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

Hello everyone. This is Edgar Kley Filho from HLS human resources department. My pronouns are he, him, his, and today we're talking to Carrie Ayers from ITS who will tell us about her life, how long she's in this position at HLS and the work she does. Thank you for join us Carrie and please tell me your story.

Hi Edgar. How are you?

Good. How is everything?

Great.

Tell me how you identify yourself.

I'm Carrie Ayers. I'm she, her, hers and I work in business operations in ITS. I'm a Business Operations Specialist 3. I'm also an HUCTW executive board member for the professional region.

Explain to us what the HUCTW is.

HUCTW is the Harvard Union Clerical and Technical Workers.

That is the union for the HLS administration staff?

Yes.

I was part of them until a few years ago. It's a good group work in there as well.

I want you go back to talk about the position that you hand here, but tell us a little bit about your story, about your family, were you born in Massachusetts, are you from a local area or somewhere else? I was born in Western Massachusetts.

Western Massachusetts, which town?

I was born in Holyoke, but I grew up in Chicopee.

Chicopee?

Yeah.

Farther West. I don't know Chicopee, I know few towns around over here.

Right next to Springfield.

Really close to Springfield?

Yeah.

Wow, that's very far down. How was there? How was growing up there? You live most of your life there?

Yeah. I spent all my time as a child in Chicopee.

Was it a small town?

It's a medium-sized city I'd say. It's definitely not as big as Springfield, but with Springfield right there there was stuff to do.

If you need anything, you just drive there and do something. I'm always curious because I think in small towns, of course, keeping the difference between my past, living in Brazil in small town and living in the US small town, but gives that sense of safety. As a kid, I remember we could go anywhere, play anywhere, go with our friends, run through creeks and stuff. The only thing that I remember my mom, I used to go to the school in the morning, come back, and then she said, make sure you finish your homework first, otherwise you're not going to play. I would be eager to finish everything, show hands, go play with your friends, be back around 5:00, 5:30, something like that before dinner, before sundown for sure. I remember seeing my God looking back, we would go everywhere and mom didn't care, didn't even know where you were, there was no cell phones or anything. Seeing my God, so much trust there or maybe get out of here because I don't want kids to be messing around in the house, [LAUGHTER] thing. I think maybe that's what she meant, not that she trust me so much, but in nowadays, of course you can't, it depends on where you live. I believe there might be some small towns that still do, like very far.

I live in Luneburg now, which is pretty small. I definitely see the kids out riding their bikes around the neighborhood and things like that, but I don't know how far they go.

But still have some freedom?

Yeah.

Because I see the sense or the feeling of now I'm not going to let them, whatever reason is, and few has become more dangerous than anything else other than traffic and everything. Anyways, how long you lived there? We went to school there until finished high school there?

Yeah. I went through high school then I went to school in Worcester at WPI.

College or high school?

College.

College in Worcester?

Yeah.

The school was sailed easily, no big deal, no problems.

No, it's pretty average. I was shy, quiet girl but the one with the good grades. [LAUGHTER]

The good grade is good, because that's why you're smart. Then you went to college?

Yeah.

How was college for you? Good?

College was good. My freshman year I lived with my grandmother and her husband's, which was interesting and couldn't wait to move on to campus after that. [LAUGHTER] That was a lot more fun once I moved onto campus.

In your freshman year you stayed in a dorm and what would be the dorm experience? Do you stay with the family member or your grandmother?

Yeah.

Then after that, you chose to be on campus or living in off-campus housing?

On campus.

On campus housing?

Yeah.

How was the experience? Good?

It was great. I was on the bowling team, so I had met somebody on the bowling team and that's who I ended up rooming with. He was in school also.

That's nice.

We became really good friends and we still keep in touch.

When you're talking we are here in a higher education environment or that, my experience of working at DOS was always trying to figure out what to do, to make the students happy. One of the situation when they have to share dorms or live in the dorms, how that experience would be, and it's always very complicated, it depends on where you come?

Yeah.

But you were lucky enough to find someone, enjoy bowling and then become roommate. I think that makes easier, because might be very complicated to live with someone that you don't get along, not even say don't get alone, because that would be too much, but so then you say roommates or friends for the entire time that you were there?

Yeah. I actually did a co-op in my junior year. She actually finished half a year ahead of me because I did a co-op for half a year. The last year I was in with some younger students, but it wasn't a suite so I had my own room in the suite, so it wasn't too bad.

