[MUSIC] You are listening to Tell Me Your Story, where we connect to HLS staff on a personal level.

[MUSIC] Welcome back with the second half of our conversation with Susan Salvato.

You mentioned one thing. I don't want to forget this, Susan. You said that before you came to Harvard, you're working in a courtroom.

I worked at the federal courthouse.

What was your job there?

I was the court stenographer.

The stenographer.

Yeah.

Can you tell what the stenographer does for the new generations?

When I was a court stenographer, you would sit down with what they call the stenograph machine. It was basically another language. I went to school for two years for that.

To learn that.

To learn that.

So for some people who thinks that it is the same as typewriting, that's already archaic. It's very different.

It's very different from a typewriter. A stenograph machine only has 18 keys on it.

Eighteen keys?

It only has 18 keys on it.

You don't write a word in the stenograph machine like you would in the typewriter. A lot of the words have abbreviations. You go by sound. Everything's written by sound. I'm trying to remember because I haven't used it in a long time. But for example, if I wanted to write the word tough, there's a T on the left side.

I would type T, U, and F.

T, U, and F.

Tuf. It's by sound.

Yeah.

I'd hit those three keys at the same time.

It's fascinating.

It's a lot of memory.

Yes, I imagine.

You have to be really fast. When you go for your state boards, you have to be able to take down for the jury charge. I'm talking about then. I don't know what it is now because they don't even take them by stenograph anymore. They do it by voice.

Oh, wow.

They have a thing over their mouth. They're talking to it, which I think would be harder. You had to be able to take 300 words a minute for a jury charge,.

Three hundred words.

Three hundred words a minute. You had to take 150 words a minute for the judge's Q&A. You had to learn this language. You got to learn to build up your speed. But then you also had to be able to transcribe it back within a determined time frame, which was usually very quick for the lawyers for what they were doing. Depositions, if you were in court. Most of mine, I did more court work than I did depositions.

It's really amazing.

It was, yeah.

Would you say that you have a good number of codes that you need to learn? Memorize as well or not?

There was a lot of them, yes.

It's funny because I still feel myself doing it. I've been working here for 42 years. So that's how long it's been since I've touched the stenograph machine.

Wow.

When you're talking to me or anyone is talking to me, sometimes I'll start seeing that language in my head.

Yeah. How you would be able to type.

I could feel it in my fingers. I can actually type it out. I still have the muscle memory to take it down. If I take the printout and then I'm looking at it, I can read some of it but I can't read all of it anymore. If I went right back, I'm sure I'll pick it up again. But if you want to type a comma on the machine, you'd have to hit RBGS. Yes, all at the same time to do a comma. If you wanted to do a period, you had to hit FPLT all at the same time. That's a period.

Just for one sign.

Just for one. You'd hit it fast. But the thing is, that's why it was by sound. One word, the word could be three letters. But in order to take it down on the machine, I might have to push down five letters because it was by sound.

When you watch, of course, now the old movies because they show the court movies, and you saw the stenographers there, they are so fast typing those things. You just feel like they don't look at anybody. They're just listening to this stuff and just typing.

You have to take down everything that you hear.

Wow.

Not yet, if the judge is talking. Then the lawyer is talking. Then the other lawyer is mad, and he's talking. You got to get all three of them.

All of them.

I don't know whether you'd remember this. I don't even know, if you lived in this area. But when I first started, there was a huge lawsuit going on in federal court. It was what's called an expedited trial, which means that it would be going on for months. It lasted like, was it five or six months? I didn't take it for five or six months. No one stayed for the whole five or six months, but it did have rotating stenographers. There will always be at least four stenographers in the room. You'd go in, you'd take two hours. I'd walk out. Another stenographer would come out instead. I'd walk out, and it keep rotating. They would always be four in there. But when you walked out of the room, you went immediately to an area that was assigned to you. You typed up your notes right then and there because it was so long, and they needed the transcripts right away. You then type it up, then you'd go back into the courtroom. That went on for a long time.

