


5-2-1991

## Interview with Joy Blackiston

Dr. Joseph M. Juran Collection

Follow this and additional works at: <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/juran-transcripts>

 Part of the [Business Administration, Management, and Operations Commons](#), [Management Sciences and Quantitative Methods Commons](#), [Operations and Supply Chain Management Commons](#), [Organizational Behavior and Theory Commons](#), and the [Strategic Management Policy Commons](#)

---

### NSUWorks Citation

Dr. Joseph M. Juran Collection, "Interview with Joy Blackiston" (1991). *'An Immigrant's Gift': Interviews about the Life and Impact of Dr. Joseph M. Juran*. 38.  
<https://nsuworks.nova.edu/juran-transcripts/38>

This Transcript is brought to you for free and open access by the NSU Digital Collections at NSUWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in 'An Immigrant's Gift': Interviews about the Life and Impact of Dr. Joseph M. Juran by an authorized administrator of NSUWorks. For more information, please contact [nsuworks@nova.edu](mailto:nsuworks@nova.edu).

## Joy Blackiston

(Interviewed on 2 May 1991, Wilton, Connecticut)

### Video Rolls #4-5

*Q: We should spell your name how?*

JOY BLACKISTON: Joy Blackiston. I will talk louder.

*Q: Spelled, J-O-Y?*

JOY BLACKISTON: Right.

*Q: B-L-A-C-K-I-S-T-O-N.*

JOY BLACKISTON: Correct.

*Q: And the relationship. How should we define that?*

JOY BLACKISTON: Dr. Juran's granddaughter.

*Q: One "d" or two?*

JOY BLACKISTON: Good question. I do not know.

*Q: To all of us, the guy's kind of a legend.*

JOY BLACKISTON: Uh hm.

*Q: So that we see him out with other people, with such extraordinary regard, and none of us have celebrities in our family. What's it like to have a celebrity in your family?*

JOY BLACKISTON: Well, I haven't really known him my whole life. As you know, I've only known him since about 1975. So even at that time, I knew he was somewhat famous, but I hadn't been around for that many years where I had seen the success -- ah -- and the people following him.

So, to me, it's just like having an ordinary grandfather who has achieved some fame.

*Q: Had you really known who he was when you first met him?*

JOY BLACKISTON: No. I really -- no, I really had no idea. I knew of him. I always knew that I had been adopted and I -- I had seen an article in a magazine -- actually, not even a whole article, just a little bio of him and I had known that he was a famous person. Relatively famous.

And ah -- but I didn't, until I got to know him, really know the extent of it.

*Q: He's not Cary Grant.*

JOY BLACKISTON: No. (LAUGHS)

*Q: Is there a difference in the Dr. Juran who we know and see and work with and the private Dr. Juran?*

JOY BLACKISTON: Oh, yes, definitely. Yeah. He -- ah - - he's just a very loving, warm, generous grandfather, great grandfather. Very -- very much of a family man, loves children, little children. Gets right down on the floor and plays with them, reads to them.

Ah -- I know he comes across warm in his -- in his lectures and so forth. But he -- ah -- he's really very, very down to earth.

*Q: My suspicion is that all of his socks are sorted. It seems like the nature of the beast. How does quality spread over into his private life?*

JOY BLACKISTON: Good question. I don't know if I really know the answer to that. Ah -- I just -- I don't really know the answer to that.

*Q: I have parents who are not nearly as old, and they have neither the vigor nor the energy, and my father is not still working. How do you account for this old guy, who is still doing all this?*

JOY BLACKISTON: I think he has such a great drive and he just has so much knowledge stored within him, and he feels that he can give so much, that he wants to do all that he can in his lifetime. And that is why he never takes a vacation day. Ah -- the only time he will really take from his work is to be with family, occasionally. And he really does that out.

He will constantly watch his watch, watch the time, and -- ah -- get back to work, even on Christmas or Easter or Thanksgiving. And he doesn't take weekends.

He -- he just wants to share all this I believe.

*Q: What are some of the legends within the family about him? Where did this enormous drive come from?*

JOY BLACKISTON: Well, I think it came from the fact that he was poor, very poor growing up, had nothing. Ah -- and worked very hard to get where he is today. And I think it

snowballed. He -- ah -- everyone in his family, really, has this enormous drive.

