

Interviewee: Valerie Taylor (Kept her maiden name at marriage)

Interviewer: Jessica Higgins

[Intro and consent] *So can we just start with your last name story?* Sure! When I decided to get married, I decided... It didn't even really occur to me to change my last name. It was a time when a lot of women were not changing their last name - not by any means all. Many of my friends did change their name, but for me it just wasn't even... I just didn't even question it. I just wasn't planning to change my name.

*Ok. And could you clarify... So your last name is...* My last name is my father's last name. *And that's... Finocharo? Or are you...* My last name is Taylor. *Ok, you're Taylor, and then your husband is Finocharo. So when you guys, you know, have to do legal documentation or deal with the kids, you use his last name, right?* [Skype breaks up. Val calls me again, clarifies that we're back]

*But most of the time your family uses your husband's last name?* Yeah, the rest of them use my husband's last name. We actually... We use my last name on all of our bills and things like that, just so that my husband doesn't have to spell his name out every time he does anything. [Val points out that the video on Skype isn't working. We clarify that we can hear each other] And um, we use Finocharo, like if I'm calling the kids' doctor, something like that, I often go by Finocharo just to make it easier for them to connect me to whoever they're talking to.

*When you have to use Finocharo, or when people call you Mrs. Finocharo, like... How do you feel when people do that? Does it bother you?* Oh, I answer to either, it doesn't bother me a bit. It doesn't bother my husband when people call him Taylor either. *What effect has it had on your kids?* You know, I've never even talked to them about it! I don't... I'm not aware of it having an effect on them, although I'm sure that there was a period maybe when they were young teenagers that they might have been embarrassed by it, but neither of them said anything that I can remember.

*Just that the two of you had different last names? Right. When you wanted to keep your name, was there any importance of the uniqueness of it, or did it have any history, anything like that?* It wasn't really that, in fact, the name Valerie Taylor is about as anonymous as you can get. You can probably find thousands of us, and if I were Valerie Finocharo I'd be a lot easier to identify. So, you know, there are definite benefits to having an unusual last name. I'm pretty sure Jane Finocharo [her daughter] is the only one out there.

*Yeah, yeah [laughs]. When you made this decision were there people in your family... I know you said there were a lot of people doing it at the time, but was it specific people in your family, or specific friends that were doing it too? Keeping their last names?* No, in fact, I may have been the first one in my group of friends to keep my last name, and no one else in my family has, I don't think. I... I don't think I have any female relatives who kept their last names, that I can think of.

*Were they supportive of you, when you did it?* The only person who asked me about it was my cousin's husband, who suggested that some people hyphenated, and I was like, "Yeah, I know, some people do, but Taylor-Finocharo sounds like kind of a handful." [laughs]

*Would you make the same choice again?* Yeah, I guess I would, although I have to say that I have to put that in the context of the time. I think if I were a young woman getting married today, I might not. Because I don't think that there's as many... I don't know that you're making as much of a statement about who you are anymore as it was back then. Back then, you know, we were making a conscious statement. For young women these days I think probably the very minor disadvantages of not having the same name as the rest of your family probably made that not a choice that a lot of women probably are going to make.

*So your statement in choosing to keep your own last name was just that this is part of your identity and you just didn't want to lose that.* And it was the context of the times, like, you know in 1989, it meant something very much different than it does now, 25 years later.

*Just in terms of women being erased, do you think that choosing to keep your father's father's father's last name instead of just taking your husband's last name is that effective?* [laughs] No. [more laughter] I had decided to start following my matrilineal line back to Morgan, you know, five generations ago, which is about as far as we can take it... maybe it would mean something. I identify as being Welsh, even though I'm maybe 12% Welsh or something, but... If I were going to that, that's probably what I would do, head back towards Wales. [finish up and thank Val]