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## Interview with Judith Ann Dowty Pittard

Judith Ann Dowty Pittard  
*SC Mother of the Year 2007*

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**South Carolina Mother of the Year Award Oral History Archives**

**Interview Transcript**

Judith Ann Dowty Pittard

**Dr. Disney:** Good morning.

**Judith Ann Dowty Pittard:** Good morning.

**Dr. Disney:** My name is Dr. Jennifer Leigh Disney and I am honored to be here interviewing Judy Pittard, the 2007 South Carolina Mother of the Year. Judy, it's an honor to be with you today and we thank you for driving up from Charleston and giving us your time today.

**Judith Ann Dowty Pittard:** I'm glad to do it. Thank you for having us.

**Dr. Disney:** Thank you. Why don't you start by telling us when and where you were born and raised?

**Judith Ann Dowty Pittard:** I was born in July of 1948. I just had my 67<sup>th</sup> birthday. I was born in Albuquerque, New Mexico. My dad was stationed there with the United States Army and just happened to be there when I was born. I have an older brother who was quite mischievous and my mother has many stories about him as my mother was greatly pregnant with me – climbing on top of the adobe houses and her having to climb on a ladder to go get him; following his dad to work; being collected by the policemen and being taken to the police station and given ice cream. We weren't there very long, probably maybe a year or a little longer. Then we moved on to other places through the military. I am one of five children. Three of us were born fairly close together and then my parents had my younger sister when I was about twelve and then my younger brother when I was sixteen, so they kind of formed a little family unit although we are all very close now. They were the babies of the family when I was coming of age. It was a great sized family, even if it was kind of a surprise.

**Dr. Disney:** Is there anything else you would like to share about your family or your early childhood experiences?

**Judith Ann Dowty Pittard:** Because my father was in the military, we were transferred a fair amount. We didn't have a home until 1959, our own house. When my parents purchase that house, a very small and simple house, it was on two and a half acres of land. That was my father's dream – to have some property and his own big garden. He'd grown up in rural North Carolina part of the time and northern Virginia part of the time, and just always wanted to not really be a farmer, but have his own land to till and work. He was an enlisted man. He was Master Sergeant by the time he retired. When we moved around, some of the places we lived was Hawaii, which was great and that was when I was about seven years old, and I remember quite well that experience. One of the things I remember from when we lived there was that other people would take trips, field trips, with their classes to Washington D.C., but we went to pineapple plantations and sugar cane plantations. They would give out the little samples at the different places and of course we sampled the raw sugar at the sugar cane as well as the refined

sugar, but they also gave little packets out, brochures, and little things we could take home. Subsequently, when we came back to the States and people had found out we lived in another place that was interesting. They'd always ask to tell them about Hawaii and I'd whip out my little packages of sugar and show them off to the class and tell them about the volcanoes that erupted. We had an eight millimeter movie of the volcano eruption and I'd take that into class and everyone was so impressed by it.

**Dr. Disney:** So you've lived in a lot of diverse places?

**Judith Ann Dowty Pittard:** Yes. When I was in high school, we moved to Frankfurt, Germany. That was right after my sophomore year, so I spend my junior and senior year in Frankfurt. It was a wonderful experience. When my dad first got the assignment, I was not happy about it. I was in tenth grade and I was involved with my friends. I pretty much just told my dad, "If you want to move there or if the army wants to move you, you can move, but I'm not going to move." My father shook his head and just said, "Oh yes, you will." Of course, we packed up and moved there when the time was right. It turned out to be the best experience, in terms of influences of my life. It broadened my range because we had been a lucky military family, in that our assignments had been a little more lengthy. Many families moved every two years, and we had been on our Virginia assignment for seven or eight years at that point. It was enough to get your feet planted, unfortunately. It's better if you move those two years and just get used to the routine and meeting the new people and making yourself do that. Plus, those years that your friendships are so close in high school are so much more important to you than your family. But we learned to ski in Switzerland. I went to Spain. We traveled all around Germany. I had the opportunity to go to Dachau, and of course this was in 1966 and it was somewhat set up like a museum, but it was still a much more just a solemn place to go. It was a very moving experience. We also went to Berlin when it was still under communist rule. You'd go in through Checkpoint Charlie and just have that feeling of being watched and having to be very careful. You had to pull the shades down on the windows; you couldn't take pictures – a very intimidating situation. So when the wall came down, we had sent my husband's parents on a trip with the other siblings of the family, they brought us back pieces of the Berlin Wall because it had just been taken down not too long before they got there. I kind of saw full circle of that experience.

