Ann Cramer: Hi, I'm Ann Cramer. Recently retired from the IBM corporation after over four decades. Retiring as the executive for IBM's corporate citizenship in the Americas. Currently having a ball as a senior consultant at Coxe, Curry, & Associates.

I always love to start, when you think about the who am I and how we be, or we live, as being first, it's the amazing blessing that I've always had a faith. I never had to question the who I am, what do I believe in, it was always a part of who I am.

Consequently, one of the stories that I love to tell, even from the first grade or the second grade when I was elected in the first grade to be the student government representative, is that even from then there was a sensitivity of either I could say I feel so inadequate, therefore I had to get out of myself to be listening with and being with others. Even at 12, when we were going through confirmation and I realized, this was the Episcopal church where we'd been learning our catechism, and that the law was that we were asked to love others as we love God and ourselves. Consequently, and to think of a vision statement even then, for me, was that what I would walk towards, or have as that north star, or vision, or expectancy, that I wanted to be a part of a world in which every child, every child could grow up to be an interdependent contributing citizen.

Those have lots of inferences, but that helped both how and where I walked, with whom I worked, family organizations that were all sort of creating to that woven tapestry of getting to that north star. Even when we were going through our high school years, and people were questioning their faith, I always think that I had the faith of a child. That I would just keep walking, keep listening, and it came out of again, and it may have been who we were as women at the time, but that sense of we can say inadequacy or never enough, but also the listening to, being involved with, having the ability to be the servant or the service person. I was always the chaplain or the service leader, the head cheerleader, often the president because I could be organized. The math part of me gave me a sense of very practical problem solving solutions. The essence was that element of faith.

For many years, I still claim that I really understood what grace was, by the family in which I had the privilege of being. That I could have a tantrum, or tell mamma or daddy that I hate you and go close the door. But that I knew I would still be loved, in spite of the who I am or what I did, that I would still be loved. Which was that grace statement of God would love me no matter where, and evidenced by mamma and daddy. Also just having that gift of having resources, but in fact because daddy was the head of the trust department at Florida Bank, we were always ... Had to pay cash, never spent more than you had. Therefore we were the last people on the block to get a TV. It was really fun.

We weren't poor, but you would think you were always passing by because we were living so wonderfully frugally. In that process, it gave us a sense of some of the groundedness, and staying in the same community forever and ever. Going from first grade, pre-k through to high school with the same group of friends. Steadiness, consistency, continuity, grace, the underpinning of love. Even in high school, I was the one, just because I was the friendliness, the miss ideal, the cheerleader, I was smart. I was the fifth person in a class of 600 in our rankings.

I was also the one who would speak to everyone in the hall and know everybody, from the person that I didn't grow up to, to the newest person, to the oldest person. The whole idea that everybody, I always love us. Everybody got dressed the same. It didn't matter who you were or what you did. What position you had. You were still a child of God.

It's in that kind of understanding from the beginning, it was a from the beginning, that became the under girding of the who am I, how I serve, how I live. Even I can remember, and this was so fascinating, when I went to IBM, 1966, we all went to classes. I'm a math major. It was fabulous, all the people who've influenced me like the math teachers in high school, and the head of the math department at Salem, which is where I went, Salem College, a college for women. That's a whole lot of stories, the stories of like I was the freshman class president because I remembered everybody's name in my class. It wasn't because I just cared, I wanted to know who you were, and what your name was. I knew everybody's name.

The head of the math department, at the time you had three choices, you would be a teacher, or a nurse, or get married after you graduated. That was it. I knew I didn't have the patience to be a teacher, I didn't have the patience or the nurturing, really, to be a nurse, and I didn't have a ring. What was I going to do? It was fabulous, because the head of the math department, Mr. Curly, whom actually Jeff, my husband, went up and met at Salem one time when he was driving through Winston Salem, but he said, "Well, you know, this company IBM ..." which of course, I didn't know how to spell IBM. "... Is hiring."

In January of my senior year, I got an interview in Poughkeepsie. Here is this southern girl, Jacksonville Florida, going to Poughkeepsie in January. They were way east on the timezone. At 4:00, it was pitch dark, freezing cold, bone cold, but I went to my little interview and got three job offers from IBM. One to be a software developer in Poughkeepsie. At the time they were growing the research triangle park in Raleigh. Or to be a software designer in Raleigh. Or, to be a systems engineer in Jacksonville, which was where I grew up.

