

# Silent Generation

Unedited Transcripts of Audio Interview Questions  
with Writer and Executive Producer Laura R Patterson, Ph.D.

All Audio Tracks: <https://soundcloud.com/laura-patterson-ph-d/tracks>

Film trailers: <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/TrV9kTImLvo>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dXWUO4qW8u4>

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[What has been the most meaningful takeaway for me personally from working on this film?](#)

So one thing that I've realized in life, I'm going to get a little philosophical here, is that we often, there are people who are important to us in our lives, and we don't always know them at the time in life where we would have gotten along best.

And I'll use my grandparents as an example in that, that, you know, my grandparents passed away when I was in my 20s, and so I loved them, they loved me, we had a lot of wonderful experiences together, but there are a lot of things about their life, things they did, where I look back on that now as someone who's in my 40s, and I could connect with them now much better than I could connect with them when I was 20,

and I mean that makes sense because you know they were probably in their 50s or 60s at the time I'm thinking of, so you know now I'm much closer to the time in life that they were at, and I mean a silly example is that my grandma's sewing machine is sitting in the corner in my bedroom, and I would love for her to teach me how to use it.

I've been trying to learn how to use it, and it would be so much easier if she were sitting right there to tell me, and when I was 15 she would have loved to have taught me, but I had no interest because I was busy doing whatever I was doing as a 15 year old.

So you don't always align, like you know you don't always get, or maybe I'll say the relationship that you get with important people in your life is always contingent on the time at which you know each other, and I think in some ways that relationship continues to grow and evolve and change even if one of those people is no longer there yet.

And so when I look at this incident that the film is based on that happened with my grandmother, and the feelings that raised in me about the disconnection that the elderly face in our society, about my culpability in that, about wishing I had been closer and more able to provide the connection that my grandparents needed, you know I, although at that time in life I didn't know those things, I feel like I learned those things.

and now even though my grandparents aren't here it feels like a little bit of a penance or something I guess to be able to put this messaging and to put this film out there and start these conversations that really I think would have helped me had I been exposed to them when I was 20 and so I guess that's probably the biggest thing I personally took away from the film was the ability to I won't say change but I guess comment on or try to change in someone else's life something that in my own life you know I would like to have gone a bit differently.

### [What role does technology play in the film's portrayal of isolation and loneliness among the elderly?](#)

So this is an interesting question because at first, the reason that I had the older technology in this film and I had an old ringer washing machine was simply because this was, that was the actual type of washing machine that injured my grandmother in a very similar incident.

And so the idea that this, first of all, could happen. And secondly, just a throwback to the idea that there's so much knowledge and experience that's lost through generations. You know, I grew up watching my grandma use this ringer washing machine.

And so to me, it was a very, I don't know, kind of homey and common experience, but I knew that viewers of this film would not necessarily have had that experience growing up. I think it was very abnormal that my grandma was using a ringer washing machine in, you know, the year 2000.

So that was a, I just always felt like that was a bit of a privilege to get to see something from that time period. So that was my initial reason for wanting to use the ringer washing machine. But it turned out that we, we kind of, I don't know if I'll say, lucked, but found our way into even more interesting commentary around technology when we wanted to move the ringer washing machine into Leo,

our main actor's basement, because he was the person who was you know, we filmed this in his house. And I wanted to move out his, you know, present day washing machine and move in the old washing machine because that's the setup that my grandmother had.

And when we tried to do that, Leo got very upset about the potential for us to mess up his plumbing. And I'm not a plumber, so I will give him that. So we decided so that he was not afraid of his plumbing that we would just put the old washing machine, you know, the ringer washing machine there along with the present day washing machine.

And as we were having conversations about this, you know, prior to the filming and, you know, should we really push him on like moving out the washing machine that's kind of weird. Do we want them both there.

It dawned on us that actually This made a lot of sense because the idea that, you know, an older generation would be more comfortable with older technology, and yet may try to take those strides forward.

Like he, you know, the character Pete in the film, bought the new washing machine, had it right there, had instructions on the wall on how to use it, and still ended up going back to his technology because he never felt comfortable with the new one.

And so we ended up filming that shot purposefully to show the present -day washing machine behind the older one that he's now using. And on the left -hand side of the screen you see a present -day, like a modern dryer, but in front of it is an old drying rack that he's using instead.

