

Oral History Interviews with Emeriti Faculty
Interview with Marjory Irvin
Interviewed by Julia Stringfellow
Location: Lawrence University Archives
Lawrence Reunion Weekend
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Transcription done by Cassie Cobb, 2008

[Start: 00:00:00]

J: This is the first oral history interview for June 15, 2007. This is being done for the Lawrence reunion weekend. The interviewer is Julia Stringfellow. The interview is taking place at the Lawrence Archives. Could you please state your name?

M: Marjory Irvin.

J: Where and when did you teach?

M: I taught at Milwaukee-Downer College from 1948 to 1964, at which time I came to Lawrence where I taught until 1987, when I took early retirement and moved to Kentucky.

J: And what did you teach at the two schools?

M: I taught generally music, always piano and music theory. And at Milwaukee-Downer occasionally some other courses, but always music related and at Lawrence it was piano and theory, except for my first year when I taught piano pedagogy.

J: And what was the teaching experience at Milwaukee-Downer like? What memories would you like to share regarding that?

M: The teaching experience... it was not just the teaching experience, it was the total interaction with the students, because it was never just the teaching, the teaching I did, the piano lessons were one on one, the theory classes were always very tiny, I think my largest class was five. Once I taught music theory for one person only.

J: Oh, wow.

M: So, it was not a terribly crowded course. Music appreciation, that's what I taught at Milwaukee-Downer that I'm most famous with Milwaukee-Downer people for because that was a requirement for graduation, for the BA degree.

J: Okay.

M: And so I got most of them in there, those tended to be much larger classes; we sometimes had to bring in extra chairs. And, in my teaching of that course, my students changed the way I taught it, drastically. I remember one, I used to teach it with the "drop the needle tests" – I dropped the needle most any place and they had to identify what that piece of music was and the composer. Some did that very easily, and for some it was almost impossible. And the day of the test, I walked into the room to hear one of my students who was having trouble say to the rest of the class, "Now Mozart's

Fourth Movement is ba, ba ,bababaaaaaa.” And I suddenly realized, drop the needle is not the best way to teach this course, and it caused me to revamp it until it became a very good course. But that was a revelation. Changes you for life.

And the teaching of music theory was so informal with so few people there, you don't stand up and lecture. A lot of interaction with the students, in class and out. They were forever beating upon the door. But it was very rewarding; they were nice people and bright girls. Did you know that the percentage of alums who get PhDs, doctorates, the percentage is higher for Milwaukee-Downer graduates than it is for Lawrence graduates? Which is amazing to me, that these women have gone on to advanced degrees in such high numbers.

[00:05:08]

J: It's amazing.

M: Do you want my teaching experience at Lawrence too, or just at Milwaukee-Downer?

J: We can, let's do Milwaukee-Downer first. How big was the music department at Milwaukee-Downer?

M: When I first went there, there were four. When I finished up there were two. The enrollment declined precipitously, as you must know. And there were two of us who played the piano and taught various things, and one singer, and one violinist. And that covered the waterfront pretty much. The singer didn't teach any classes at all, as I recall, the classwork was up to the three of us. She taught just voice, and conducted the choir, such as it was.

J: Let's see, now when you were at Milwaukee-Downer, professors usually lived on campus with students, correct?

M: In the early days, yes. And that was different. Our salaries were so low, that there was no way we could afford to live off campus for the most part. And so we were provided with a room, for a fee, it was taken out of our salary, a room and I think every meal except Sunday evening. I think we had to go out Sunday evening, otherwise all meals were provided. And we ate together, faculty and students. At each student table, there was one faculty member, and the student who was referred to as the vis-à-vis, who was supposed to help guide conversation. It was rather formal, served by maids, they brought the food to the table, and they cleared, as I recall. I don't recall students doing that work. But, then there were more faculty on campus than there were tables of students, these were tables for eight. So some of the faculty were not assigned to students tables, they just ate together. And the food was remarkably good. Sometimes it was downright elegant. But always good, extremely good food. This all changed with the advent of John B. Johnson, Jr., when he became president. He did not think this was a healthy situation. And so he upped the salaries, gradually, and when he got them to that point where people could afford to live off campus, he indicated that must happen. So all faculty moved off campus.