I took the systems engineer because that was the technical arm to the sales team, in the branch, in the field, which was perfect. I literally went to Jacksonville as a systems engineer. The in the first summer, in June of that year, we went to Newark New Jersey in 1966 and then '67. The year of race riots and tensions. Here I am, my little white Anglo-Saxon Protestant self. Didn't know many Catholics. Definitely didn't know many Jewish people. Definitely didn't know many African Americans, other than those who are working within the context of our families. I go to this Newark. I was so ... again, knowing that everybody is just a child of God, we had these most brilliant African American IBMers who were teaching our class. Every morning I would walk into Able Delicatessen because our hotel was on the downtown corridor of Newark, and then our office would just walk and then we'd go into Able's. Mr. Able, every morning would said, "Hello Florida Sunshine." He'd have a glass of orange juice. He said, "I think I'll start serving grits instead of hash browns." Literally, you think, "Mr. Able, everyday, hello Florida Sunshine."

One day, heat of the summer, very tense situation in Newark. I dropped my contact lens out. I was walking along the sidewalk in Newark, New Jersey in front of the YMCA, which was between the IBM office and the hotel. I'm on my little hands and knees, out come moms and dads picking up their children at the end of the day from the Summer Y Program, construction workers with there lunch pales and everybody else, and they were on their hands and knees with me. I thought, "This is so amazing." I was meeting people who are so different. In that summer, a friend of mine was at the beach at Bay head, New Jersey. I couldn't imagine you had to have a key to get on the beach. I'm coming from Florida, and I thought, and of course, I had a key but all of a sudden, we realized about barriers and privilege and differences but sameness and similarities and how we're all the same people.

With my career with IBM, it was fabulous. I was immediately brought to Atlanta because they were building up what was then the Support Centers and they needed a few women in the Support Centers, which I love. Of course, everybody was moving to Atlanta at that time anyway. When I was here, I sort of had my three strands. I had my IBM professional strand. I had my Junior League strand, which was a service part but it also connected me to all of my friends with whom I had grown up with, and my Faith community, because I had some friends at both Columbia and Candler Seminary, who were working at the time with integration in Atlanta and working with the children at Bass High School specifically to meet the children who were the African-American children who live south of the railroad track and the white children, who are primarily World children who would come to the city for new jobs that were living in what is Little Five Points in MM Park.

I had my little three strands of life and it was cute. The guys at IBM would always know I was somewhere in the office, "Maybe she's in the Data Center." I put my jacket on the back of my chair and go down on the streets. That's where I'd work with kids who are ODing or runaways in the Strip where on Peach Street, 14 Street, which was the Strip, where the hippies were or the kids were. Then I'd come back and I'd rush kids to Grady, in my little car that daddy had got me, black and yellow Oldsmobile, which was adorable.

One day, it got wrecked and so I sold it for an old Chevrolet with no air conditioning and the man felt so bad because he didn't want have to deal with daddy because he was like, "Oh, Mr. Wilson, I'd be very disappointed if I sell you this car," he said. That's all I want. He said, "I'll put the air conditioner in it for free," just so I would not have a car. Anyways, it was so cute and you begin to strand together your life.

I think that was, again, back to my initial 12-year old confirmation North Star of how do I integrate those pieces of our life, whether it's service through and knowing I had access and influence and relationship with people who had resources through the Junior League. The intellectual and the amazing solutions part through IBM and then the Faith community of people who were really understanding on the ground what were the needs of people relative to poverty and education.

It's been interesting to see then Jeff, my husband, and I met through the work on the streets with the kids. He's a clinical psychologist by trade but he came into Atlanta and visited some friends who are at Columbia Seminary. He started helping out with the youth work and the street work. We were doing that together. We got married in January of 1972. Fun fact: We were living in the Little Cottage, which is now Paideia School. Paideia was starting on ... Other fun fact: four of us, the girls who were living at 1080 West Paces Ferry and that cottage, which is now Mr. Arthur Wayne's home. Fun Fact: two fabulous cottages. It's so fun. Oh, Lord. I mean, those are those little fun facts. Cottage 1080 West Paces, Cottage 1487 Ponce de Leon.

Anyways, Paideia started taking over the cottage and Jeff and I bought our house in Little Five Points, which we've been in since 1972. Our work together, where Jeff is so interesting, our work together, Jeff continued to plow his ground more at the grassroots, where we always say we have the same base values, where our vision and our life values and beliefs are the same, but his skill set where he then went into teaching. He actually worked in the Juvenile Justice and he realized that he didn't want to see more children coming to the JJ, the Juvenile, that it would be much more wonderful for these kids if they had an education and more options in their lives. He worked and started teaching Physics, because he was pre-med in Clinical Psych, and used that as his teaching.

He stayed on the teaching level in terms of running a skill set for kids to move through their next contributing, interdependent citizens, where I realized that my skills were more of problem solving and to get to the systemic or policy changes, serving on boards, working on many governor's commissions and trying to reach those kind of places of consensus that would create systemic change.