Were you the boss of that situation? [LAUGHTER]

Was I the boss? No, again, I'm the quiet girl, so I kept to myself. [LAUGHTER] I had some other friends that were a year behind me. I still had people to hung out with, when eating lunch and dinner and all that stuff.

The course that you took there, it's interesting because some college give someone already a path to certain profession or disciplines that someone wants to fall in terms of a career. That was a case with you or not? [OVERLAPPING]

I went to school for computer science, which was basically computer programming, which is not what I ended up doing because I wasn't great at. [LAUGHTER]

My very first real job was a computer programming job which lasted about six months. Then I switched into support. Computer Support.

That was better?

Yeah. I was definitely more suited to that.

On that, so you have I don't know how you say that, a goal. Let's put as a goal more than a fantasy. Because sometimes, because we don't have, I'm put myself in that same situation, I'm going to college and I'm going to do this. I feel like this is going to be my path. I always joke about my passion. I'm thinking about the girl from the commercial, my passion is this. It doesn't end up being exactly what it is because if we create a fantasy about why this is going to be, I'm going to do this or it's going to be this much money, whatever it is. Was that situation with you, you have a computer science in your mind and say I'm going to do this, but then this is boring.

Yeah. I mean, I guess because I always had good grades in school. Growing up I was like, "It'll be easy." It wasn't that easy.

I'm telling because the same I took computer science in Brazil before I came here two years. I would say we can lock the cars for awhile to take a leave. That's why I did because I was coming here to stay six months and go back to finish everything I ever did. But I always had a problem with math. I never repeated a year anything. Always did well and good grades as well. But I hated math. Math was my nightmare, was so complicated to study and get a good grade there. Then I decide to go for computer science because it was the boom in the '80s. Oh, there you go. You're going to be, I hated it as well because right in those programming things, those codes that were like, I don't know, sometimes took a whole page of your notebook for one code. I was like “what in heavens is this?”, but I had to finish. Then that not using that at all, good experience and everything. Then I think was here that I took vocational tests or something like that and said, I should be a priest, a psychologist, [LAUGHTER] working as a teacher. Something of that nature, I say, oh, I see, I get that right. And I end up being. Anyways, I'm digressing here because of the story about working. You finish your course in computer science in college. Is that what you did?

Yes.

And then you say that you end up working with administration part?

Yeah. I did do a programming job for a short time and then I had a boyfriend who had a job in Westborough. I was still out in Western Mass. I was looking for another job and ended up getting a phone support job at a company called Stream in Canton Massachusetts. They did phone support for Microsoft. If you were calling Microsoft, you might have been talking to me.

Wow, that's nice. Did you like it?

No. [LAUGHTER]

You have to get there Carrie. Phone support is tough. It can be good and can be rewarding. But also, it can be really hard because you get all different kinds of people from all over the world. There are some people who don't want to talk to a woman on the phone. They don't believe that a woman can help them. At that time, we couldn't remotely log into somebody's computer to help them. I was hoping people install Microsoft Office.

You have to describe it.

I had to have them edit their bios files. And if they screwed that up, then their computer wouldn't boot, that would be a really big deal. [LAUGHTER]

I imagined. Then of course you have to consider the distress in both sides. You're trying to teach them and describing things. Can you see this your computer on your whatever you are doing and the person resisting, I cannot mess this up. I'm going to miss an opportunity here. Wow. How far? You think now that you call someone, they can say, can you see this page? Can you do this? Can you do that? Or can even Zoom with the person and in some cases. But I always feel like sometimes of course, when his personal that you call someone and I think that's what you did at that time. You'll be one of those that you call say, I'm having issues here, can you help me out? Sometimes I call someone and they feel like they are not in a good day because I tried to be nice. I swear. I try to be nice but sometimes you get someone that they don't care. You are trying to say no, is this and then transfer me to another person, you repeat everything. Wow, I can understand the experience. Then after that, what came out?

After that, I moved to a small company called Executive Perspectives, which was definitely my favorite job. It was a small company. They did simulations, management simulations. They would go to bigger companies and run the simulations so that people would learn how to deal with different experiences.

But what kind of experiences though? Would be machines or would it be administration style.

Like management type stuff like an HR perspective or something. They have everybody who joined the company. It exists again, but it actually had closed for a while, which is why I don't work there anymore. [LAUGHTER] Everybody who was employed there had to go through one of the actual simulations. In the case, the one that I went through was about race. It was like how to deal with situations and they'd come in unexpectedly with some new news that you had to deal with. It was like a real experience.