J: So he didn't think the faculty should be living with the students?

M: No, he didn't, and I think that we lost something when the faculty moved off campus. But, we gained independent lives, for the faculty, which was nice. It was nice both ways

J: Was the transition going from living on campus to living off campus, was that a smooth transition, or...?

M: Most of us wanted to get off campus, but simply couldn't afford it. But there were some who didn't want to move and they'd lived there forever and living off campus was just not, not an ideal thing for them. So that was difficult for a few, but not for most.

J: It sounds... I mean the dinners, having a student who is in charge of conversation, must have been some very strong riveting conversations taking place at the dinner table every evening.

M: I think so. I don't recall those too well, I remember more the faculty conversations when I was at faculty table, because there were some memorable ones there. I remember one evening in particular when the religion professor started talking about the idea of how many angels could dance on the head of a pin. This famous theory... and the biology professor who was a very acerbic lady listened as long as she could stand it and then she went "Hummmph. Angels. The only creatures known to man with two pair of pectoral appendages, conceived by a celibate clergy, who, unable to imagine them without arms, tacked them on." One tends to remember things like that. That was Miss Penny, she was professor of Biology. As I say, very acerbic.

One morning at faculty table it fell to my task to pour coffee for everybody and pass the cups around. And that's, you know, somewhat dangerous, spilling in the saucer, I didn't fill them too full. She said, "I want a half a cup," so I poured her a half a cup and passed it around and she passed it right back and said, "I meant, of course, the top half." When you're half asleep...

The faculty table conversation was pretty interesting.

[00:10:00]

J: Sounds like it! What were some of the student activities that the faculty were active in, for example, the Hat Hunt.

M: The Hat Hunt, let me tell you on and on into the night about Hat Hunt.

J: Please do, that sounds like such a fascinating activity.

M: First of all, its origin. At Downer College, not Milwaukee-Downer, at Downer College in Fox Lake, one evening, I think a Sunday evening, a local minister was invited to come and speak to the girls and he left behind his high silk hat. And instead of turning it into the office to be returned to him, the girls for some reason or another, kept it. And the next spring, they decided to hide it and make the freshmen find it. And that's where it all began. They would give clues as to where it was and then it evolved... it moved to Milwaukee-Downer College when the two merged.

The hunting used to be indoors, until the girls got so violent about it, that they were tearing up floorboards looking for that hat, and that was why it was decreed from on high that it should be outdoors at all times, so it got to be outdoors. When I first arrived at Milwaukee-Downer College it was about three and a half months long. The girls, the freshmen, had to braid their hair in however many braids the sophomores decreed, like 13 or 17, they had to braid them and they could undo the braids for the day, but they had to come to school on the bus with their hair in braids and it got shortened as the enthusiasm waned over the years, it got shortened to about four days, by about 1961.

And there were traditions within the traditions that were very important to people. There were, for example, costumes, they all wore traditional jeans and jean jackets, which were unwashed throughout the ages, this was sacred dirt on them and they were not to be washed. So they were all clothed in these filthy... these lovely pink and white girls were clothed in these filthy clothes. And then there were other things, they were filthy because sometime toward the end of Hat Hunt there was a mud fight between the sophomores and the freshmen. They made lots and lots of mud... and everybody, freshmen and sophomores, ended up just caked. So therefore these clothes just got nothing but dirtier and dirtier. But it was very important.

There were also the Nightie Girls, there were two Nighties, as in night, Nightie. So these two nightgowns, patched and filthy, but it was a great honor to be a Nightie Girl. And the Nightie Girls were obliged to do an act together. Speaking of acts, the sophomores, as this thing developed, delayed the hunt by demanding to be entertained. So the freshmen would have to come up with an act individual or group, the Nightie Girls always had to perform together, whatever they did, generally song and dance. And they had to entertain the sophomores on demand and they didn't really give the clue that would lead them to the hat until the last day when the sophomores decided they should find the hat that day.

