

## Oral History Interviews, Milwaukee-Downer Reunion Weekend 2006

### Interview #2 with Audrey Schumacher Moe, class of 1956

By Julia Stringfellow

Briggs Hall room 424

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Start [00:00:00]

#### 1. Could you please state your name?

This is Audrey Schumacher Moe.

#### 2. When did you graduate from Milwaukee-Downer?

1956.

#### 3. And what was your degree in?

Liberal Arts, I majored in English and minored in History and French.

#### 4. Why did you choose to attend Milwaukee-Downer?

I think it was a fluke more than anything else. Someone had given Downer my name and then Downer contacted me. It was an excellent place for me to be because I really didn't have any money to go to college, and they gave me a campus job and a student loan. And then I got to live in Holton Hall in Sky Parlor, which was a room of four people rather than one or two, so it was the cheapest room. And it was great, it got me through school and got me my degree.

#### 5. What was the transition like going from high school to college?

I'm not even sure what that was like. I think at the time it was just part of life, it was something that you did. It was exciting and it was wonderful, probably the best part of it all. Suddenly you're out on your own, this is it, this is life.

#### 6. What were some traditions at Milwaukee-Downer that you participated in?

I participated in everything that went on in our class. I was elected class president of the freshmen, so that made me an automatic second Hat Girl. And then that also meant during Hat Hunt, I was the one who got picked on and ordered around and all that kind of thing. Which at the time I didn't really understand, I didn't quite catch on what Hat Hunt was all about. It's too bad because I could have had a lot more fun with it had I really caught on what this was all doing. Instead I think I kind of went through it. I was thinking of one thing that happened afterwards where we as the yellow class were going to get back at the green class. They conducted Hat Hunt for us of course.

What we decided to do, and I think I was the main instigator as I remember, we were going to fill up the city students' locker room with crumpled up newspaper. So we saved the newspaper and we got together and I don't even know how we achieved this, but somehow or other we managed to get into the city students' locker room when no one was around with these piles of newspaper and we crumpled newspaper forever, we thought we could actually fill it up. And of course hours and hours later it was a foot deep of crumpled newspaper, maybe two feet in some places, we were stained from newsprint and sick of crumpling and so on. But it did make quite a statement. When the city students came in and here was this locker room with all this crumpled newspaper, and then of course we really got into trouble because that was a fire hazard which was something we never thought about. I remember worrying a little bit because the word around school was we were really going to be in trouble for this, but actually nothing happened. I think probably they never knew who was really responsible and nobody ever actually told. One of those student pranks.

Then I participated in probably almost everything that went on, because as second Hat Girl I honestly didn't have any choice which was great, it was wonderful. At one point I was elected president of Holton Hall, that was one of the dorms. I served in that capacity. I was elected Prom Queen and my husband of fifty years now was Prom King because we were dating at that time. That was Courtney Moe. Most of my classmates, probably all of them, knew Courtney. He came to a few other things. So that was kind of fun.

**7. Did you meet him while you were a Downer student?**

No, we met in seventh grade back in Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin. But I did date while I was at Downer this other friend of mine from high school, he was going to Harvard and he came home, he lived in Milwaukee. I would date him and I have to admit that I think the curfew for Holton Hall was something like eight o'clock, maybe it was even seven o'clock. We didn't have a lot of leeway. When I had a date with Bruce, I actually would sneak in and stay out later. And a friend would either open the door for me or prop it open so I could get in. So I have to admit I did do those things.

[00:05:47]

**8. Tell me more about your involvement with crew, about how the teams were chosen.**

That's right, I was on the crew, that was one of my activities. The other thing I loved, too, was field hockey. I remember one of the games I was the only person who made a goal, I was so excited about that. At that time women in high school, we didn't have the opportunity to participate in sports and I love sports. At Downer it was fun, we had a field hockey team, and then crew was really nice. I really liked that. I was the number one star, the oar number one on the star side. I really looked forward to the practice sessions on the river, then the regattas with all the excitement. And of course those wooden boats, they were dinosaurs to get into the water. I can still see Miss Heimbach there in her grey suit. We're all wearing our white shorts and yellow blouses. And of course the pictures

are wonderful because we all weighed, 85 or 90 pounds, we were all skinny little things. I loved crew, that was a wonderful activity. At the time it also seemed kind of exotic because not every school had crew. And I'm delighted that it continues on here.

**9. What time of year did the regatta occur and was it the different classes going against each other in rowing?**

Yes, it was the different classes because there were no other schools around with rowing teams. So we had no one to compete against except each other. So it was intramural contribution, not contribution, competition.

**10. Was there a particular professor or professors at Milwaukee-Downer that really made an impact on your life, that were very influential?**

I will tell you a funny story, this is not what you're asking but Miss Dart was my French teacher and she was really a dear, she was an absolute darling. Languages are not easy for me, and I had Spanish in high school, so I used to get mixed up between French and Spanish. And I had this campus job so I didn't always have time to really study and study hard. There were I think only four people in my French class. And in translating, I remember one time sitting in class with dear Miss Dart, she's going through, I forgot what French literary thing we were reading, and suppose to have translated, and the pages in my book were not cut. I had to cut them with my hand, showing that I had not read the assignment and I had not done my translation. And she's sitting three feet from me, it's not as if she's way up in front or something. I just remember that she was so discreet, she never said one word to me. And of course it was just totally obvious, that was the kind of dear person she was. She understood that you didn't always do your assignment.

