

Interviewee: Jo-Anna McCort (Jo-Anna legally kept her own last name but goes by her husband's name in certain situations)

Interviewer: Rachel Fischman

[Intro and consent] *So, what's your last name story?* I was born with the last name McCort [provides spelling], of which my family was very proud. And I was raised knowing that I was the last one in that part of the family's line of McCorts. Because of that, when I got married, although I wanted my children to identify as a whole family, including mother and father instead of being confused about surnames, I decided to only use my last name for work and school and then I would take the Fischman last name, which is my husband's last name, and use that for anything to do with home.

It did get confusing a few years ago when I found out that the IRS had gotten confused because I had not officially changed my last name to Fischman and I had been filing as Fischman for many years. So, a few years ago, I didn't have to pay any money, I didn't have to pay a fine, but I did have to start filing as Jo-Anna McCort Fischman but my legal name is still McCort. Although my children, and my neighborhood, and my community identify me as Fischman.

*...Would you say that it's related to feminism because you didn't want to be made invisible, you didn't want your family name to disappear?*

Yeah I do think that. Am I allowed to expand?

*Yeah.*

It also gave me the opportunity, and this is going to sound weird a little bit, but it gave me an opportunity to give back to my parents. Although they are no longer living, I wanted them to feel, or have some [inaudible] for any successes I had. Still. I'm thinking about going to graduate school and I think I would use McCort as my name.

*And do you think that...keeping your last name had any effects on your children?*

Not at all. Except they were confused when they found out that I did keep it and they laughed at me.

*Did you have any role models for making that decision?*

No because honestly I was raised in a very progressive, feminist household and it was not a discussion whether how that would affect feminism. It was a given that you would use your last name. So it wasn't [inaudible], my mother really had gotten past that bit and really, I thought, very progressively believed that it was a choice and that it was not a negative. It wasn't anti-feminist to keep your last name...to change your last name if you wanted to...I think my parenting was so progressive that they believed that you needed to do what best fit you.

*What were your hopes in choosing to keep your last name?*

[Laughs] That when I was on the Today Show being interviewed as Jo-Anna McCort, people would go, "Wait, isn't that Jo-Anna Fischman?" [Laughs]

*And has that worked?*

[Laughs] It hasn't worked for me yet. [Laughs] I'm still working on it.

[Laughs] It hasn't worked for me yet. [Laughs] I'm still working on it.

*Have there been any unforeseen consequences, other than the IRS situation?*

Um, no. I do think my older daughter was kind of confused by it and I sometimes have pangs because I gave my son my maiden name as his middle name and in Jewish superstition, you shouldn't share a name with any living close relative. So I get a little superstitious that I hope I haven't hurt him in any way by sharing that name with him while I'm still alive. That's crazy. I know.

*So there are times that you're called by your other name instead of your real last name?*

*What were your hopes in choosing to keep your last name?*

[Laughs] That when I was on the Today Show being interviewed as Jo-Anna McCort, people would go, "Wait, isn't that Jo-Anna Fischman?" [Laughs]

*And has that worked?*

My other name Fischman?

*Yeah.*

All the time. Far more often.

*...Would you make the same choice again?*

Yes.

*And was there any-[interrupted]*

Well, well, well. I might actually keep my last name now. Looking back, I don't think it would have hurt you guys if I did. I think it was just easier at the time to do it the way I did it.

*So if you were doing it again you would legally change it, you're saying?*

No the opposite. I think I would just be Jo-Anna McCort.

*Okay.*

It still makes me sad I don't identify as that anymore.

*Was there any practical reasoning for keeping McCort instead of Fischman? Like length of the name, pronunciation, or uniqueness?*

Yes. It's a much nicer sounding name than Fischman in my ears. And...I think it...flows. I think it's pretty with Jo-Anna. I think it's very, yeah, a little bit unique.

*And what...kinds reactions have you and your family gotten about your name?*

Reactions? I don't know what you mean really. Like...

*Like from people, like outside sources?*

Well, I think one thing you might be interested in; my friends who have kept their own last name are sometimes condescending to women who have used their husband's name. There's sort of a superiority that goes with it. That I also didn't, you know I don't do superiority.

*Why do you think that exists?*

I think that over intellectualized women think that they are superior and like to carry themselves in a more superior way and one of the ways that they outwardly do that is by changing their name. Not changing their name. And there are other things. You know, other markers that people put on themselves. It's like the outside of a book. You know, what do you want to read in this book? But I think there's also a lot tied to their parents', I don't know, I shouldn't judge them. I'm sorry, I think I went off.

*No, it's fine...How effective do you think your choice is in intervening with women being erased?  
Like with your-*

Raced?

*Erased.*

Oh you're saying some people feel like their previous life was erased when they changed their name?

*Yeah, like you were saying you were the last McCort.*

Yeah. Yeah, I mean. Are you talking about for me? Or for other people?

*For you.*

Ok, I never felt like I was going to be erased. And I still don't. I feel like I built a, I actually feel like I built a nice strong family unit by using Fischman. Although, I don't know. It's easier; it's easier so I don't feel erased. I think raising children makes you feel erased. Not was your name is. [Laughs] No I'm serious.

*...Ok, how meaningfully does a woman keeping her father's father's and so on name speak to feminist goals?*

Oh, that's an interesting question. I have never...I guess people could say it feels like an equalizer...I guess it's a neutralizer, keeping your father's father's name if your brother's keeping it, too. But-

*But why not your mother's mother's name?*

It would get so confusing wouldn't it. I guess you could do that. I...I'm confused now. This is too much brain function...I don't know, I can't answer...Can you restate the question?

*Yes. How meaningfully does a woman keeping the name on her father's side speak to feminist goals?*

I guess it doesn't speak to feminist goals. And I don't think that anybody really thought about that when they started doing-there were no feminist goals when people started doing that.

*...And what do you think the generation of children with hyphenated names should do as they marry and have children of their own?*

What do I think they should do?

*Yeah.*

I have to say the whole hyphenated thing bugs me a little. Only because it's confusing. But I have seen it done where both the parents hyphenated as well. For example, the Zinn-Rowthorns. Haley is also Zinn-Rowthorn and Perry is Zinn-Rowthorn and so are all the children. I suppose when they get married they can hyphenate and be like Zinn-Rowthorn-Bailey...I guess what I

think people do is they take the second name of those, which is usually the father's name. The mother's name usually comes first. So it is sort of still a patrilineal thing, isn't it?

*In that case, I guess so.*

So, that's what I've seen.

*Is there anything else you'd like to add about why you chose to keep your name or anything?*

I liked my name, I just liked it. And I thought my parents did a good job picking it...Will you keep your name?

*I don't know. Okay, thank you. [End]*