And there was also the Tune Box. All throughout the freshman year, the sophomores lurked to find some girl who could not carry a tune. And then the Tune Box, she was then awarded the Tune Box and she was required to sing, which she couldn't do and they would say "Terrible, terrible, get your tune in the box," and she would stick her head in the box and then come out and sing just as badly, but everybody seemed to love it, including the girl.

Then there were the Hat Girls, the girl who found the hat was the First Hat Girl and she was carried around on a litter for 24 hours. Her feet were not allowed to touch the ground. It was a big deal. The other girls carried her around and the freshman class president was the Second Hat Girl. Those two between them chose the third girl. And the Fourth Hat Girl was elected by all the last hunters. There were two degrees of hunters, there were the Last Hunters who did everything, and then there were the Three-day Hunters, the Three-day Hunters maybe didn't have the enthusiasm and maybe they didn't have the grade point average to be allowed to take time out to hunt hats. So, the Three-day Hunters were allowed to come to the hat banquet. But the Last Hunters were the only ones who had a hat emblem sewn onto their class jackets and that's kind of a big deal, so they all, all the Last Hunters elected the fourth girl and then I must tell you, there was the Honorary Hat Girl. That was a faculty member. And in the entire history of the hat, and you're getting a picture of how long that was, there were only three Honorary Hat Girls. The first one was Miss Thompson, who taught Classics. The second one was Miss Hadley, who taught English, and the third one was me. So there were only three of us and at one time as Milwaukee-Downer was closing down, we were all three alive and there. I've sort of had the feeling that old Hat Girls never die. But it was a great honor, we thought, but our faculty college looked down on us for this frivolous endeavor that we were engaging in.

[00:16:18]

J: How was the honorary faculty Hat Girl chosen?

M: By the Hat Girls. There was a Hat Committee, the Hat Girls from each year. The Senior Hat Girls, the Junior Hat Girls, the Sophomore, and they were the ones who would choose. Well there was no new Honorary Hat Girl until the old one retired, that was a for life proposition and I don't remember the year that I received that honor, whatever year Miss Hadley left college, which is late

50s, so I only had it for 5, 6, 7 years. But it was a great honor, because we always had to give a speech at Hat Banquet, related to the Hat and its history.

J: Great!

M: Ohh, and one other thing about that, I will not swear for the accuracy of this... but the girls told me that at one point prior to my arrival there, at one point Life Magazine wanted to do a feature on Hat Hunt...

J: I think they did.

M: Uh-Uh.

J: They didn't?

M: Uh-uh. They wanted to do a feature on Hat Hunt, but they wanted a blank check on what they could publish in the way of pictures. And the administration would not give it, because those girls looked awful, just awful! With the 13 braids or the 17 braids sticking out all over their heads and muddy clothes and maybe mud daubed on their faces, it was just... so since they were not allowed any censorship, they were not allowed to do it. I can't vouch for the accuracy, but that's what the girls told me.

J: That's very interesting. What was probably, the most interesting hiding spot for the hat while you were there?

M: There weren't any interesting hiding spots. There were under a rock, or within a circle of four trees or something. They weren't interesting at all. Sometimes it was actually in the little stream that flowed through there! They had to go dig in the mud to find it. It was in a glass jar, the hat, there were only shreds of felt left of the hat. They were in an oil-silk pouch. And they still are, they're here now...

J: Yes.

M: What's left of that hat still is here, but it had to be put in a glass jar if it was going to be buried in the water, so they dug with trowels. Mostly it was buried in an area, the clue put them in an area, and they all, this cluster of girls, were there digging with their trowels, making a great big hole in the ground. They were chanting. The crowd around them was chanting as they dug, "Sit where you diggin' and dig where you're sittin'." And this chant went on and on. Pretty soon someone would go clank with the trowel, and it was against the glass, and then it got very exciting as they unearthed it, and in a minute it was unearthed, that girl who pulled it out of the ground was put on this litter, and carried aloft.

J: Carried for one day.

M: Mmm-hmm, 24 hours. All over campus.

J: How did the Hat Hunt, did it interfere with class attendance, or getting studies done? Since it would last for a few weeks....