**Dr. Disney:** What a diverse set of national and international experiences.

**Judith Ann Dowty Pittard:** While we were in Germany, the real blessing of that assignment was that my mother is English and was born and raised there and met my father during World War II. She was in the Women's Land Army at the time and her story was fascinating. I wish you had a way to take her story in too because she has an entirely different perspective having grown up English and been through the war as an English person and experienced what they did over a very long period of time. She met and married my father when he was stationed there before D-Day. It is kind of a funny story – she was invited by a friend to go to a dance that would be for the G.I.'s and she didn't want to go. She was not interested in meeting an American and didn't have a very high opinion of them, actually. Her friend said she had to go so her friend could meet an American and get married to him. My mother reluctantly went and she met my father, ended up marrying him. Her friend did not end up meeting an American guy, but ended up meeting an English man and got to stay in England for the rest of her life. My mother was always just a little bit annoyed about that because she didn't really want to leave her home country, but I always said, "Well, look mom," and she was always glad she had this family and

where she was, but it was hard for her to leave her family. When we were in Germany, we had the chance to reunite with her family. We got to see the country, enjoy that, and enjoy the experience of knowing where she had grown up. To this day, I love to go there and feel very connected to England.

**Dr. Disney:** So Germany was your junior and senior year of high school and you had the chance to meet your mother's side of the family as well. What happened when you came back to the States after high school?

**Judith Ann Dowty Pittard:** I had decided when I was young, actually when we were living in Hawaii I had my appendix taken out and was hospitalized, but when I was in the hospital I decided that I wanted to become a nurse. That was kind of my goal from that point on. I went to nursing school and started out at RPI, which is in Richmond, Virginia and is now PCU. After two years, you were allowed to transfer to the University of Virginia to their school of nursing. Virginia was not co-ed at the time; in fact the class that entered in 1969 was the first co-ed class at UVA, except for professor's daughters who could enter as undergraduates. Otherwise, there were no other women, except in the nursing school, but you only entered as a junior.

**Dr. Disney:** When did you enter?

**Judith Ann Dowty Pittard:** I entered in 1968, so we saw all of that happening. That was a very unique experience. The men on campus were not very receptive to women invading their very traditional campus. Students still wore coats and ties to class and they always went away to find their dates at all of the girls' colleges that were in Virginia at the time. It's not that they didn't date the nursing students, but they preferred not to date them. That was one of those experiences and I happened to live through that change at UVA. We entered the nursing program through a short summer session that taught you all the basics – how to make a bed, change a bed pan, give shots; we learned a lot about the pharmacology, medications, etcetera. Then after that short summer session, you entered and started your classes and your clinical rotations at the beginning of your junior year. I graduated in 1970 from UVA and formed some wonderful friendships among the nursing students, I think, because we lived together but also worked together and had fun together. It was like being in a dorm with about 200 students. We were pretty close knit and I still get together sometimes with that core group of friends that I made. We meet every year and have our little reunion. The group has met every year since.

**Dr. Disney:** What kind of activities did you get involved in after you graduated from UVA, in terms of family, community, further education, meeting your husband and all those kinds of things?

**Judith Ann Dowty Pittard:** I met my husband the spring of my senior year. It was a blind date arranged by a classmate of mine who was a friend of his. It is a funny story because I had no interest in going on a blind date and neither did he, but this girl kept bugging us. I was in the library trying to study and she kept telling me I had to go out with him and I finally told her I'd go if she left me alone, even if I didn't want to. So then she had to go and convince my husband Bill to go out with me because she hadn't asked him yet. He immediately said, "No, I'm not going!" and she told him he had to since I already agreed to it. That was kind of the way it was. But we went out and he was nice, but I still wasn't particularly interested. I had made plans to move to Colorado, in Denver, after graduation. I was going to take my nursing exam there and

then start working there and just enjoy being in Colorado. I always wanted to go there and live there. He was like, "Stay, we just met each other," and I said nope, I'm going to Colorado. He wasn't real happy with that decision, but I packed my bags and I went out there. I went by myself, but I did know a family that my brother had met out there with a group called "Young Life," which was an international non-denominational Christian group. I had an experience with them in Germany and that's where I started my faith journey through their organization. People would always ask if I was a Christian and I would casually say, "I guess so," and they would say, "If you're a Christian, you know it and you need to decide if you are or not," so I say, "Oh, I guess I should better decide." The group itself was very influential in my life, so I was very glad to volunteer for them for a year.