### So when was the last time I called?

I will say with my grandparents who this film was based on, I called you know once a week probably at least and I felt pretty good about that and one of the things that we discussed when coming up with you know the tagline for this film of when was the last time you called was that first of all absolutely people need to be calling and people need to be in touch but secondly there's a throwback to American culture in that as well because thinking that calling is enough is not necessarily enough right like you know I was certainly in contact with my grandparents by phone when the incident that inspired this short happened and that was not enough contact to be closely enough I guess involved in their lives that to avoid this happening in the first place and so I think it's very important to call and certainly if you're out of state that's often you know the best you can do but I think it's also very important to make efforts to be even more involved in that if possible and my parents actually just moved into a basically like an in -law suite house separate house but same property so like they're right in my backyard pretty much and I feel really good about that because the experiences I went through with my grandparents and being far away from them when they were aging just made me very aware that if at all possible I wanted to be much more immersed in my parents life as they age so that I could try to avoid these sorts of just avoid these sorts of situations and give them the support that I think the elderly really need in our society

## What inspired me to select the song at the end of the film?

So my initial idea for the song at the end of the film was that I wanted Guy Lombardo's Enjoy Yourself It's Later Than You Think. And the reason I wanted that song is because that song has always super creeped me out.

My grandparents liked that song and so I remember listening to that song with them, I mean back on their you know super old -timey, I think it was AM850WRMR back in Cleveland, but on their super old -timey radio station.

And it was creepy because it's all about just that like enjoy your life because it's going to be over very soon and knowing at the time that I was listening to the song that the people who were recording the song were now all dead and that just that resonated with me and it's something I carried with me.

And so we initially tried to get that song for the closing of the short and it was way more difficult than I thought it was going to be. And I have really good friends, the Constant Tourists, so Cassie and Nate Sanchez, who are in a band as I said the Constant Tourists, and they offered generously to do a song for the end of the film kind of in the spirit of the song that I was hoping to get for the film.

And we were at a relatively tight time crunch and I was absolutely floored and amazed by how they came up with the idea for this song really quickly. I think did a fantastic job and I have to say I'm so much happier with the song that they put together than the song I initially wanted.

So kudos to Cassie and Nate and to the Constant Tourists for having done this this amazing song for us. And really I think just capturing the spirit of the short in a way that I'm baffled by their ability to have done this so so well.

I absolutely love it. Link to The Constant Tourist music video:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KZpYldMUP5w>

## What unique perspective do I think my role as a female filmmaker brings to this project?

So I teach a class at the University of Colorado called Gender, Race, and Chainsaws, and it's about horror films and, you know, representation in horror films, what horror films teach us about society, what kinds of people they tell us we should be, and you know, one of the big things that we talk about in that class is that the person telling the story is going to tell the story from their vantage point, and when you look at the film industry and you have a bunch of, you know, historically, we'll say rich white men, straight, white straight men, cisgender men, right, telling stories, that is a, there's a certain perspective that's being overrepresented, and so I think my awareness from the information I present in this class to students is that we need multiple perspectives out there, and I think being able to,



you know, be a female filmmaker and put my voice out kind of into the sea of horror films which are out there, which is also a genre that is particularly underrepresented in terms of women, I think has just been a fantastic experience, and so in some ways I think I don't know that I can say as a woman I went into the film wanting to deliver, you know, particularly X, Y, or Z because I'm a woman, but I will say that as a woman I've had different experiences in my life than men have,

and I think being able to present a piece of, you know, a piece of art that comes from my perspective, and also to be able to, you know, provide an example to students in my class, to, you know, wider society that women have a place in this genre is really important.

### Can I share a memorable anecdote about tracking down the washing machine used in the film?

Absolutely I can. So the washing machine in this film came from someone named Lee Maxwell. And Lee Maxwell is fantastic.

He has a washing machine museum, a vintage washing machine museum in Fort Collins, Colorado. And he, it's amazing. It's an airplane hangar basically full of, I believe, 1,500 vintage washing machines.

I reached out to him because I was in need of a vintage ringer washing machine to film this short. And he was incredible and basically offered to keep an eye out for one because apparently, you know, when you Google vintage washing machines in Colorado, he's what comes up.

And people frequently would, you know, their grandparents or parents would pass away and there'd be an old washing machine in the basement. And they would often call him and say, what do I do with this thing?