Interesting. So how long ago Carrie?

That was in the late 90s. Yes. Late 90s.

That was very advanced for that time already thinking taken in consideration all those topics.

Yeah.

The training was always well accepted people who participate in Dino had a good.

Yeah, it was great. The problem came when the two owners were married and got divorced and they had to sell the company to find out what it was worth in order to split up the money. Then this was right around the 2000s bubble. The bubble burst. Nobody wanted to pay for training anymore, so company went out of business unfortunately. But everybody that worked there, it was a really tight-knit group. We were about 50 people and a lot of them reformed the company and all still work together.

Oh, good. They are somehow to manage that. After that, how long it took for you to get to Harvard for example.

I worked with one more jobs. The person who was the CEO at Executive Perspectives moved on to another company called School Success, which was an online like a preschool. It was like activities and things that a preschool could use or a parent could use with their kids.

They relate to school. So that was a prep to get to Harvard somehow? [LAUGHTER]

[LAUGHTER] Pre-school at college.

[inaudible 00:16:05] you'll go for computer science switch and now you are not to ask somehow. Then the other drug that you had, the one about management, learning how to write joke, and then you go for a preschool.

Well, there I was doing tech support and system administration and QA. They needed a QA person. I did QA, which I really loved doing and really enjoyed QA. Again, that was still during that whole bubble. Then they couldn't get the other funding that they needed to keep going, so got laid off again. [LAUGHTER] Then somebody that I worked with at executive perspectives knew somebody that was working here at the law school and the IT department, and that's how I got to jump in.

When did you start, which year?

2001. I started here.

2001.

Yeah.

You started straight in ITS?

Yeah.

You have been an ITS the entire time?

Yeah.

How was the first job?

First job was good. I was a technical support analyst. I was doing the field support. It was good. I spent a lot of time teaching co-ops, how to do support and get to know the faculty and staff I feel like I had some really good relationships with the latter.

Yeah. Because that's how have staff getting to know everyone because of the need of the support that ITS gives for every department. I'm curious. Just because you took the computer science at college, did that help somehow? Working as tech support and beginning ITS, what you will learned there helped somehow or was just a familiar thing that?

I think it makes you think in a particular way. I think it helps in troubleshooting, especially when it's like software-related, doesn't really help with the hardware side, but I think it helps when you're thinking about the software side of things. You have an idea of how it works on the backside.

You stay in that position for how long and then moved on?

I was in that position for six years.

Six years.

Yeah.

Then what you do now? What do you do?

Now I'm in business operations. For about the first eight years, I was by myself as the business operations person. It wasn't really called business operations at that point, but I did all the budgeting and purchasing and all that stuff alone. Then when Pratik became the CIO, he arranged.

Yes.

ITS and added in a new position which is where Tammy Lombardo is now. She became [OVERLAPPING].

Loved Tammy.

My manager and then added Jay who was actually the AV.

Jay Rein.

AV guy into the business operations. Then we took over. We're still doing budgeting and purchasing. We still do that as a group, but my job has changed a lot since then. We took over the phones facilities and all the phones. We took over the phones. I'm mainly in charge of the phones.

Right now you're in charge of the phones?

Yeah. Then backup to Jane Anna and I now also works in Jane Anna Chapman also works in business operations and she does the budgeting stuff now but I'm backup to her on those things like paying bills.

You were working with Tammy and Jay?

Yeah. It's changed again. Tammy is Jane Anna's manager, Jane is Jay and my manager.

I'm not even going to ask ITS. ITS has a huge [OVERLAPPING].

We're about 55 people not including co-ops.

Because co-ops come in and that's more fast support that you need. But you have a big number of folks in ITS and that has changed a lot in terms of a I remember this space where you are long ago used to be the media services?

Yes, media services.

That was the name at that time. But then you again leave a little bit of the side of a computer services and go through the administration. You're dealing with the budget and other parts of administration. You said that you were dealing mainly with phones, that would be Becky Andreasson in our good times. Phones also changed a lot. Before it could be all landline. Then now is VOIP, voice over.

Over IP.

Over IP. What do you do in terms of you maintain all that or is more in terms of new people come you're transferring phone from one to another.

The portal is maintained by Verizon.

Yeah.