When we were married, after Megan was born, I theoretically retired from IBM in 1978 after Megan was born. Actually, it was 1979, and then started doing a lot of work with then Governor Busbee with starting leadership programs like Leadership Atlanta, the starting wall of the state downtown development, community betterment programs, starting job training so that people would grow in community.

I did that as a volunteer, as one of the Governor's Office of Voluntary Services. I worked as a "volunteer" for 10 years. Again, the grace of having my IBM credentials, my volunteer leadership credentials to the Junior League, because I was president of the Junior League in '79 or '80. Therefore, I was on board in United Way as one of the only women who worked with visioning processes with the Chamber because I had the business credential. Working with the business, the Chamber using their envisioning for what they wanted to be. It was one of those extraordinary times where I had the time and availability to work on some major community initiatives in that 10 years.

One of my favorite one was Governor Busbee had to fill out all the professional registration boards for like medical, legal, engineers, because I had Systems Engineer in my title at one point. He had to put a woman on those board so he put me on the Board of Registration for Professional Engineers. It was so fun. I loved it. I was on the board for 11 years. Loved it and chaired it for about six just because I knew how to run a meeting. We'd get it done.

Over that time, it was amazing to watch the transition of women and minorities coming into the Engineering world when we started '79 and '80, very few women. That would be the very minimal minority. You had one woman and two minorities. Then at the end, starting in the '89 and '90 that we had many more coming through. It was really fun and I got to be a part of the campus of Georgia Tech a lot, not that I graduated from there but just because I would be a woman that would meet with women; the Society of Women Engineers, the SWES.

That was fun. All during those 10 years, got a chance to really get involved as a volunteer. Then in 1989, just before the bid was determined for Atlanta to be the Olympic site, I was on the United Way Board at the time and Tom Smith, who was the head of IBM said, "Would you ever come back?" I think I have to pray about it, talk to Jeff about it, think about it. Yes, because I came back into what was the external programs role and we'd be responsible for IBM's part with the Olympics in Atlanta.

Again, I was, "Out as a volunteer, came back in '89 in the role of external programs and then stayed in that role till I retired in 2012." Again, it expanded from Atlanta to Georgia, to Southeast to Mid-Atlantic Southeast, to East, to US, to North America, to the Americas as the company changed. I never had to move. I only had two managers from 1989 to January 1, 2013. Amazing. It was amazing. I loved every minute of it. I was a part of that whole researchers of companies as being good corporate citizens and revamping that whole understanding what that meant across the full spectrum of the company. It was very, very fabulous.

Again, it was the weaving together and because IBM cared about education and Jeff and I were already ingrained in the educational systems and systemic changes in Georgia. Then, I had that platform to work across the country, if not the world, in enhancing the capacity of every person to be an interdependent contributor in as so much more they were adding value wherever they were. It's really one of this fabulous kind of congruence than what we saw on the Math Major integration alignment, congruence, strategic and yet open and flexible and fluid, but still on the path, always like the path.

Because you can think, tributary. Yes, you can go off the path but then you can come right back or you can stumble along the road and still get back up and keep on. Keep on.

It was interesting because I started on 1966, it was very branched-focused. I mean, I loved it. I love being in the branch and then at the district office and being a part of the cell team. My favorite job when I was in the district office was being what we call Executive Education; teaching client executives terminology about data processing, like bits and bytes and hexadecimal and not being overwhelmed by those computer nerds that were trying to overwhelm them with how they can manage data processing.

As fun though, when I came back, we had already transitioned into the first areas of PCs. Getting more diffused, and obviously with IBM, with Mr. Acres at that time, it was interesting because I chair of the United Way of Atlanta board there, who was chair of the United Way of America board. Also, at the same time, he was in his own transition with the company. You could watch that transition literally up close and personal with that transition.

I mean, it was so fun and I think of myself often as I think of IBM, that over time, the values, the basic beliefs never changed. The fluidity and flexibility was listening to the client and serving the client's needs, starting with meet scales and things that had to do with what the client needed 103 years ago. The computer and tabulating company, whatever you needed the scales.

In that period, in '89 and '90, is that the company just had to listen more acute to the client, which is why it was a miracle that Mr. Gerstner came in and really forced everybody to free focus on what does the client, what do we offer that's of value and how do we make it work. You went from a manufacturing company that produced equipment, provided as equipment solutions to the client to creating new consultancies and being at the lead.