I worked in pediatrics at the University of Colorado hospital. I wanted to work just a clinical job, and this will sound unusual today, but it's such a popular hospital to work at for young graduates and people who are interested in really good health care in a medical center that you were kind of on a waiting list to get on one of the regular floors. I worked in a children's research unit instead. It was a very small unit, just an eight bed unit. It was a kind of lonely job because you were just one nurse and you had your patients, so there wasn't the interaction you get on a regular nursing floor. I think that was a disadvantage for me, but I learned so much in the process about the up and coming way of doing things. They were doing kidney transplants on a regular basis on children and they were doing liver transplants. I got exposed to an area that I would have not seen otherwise. We had a lot of long-term contact with our patients, who would come in for our studies. Especially the transplant kids because they were in a lot longer in our unit.

I came home at Christmas and went out with my future husband again. We talked and he told me he really wanted to marry me, but I was like, "You don't even know me." He asked me to please come back and it was a pretty hard decision for me, not that I wasn't interested in him because I was. I wouldn't have said I'd come back if I wasn't, but I loved Colorado. I loved the chance to kind of grow up and have my first a shared house apartment situation and being in charge of making meals and buying groceries and paying my own bills. It was all of the things you have to learn and I enjoy that. I could ski. Anyway, I ended up coming back to Virginia and we got married. I went right to work as a pediatric nurse on a regular floor. My husband was a fourth year medical student at the time. That was a good year to get married because it was the only year for many that he was at home on a regular schedule and wasn't exhausted. The next year was the internship year and I would put food out in front of him and he would literally fall asleep at the table. His head would just knock something over and I would just put him to bed.

**Dr. Disney:** What kind of medicine does he do?

**Judith Ann Dowty Pittard:** He did neonatology so he was working with all of the premature babies, an area that I was never particularly interested in. I wanted patients I could talk to and I never had a keen interest in children's medicine. I was on a unit in Charlottesville, Virginia, where we married and spent our first couple of years, and it was past infancy discharge but before school age. I was always attracted to the children who had cancer and I think it was because they were a little longer term on the unit, so I was able to build relationships with them and their parents.

**Dr. Disney:** What amazing work you both have done – neonatal care, children with cancer. That’s incredibly difficult and I know it’s emotionally taxing work.

**Judith Ann Dowty Pittard:** It is. I stayed in nursing until we started our family and I just became a full-time mom. We had a total of five children. We had identical twin daughters who were born second – first was my son Bill, and then my twin daughters, Emily and Ann. Ann developed cancer when she was about eighteen months and died – she had neuroblastoma and at the time they really couldn’t do anything to help you. I thought it was ironic because those were the children that I was so drawn to and in a way I had an inkling about how hard it was going to be. It did help me prepare in a very small way.

We had our two girls, and our son Bill. The three children and my husband and I had some very happy times together. It was very special to have twins and go through that experience together. After Ann passed away, we moved into a new neighborhood because we had been in a small little house. It was a two bedroom and everyone was sort of on top of each other. We moved into this great neighborhood and made the most supportive friends. They were our baby sitters, our best friends, and the people we did block parties with. We had moved on to Ohio for part of my husband’s training in neonatology. We made this entirely big move when our oldest son was five weeks old. It was far away from our family and there was no one that we knew. That was a big adventure since my husband, at that point, was working all the time. We had a great church there. Once we moved into this neighborhood that had all the young families and all the great support, we ended up feeling at home and stayed there until 1985. Then we moved to Charleston in 1985. But before moved, we had two other children – two boys, Andrew, who lives in Columbia now, and our youngest son Benjamin, who is currently in Atlanta, but is getting ready to move to West Palm Beach, Florida for a job.