Ah -- coming from a very poor background, he -- several sisters -- ah -- I believe have Ph.D.'s. His daughter has a Ph.D. Ah -- everyone in the family is extremely intelligent. Ah --

*Q: Is there a sense of humor in there someplace? We've been around him, we have never heard him tell a joke.*

JOY BLACKISTON: Ah -- I think there is, in a very -- ah -- subtle way. There's so much emotion when I see him, I feel that there is -- ah -- that is the most feeling that I get. Just -- just love -- ah -- I think he made up for time with me the fact that he didn't -- there was this span of about 25 years that he did not see me.

And when I finally started to have a relationship with him, at 25 years old, he was making up for lost time and -- ah -- constantly, you know, showing affection and generosity and warmth.

*Q: If I thrust some old guy on my daughter, she might feel infringed upon. Out of nowhere comes this guy.*

JOY BLACKISTON: That was hard initially, because -- ah -- at our first meeting, there was a man that was a stranger to me, but he had all this love inside of him, and he felt, because I was adopted that he -- that I had been taken away from him. I mean, he had seen me as an infant, and -- and then I moved away.

But he was such a -- an easy person to deal with, to get along with, and showed me such concern and such caring that it was very easy to be comfortable with him.

*Q: What does it say about a guy like that who seemed to carry this need for family and relationships for such a long time.*

JOY BLACKISTON: I think it says, as you get older, family becomes extremely important in your life. And, especially to someone who is such a workaholic, that their only release then is family. That he doesn't really have, that I can see, other hobbies, or vacations, or other time out that he takes. But his family is -- is his only break from his work. And that's important to him.

*Q: I have an image of what grandfathers do, because my grandfather died before I was born, and the other one was too old. I think it would be hard for a lot of people to visual what this Dr. Juran of the lectures is with a small child.*

JOY BLACKISTON: It's funny because he always brings her little items of interest. You know, things, I think, he feels that she would enjoy seeing -- would -- good things for her to be exposed to. Just interesting artwork, or when he receives his many, many beautiful Christmas cards from all over the world, he always brings a lot of them, unique ones, to her, so she can share that.

And he always brings her books. Ah -- again, sharing the knowledge and feeling that -- you know, education is so important. Ah -- and he reads to her.

He loves -- one of his favorite things to do with children is building with Lego. So he will always get down on the floor and they'll starting creating a Lego project.\*

*Q: What's he built? What kind of stuff has he done?*

JOY BLACKISTON: Oh, it was pretty -- you know, pretty simple things, arches and, you know, towers and things like that. Well, she's only seven. But -- ah -- she enjoys that, too.

*Q: If we were to take this camera to your house, would we stuff of a Lego universe?*

JOY BLACKISTON: Well, no. Usually there's not quite time to get into this huge involved project, you know, and then it's -- it's Easter dinner or something.

But -- ah -- he does love children, and he -- he makes it quality time, the time that he spends with them.

*Q: It is our impression that he eats strangely. What do you serve Dr. Juran for a major dinner?*

JOY BLACKISTON: He -- he's just a totally, normal person. When he comes to my house, he eats what's on the plate, pretty much, and that's it. (LAUGHS)

*Q: Or he's not invited back.*

JOY BLACKISTON: (LAUGHS) I don't make him special meals and -- ah -- he actually does eat dessert and -- ah -- he's -- I think he's not quite so disciplined and when he's visiting and then when he's home, if he feels it's necessary, he goes back to his regime of very strict dietary rules.

*Q: Does he wear the bow tie when he's constructing with Lego?*

JOY BLACKISTON: Yes. (LAUGHS) Yes, he always wears the bow tie.

*Q: Really?*

JOY BLACKISTON: Yes. (LAUGHS) Now, once in a while, when I've come to his house, to visit, he's got an open plaid shirt on. But usually, when he comes to my house, if he's dressed up a little bit, if it's holiday, he's got the bow tie on.

*Q: Do they clip on, or do they have a strap that goes around the back?*

JOY BLACKISTON: Good question. I don't know. (LAUGHS)

*Q: Or is it tattoed in place.*

JOY BLACKISTON: (LAUGHS)

*Q: We want to find out the real stuff. We're looking to have as unviersal appeal as it possibly can. Now, there's a bunch of people who watch PBS, may one day flip on this program. Why should anybody in America care one whit about Joseph Juran?*

JOY BLACKISTON: Well, aside from the fact that he was instrumental in bringing about the changes in manufacturing in Japan, and how that relates totally to the -- the scheme of business today, with the competition between the United States and Japan, which many people are aware of.