The fun part, because IBM never disinvested in its research so it can always stay innovative and being creative and innovative. That's why I love the whole idea of innovation as that point of intersection between invention and insight. Gratefully, the company was able to twist around, get the boat right it up and moving forward. Is it dramatically changed? Oh yes. Is it dramatically different in terms of a global reach and having colleagues all over the world where we all work on the same team and be up at 11:00 talking to your friends in Australia who were doing something similar to what we're doing all in the same in team. Also having everything being more corporate and centralize to effectively strand across, taking away the silos, which was both a cost-saving but also an idea creating, enhancing towards more communication.

For me, I love that back to the flexibility, where you stay focused on your base values and beliefs. Then the fluidity of time of being able to respond with where you and what the needs are in time and creating those solutions that are relevant and responsive to the need. It's fun, but not easy because it was hard for a lot of people to move through the change. I guess I see the only constant is change. I both want to be ahead of it and with it and be smart, not to just move with the flow but to be smart about how you can use that the preemptive way to service people.

In fact, I was just in Philadelphia this week with the LINK trip, the regional leadership trip. Here again, insights, right, insights, over and over we would hear. There's no presumptive that we would go into communities and people had all these great ideas for the community. Of course, they would never work because the community was never involved in determining the ideation, what do I need.

As soon you would quote this end and provide a response of meeting your needs, who you are and what you can do as well as the needs of the community, that were two great examples. There are two of everything. One was they had a pocket park that was getting trashed and tramped every day. No one would plant the grass and people wouldn't respect it. Of course, it was in the center of an area where there was a high rise of senior citizens. They brought them in with some kids in the neighborhood who were doing the trashing. The senior citizens all wanted gardens but they couldn't stoop anywhere. It was UPN and Drexel that were working within the university and providing these new higher bids of planters so the seniors could sit on these cute benches that the engineering students devised.

Of course, we had a player. He were some skateboarding and they would all be together as opposed to just planning beds, which the seniors could use and the kids would trash. Then everyone has a new sense of ownership. Then there was another one related to graffiti and it's the same thing where they brought the neighbors in. Instead of just creating graffiti, where they would constantly clean it up and they'd paint it over. They wanted to have a sense of place from where they came. They designed this great mural that reflected some of their community and heritage. Then you had a respect for it because that's defining who I am, very different from just slapping some paint on the wall, have an artist concept and go.

The whole idea which is where we grew with IBM is of the same precept of how do we listen, what are the needs and then how do we collectively respond to those needs and ways to make a difference for the long term outcome of community, but most for people. That's what I'm excited about even today in Atlanta. We're looking now, rather than isolated issues, education, transportation, water, social services, the arts. Everyone is so busy in their own little thread mill that they forget to go across.

Yet collectively, they're all similar ideas. We know how arts infuses energy for innovation to be smart and be education or we know that there are ways to use technology to enhance the transportation quarters, just like how I always love the UPS Store every time they turn right instead of left so you don't get mad because they're turning left. Usually, "Oh my gosh. They use a lot of gas. Oh my gosh." Again, it's creating smarter concepts through the courses on the IMBer. IBM themes as smarter cities, smarter planet, thinking across the silos to create that intersection of innovation but I'm seeing it in the community, the collective impact of looking as a community and determining what are those outcomes. Yes, we want children to have positive early learning. Yes, we want children to be learning by First Grade and Third Grade. Yes, we want children to have numeracy skills. Yes, we want high school graduation. Yes, we want readiness for post-secondary.

Then who's making a difference? How do we enhance it, invest in it? Or how do we hold people accountable for the results they say they want in a way that creates that collective community of positive impact? More and more people are looking at it that way. It may be because we can afford. We can afford everybody going down their own lane. We just have to provide more cross channels to create that confluence, the confluence of coming together where the strength of, the power of one and the power of many.

One of my new favorite strategies or theories that I talk a lot about, especially with women. In fact, I just spoke it at the Georgia Tech Women Alumni within two years ago. The topic is there's no such thing as work-life balance. There aren't, that even a feather, which is that smallest thing can get you out of balance so don't even worry about it. The end is that there is such thing as work-life alignment or congruence. Because with seasons, there are seasons where you're going to spend more time on your career, more time with your children, more time with your family, more time with your elder parents, or wherever it is, that the seasons will sort of even out over time, so that being all, all the time, every day doesn't happen because you'll never be imbalanced and you'll always be in a place you're not supposed to be. You want to be somewhere else.

Giving folks that kind of comfort and confidence, this is what I love to talk to young women about, is being able to understand that their seasons and fluidity of life, the path that you can just keep on walking but the end is to be able to be clear about whatever your life values are and to say, "If you claim your life values or faith and family and friends or finances mean your work or that the idea that you need to stay fit, the healthy part. Of course, for me, my other F is Philanthropy, how you give and steward your life resources.