There was only I think about 10 of us there. There was 10 stenographers at the federal court.

Everyone doing that two hours rotation?

No. There was ten in all in the courthouse.

Wow.

There was only 10. When Mashpee trial was going on, that four of those 10 were in doing the Mashpee trial.

Wow.

If there's a rotation in a court, where you can use more than one stenographer helping. For example, you do two hours or three hours. Another one comes and do two hours. Can you say that you have the same language written there or everyone has a style?

Well, you would mark on the transcript.

To where you stopped.

You mark it. There's a special thing that you'd put into the machine when you start.

So everyone would know exactly the portion that you did?

Exactly.

Perfect.

There's a lot of things that you could do.

I mean, for the most part, you also had to do punctuation while you were taking it. You couldn't just take down the words you were hearing, you had to punctuate it because

if there's someone was pointing to someone, say he did it, I'd have to say, I'd have to even write it that he was pointing to man in front row, in a white shirt with blue pants.

Oh my goodness. Things that you did. You had to get emotion, right? If there was anger, if there was sarcasm as well, mentioned in a way interpret all those?

Then on top of all of that, there would be times, and this is actually one of the reasons why I stopped doing it, I couldn't do it anymore. There were times and this was probably one of the second trials I sat in on, it was a nine-year-old girl who had been burned, had third-degree burns over 90 percent of her body.

My goodness.

She had the flu. You only get the chills when you have the flu?

Yeah.

They put a blow dryer in-between the bed, put the blow dryer on to try to keep her warm well, it started a fire.

Oh my God.

The girl was burned.

That's about to happen to her.

The company was being sued.

Because of that of course.

Because of that.

Yeah.

It took every ounce of strength that I had during that whole trial. I took the whole trial by myself.

You were looking at the girl?

She was there. She had already had something like 40 surgeries at the time. She would have like 20 more, but at that time they only had pig skin. She didn't have normal skin like you or I would have, and pig skin doesn't stretch and it doesn't breathe. This poor girl had to have skin grafts every year as she grew because you grow when you're a kid. I used to want to cry throughout that whole trial.

I imagine.

I took a couple of them that were like that and I couldn't do it anymore.

Nine years old?

She was nine years old.

That's another part of this that might be very difficult to participate and watch.

Some of them, there was one with a guy that worked for Rome, one of the big newspapers that I think its Herald, and he was killed in an accident. But what happened was, they have those trucks have the doors that can slide open?

Yeah.

He was driving the truck and something happened, I'm trying to remember. I think that he swerved to avoid something, and when he did that, he hit a tree and the door was open, he was thrown out. After he was thrown out, the truck came down on top of him. They showing these besides fact that they're describing in detail what had happened in which you saw, they also had pictures. Now he has his wife with five young kids in the courtroom, little kids. The kids were eventually taken out of the courtroom, but it was heartbreaking. It was absolutely heartbreaking to watch that.

To watch everything, to hear everything, to graphic them for all the information. Oh, wow.

It's horrible.

I didn't last.

That might take a lot of yarn on your mental health in terms of that.

I couldn't do it anymore. I always seem to get those. Some of them are nothing like that.

I can't imagine. Yeah. Then I'm glad that you found a better job, a easier, I think in a way not so invested in that part of I know that we all do.

The emotions with that because it would take you apart.

Another thing that I remember working with you when I was in the US, that I thought that was such a wonderful thing and we were all excited every end of the year for the holidays. You had a connection with charity or organization for?

My niece was or still is a social worker for the State of Massachusetts. She's based out of Malden. My mother and I for many years, we would go to see my niece and ask her, can you get us a family that we can do a Christmas for? One day, I was in my office and Lisa came in.

She saw some presents on and she said, "What are you doing?" I explained to her what my mother and I did, and she said, "Oh". She said, "Can we do it with you? Meet at the registrar's office?" and I said, sure. She's like, an you get us a family? I got my mother and I a family, and then I got one for us, for the registrar's office. Then the next year, DOS came in, with a DOS did it the rest of the time. DOS was pretty much from the beginning and they went right through until COVID.