**Dr. Disney:** Wow. What do Bill and Emily do?

**Judith Ann Dowty Pittard:** My son Bill is a lawyer and he works for the United States House of Representatives as legal counsel for them. It is a job that he really enjoys. The thing that he enjoys most is that every day is something new. It can be something very politically oriented, like if someone wanted to sue someone else. It can be some legal matter to protect the House of Representatives or individuals within the job description. They don’t do anything personal, but if it’s in the job description, then that’s where the legal counsel comes in. They also deal with things like rental disputes within the Capitol Building. It can be little things like that or all the way up to current issues. He lives in Washington, D.C. with his wife and three children. They love it and I don’t think they’ll ever live D.C. We love it because we get to go up there and see and enjoy the city and do that as much as we can.

My daughter Emily has four children. She is married and her husband’s a lawyer in Charleston. She graduated with a degree in public relations and communication from Miami University in Ohio. She wanted to go “home” to Ohio, so that’s where she went to school. Now, she teaches music at a preschool and has gotten her real estate license within the last year, so she’s been doing that. She volunteers in 100 different places and runs her children just like I did.

**Dr. Disney:** That’s exactly what I was going to ask you about. How were you able to do it? With such a high pressure job, raising five children and dealing with the trauma at work and at home with the loss of a child. Your husband had a high pressure job and we all know what the medical

profession demands. How were you able to balance all that you were doing in the home and outside of the home, in terms of work, family, and community?

**Judith Ann Dowty Pittard:** Like I said, I did not work from the time our oldest son was born until the time our youngest son went into elementary school. I took a long period of time off – almost eighteen years. I was very fortunate. My husband had a salary that could support us. We didn't do any fancy vacations. All of our children went to private schools, so all of our money went to their educational process. We had a place in the mountains and that was our retreat. When I say we had a place in the mountains, I mean a little, tiny place – two bedrooms and everyone slept in one bedroom when we went up there. That was one of the ways we coped, that place. There was no phone, so when my husband went there, he was all ours. It was probably the only place he really relaxed and until this day, that's the best place for him to be. He changes personalities, almost, when he's away.

I didn't have the personal work stress, but my husband wasn't around a whole lot. He was home when he could be, but he was on call. He was up all night and sometimes stays through the next day until whenever he finished. He would come home and would be exhausted and not really good for anything. But he played with the kids. He played football in the front yard with him. We went apple picking and did all the family type things, but we would always have to preface everything with "your dad's on call and I can't promise he's going to be there," for whatever event it was. Family was important to him and he made all the effort he could, but his job just required a lot. He was also interested in research, so if he wasn't doing the clinical aspect of his job, then he was involved in research.

**Dr. Disney:** That's quite a commitment. I think you just shared beautifully how difficult it can be for people in the medical profession to be committed to their jobs and their families.

**Judith Ann Dowty Pittard:** I volunteered, usually with things at school. I didn't do a whole lot on the outside and quite honestly, I was kind of the one who held everything together. I volunteered at church and taught Sunday school and bible study groups. Most of the activities I was involved in were either in the church or scouting. I was a Scout leader, a Den Mother, a Brownie leader. We always had a group of kids at the house doing something. We had a real good and supportive neighborhood. Everyone pitched in and worked together. Kids would just come to one house or the other. So one time you'd just have all of them at your house and on another snowy day, they'd be down the block at someone else's house. There was a lot of indoor time in Cleveland. Winter lasted forever and it snowed every day. You got Cabin Fever pretty quickly. My oldest two children are avid readers to this day because that's where they spent their formative years and that was one of our biggest activities. We read all the time and I read to them all the time. We took long car trips from Cleveland down to Virginia where our families lived and we'd read books the whole way there and the whole way back. We listened to things on the way, but we were mostly just reading books.

We moved to South Carolina when the oldest of the younger two was five and the youngest was two and a half. I used to laugh because it was never sunny in Cleveland and the weather is never particularly good, except for a short period in the summer, so when we first moved to Charleston I'd say, "Oh the sun's out. You have to play outside today." They'd all go out and about three months into the time we lived there, they'd say, "Mom, it's sunny every day. Do we have to go outside every day?" and I'd say, "Yes! You don't want to miss any sun." They

still enjoyed that opportunity, but consequently, they didn't read as much because they were able to be outside so much more.