I think it's nice to see the personal side of a -- of someone like that, and how it all came about. How -- what happened in their lives to make them who they are. And give the impact that they have had around the world.



*Q: Here's a man with tremendous knowledge and obviously very gifted and with a sense of a personal mission in life. To achieve what he's achieved and keep doing what he's doing, what hard choices do you think he's had to make as he's gone through his own life, to be able to accomplish what he's accomplished?*

JOY BLACKISTON: Well, I think some of the very difficult [choices] have been time spent with family. I think there were many times that he has had so much traveling in his schedule that -- and has not -- had not been able to do it with small children; he had four small children. Ah -- was not able to do that. And so the family was left at home.

Ah -- and I think that is one of the reasons that he is so loving and really takes the time out now with his children and grandchildren as much as he can. Because I think there was a lot of that time that he did miss when he was so extremely busy.

Of course, he's still busy, but, I think as the years have gone by, he sees that if you don't make the time, you don't -- you don't get it, you don't have it. And you miss it.

Uhm -- so I think that's one of the choices that he had to make. Ah -- less time with family. Ah --

*Q: We marvel at him. How alert, and how sharp, and just alive he is. Does he have a sense of some clock ticking away internally?*

JOY BLACKISTON: Oh, yes, very. Ah -- very much so. I think he -- he has said a number of times how he wants to write his biography, but yet it keeps getting delay. He is -- so many other things are still going on. So many other business projects. Ah -- he doesn't have the time.

Although he has started a lot of the initial work. So I think he's -- he is very, very aware of it. Ah -- he writes family letters to all the children and grandchildren -- ah -- I would say monthly. And he's just very aware of keeping in touch and keeping everyone informed about what's going on with him and the rest of the family.

Ah -- and I think he's concerned that he will stay as sharp as he is.

*Q: We know from his colleagues what professional expectations are. What do you think are his expectations for his family who he showers so much love and affection on?*

JOY BLACKISTON: I think for the grandchildren -- I mean, certainly he would want them to have a good education, fine college education. And I don't think he would put any pressure, but just probably to say, you know, be -- do your best and be the best you can be.

*Q: How about request for your time? Are there any conflicts of where you spend the holidays, who goes where?*

JOY BLACKISTON: No, never, no. He's very easy-going. If -- if he gets invited, that's wonderful. But he never, he never says, oh, I think it's our turn, we should see you, it's -- never demands for time like that.

*Q: Here is a man who has been responsible for making better cars, better television sets, he's also a consumer. What's he like as a consumer?*

JOY BLACKISTON: I think he's probably an extremely careful consumer. He -- I'm sure he -- really shops around for what he considers to be the best technology -- ah --

probably money is not as much of a factor but, of course, quality is.

Even in cars, I know he owns a Toyota. (LAUGHS)

*Q: Have you ever been with him at a restaurant when he's sent something back, or whenever he's expressed dissatisfaction with something?*

JOY BLACKISTON: No. We rarely go out to restaurants. Usually when it's a -- usually it's a family get-together. But if he is -- I've been with him when he is served something that he simply does not care for -- ah -- he's -- he's very clear about turning it down and saying that he doesn't care for it. And is not -- cannot be goaded into just trying a little something.

Ah -- alcohol -- he does not drink alcohol. He makes himself very clear.

*Q: Can't wheedle him into seaweed and saki?*

JOY BLACKISTON: No, no.

*Q: Does he eat sushi and Japanese food? When he was in Japan, that must have been a difficult time.*

JOY BLACKISTON: I -- I would doubt it.

*Q: We're going to California to talk to some brothers.*

JOY BLACKISTON: Right.

*Q: And a sister, I think.*

JOY BLACKISTON: Right.

*Q: What are we likely to hear from those people about him?*

JOY BLACKISTON: That I don't really know. Because I have -- I've only met one sister who's up in Buffalo, Minerva. And -- ah -- I have not met -- ah -- the brothers and sisters out in California. But I have met all of his children.

I know his brother is very successful in the film business.  
Ah --

*Q: (INAUDIBLE)*

JOY BLACKISTON: Right. (LAUGHS)

*Q: If we were to ask Brooke, even at seven years old, to come up with some words to describe her great grandfather, how would she describe him?*

JOY BLACKISTON: I would think she would say, loving, and -- and warm, and generous. Ah -- he certainly is that. Enjoys playing and reading. Ah -- really one-on-one with the child. Very giving of his time when he's with her. Sharing things with her.