And so he said, you know, the next time a washing machine shows up that meets your requirements, I'll let you know. And he did. About six months later, he contacted me and he said, hey, I've got a washing machine down in Denver in someone's basement and it's got your name on it.

So we were able to adopt this washing machine from a family that was moving it out of someone's house who had passed away. And the family was, of course, very excited that the washing machine was going to go on to be a movie star.

And if you ever have a chance, you absolutely need to check out Lee Maxwell's washing machine museum because it is fascinating. Absolutely fascinating. It's fascinating. He's an engineer and it is fascinating from an engineering perspective, but it's also fascinating from a social perspective.

I'm a sociologist and he really tailors this museum around the history of women's liberation and how that aligned or in some cases did not align with the advent of the washing machine and

messaging around support or really dislike among the population for washing machines and what that would do to women's free time.

### What inspired me to create a horror film about aging and isolation?

So I've always loved horror because horror is a genre that lets us dig into the worst experiences that people face, right? It lets us explore the pain and the suffering and all the terrible, terrible things that we go through.

And it gives us a space to do that artistically, and it gives us a space to do that with community. And I think we need more of that. I think we have plenty of experience, or I guess at least comfort maybe, dealing with the easy things in life.

But when you look at the things that we really, really struggle with, it's not always so easy for us to navigate that. And we often don't have a space and a forum to really connect with others around the most difficult moments that we face.

And so aging and isolation in particular, that's something that's terrifying to all of us. It's something that we all face moving forward. And I think when we look at our own future, we find it really scary.

I mean, the same thing a horror film does makes you hide your face and not want to look. I think we feel that way about our own futures when it comes to aging and the potential for isolation. And I also think we feel that way when we look at people in our lives who are farther along in that process than us.

And I can certainly say from experience that sometimes it's hard to look at. It's scary. And I think we need a space to have those kinds of cultural conversations together.

### How did my personal experiences inform the development of the film's characters and themes?

So this film is comes from a place very very very close to home. This is a largely true story about an incident that happened with my grandmother and it basically played out the way it does in the film except one notable difference was that my grandfather was still living there with her and so we found out you know I and my parents found out about this when we were talking to my grandfather on the phone one day and he's telling us the story about what happened with grandma last week and he's he started it with you know your grandma and basically she had injured herself in an old ringer washing machine that they had not quite as severe an injury as this but same to him downstairs with scissors to just cut off the injured part of her finger and he of course didn't do that he took her to the emergency room and you know he's telling us this story over the phone saying that the doctors at the emergency room were you know saying oh my gosh you absolutely couldn't have just cut it off my gosh you have to come in and you have to fix it and you know you would have lost the use of that finger and that would be super I was in my 20s probably at that time and I remember just being really struck by how needed it was for

people sort of entering into this much much older phase of life to have younger people around them people who could help them make these sorts of decisions and navigate these kinds of issues and I thought if my grandfather hadn't have been there this day would have gone very very differently and it was shocking to me how close we were to that having happened

### What are my thoughts on the concept of being forgotten and its impact on the elderly population?

So in some ways I would say the the impacts of being forgotten on the elderly population are pretty apparent both in this film and you know when we think about the idea of just being left alone right you're you're disconnected social isolation you know mental health problems related to social isolation and then very tangible problems when there aren't younger people around to kind of help you navigate everyday experiences or you know deal with problems that you might face.

And I think also one thing that I wanted to address in this film is that this this concept of being forgotten isn't only a negative impact on the elderly I mean it obviously it is very much so but it's also I would say a difficult experience for younger people because I don't think younger people necessarily realize that they're doing this they don't necessarily realize that they're not paying attention and that they're not aware of what's going on with the older generation until something terrible happens and that was really the situation I faced in my life where you know my grandma had this very serious incident and I was shocked and I remember actually being a little bit I'll say upset upset at society maybe for not having prepared me for this for not letting me know that I needed to be paying attention right I was unaware I think that the challenges that my grandparents would face as they got older would be as severe as they were and I think it took me by surprise as much as you know that isolation that they were experiencing I guess took me by surprise as well and so I really wanted to get messaging out there not only on how awful this is for the elderly population when they're forgotten although absolutely that is kind of the main point in a lot of ways of this film but also the need for awareness among the younger population that these kinds of things happen and in a sense I'll say will happen and you need to make a conscious effort not to forget and not to look away and not to get distracted I suppose by all the other things that society is telling you are important and to remember that you know these relationships you have with these very meaningful people in your lives need to be prioritized