**Dr. Disney:** Let me ask you this. What does motherhood mean to you?

**Judith Ann Dowty Pittard:** Well, I've thought about that a lot. For me it means that your children are really your priority. It changes your focus from what you want to do to what's best for your children and family. I don't mean to the point of totally neglecting your own personal needs, but it was far more important for me to make sure that they had good meals and that they had playmates and activities that were going to stimulate them mentally and spiritually. Like I said, we read all the time. We would bring our little red wagon to the library when they had to be pulled. But it was just exposure to those things. As they grew up, I tried to expose them to what the culture was that their family came from, knowing their relatives in North Carolina and Virginia, which was where most of their family was from. Each of my children went to England with my mom at some particular time in their life, usually when they were about eleven. So this is how the trip that I just took came about. I just took my three oldest grandchildren, one twelve and half and two almost eleven year olds, to England with me so they could see how it is in another place; where their grandmother's home and family was; and just to be exposed to the people that are meaningful to her in her life. I felt, even early on, that I wanted my children to know that.

A funny story: when my oldest son was very young we would take walks in the neighborhood. I would tell him that we've really got to take care of the Earth; we have to treat it well. I would say to him, "Don't ever throw trash down, but if you see some you can pick it up and throw it away. If it's really gross, I don't want you to touch it, but if it's paper or whatever..." So we're walking along and he goes, "Mommy, there's some trash," and I told him he could go get it. It was in another yard and he walked back and brought over a five dollar bill that someone had dropped, but we couldn't find anyone around. He said, "It's money!" and I said, "Yep, what a good idea it is to pick up trash!" It went right into his piggy bank and he kept it for a really long time. But of all of my children, he is the one who is most passionate about the environment now. I think it started with those early years of exposing him to what I felt, as a mother and a citizen, was important.

**Dr. Disney:** That's beautiful. I have a five year old and when we walk, I say the exact same thing.

**Judith Ann Dowty Pittard:** Someone's got to teach them, though. They're not going to learn if you don't encourage the anti-litter campaign.

We also talked a lot and I think that's another important thing that motherhood should include if it doesn't – just about thinking and their ideas about science, or ideas about their faith. Faith is very important to me and I've really tried to pass that on. It's difficult because your children don't always make the same choices you do in that regard and having to learn to be tolerant and not say too much, but say enough. A mother has to take those things into consideration – to let them be themselves and who they are. Each one of our children is very different. They have different interests and things that they want to pursue and encouraging those areas is another part of motherhood that's real important to me.

**Dr. Disney:** What did it mean to you to be named the South Carolina Mother of the Year in 2007?

**Judith Ann Dowty Pittard:** It just completely, as far as I'm concerned, blew me away. Sometime before I knew my name had been submitted because I knew you had to say it's okay. I knew it was a friend who recommended my name, but I kind of dismissed it once she mentioned it because I think it'd been about a year before. It just totally came out of the blue. It was New Years' Day and we were sitting around the breakfast table – my husband, my youngest son, and I. The phone rings and it's Shirley saying, "I want you to know that the committee's met and has selected you to be the nominee for the year. Would you accept the nomination?" and I was just like, "What?! What are you talking about?" It was just a lot of complete surprise and not really knowing what was involved and what it meant, but it was also exciting and it was an honor. One of my first thoughts was my mother being English and one of the things Shirley had told me about was that they do a tea at the Governor's Mansion every year. My first thought was that my mother would love to come to a tea at the Governor's Mansion! How could I not accept? That was kind of my first reaction. It would be really awesome for my mother to have that experience. And then, I admit and have to laugh, I thought obviously they didn't ask the kids. Each of the kids pretty much reacted in the same way, knowing that I would understand where they were coming from. They were like, "Well no one asked us, Mom." I think my husband was almost more excited than I was. He was just so pleased that I was being honored. I found it was very difficult to tell people and I felt like it was kind of like bragging. It was like, how do you tell people you've been honored in this way? And you've got to tell people because you're going to ask them to the tea, after all. The first people we told, obviously, were our children and they were all like, "Congratulations, Mom. That's great. But what does that mean? What's all involved in that? Do we have to do anything?" After that, the rest of my family found out because I called my mom and they all called and they were all excited. There was a lot of pride in it, but more just amazement. I kept thinking that there were so many people who would be more deserving that maybe accomplished more or contributed more, but it was nonetheless an honor.