Office of Public Interest, they did. They started, they did it. Oh, God. There was several departments that did it. Admissions, did it. There was Admissions, oh, Student Financial Services.

Financial Services did as well

There was about six of us. There was about six departments.

Which is a great thing, right?

Which was wonderful, and it was so nice because for example, the Registrar's Office, the first three years we did it, we had the same family. They were two little girls that were being brought up by their grandmother and grandfather. One was I think two, and one was four. They tell us what they needed, and it was so much fun. The younger they are, when they kids want toys and stuff it's so much fun. Sometimes we had the group with the older kids and it's not as much fun because kids not to fun buying for a 15 year old because they didn't want something-

Yeah. One of the ones that you gave to DOS, I remember being there was 13, 12, 11 or something. I don't know. I come from a place like in Brazil, for example, at a time when I was a kid, I always projected myself, the idea of having a chance to have a gift for Christmas for, it doesn't mean that I want that gift, but receiving a gift, whatever it is the gift. I always thought that that was such a beautiful project, such a beautiful campaign and I remember everybody in DOS, there were two aspects of it: one buying the gifts, getting together, and then another one that I thought that was a cool thing in terms of a bonding for the department, for the folks who want to wrap the gifts. We would have some time, get together in the conference room.

That's fun doing that. it's fun.

Gathering together in the conference room, wrapping everything, put into getting those bags, and then when you were ready, bring to the Registrar's Office for your off. That's one day when I got there, there were bags everywhere. [LAUGHTER] They didn't know where Santa Claus came from, but was coming from Registrar's Office with Susan Salvato.

These kids would get anything. Some of these kids were in really dire situation.

That's the good thing that I feel like when you know where the source is, when you know that the group that is dealing with, you feel more comfortable helping and you know, that's going to the right hands and feels much better. I know that pandemic disrupt everything, do you think that they are going to still do this in the future eventually?

I don't know whether they will to be honest with you. I have to ask Lisa if she wants the contact information.

There was one, and it wasn't DOS it was Admissions. He was a 16-year-old boy.

I think there was a mother and father in the picture, I think, but the mother and father I don't know whether they didn't want him or what the situation was, but he was in a foster home.

They said to us, give him gifts certificates. They gave sizes for close admissions got him.

Stephanie told me, my niece, this boy has nothing. She said Susan, he said, the nicest, nicest kid you could meet. I think admissions probably bought about half the store for him. They think they've brought him gifts [LAUGHTER]. They bought so much for him. I asked my niece a couple of years later, I said, "How is he doing?" And she said he was doing really, really well.

Great.

She said he was doing well [OVERLAPPING]. But she can only tell me so much. There's stuff she can't tell me.

Because that is the confidentiality part of this. But somehow they probably they also check a little bit to see how everything goes and give the assistance support that they would be able to, so it's good to know

What's the plan for the future, Susan, for you?

I don't know. [LAUGHTER] I don't know. I'd like to come back to the law school. Right now I'm still wrapping my head around retiring on Monday.

After all these years?

I can't imagine not working after all this time.

I don't know why would you retire after 42, I think you should keep going at least 20 more and then [LAUGHTER].

I don't know. Once I acclimate to being retired and figure out everything, then I'll see what I'm going to do.

Yes. I think you should definitely take your time to figure out certain things, how you feel.

I think I want to go back to work.

Well, I hope by the time when you're figuring this out and I hope also so that you figure out that you can enjoy your retirement a little bit because sometimes you get to used to what we do, and looking around and other options is not really something that you think much. We like where you are, you are very right. [OVERLAPPING]

I love my job. I love the people I work with. Half at law school and the people in it or my second family, I spend much time here in with the people that I work with that I do with my real family [OVERLAPPING].

That's true. We spend more time at work and that's right. We should try to do the best that we can to make this family more right engaged in all senses. Of course, we have each department have their own cell, I would say, over folks getting together. But you have a big community here. [OVERLAPPING]

And that's the biggest difference if you've worked here for as long as I am. That's where you see the biggest difference. Because 42 years ago, there was a lot less staff.

