different way, I may have to be whatever, but I'm going to be in the game. I'm going to be doing it. And you can tell by their relationship, that she [Emily] knows it. He's there for her.

And I will tell you of an incident that will kind of tell you Jon's character that happened early in our marriage, and I'm so glad it did, I'm just so glad it happened. We went to a church in Bellaire, Texas, and the minister was an Aggie, the minister of music was Asian, and the minister of youth was African American, okay. So but when we moved to Sugar Land, we went to another church, so it had been awhile since we had been there. But the youth minister, we happened to end up at the same restaurant as he was one night. And I recognized him, and he recognized me, but I didn't think to say to Jon, oh that's the minister of music from the church. So this guy was like a football player-size guy, and he starts coming up, and we had gone to that church for a while, so he's like, "Hey," and he came over to me and he was a married guy and everything, and his wife, we were good friends, and so he was making these comments to me like, "Oh, hey, good to—" you know, that. And Jon thought he was coming on to me. So he

though here was this huge, let me just be blatant about it, a huge black football player-size guy—coming on to his wife, and what's he going to do about it. So we're standing there, we're chatting, and of course I'm not even catching this. And all of a sudden next to me, this very soft-spoken guy, that I've been married to goes, "Hey!" And this guy jumps back, and I said, "Oh, oh Jon this is the youth minister from the church we went to in Bellaire," and the guy starts saying "Oh Judy, I'm so glad that you told Jon that, because I know he was about to beat me to death with his cane." And so we made a few little pleasantries and everything, and then went on, and so Jon and I went, and I said, "Well, we need to go get some groceries and whatever," and so we went to the grocery store, and Jon said, "I don't think I can shop for groceries right now." And I'm like, "Well why?" He said "I don't even know if I can stand up right now." He was ready to—whatever it took. He said "I don't know what I was going to do. All I knew is I had to get him away from you." He thought someone was molesting me. And he put his whole being into taking care of me. And then afterwards he was a bowl of jello, which, I would be too if I had been in the same situation. But it showed me early on—and he has shown Emily, we have this kind of key thing whenever he thinks someone's like "Hey!" Because we know, that whatever it would take, he would be there.

DM:
Exactly.

JS:
Whatever it would take to do. And like I said, I hate that the incident happened, but I'm glad it happened so early in our marriage that I never have to wonder what if I was in a threatening situation, what if I was whatever. I've always felt safe with Jon by my side, because I knew whatever it took, whatever, whatever. And he would take care of me; he will take care of Emily. And he has, I mean we have taken trips, we've taken whatever, and when Emily and Jon went to New York together, when she was in high school, I said to one of the ministers at our church, I said am I nuts sending a blind guy and a teenager off to New York City, the big city? Now I didn't worry about Houston, I do worry about New York, and they're like, "No, I think they'll be okay." Well Emily's whole thing is, "Well, I had the map, and dad had the credit card." But I thought, we had taken a trip for my job one time, one of my companies had sent me to England to get records for litigation. And he took care of me. I'm just not really good with numbers. And he remembered all the bus schedules, and the train schedules, and the time we're supposed to be here, and I felt safe with him. And so I thought that, well he took care of me, and why can't they go? And they had the best time, and I didn't worry, because I knew he would take care of her. And, frankly that she would be okay.

When Emily was little, she—and this is the relationship they've always had—she wanted to do horse lessons. And so she wanted to ride horses, and the only way we could do it, is for her to have lessons. So they would go out to the stables, and the horses, the tack had their names, like on a dog tag. Like you put on a dog's collar, they would have their name, Sambo, and Sugar, and

whoever they were called. Well I would have to go write out the check, so I would be going in the office and writing the check, while Emily and Jon were going to get the tack, and Emily started taking horse lessons before she could read, she was four years old.

DM:

Wow.

JS:

So, Jon couldn't see the tack—

DM:

Right.

JS:

And Emily could see it, and she knew her letters, but she didn't know how to read the names.

DM:

I see.

JS:

So, they would tell her what horse she was going to have, and she had to go get the tacks. So, say it was Sambo—so Jon would go in there, and he would say “Okay Emily, we need the tack for Sambo. It starts with an S.” So she would go and say “Okay read me the letters.” And so she would find one with a S. But they also had Sugar, so if she said S-u, he'd say “That's not the right one.” And then they'd go to S-a, “Okay, then what's the next letter?” And so together, they've always been able to do stuff, no matter what.

DM:

Right, right. If anything, that just would make you closer it seems like.

JS:

And it has, and it has made them so close, because they've always had that connection.

DM:

You can see it too.

JS:

And they never said, “We can't get the tack until you finish writing the check, and have to come here and get it for us.” Even without being able to read, even without being able to see, together they managed to get it done, and I think that's kind of the whole thing about our family, the three

of us, the two of them, the two of us. It's just we've always been able to get whatever we needed done, together.

DM:

You can immediately see that closeness. When Jon sat here, and Emily sat over here, there's just that adoring relationship.

JS:

Oh yeah.

DM:

It's immediately obvious.

JS:

Oh yeah.

DM:

It's one of those.

JS:

Oh she thinks her dad is great, and let me tell you, any guy that Emily meets, she's got a big standard to hold up.

DM:

Right.

JS:

And there was a guy here at Tech that she dated for a while, and he was not doing what she thought. And she basically said "You listen hear, my dad is blind and he can do da-da-da-da-da. You can do it." And she just is not letting him off the hook. And I'm just so glad, because she has that. I look at his side of the family, not necessarily as much from mine, but his side of the family is what I call this legacy of love and stuff. And I just think that he set a real high standard for her, and she has said I would like to marry someone just like my dad. It's not this, whatever, she understands the goodness, and everything that he brings, and that that's a pretty high standard that he has set. He set the bar really high for her. And I hope she finds someone who is as good as Jon is.

DM:

Yeah. We're about out of time, is there anything else that you would like to add today? And I

think we'll need to talk again sometime if I'm down around Sugar Land, or if you're up at Lamesa. There's just so much.

JS:

Well we've been married thirty-two years this year, so of course I've got whole years of stories about him, but bottom line to wrap it up—I just feel so lucky. I feel like I'm so lucky that Donna brought Ed Rumsey home so that I could meet Jon, and get into his wonderful family and have this wonderful life with him. Because, even though I dated really great guys, and I would have had a good life I know with them, it just wouldn't have been this amazing, this magic dust kind of life that we have.

DM:

I'm going to go ahead and turn it off then.

End of interview

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