Then there were all the things that were involved in accepting it – the interview with the newspaper, the television came to the announcement. There was a lot of behind the scene things and we had to write several essays and a three minute speech. At the time, they were doing quilts for the babies and each of the mothers was asked to bring a quilt. I'm a quilter, but I'm not a fast quilter and this was about a three month period of time to have the quilt done. They were just baby quilts, so it wasn't a huge project, but in the mean time I was working, I had some volunteer activities, all of the things they were asking us to do, and I had two granddaughters born in that period of time, which I tried to be involved with as much as I could be. I was still working on my quilt when it went to the convention – I was finishing up the bonding for it as I sat there. When I got there I just assumed, as a quilter, that people made the quilts that they brought, but most people didn't even make their own. It didn't bother me because there was a joy in making it and I enjoyed it, but boy it would have taken a lot more pressure off me if I had gone out and bought one.

The tea was just a wonderful, wonderful experience. My mother was there, and in fact, almost all of my family came. I have four sisters and brothers and they came with their families and their children. My sister has a very large family and a large number of her children came. My two baby granddaughters were there, along with my three other grandchildren. A sweet

memory of the tea is Vivian, who is almost eleven, and Liza, who is almost eleven, would stand at the beautifully set table with all of those wonderful little finger foods. They stood at the strawberry and fruit tray and just ate them. They didn't even move and their beautiful little dresses they were wearing all had strawberries. It was just sweet and for me, that is one of my happy memories. A lot of people from our church came because the church sponsored me. Like I said, I was working at the time and people from work sent cards and flowers. So did high school friends and college friends. It was like a reunion and it was just one of those happy occasions you had.

**Dr. Disney:** I want to ask you some broader questions about women and mothers in society, and that kind of thing. Do you think women's work and women's roles as mothers are adequately recognized by society?

**Judith Ann Dowty Pittard:** I think it may be turning around some. There was a period of time when – I guess at the time when my younger two boys came along, which would be 1980 and 1983 – I really felt like motherhood and your role as a mother was kind of discounted and considered not as important as working, having a job, bringing in income, and contributing in that way. I think it's coming around a little bit. I think there is a lot more work to be done from the standpoint of if you choose to work and be a mother. Through those years you carry a big burden. Usually your work doesn't recognize that your family responsibilities are ongoing, but those deadlines at work – they expect those to be met and then sometimes your family gets the short end of the stick as far as individual time with children. I think it's kind of like, "Alright, everyone, grab your own food or whatever," and I think it is a real hard issue to face. I have seen a little bit of a change. My daughter has stayed home with her children and both of my sons' wives have stayed home with their children. It's not that they have exceedingly high paying jobs – they certainly make more than the average – but their wives seem comfortable doing that and don't feel pressure to work outside of the home during the years that their children are small. That I feel is different than a period of time when you had your baby and then went back to work immediately.

**Dr. Disney:** There seems to be more and more pressure for two income earning families in households and that seems to make it even harder for young women and mothers to balance work inside and outside the home.

**Judith Ann Dowty Pittard:** I still think, like I said, that there's a lot more that needs to be done – family leave, fairness of pay for women doing the same job that a man does. All of that is certainly something that continues to need to be addressed.

**Dr. Disney:** You've already started answering my next question, which is: what do you think are the most important issues facing women today?

**Judith Ann Dowty Pittard:** For me personally, it is balancing that time. I had the privilege and pleasure of being available for everything for my kids. Were there times when they drove me crazy? Yes there were. I remember one night getting in my car when the girls were little and Bill was little. My husband came home and I told him, "I'm leaving and I'm not coming back until they're asleep," and he asked where I was going and I told him, "I don't know. I'm just getting in the car and driving around and going nowhere, but I'm not coming back until they're asleep." There are moments like that in motherhood that make you feel like you just can't do it anymore.

But for the most part, I think being there for all of those things are a big challenge for women. We are being pulled in so many different directions. The pay issue is one. For me, personally, I feel that one of the big issues is knowing what's important to you and being able to communicate that to your family whether it's your beliefs, morals, standards or whether it's that you're passionate about the environment or passionate about healthcare or the rights of the underprivileged. There's so many issues, but you need to be able to express that those are important to you so that your children do know where you come from and give them an understanding of where they can be passionate. It doesn't have to be where you are, but that they can be passionate for an issue and follow through on that. My faith, as I've mentioned, is very important to me. I think that we often don't know enough about our own faith to be able to express it to others, whether it's our children or not. Being knowledgeable about that and being able to communicate and being able to be a good listener through those years with your children so that you're not just saying, "Yeah, yeah, uh huh," but really taking in what they're saying and understanding what it means is important. I see that with my grandchildren and I just want to pull them over and tell them to just talk to me. They're so busy and sometimes don't talk to you enough. I'm starting to sound like a grandmother.