Yes.

I worked in IT so I knew everyone in the school. I also knew a huge number of students because I also was [OVERLAPPING] overseeing the student computer lab for a couple of years.

And a different lab as well because there was no much technology in person, it would it be the biggest deal.

I worked with everyone at the law school. Now, I'll bet you I don t know. There's a lot of people I don t know.

I believe you. Susan, I'm here for 20 already. Next year will be 20. But there are some folks today I was talking to I will mention the name, I was talking to Sebastian that works for the Berkman Center and you know, they are in 23 street now, and you're never in touch with them. He went through a char because he couldn't come to the luncheon and so he went there to pick up the gift for the longs services gift. I was telling you were here for 15 plus years already. He said, "Yeah I am." You see Sebastian never met you. He said, " Yeah, at Berkman Klein Center.".

That happens all the time.

Exactly, how many people we don't. Sometimes when you have our events, we tend to be, of course, for the obvious reasons, to be in our group, in our own table chatting with each other.

Part of the reason for that is not because you don't want to.

Yes.

You don't want it to interact with other people in the school and communicate with them, is that the only time you get to catch up but your own group of people.

Yes. In many cases, I would put myself included in this one. I am not the person that is going to be sitting in one place and then go hey, here, there. I don't know how to do that. I feel uncomfortable and I tell everybody nobody believes me that I am an introvert. Sounds like I'm not, but I am. [LAUGHTER] I talk to match with people that I feel comfortable with. But to do that extrovert attitude to go, I love people who comes, hey, my name is this and introduce themselves. I think it's beautiful. I cannot make myself get to that.

I totally understand.

Then, for example, we had this event yesterday, not yesterday on Tuesday, they trick our treat at the Halloween party that for the first time I think that you are doing. Have you ever seen before that event?

No.

Since you are?

No.

I'm happy to say because I was talking to a lawyer.

I thought it was great though.

I loved it.

I thought it was a wonderful idea.

People were walking around from different, you know. That's what I mean.

It was cool seeing them and people in different costumes.

Yes.

It was awesome. [OVERLAPPING] some people I didn't recognize you would first then I did. [LAUGHTER] When you first walked into the register, first, I didn't know you were then I did recognize you. But people of my own department, I looked at Maddie and I didn't know Maddie was [LAUGHTER]I work with her everyday with her every day.

Wonderful makeup.

Megan looked good.

Megan was really, really cool and I was meant to do our folks than HR,Gill,and Sheryl Dickey from OCP all the way to business and in Human Resources and Finance office to check on the decorations. They went all the way to Facilities to check on the declarations. It is a way to make the community rotate and just to see where they're located. That’s are cool events I think and I hope you keep doing that one for the years to come because that's a good way to make connections and make people feel more, that I wouldn't feel comfortable doing.

I'm going to have to follow up with you guys next year and see what you're doing.

You should come back and visit and see. Susan, I think this is the time to wrap up. I am so happy that you accepted the invitation to talk.

I'm glad you asked. [LAUGHTER] It's just great.

To tell the stories and other things that we didn't know about law school from years past that you already mentioned and your experience in court as well, that was really, really interesting to hear about. I wish you all the best. I know that you are getting your retirement in Lane here and soon you'll be leaving. But please come back and visit us. Hopefully, you can come when you find out how retirement is if you want to come back.

I want to come back. [LAUGHTER].

Then you'll be here. Thank you very, very much.

Fingers crossed.

Yes.

Thank you, Edgar.

Thank you. [MUSIC] This idea of yours, this is wonderful.

Thank you. Thank you.

Good luck with it.

Thank you. For everybody who are listening to us until next time, I see you then. Bye-bye. [MUSIC]

Mashpee Trial

<https://www.nytimes.com/1978/01/07/archives/indians-lose-in-court-in-fight-to-gain-land-jury-says-mashpee-group.html>