If you say those are those are your values and then you look at your work priorities, meaning that current life priorities, what you have to get done on your given day or you think you do and then you look at your hours. One thing we all have are 24 hours. Sometimes, you feel better than others but you still have 24 hours. Then do those measures of how I use my time. Reflect what I say my values are. Over time, how do you get that more in alignment?

Like I always laugh about fit. I didn't get my exercise in. Do I really value it? Or if I do value it, what do I do about it? How do I exercise? I love to talk with young men and women about that whole life alignment, of clarity of who you are and what you believe and what are your values. Then clarity on how you steward your resources. Once you look at time, then I always say that there's this third hand over here. On the one hand, and on the other hand, and then there's this third hand, which is that stewarding. The stewarding, the who we are and how we, "live our lives."

That's the thumb, sort of as the governance, because that's the value thumb of the legal, ethical, moral part of our lives. Don't ever think you're entitled or above the law or one little immoral thing that lead to another. It's the moral, legal, ethical part of your life and how your life is governed. These are my pointers as how we treat people, every person. How do we treat people? Diversity, cultural differences, global differences and understanding the stewarding of how we treat people is reflective of use. Of course, this is my tall fingers, the three finger, is how we steward the environment, how are we living the place better than we found it.

This is the ring finger, my promise finger, is delivering every day on our promise the best we can to our family, to our life, to our work. How we delivery on our promise? Do we do what we say we're going to do? Of course, this is the stewarding, the volunteering, the giving, the making a difference, the volunteering, the giving, the contributing, the service side. I always say, "Why is this last? Because that's your grab finger and it always makes life back to the ethics."

If look on the one hand, this is what I say about you. On the one hand is how I spend my time to help reflect that congruence and I can change it, what actions can I take to make it more congruent. Then the third hand is then that symbol of who we are and how we spend our life. The essence is how you, over time, get to that congruence and integration. Because how I spend my time today is different that it was 10 years ago. One example, as I was traveling a lot more. Therefore, the depth of some of the work that I was doing was much more surfaced but I loved it. I still got to do what I do but I love the job and I love the travel. Now, I don't travel as much so I get to do deeper things here that are really rewarding. That doesn't mean that that wasn't rewarding. It's just different time, not so much priorities but different way of stewarding my 24 hours over here.

I think that's what's really fun and that's what I love. One of my favorite things is to talk with or to be able to engage with young people or there are a lot of people ... Literally, on the Philadelphia trip, I talked to 10 people younger than I but all thinking what's next. Going in with faith, no fear of how do you be open to opportunities. It's not like you are leaving but you're going into. It's always the moving into, with faith and minimum fear. Not that we're not scared or not that we don't question, but it's moving forward in faith to face that kind of future.

It was funny, therefore, it's not just the college kids whom I love, and they're so fabulous. That's a new one of my favorite things is to move them into leadership and service opportunities on community boards and non-profit organizations to bring that creative thinking and new way of being, but still value-based. I'm rooted. The rootedness gives you the freedom to fly.

I do think that some of the things that I grew up with, I mean, like for me, meeting my first African-American professional person was, that was for me ... With these kids, their world is so fabulously diverse and so rich in different experience. They travel all over the world. I mean, a lot of our kids. Then there are a lot of our children who are deep in poverty. The thing that saddens my heart the most is the same issues of poverty that we were working on in the '60s have been exacerbated.

I mean, here Atlanta is with the largest poverty gap of many cities in the country and the most difficult to coming out of poverty because it's where you get stuck. That's the part that breaks my heart. How do we provide that kind of content and construct for folks to have confidence to come out and try something new when they've been beaten down for so long. On the other hand, children or young adults that I get the privilege of working on with all stay in Atlanta and lead Atlanta. Young professionals that are working in non-profits and that are serving the city and hands on in points of light and heeds for America, I mean, all these great young professionals, just your heart sores. They have a lot to learn. There is something about age. You hope you learn in terms of age and wisdom but on the other hand, I learn from them every day. I love it. I love it.

One of the joys about doing the Atlanta Superintendent Search was that we got to work with these fabulous group of young, new, school board members. They were fabulous. They've taken hard stance already, they've been mature in their roles. It's really been fun to watch that process and be so respectful, and hopeful. I mean, I've never not had hope, but I'd love experiencing the exuberance, as well as some wisdom. It's fun.