*Q: To the extent that you're comfortable in doing it, tell us about your history with Joseph Juran. Long time separated and suddenly here's this guy on your doorstep.*

JOY BLACKISTON: Well, I always knew that I was adopted. Ah -- basically, my parents were [yrey] young and in college. I was in foster care when I was five months old and then adopted not too long after that. And my grandparents saw me when I was a baby.

Ah -- then my adoptive parents moved away. And there -- once you're adopted, there is an agreement made that there will be no contact with the original family and so forth.

So it wasn't until almost 25 years later, that he did contact me. He knew I was an adult at that time. And he wanted to re-establish contact. And I think he was setting up some future situations for -- for all the grandchildren. I was -- I was the first grandchild, so I think that made it harder for him to have me taken away, or for him not to see me for that length of time.

I got a call from my mother, my adoptive mother, who can be dramatic and very -- are you sitting down. And I said, what happened? What? And she said, your natural grandfather called me and he would like to see you. And I had really heard very little about him, except I knew a little bit about his field and that he was well known.

Then, when we first met, he came and -- to where I was in Florida and met me. It was -- it was a bit awkward, because here was a man that had all this love for me, and -- that had been building up for 25 years. And he was essentially a stranger to me.

But because he was so warm and easy to get along with and just didn't ask anything of me; just wanted to get to know me - - ah -- it was -- it was a very nice opportunity and it was -- it was very easy to become close to him.

*Q: You were someplace, you agreed to meet somewhere, and in walks this person. Can you talk me through the moment. How did it happen?*

JOY BLACKISTON: I was living in Florida, at the time. I was in an apartment. I picked him up from the airport, actually that was the first time. He flew in.

Ah -- I didn't really know what to expect. I guess I didn't -  
- I didn't thoroughly know why he wanted to start a  
relationship with me, and how would he feel after all this time.  
Ah -- and then I was a little concerned that, well, he's so  
successful, and I was not working at the time. I was not doing  
very well at the time, actually.

I was on unemployment. Ah -- I was between things, as  
they say. And I was wondering, you know, well, what would  
he think I was a failure, I'm, you know, I hadn't quite made a  
success of my life at that point. Ah -- so I was concerned  
about that.

But he -- ah -- he was not concerned about that. I was still  
young. And he gave me opportunities, at that point, to come  
visit him in New York. To scope out what I wanted to do  
there. If I wanted to continue to go to school. Ah -- he was  
willing to -- to help me, at that point, go on with my life, you  
know, make some choices.

And I -- ah -- I appreciated the -- ah -- the concern and --  
and the help. That was -- it was a good time for me to meet  
him.

*Q: Had you spoken with him on the phone before he flew  
to Florida?*

JOY BLACKISTON: Yes. We -- we had had several --  
several chats on the phone.

*Q: There you are parked outside.*

JOY BLACKISTON: Right.

*Q: How did you know how to recognize him?*

JOY BLACKISTON: Well, as I said, I had -- I had seen a picture of him in -- from a magazine that I think my mother had saved. And, of course, this was probably from the 1940's. So he had changed quite a bit.

Ah -- but I knew, basically, the, you know, his look and the mustache and -- and -- ah -- he told me what he would be wearing. And he described himself. So he was -- he was pretty easy to spot.

*Q: As you drove off, it must have been an emotion-filled moment, certainly for him. You were probably somewhat cynical yourself at that point. What did he say? How did he break the ice?*

JOY BLACKISTON: Well, I have to remember. I think it was just a lot of small talk. I mean, he embraced me when I first saw him. It was somewhat stiff, because I think it was awkward for both of us. But he wanted to know as much as he could about me. I mean, there was all -- all these years to fill in -- ah -- in a short amount of time, I guess.

And -- and -- but first there was a lot of small talk. He -- ah -- he was staying nearby. But we went out for dinner. I believe we went to a Chinese restaurant. And -- ah -- really tried to catch up on a lot of time.

I was also very interested in learning about him, and -- and his family and -- ah -- a little bit more about my situation with my parents. His son was my father. And that whole background, which I had just had a -- a very general knowledge -- general knowledge of and I was interested in learning more.

*Q: What kind of things did he tell you about himself?  
Clearly, that's a moment that I'm sure wanted to communicate  
on who he was and how he felt.*

JOY BLACKISTON: What -- how did he describe himself? What are some of the things he said?