New installs. So a new person comes needs a new number or they need to be reassigned a number that the previous staff member had or adding a call parents of say, a faculty phone number on a faculty assistant's phone or moves. Some people move, we have to update that so that if somebody calls E911 from the phone, they know where to go.

Yes.

That's why we have stickers on all phones. I say to call us if you need your phone.

Yes.

So that we know it moved and we can update it because if you move it and we don't know, then we can't update it. Again, if somebody makes an emergency phone call there we're not going to be able to find you.

That big fore front desk is in general because they have a bigger number of lines that they can access, because they answer the phone and need to transfer for other folks. That's another interesting thing that I learned when I was in the DOS. Well, a little bit in Facilities. But how many people can add to that and who you can transfer? Who you can pick up the line if that person doesn't answer that phone in their office. It's so much intricate in terms of what needs to be done and that protocol goes through you. If someone says in my phone, I want to answer the main line, but I want to have access to the director or this or that, of course, everything approved by the management and all that stuff. But would it be more or less that?

Yeah.

And having to send the right information so they can set up.

Yes.

Then have the codes there. You also are you said, linked to the Harvard Union, the Clerical Union. How is the experience? What made you get involved and is a good experience, a good group to work with too?

It's a great group to work with. Right now we're going through our contract negotiations. We meet every week to talk about what's going on.

What's next.

What's next steps to get things moving.

Yeah.

It's a really good group. They have a lot of great ideas, is a lot of people that have been part of the group for a long time.

Long time.

Then we've had recently had some turnover, so we've got some new fresh faces and ideas in the group [OVERLAPPING].

One big change, I think was last year. If I'm not mistaken. Of course I'm going to forget her name, which is a horrible. Love her.

Donine.

Donine.

She retired. [OVERLAPPING]

Yeah. Donine was there for a long time Ann Sjostedt was also there for a while.

She's still there.

He's lovely. I like the culture. But you did something else.

What are you talking recently?

Green team.

The green team. What happened with the green team?

Unfortunately during COVID, a lot of people left. [OVERLAPPING] I think we only met once, maybe twice a view on account when we said goodbye to Bill, [LAUGHTER] who was another great team member. A lot of our more active green team members left during COVID, they left HLS. Right now, we haven't really done anything, but I'm hoping to.

To revive.

To revive, yeah.

I think it has a lot to do with the entire change that happened with the COVID, and then when you returned. Because I remember how many staff left and then how difficult it was and it's still a ease to fill those positions back. People that took a difference approach to their careers and it's too complicated to. But I remember the old days and how much you have, you have DO going to each department and trying to have the program of the leaves and sustainability and doing all that, they did a phenomenal job, and did the Earth Day fair also was really nice and people go.

Right now, I was going to ask the question I have asked others before, for example, your relationship with the students because I know that students depend heavily like the rest of the community on ITS for many different things. You are more involved with the students in their first years, I would say, right?

Yeah. Actually even then, I wasn't that involved with students because mostly faculty and staff, but school startup time. We'd sometimes, I remember one year we all had to take turns sitting at the desk. There would be a line of students out the door who needed support. It was always interesting when you get those computers that are in a different language and you're trying to figure out what it means.

You're trying to help them. That was interesting in this time of the year for ITS, I would assume would be mostly orientation time when these students are coming in, which DOS would say all hands on deck. Nobody has a title anymore. You are all going to do a complete different things just for the sake of making that those events going well. That's we depend heavily on ITS as well. It would be I think all departments that deal. Would be Admissions, Registrar's Office, DOS. I think all of them get involved and have to do with ITS. I think there wouldn't be because at same time that you have these shows, you also have the visiting professors. Everybody that comes. It is a big group and I think people depend heavily on what ITS always does. I don't think how much we all say this, but I think everyone is very appreciative of the work that the ITS does because I can see that can be tiring sometimes do you know calling on a computer. I was one of those. I got better. I swear that I got better, but I would be one. “My computer is doing this” and the first thing that person tell me on the phone was “did you turn off and restart your computer?” [LAUGHTER] Then when you did, you know, the embarrassment, like, “I should have done that before I called you again”. Then you just wait for it. It was a yes, you should. I think the [LAUGHTER] desire of someone on just said yes, you should have done that, but you didn't. You have to come here with 300 other calls waiting for me to talk to. Carrie, what other things? Work is good. You are involved with the clerical union. You are revamping the Green Team that's going to be working. What else? What do you do for fun? Read, watch TV, series, movies, book, or anything? Any particular hobby?