How to create a climate? Today, I was talking to a young man whom I love, who was one of my mentees. He's taken on a challenging assignment from our mayor. That's when I said, "You can do this. You can do it. You're creating a culture and a climate of hope and expectations in a place that's very depressed. I said, "It's wonderful to give, communicate the open dialog, create a space for folks to build trust. What fabulous place is that?" Because there is none now. His exuberance and faith and trust, and yet, common sense, reading budgets, looking at the financials, looking at the organization, it's really messed up, getting it back in order. On the other hand, his ability to see the mission of the work is so exciting and how to build that infrastructure. The mission, deliver on your promise, can occur.

That was fun, is to see him and say, "You know, I'm available to you. I can do whatever." It was fun because he'll do great, and he has a team who'll make it happen. We take it outside that role and support him. That's what I love, is seeing those young people take on these difficult tasks. They're going to do great.

Speaker 1: Is there anything you wish you had done?

Ann Cramer: No. It's interesting, people ask, "Where do you want to travel? What do you want to do?" I live in a faith statement. I want to be open to callings and flexible to respond in ways that are with the servant, kind of the servant mentality. Yet, my aspiration is one thing, how to create a climate in which every child can grow up to be an interdependent, contributing citizen. That's sort of the statement of where and how do I continue to walk. That's the blessing of energy and health.

I may be growing old, yes, almost 70 but the end is the blessing and the burden of energy and health and time and intelligence today, as well as experience that can yield some insights that are really fabulous. I think that's the thing, is to be open and flexible to the opportunities of what's open to us, is sort of the wish, is to always be that, open to opportunities when they come and not be fearful.

There are times when I say, "Why did I say yes? Oh gosh. Why did I say yes? It was the stupidest idea? Why am I speaking today? I don't know what I'm talking about? Which is true, a lot, but then you say, "Well, what am I learning from this?" I won't say no again because I lived through it. It was fine. Friday, I was moderating a panel, I thought, "Why did I say I would do this? I don't know anything." It worked out fine because I have a facilitative nature and I didn't need to know anything. The panelists knew everything. That was a fabulous. Again, that was a facilitative part that was what was important. I didn't need to know everything.

Or even yesterday, this is so funny, my husband is so cute. I made this wonderful offer to this new superintendent who was doing the BeltLine Tour with her new employees. Of course, I said, "Why don't y'all come over to our house for a refreshment?" I thought, "Why did I say?" Of course, it was perfect because they came, we had Cokes and everybody got water and chicken nuggets and carrots. We had a little bit of carrots.

Jeff said, "It was fine. It wasn't a big deal but you can make it a big deal." Of course, then you're so glad you did it because all of out of town guests got to see a real house of real people, including a teacher. My husband is a teacher so it's like a real house of real people in a real neighborhood, near the BeltLine, near the MARTA Station. Paul Morris, who's at the BeltLine, just dropped them off in their van. They all came up the stairs. Then you're thinking, "I'm so stupid. Why did I even ask of it?"

It's probably too much on their agenda and of course, they loved it. I mean, we loved it. It happens all the time that I'll say, "I'll do something," but then you'll learn from it. It was fabulous. Jeff kept saying, "It's going to be fine. They won't see the dirt in the corner." I got home Saturday, right? I didn't have time to clean. I mean, it was fine. It wasn't horrible. It was fun. It was fabulous. I think that's the whole point, how to make it fabulous in spite of the, from the beginning, insecurities, inadequacies, always feeling, "Oh, I'm so stupid." That's the catalyst.

It is a global. It's the global. It's interesting because sometimes, I think I'm stuck, like Jeff and I have lived at our house for 42 years. I work for IBM forever. We've been involved with the same organizaions like the United Way in communities and schools and the Junior League and the Arts Community and the Theaters. I mean, Megan and Will, our children, they lived in the same house their whole life and their same bedrooms the whole life. Part of that seem stuck and you think, "Well, they are really stuck." I call that rooted. The rootedness then allows that flexibility to fly, flutter and be around and be willing to take on new responsibilities. I see that in our children as well, that they are willing to risk new things but they are very settled in terms of faith, security, in terms of the stamp of where their base is.

Consequently, that also allows you, for me, not only did I not know anybody out of my initial neighborhood in Jacksonville, but from an IBM perspective, to see the global experience and to be able to understand one of my greatest uh-huh's when we were trying to develop volunteerism across the globe. The essence was, companies like IBM, UPS, were all doing that. The essence for with volunteerism is a US thing. US, what did you say? No, no, no, no. Everyone wants to give. Everyone wants to make a difference. Everyone, in some place in their heart, wants to be good neighbor.