*Q: Yes, how did he talk about himself?*

JOY BLACKISTON: I think he gave me a brief background of how he had gotten to the point he was at that time. Ah -- and what things had gone on in his life. Sort of a -- a quick bio that, you know, brought him up to date of the types of things, you know, where he had worked and ... type of things he had been involved in, so I could understand a little more -- more about it.

Ah -- just in the most general sort of way, of course. Ah -- the only thing I had really heard about quality control up to that point was, I guess, something -- you remember the book, "Cheaper by the Dozen" -- I mean, he was in -- in that, in a very general way that -- ah -- Frank Gilbreath and that quality control.

*Q: I'm sure he talked of his life as husband, father, and grandfather. Here you had a whole family that you knew nothing about. How did he present himself in those roles to you?*

JOY BLACKISTON: He talked a bit about his children, his four children and -- described each of them and the situations -- ah -- how their -- his relationship, I believe, with each of his children, briefly. Mostly with my father and that -- ah -- had sort of been a rocky one.



And, of course, that's the one we dwelled on the most. And that all intertwined with the situation of my birth and my adoption and that's the one we discussed the most.

*Q: What has it meant to you to suddenly discover your grandfather who took the lid off the box and opened up a life. What's it been like to discover you're the grandchild of Joseph M. Juran?*

JOY BLACKISTON: Well, it really was like a fairy tale for -- for quite a while. I really felt -- felt transported. It was -- it was wonderful. He gave me so many opportunities that I wouldn't otherwise have had. And for quite a while, about 15 years ago, after this happened, after I came up to New York to visit him and then began going to school there. And then developed a career there.

Of course, I realized I -- I probably could not have done this without meeting him, and he shed a whole new outlook on my life.

But I would go around telling people. And my husband would say, well, you know, just tell the story, tell the story. And, you know, it's like a -- it was like a fairy tale, and it was, for me. It was -- it was -- it was wonderful opportunities.

Not to mention -- ah -- having a part of your family back that I had never known. A whole section of my family life that had -- ah -- been blocked out before. Grandparents and aunts and uncles and cousins and everything.

*Q: This is obvious not easy, but it's such a wonderful story. Have you ever speculated on what your life would have been like had Joseph Juran not pursued you as avidly? What do you think life would have been like?*

JOY BLACKISTON: Ah -- I have thought about that. Because I have some friends that are still in Florida that are leading a very different type of life. And probably along the same type of lines that I would have been -- ah -- had I not made the move to New York, and the whole different situation.

Ah -- I was working in the theater which, at the time, was not very lucrative. (LAUGHS) And -- ah -- I don't know. I -- I don't -- I certainly don't think I would have had the lifestyle that I have now.

*Q: Lifestyle is just outward trappings. Inside, what are the most significant things about your wife that happened as a result of this rediscovery by Joe Juran?*

JOY BLACKISTON: Well, I never had a grandfather before. My only other grandfather had died before I was born. So that was a great relationship that I really valued, that we have nurtured, that we've worked on. As I say, I think it's been harder than for most people who have known their grandfather all their life; their grandparents all their lives, since they were children.

To develop a relationship with someone when you're adult, and to someone that was almost a total stranger -- ah -- I really valued that. And especially because -- ah -- he -- he is so well known and he's done so much for society, and companies, and so forth.

I -- I mean, I'm so proud that he is my grandfather and I had that chance -- have that chance to know him. I mean, it could have been, you know, Joe Blow, just any ordinary person. But he's not. He's -- he's a great person.

*Q: This is an opportunity to say things you haven't had a chance to say to him directly. What would you say,*

*recognizing the huge distance that you've come, all that he's come to mean to you? What do you say to Joe Juran?*

JOY BLACKISTON: Thank you. Thank you for taking the -- the effort. Making the effort to -- he didn't have to do this. I mean, we were a part of his life that had gone, that was just a -- he didn't have to -- to make that extra effort to locate us, and -- and to locate me. And -- and do for me what he did.

And -- and -- but he is that kind of a person and -- ah -- because it has changed my life. I think it's changed -- I hope it has changed his life. And -- ah -- my daughter was his first great grandchild. And when I saw him hold her for the first time, I saw that look in his eyes, and I feel that that -- has really been a wonderful part of his life, too, to have his family.

*Q: What have I not asked you?*

JOY BLACKISTON: That I think that's what -- what is inside of the man. His innate qualities, his love, his generosity, his caring, his understanding, are what have certainly helped him become who he is today.

Not just the education and the intelligence, which most people do know about. But -- but that inner warmth and -- and love.

(END OF TAPES 4 and 5)