I'm a hockey fan.

Are you one of hockey fans?

New York Rangers is my favorite team.

Should we end this conversation right now [LAUGHTER] or a New York Rangers.

Yeah, they playing the Bruins tonight.

Oh my god, I should say that's it. My invitation is either even going to put this on there anymore. [LAUGHTER] It's interesting that you are saying that because when Dean Sells was here, these cells from New York and Alex, well, her husband as well. But Alix, her daughter, huge Rangers fan. But like dying hard like Rangers fan. But then they did really well in a few years in a row, not an issue now.

Last year they did pretty well. They did better than expected because the couple of years before that they were doing. This is what we Rangers fans go through. They get rid of all their good players just when they're getting really good, and then they bring in all these young people. [LAUGHTER]

It sounds like Brazilian talking about soccer. Is very close as he, look what happened with boycott because they have all these divas they didn't do it. If they had all these folks from Brazil, we do the better. How someone from western Massachusetts, maybe that's the influence, becomes a Rangers fan.

Actually it is because I grew up in Western Massachusetts. When I was in college, I think it was my sophomore year, I came home for the weekend, and my friends had tickets to the AHL team which played in Springfield. AHL is the minor leagues for the NHL,

and the Springfield Indians, they were called the Springfield Indians and they were the islanders farm team. I didn't want to go because I thought hockey was a silly sport. [LAUGHTER] I went and I still complain the whole game, but yeah, I went back again and again, and again, and I just got hooked. My favorite player played and I picked that player on that team who was my favorite player. He almost retired that year, but because he started out as defenseman, but the coach switch them over to left wing. He stayed with the Islanders the next year. He played for the Islanders for a few years, and then he ended up in Toronto. Then he played for the Rangers for awhile with Wayne Gretzky. Then his last season he played for Ottawa and he retired. I followed him around as a player but when he retired I had to pick a team. The Rangers, he had only played for Ottawa for less than a full season, so I went back to the Rangers.

Ended with the Rangers. That's a whole story there. Is this the only betrayal in terms of Massachusetts, having residents cheering for New York?

Yes.

Everything else could be Red Sox.

I'm not a football fan, but I have watched doing when Patriots make the super ball into match. [LAUGHTER].

We're going to forgive you for that indiscretion of, no it's really interesting because I like hockey and I think people who watch soccer, you understand the difference between fans and fans in a way. South American soccer fans or Latin American general, we are so passionate cheering for our team. It's not just like a, I see people watching TV. They watch TV like they were watching a game. Like they were watching a movie. That's beautiful, nice play. Whether it's Latin American person, they are going to be scream from being like they're going side of the TV almost breaking, go, go the same way. When I watched football Brian always say “Jesus, you're going to have a heart attacks”. No, I'm not. This is normal. This is how we exercise our anger, frustration or whatever it is. But hockey takes me to a complete different level and I get scared because different from any other sport, you have a pace that is a go there soccer is the worst of all because 90 minutes sometimes you don't even have a score, but they try go back that whole thing. Hockey is by seconds, even more than the basket ball that the whole thing that they do. But the hockey is so intense and so fast that I feel like my heart is pumping so fast. This one, I definitely will have a heart attack [inaudible 00:33:19]. I think it's the frustration to watch and be so pumped all the time that I avoid, I watched when Bruins were champions a few years ago, twice, and one was against Vancouver was too much. I finished the whole thing. I was very happy that they did and I thought that was amazing. But hockey is too much for me. I can't handle. Are you a strong fan or I wanted to teach for America very polite. Oh, that's nice.

Probably in the middle. [LAUGHTER] I definitely yell at the TV when they think they should be shooting and they're just passing. [LAUGHTER]

That's nice. I think it's good when you have some sport and people gather and cheer. That's a lot of fun. Carrie I think that's it. We can wrap up our conversation. I loved it. Thank you very much for participating. I'm in my mind going throughout all the folks that I have from Facilities time and everything else time then you are always also in my mind too and I'm so happy that I met with you. It's funny because I feel like I stalked you [LAUGHTER] because I was living here because I required something I saw in the hallways, how's it, you want to record them. [LAUGHTER] I was happy they said, yeah, I would like to. That's fantastic. I'm really happy that you accepted. I'm happy that you came and shared your story with us, and I hope you enjoy too and it was not scary.

No this was fun. Thank you.

Thank you very much, and for everybody that is listening there, I'll see you next time. Bye. [MUSIC]