My campus job was with Miss Hawley who was the art teacher. And I loved it, that may be how I got into art afterwards because after I went to Downer, when my children were in junior high and grade school in Los Angeles I went to Woodbury and got another degree in Art and Design. And of course now I write books and I illustrate books. I think Miss Hawley helped a lot, because she would screen prints for something and she would set up the screen and I would do the screen printing for her. If she was doing woodblocks, whatever she was doing, she taught me how to do it and then I did it. It was a great campus job for me. I think I was a very good assistant for her, because otherwise they would have transferred me to something else. That was a good system. So Miss Hawley, she was also a dear person.

**[00:10:44]**

**11. What was the relationship like between the students and the faculty and the administration?**

It was very close. You saw your teachers at various times when you weren't in class, you could always talk to them, have a personal conversation. It was a very friendly and close atmosphere. I just talked to Marjory Irvin, and I never had her for anything because I was

not musical. And she said, "Oh yes, but I remember you." And I was actually startled, because why would she remember me? I never had a class with her. And she said, "I remember that one time you were, you had just come from gym class. You were always very, very thin. And so you said, 'According to this chart, I'm 23 pounds underweight,'" and she said Natalie Ferguson, who is a good friend of mine, was sitting next to me, who was not as skinny as I was. She said Natalie looked at the chart and she said, "Well, according to this chart, I should be seven feet tall." That's the kind of relationship that Marjory Irvin would remember. That wouldn't happen if there was a huge amount of students and you had very little contact. That's probably one of the wonderful things about Downer, there was so much personal contact, not just with the students, but with the faculty and the administration.

**12. What was it like living in Milwaukee and going to school there? Was there a lot of work out in the city, like volunteer work?**

No, I think we were, for me anyway, we were pretty well, I don't want to say confined, but usually stayed on campus, because of course we had this gorgeous campus, the north end of Milwaukee. As beautiful as Lawrence is, Milwaukee-Downer was very, very beautiful, very, very traditional, and the gargoyles on the water spouts and big gothic library with the leaded windows and window seats and all that. It was a very wonderful place to be, and to a large extent we pretty much stayed on campus. Sometimes we took a bus downtown, and when I did some student teaching, I'd take a bus. But basically pretty much we were on the campus. I didn't really get to know Milwaukee very well. I did have hamsters in the dorm room.

**Were those allowed?**

No, and actually the two that I had as you can imagine morphed into four or five babies. And I used to put them in a drawstring purse and I'd take them home with me when I went home on weekends, taking the bus to Fort Atkinson. I'd put my hamsters in this little drawstring handbag and carry them with me and take one out and play with it on my lap until somebody sitting in another seat nearby I thought was going to get a kick out of seeing a hamster. And I had an experience with one of the babies, this was not on the bus, it was in the dorm room, it ran up my sleeve, a long sleeve jacket I had, ran up my sleeve, and I never saw it again. I have no idea where this hamster disappeared to, obviously it ran up my sleeve and down somewhere and got away, and I never found it. We never had a problem with rats or mice or hamsters. You do these things, you figure out what you can do that is against the rules that you can get away with.

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**13. What do you feel were the benefits of going to an all-women's college and how do you think that has influenced you even after graduating from Milwaukee-Downer?**

I think it gave me, it gave all of us a real sense of ourselves as individuals, as people, and not in relationship to someone else, but as a distinct person. I think that was the

wonderful thing about Downer. At the time I kind of wondered whether being at an all-girls' school was the best thing. But it never bothered me, and I really enjoyed it. I really wouldn't have wanted it to happen any other way. I want my granddaughters to have that kind of experience, I doubt that they can today. It's almost too bad, because it does give you such a sense of yourself, encourage you to be the creative one, to do what you can do in the world, rather than as in addition to somebody else. I think that would be the greatest thing, just development of self.

**14. When there were vacations at Milwaukee-Downer, or time away from school, did you do any traveling, going abroad, or visiting other places?**

Not when I was in college, I really didn't, I didn't have enough money to go traveling or anything like that. But we did one interesting thing. A couple from Chicago, an elderly couple did put out a call for a cook and a housekeeper for a summer on Nantucket Island. My roommate and I answered their call. Kate was a Home Economics major, so she could do the cooking and I could do the cleaning. As it turns out we switched roles, I did the cooking and she did the cleaning. Anyway, this couple paid for our airfare and we flew out to Nantucket Island and stayed in this house where we had this little apartment in this elderly couple's summer home. And we cooked and cleaned and explored Nantucket and had an absolutely wonderful experience doing that. That was probably about it as far as travel because I didn't have the money to go traveling.

**15. The interview is nearly over. Is there anything you'd like to add or any stories you'd like to tell about, or a favorite memory at Milwaukee-Downer?**

I think if I had thought about it ahead of time I probably could have come up with a lot of memories and specific things. I guess I'll say that the whole four years and everything that went on was a favorite time in my life. My life has been wonderful since, but that was a very good start.

**Thank you, this will conclude the interview.**

**End [00:18:18]**