**Dr. Disney:** What does feminism mean to you?

Judith Ann Dowty Pittard: I grew up in the bra-burning generation; you know the people who get out there and wave and burn their bras. I was never that kind of feminist or an aggressive feminist where there was a lot of harshness or anything. Standing up for what you know is right personally, but also what you've been taught through your faith or bringing up. Being willing to say, "This isn't right and I'm not going to continue to let it happen." You can call it feminism or you can call it good citizenship. I see women having more and more of a role in making big decisions and I think that is probably what the country needs because I haven't seen it going in a very good direction sometimes. I think women have so much potential and they have so much insight in things that men don't. It doesn't mean to discard a man's place or his views, but they have a different perspective. Because of that, the world would work a lot better if we took into consideration both points of view and do it regularly and not because it's required by law or we want to pacify.

**Dr. Disney:** That's very well said. Do you consider yourself a feminist, given that framing and your own definition?

**Judith Ann Dowty Pittard:** Yes. I am not really a crusader in a lot of ways and I think maybe more so the older I get. I was too busy when I was younger, you know, doing all the things required through those years. I am definitely more outspoken than I used to be and if I have a passion, I can usually make someone listen. What I am really pleased with is that I see my children not afraid to have opinions about things and I, as a mother, have encouraged that without being aggressive about it. If you see something that's not right, you have to say something about it and be honest with your opinions.

**Dr. Disney:** It sounds like you've been a great mother and role model, and you had a great mother and role model, and that you were an excellent choice for the 2007 South Carolina Mother of the Year award.

**Judith Ann Dowty Pittard:** Thank you very much. I still feel like it could have been anybody, you know, someone else could have fulfilled that role. But it was an honor and I met some very fine and interesting people through the experience. It would just amaze me when we come to the yearly meetings and tea what people had done and accomplished and where they had been and what they had worked through in their own lives. It's inspiring.

**Dr. Disney:** It is very inspiring. You can say that having met so many mothers and members of the association and selection committee that it's just an amazing group of women. Do you have any questions for us or any other comments or anything else you'd like to share?

**Judith Ann Dowty Pittard:** No except, I really wish my mom could have her oral history done if you have any leads on that.

**Dr. Disney:** We need to get her in here; we'll see what we can do.

**Judith Ann Dowty Pittard:** She has such an amazing story on her own. She has five children and twenty six grandchildren and thirty five greatgrandchildren and has influenced each one of them in a positive way. I would love for her to do her story. She's 91. She's in Charleston and in pretty good health and mentally, she's just as sharp.

**Dr. Disney:** This interview and you talking about your mother is just a testament to why oral histories are so important. I am so grateful to have been brought into this project by Martha Cranford and Shirley Fishburne. I am so glad that these videos will be made available through the Louise Pettus Archives at Winthrop University, accessible by family members, friends, and colleagues to see. We'll talk to Shirley and Martha and see if we can get your mom involved somehow.

**Judith Ann Dowty Pittard:** I would just like her story recorded. She's written some of it down and we know it, but in another generation it will get lost. The other thing is – I encourage my husband to answer all of the first questions and to write his own life history, so to speak. I found it so good for me just to put the things down in writing, so he said he would do that.

**Dr. Disney:** Interviewing the husband of the mother of the year or the mother of the mother of the year – we know that mothering and parenting is a ripple effect and it's a web of connection that we're learning through you. It's nice to hear that these questions are carrying on through other people's experiences.

**Judith Ann Dowty Pittard:** I just feel like if you write them down and someone has access to them, then they're there. It's permanent. He is very interested in family history and etcetera, so he was right on to it.

**Dr. Disney:** We'll have these transcripts available, as well. We're having these transcribed, so I agree with you that a written record is very important. Thank you so much, Judy Pittard, 2007 South Carolina Mother of the Year. We really appreciate your time.