### How does the film address issues related to healthcare access and quality for older adults?

So my main focus in this film was probably less on the healthcare side and more on the side of motivation, I guess you would say, or sort of the internal presence of mind and persistence and perseverance to, you know, of an older person who's injured who's experiencing some health problems, to want to go address that and get them fixed,

rather than maybe letting them go or deciding, you know, the scene where our character throws his finger in the trashcan is meant to be poignant because I think there is a point at which, at



least I've seen with older adults in my life, where there becomes this almost disregard for bodily integrity, like, ah, you know, my grandma, I remember, used to say, you know, I've got one foot in the grave and one on a banana peel,

and she was just kind of like, oh, well, whatever happens happens, but it's, you know, I got nine other fingers. It's not necessarily worth it. But I do think there's also room for commentary here on the need for an ambassador into the healthcare system, right?

The idea that, you know, older people may not feel comfortable. We talked about technology a little bit with the technology with the, just the sort of social and cultural environment of the healthcare system.

And so when older people are disconnected from society and don't have, you know, a younger generation there to kind of shepherd them through these experiences, that they might be very just, you know, uncomfortable seeking out healthcare.

And really, I think the, I don't know if I'll say unsuitability, but like the need for the healthcare system to reach out to people like that and to be welcoming and comfortable for people in that position.

### What do I hope viewers will take away from the film in terms of understanding the challenges faced by the elderly?

I really hope that the main takeaway from this film is to look, to pay attention. I think it's very easy for us or tempting to us to look away from the elderly in our society, not only because I think the cultural messaging kind of directs us in that way.

I don't think there is a lot of cultural awareness, at least in American society, about the plight of the elderly. But I also think that there's just a fear of paying attention and looking and really having our eyes open to what's going on.

And I appreciate the horror genre for a lot of reasons, but one of the things I really like about horror, and I appreciate in horror films, is when horror makes you look at the violence that you don't want to pay attention to.

And it just drags you in brutal detail through something that is culturally relevant, is an important problem that people are facing in society, and also that we as viewers may be inclined to not want to look at.

Because I think the experience of an audience member wanting to turn away from the screen and cover their eyes really fits our experience in society and in the world. And so that's what I hope that people will get out of this film.

I hope they'll leave with a sense of unease, and also really with a sense of awareness and having their eyes open to places in their own life where these problems are apparent, where there are older people who could use more support and aren't getting that support.

## How do I think silent generation contributes to broader conversations about aging and social norms in our society?

So as a sociologist it's always very important to look not just at our own lives and our own individual choices and individual experiences but also at how society is directing us you know in certain ways right and when we think about aging and we think about social isolation I think there is a whole lot of I was gonna say a lot of societal messaging telling us to look away but really I suppose it's not so much that maybe a little bit but probably more so there's a lot of societal messaging saying pay attention to this other flashy thing right pay attention to you know I mean consumerism or football or whatever it is right like like stuff going on in our youth and the things that have that I guess take a lot of bandwidth and are not necessarily meaningful in our lives and I think this film really attempts to put on full display some of the very very important issues that we as a society are looking away from.

## As a first-time filmmaker, what were the biggest challenges I faced in bringing silent generation to life?

Oh my gosh, everything. Everything. I wanted to do this short for a very long time and I started checking off some of the more, I won't say easy, but easy for me to conceptualize steps to getting to the short.

The first one was acquire a ringer washing machine and that took like a year and a half. By the time I finally tracked down the washing machine, I got some special effects supplies and started playing with that and so I had a lot of these ideas in place but I had no idea how to move forward with them.

Absolutely none and I ended up meeting Kenny, one of the producers on this film at a work conference and Kenny is involved in the industry and Kenny talked to me and said, hey we can make this happen and I was shocked and I told him like that would be amazing and I also totally don't believe you because I don't even know where to go.

I don't even know what steps I could possibly be in this but there must be huge and overwhelming and daunting and I'm so thankful to Kenny for shepherding me through that process and really helping with so much of the technical pieces and who needed to be involved and how to organize it because I had no idea and also wow it was really amazing just seeing how many people come together to produce a film like this and how important everyone's role is and it was an absolutely wonderful and fascinating eye -opening experience and I am so incredibly thankful for having met Kenny and for his ability to help out with this film because it never would have gotten to where to where it is without him.