How do we express being a good neighbor? It may look different in a village in China or Africa, but it's the same spirit of being that good neighbor, the doing unto others. That was those wonderful uh-huh's and watching how that evidenced itself literally in every part of the globe, the sameness of who we are as people, that humanity, the global humanity. The consequence, of course, still as we see about poverty and education. Just even today, about the young women that have been taken out of their homes and how I bring in equity and equality and how education becomes part of that key to bring people out of that poverty, especially young women. I think that has so many global implications so that what we do, I always have to say, you have to root it where you live. Get off your back deck, on to the front porch, get to know your neighbors and the connectedness and then proceeding to do the world.

It was funny, it's one of my favorite stories. You're going to love this. It's from the McGuffey Readers in the 1800 called True and False Philanthropy. McGuffeys Reader is allegorical, everything is allegorical and you know by the names who people are whether good or bad. This was Mr. Phantom, bad guy, and Mr. Man. Often, when I tell this story, I would say good person, because it could be a woman, good man. The whole idea in this, the dialog that these two have was Mr. Phantom wanted to go about in doing benevolence across the whole world, feeding all the hunger, releasing all the prisoners. Whereas Mr. Goodman wanted to start his neighborhood and his image was, "If I start here, my neighborhood with draw it into the village, which would go to the next village and the dovetail of all the villages. We'll create a world in which we're going to address issues of prisoners and famine and whatever. This is 1880. The issues haven't changed much.

In the end, what was so interesting about the dialog was that after Phantom says, "Oh, the use of being benevolent and changing everybody in the whole world." Goodman says, "But if you don't start where you are, so often does images of big forbid you from doing anything because it's so overwhelming. But if you can start where you are, the small things, they dovetail to create a kind of sense of whole." I think that's true, is that how we, again, align.

I was chair and had the privilege of being chair of the Carter Center. In that, you see the issues of the world, yet you still live in a place. How do you have the place, you reflect those values but then it gives you the ability to bring credibility and trust in any place else in the world where you can bring your expertise or your tools or your resources.

IBM, for instance, does our Smarter Cities Challenge, where we bring IMBers from all over the world to a team into a country where the people in that country have expressed a need. It could be health, it could be education, it could be starting in Chamber of Commerce because I want economic development, but whatever. The IBMers can come in, do a a collective study and create a plan. Again, you don't go unless you're invited and it's identified by the community. With the community, you build the solution because the, "experts leave and the community is left either with a piece of paper or a plan that can be implemented". It gets back to that listening and being responsive.

Yeah, it has implications across the world. That's why I really love the work that I got to do at IBM and I'm still gratefully involved with the Council on Foundations, which is the international organization of philanthropic leaders from community foundations, family foundations, large, independent foundations, corporate foundations. Looking at issues across issues; education, poverty, health, environment, with the various foundation sectors to create solutions, which I love. Therefore, you can look at the global view but then coming back and having the privilege of serving on our community foundation right at Atlanta. Then you move into the neighborhood and you start a little, "Let Us Works," in one of the neighborhoods. Or you start Neighborhood Nexus, which provides data for folks to find out information where they live and how they can correct situations like light or zoning.

It's that both end of having the global view, respect for the issues that are globally and bringing it on home because you still live every day where you are.

Speaker 1: With your affinity for mathematics, do you still take a break and work out differential equations just for fun, just to keep the mind ...

Ann Cramer: It's so funny because Jeff of course teaches Physics. Still, he does his lab books. It's so funny, mine is the approach. I feel like English majors treat life as a book. History majors treat life as a history lesson. I treat life as math problem. I'm always trying to figure out the shortest distance between two points, how do we create a solution, some of the geometric equations. One of my favorite topics that I love in math was topology, which is the inside and the outside are all the same. That's kind of the infinity thing where we're all connected.

That's me. I don't do the differential equations or integration or algebra but I treat life like a math problem. It's always trying to "figure it out, what's the solution?" Yet, everybody else doesn't treat it that way. My solution may not be your solution. We had to both respect that in a way that is like one of my favorite movies we've seen, one of my last, is Particle Fever. It's fabulous. It was a story of seren and breaking the particles to the smallest, smallest molecule. What I loved about it again was that symbiotic relationships with all the research theorist, who for 40 years, have been trying to figure out the smallest particle.

Then you had the experimental, the experiential people who built building that was going to crash this particle, who are the do it, the makers, the make it happen. Yet, what happened in the end, if you haven't had the theorists, they could have never built the building. If they couldn't have built the building, they wouldn't have learned what they learned to feed the theorist to move to their next level. Even though some of the theorists said, "It's one that I thought." It fed them to do thinking. Even if the people didn't build it right, they would learn from the theorist about how to improve the facility the next time.