**Judith Ann Dowty Pittard:** Thank you very much; this has been fun.

**Dr. Disney:** So tell us about your children.

**Judith Ann Dowty Pittard:** I have four children – an oldest son, Bill; then my daughter, Emily; then a third son, Andrew; and a fourth son, Benjamin. I have talked briefly about Bill and Emily and I'll continue with Andrew. He's was born in 1980 and a very active, into everything child. We always had to find lots to keep him busy. He was always into bugs and we never knew what was going to be in his pockets. I was always worried to put my hand in there when I was doing laundry. He went on to be very interested in science and went on to study medicine after graduating from Wake Forest for undergraduate. He went to MUSC for medical school and then Vanderbilt University for his pediatric training. He's a pediatrician now, currently working in Summerville, South Carolina, but will be moving to Columbia for his practice there, starting in November. He'll be with a group starting a new office, but he'll be in charge. He has one daughter, who is six, and is the love of his life. He does many fun things with children, in general. It was a good career choice for him to do pediatrics. He relates very well with children, and in fact, sometimes I think he's the biggest kid we have. When we were recently in our cabin in Virginia, we went on all of these hikes, and he was at the top of the tree, or the top of the mountain asking them all to come join him at the top. Of course they eagerly did that. He's our big adventurer.

Our youngest son, Ben, was born in 1983. He was big from the very beginning. He was eight pounds when he was born. All my other children were in the six pound range, but he came out the big guy. He was strong from the get-go and very athletic. He spent almost every waking moment playing some sort of sport almost from his youngest age because of his older siblings all the way through high school and college. He got a lot of awards and accolades for sports. He ended up playing everything from baseball, to football, to basketball, to rugby, to swimming and loved all of those things. When he was in high school, he decided he wanted to go into the Naval Academy. He went there and played on the rugby team there and was all-American. While he was in the Naval Academy, his main goal was to get into the SEAL program and he achieved that. He went into the SEALs, went through all of the training, and had two deployments in Iraq. He came home and then had a family-friendly tour of duty because he married right before he went to Iraq for the second time. The family-friendly tour was in Guam, so he and his wife had a wonderful vacation, as they put it, for two years. It was good for their marriage and good for them and a good post-Iraq deployment, which was pretty intense. He was there during the voting time in Mosul when they were trying to get the elections set up so there were a lot of threats against the voting process and also against any of the people that were involved in that. One he got to Guam, though, he decided he did not want to make the SEALs his long-term career. He elected to get out of the Navy and went to graduate school for business at Wharton and got his MBA. When he graduated, he took a job for Goldman-Sachs for a couple of years and has just recently taken a job in Florida for a new company. He will be one of the senior managers and working his way into other positions as time goes on. He is the father of three children. They've all come bang, bang, and bang. His daughter is four; a son who is two; and another son who will be one next month.

Each of the kids is very excited and interested to spend time together as a family and with their siblings. I don't if I shared this before, but my oldest son kind of led the pack on that. He kept saying we've got to get together, when are we going to get together, and kind of brought the others along. He didn't let them fade on to the periphery. We do try to get together about twice a

year as an entire family. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. It's great when all of those cousins get together and siblings get together.

**Dr. Disney:** That's so important. We're trying to do that in my family as well and I know how difficult it can be to juggle that.

**Judith Ann Dowty Pittard:** It is. And now that the children are getting to be school aged, it's even harder because they have activities they want to do, the grandchildren, and of course the parents are going to be there for that, which you want. But that's our kids!

**Dr. Disney:** I knew you had a son that was a Navy SEAL and I wanted to ask you about that so I'm really glad that you talked about that. That's such a dangerous and important and challenging work. We're glad that he's still with us. You must be so proud of him and, of course, all of your children.

**Judith Ann Dowty Pittard:** Ben always had the desire to do the hardest thing when it came to anything physical. He was gung-ho to be the first one out there to do the work and to volunteer – all of that. It went along with his personality, but I also think it was different than what he imagined when he got into it – maybe more difficult emotionally than he anticipated. It's a strain and a stress to be in that position.

**Dr. Disney:** And to go on and have a second career after that, I think, is very good for the soul. I'm glad that he's able to be successful and choose a path that, as you said, would be less emotionally taxing and safer. Is there anything else you would like to share with us Judy?

**Judith Ann Dowty Pittard:** No; just that this has been a wonderful experience and I am so delighted that my mom's going to have her chance because she has a great story.

**Dr. Disney:** We are very excited. This is the first time we'll be able to interview a mother of the mother of the year and see where you learned some of your tricks and trades. We want to thank Judy Pittard, the 2007 South Carolina Mother of the Year. Thank you again and we look forward to speaking with your mom.