Again, it's that topology of that inside, outside infinite flow that sort of creates the symbiotic world, which is where I live. You just got to find those connection points and how people can learn within from each other. Like my meeting this morning with my young friend. I literally got back in the office, sent him a note of, "10 people all wanted to be his new best friends, who were in the arena that wanted him to succeeded and had been frustrated with his organization but were providing insights to him about how to provide some new ways of being. Literally, connecting, connecting. The flow, the confluence of it all.

Lots of people come to me about career, "What am I going to do with my life?" They laugh and say, "You've thought about this, haven't you, Ann?" I said, "Yes, I've thought about it a lot." Think about your five piece for who you are and your personal and professional life. First, you want to have passion. You want to care about what you do. It doesn't help anybody to go to work if they don't care. I mean, you have to have some sense of connecting to the value.

The second is, to know what professional skills you bring and what you want to gain. Like you have lawyers but they don't like being a lawyer but there's those skills in terms of thinking. How you can grow and you use what you have but know what you want to grow.

Now, this one is the funny. It's your personal preferences. If you know you don't want to work inside the parameter, and that's the only place, then you're going to frustrate yourself. Be clear on somebody's personal preferences. If you're an early person, I mean, it makes it really important to claim it. You can choose to discard it but know your personal preferences.

The third thing is I want people to be proud of what they do. They will talk about it being an advocate, feeling proud of their work, of the organization, of the people, because that advocacy component will fuel you in your work. That of course, the other piece is as I look as going back to the service, the philanthropic side of, do you want to invite others to be a part of, like if you're selling, that you can bring your passion and your pride but that you can invite others in terms of that kind of positioning.

If you look at that, and all of us aren't going to always love our jobs because the jobs can either be menial or not exactly using our skills but that you want to enter, as I say every day, the joy of a person who has, what can be considered menial task, but they are so important to the rest of the wheel and to know that you bring value in that wheel, that everybody brings value in the wheel. If you think, "I might just just be," which I think is not the case for a person who's cleaning the floor. At the end of the day, if you didn't have that person, there would never be the fun of the day because then, no one could ever work. Do you know where your value is in the whole of the piece?

It gives you a different way to think about it so you can sort of begin to say, "What is my passion? What is my skill sets? What are the things that I care about now?" It's like when you're looking for your house, I have to have a basement or whatever. Then where you can be proud in terms of speaking out and speaking to be an advocate and the philanthropy, inviting people to participate with you. It's fun.

I do that too when people say, "I want to be involved in the community." I say, "You don't want to be, if you look at from A to Z, from Arts to the Zoo, if you don't care about animals, don't be on the zoo board but there are other boards you can be on. Or if you love animals, A, then go B." I think people forget, like, "I just want to help." Use something like my little five piece to direct, "Where I want to help?"

If you're non-performing, I know when I'm non-performing. I may be non-performing because I'm not passionate, I don't feel like I've got the right skill set, it's interrupting my life, I'm not proud. Whatever it is, I know when I'm non-performing. It's just unfit. Yet, I'm now willing to either change it or quit or move on. As soon as you do, and the other people now are getting mad at you because you're non-performing. Everybody's like, "Ah, huh, she's non-performing." How fabulous and free and freeing it is when you claim your part of the non-performing, and then make those moves that can free everybody up from being mad at you for not doing your job. Claiming our responsibility in the non-performing, instead of the other. That's where you can claim, on these five fingers. You can realize, "Oh, I really don't care," or "Oh, this isn't where I like to work," or "I don't have the skills to do it." You can make the changes, so it's fun. I live that part.

This is another fun one. When we talk about collective impact now, it really does, in today's environment where we talk about the skill sets for the 21st century, soft skills, which are critical to the success. Often, because the landscape changes so much on hard skills, that now, in terms of looking at who we are and what we do, what I look at now are what I call my C's and I think about how we learn to live in this environment in a collaborative way, building a cooperative. Since the value for everybody, the cultural differences but also the cultural similarities. The power of communication, and I always talk, "In today's environment, the power of communication is word spoken, written, body language, social media, how you reflect yourself is so powerful and the consistency of your communication are not." Then of course, building community across multiple sectors again. It's that how do we get from off the back deck in my isolated silo back here into that collective community of holding hands and recognizing how interdependent we really are, it makes such a difference.

As I look at that kind of connectedness in creating a culture in which today's people can really work well, there are new skills that are valued specially around the collaboration, the communications, the culture piece and that connectedness of all community. I think a lot of people have forgotten how important the soft skills are that will yield you success because in most cases, you can learn the hard skill related to the job, or at least observe what others are doing and move into those skills that may be changing how you look another person in the eye.

[](http://www.rev.com/transcription/rate/C40E8D1F5B4622000D193677D2246189471C3EC7E69F9A8554287F7A)