M: It did not interfere with class attendance so much as it interfered with the quality of the work. You anticipate, in the spring semester, for those who went out for Hat Hunt, their grades would go down a little. You're A minus student would become a B plus, your straight A student would become an A minus, it wasn't down a lot, but it would go down. You can't put that kind of time and energy into an enterprise without it affecting your other enterprises.

[00:20:19]

J: That's true. What were some other student activities that the faculty participated in, like Christmas plays, or Lantern Night?

M: We had a bunch of them. We did not participate in Student Government at all. That was literally student government. I think the Dean may have conferred and advised with the President from time to time, but we did not participate in that. Sports were very important to the girls. And they did them competitively, mostly, class to class. You know the classes had colors, and so they would wear the class colors and compete class to class. There were departmental clubs and the faculty member of that department was advisor of that club, as in I was advisor to the Aeolian Club, and the French department had a French Club, and Miss Dart was the advisor for that.

Then there was one activity that was purely faculty. And it only happened once every four years and that was Faculty Folly.

J: Oh, yes.

M: When I retired I brought my files of Faculty Follies and left them in the archives, they are here somewhere. The scripts and songs and whatever else, programs. It happened once every four years. I don't know that it was always true, but many times in the first act the faculty would roast themselves. Taking the role of another faculty member. In the second act, the faculty would roast the students, and in the third act, heaven only knows. It was fun and the students would agitate for us to do this, but we were eager.

Then there was Cabaret. Cabaret was a competitive thing. The seniors would produce a theme and the lower three classes would each write and produce and act in a skit related to that theme. And the faculty advisor, there was always a faculty advisor to each class, elected by the sister class. There were sister classes, freshmen, juniors, sophomores, seniors, I think that's how the faculty advisor was chosen. Anyway, that faculty advisor followed that class through the four years and helped with Cabaret and endeavored to keep it presentable, both in quality and material used. That was always a big deal. The class which I was advisor was not famous for its good Cabaret shows; they were infamous for their first one. The theme that year was something about 13, the clock strikes 13 or death comes at 13 hours, or something about 13. They took that as indicating that they should write a script in which 12 people were killed. One by one. It was, one member of the class decided they were not talented enough to do comedy, therefore they must do serious drama. By the time we were getting down to the, they finally ran out of time, it could only be a 20 minute skit, they had to kill 4 people at once, they were running out of time, by this time the audience was laughing! It was not a successful venture. But, sometimes the Cabaret skits were a lot of fun.

[00:25:41]

Then, there were special events, from time to time, happened spontaneously. There was one that I'll never forget, I think it was 1950, could have been '51. It was one of the two. The class of '51

decided to put on a minstrel show, now whether that was just for fun, or whether it was to raise money or what, I don't recall. But they were going to do a minstrel show. And they did a very fine minstrel show. But, in the early 1950s minstrel shows were not acceptable to the black community. We didn't have a black community, so we had no inside voice to tell us this was not acceptable. When that show was performed, the police were in attendance to be sure there were no riots. It was a very innocent thing, as far as the girls were concerned, but it was not politically correct. But we didn't talk about political correctness in 1950. So, I got involved with that because I made an arrangement of something or another for their quartet to sing. I don't remember what the song was right now, but I made a quartet arrangement for them and they sang it very well. And no, there were no demonstrations, and nothing happened. The police were there to be sure it didn't happen. But that was just a one shot deal, that was nothing like tradition or anything.

Then Regatta, the boat races every spring. The faculty were not involved in that except for the PE faculty who were very involved, and I was generally involved, because I was the finish line judge. My best friend taught PE, that's how I got drafted. It's terrible to be a finish line judge because it was always on the slant across the river, never straight, always on slant. All these people who were going to get between me and that point across the river that I had to keep my eye on. So the faculty in that a little bit, but mostly it was just the girls and it was the eight-girl shells that they used. It was a very important thing for a class to win that race. It was always done by classes.

And there was another activity, that the faculty were not, well I can't say that... there were the mixers, wherein young men were brought onto campus and there was dancing and mixing. And I can't say that the faculty weren't involved because one of my colleagues in the music department met her husband at a mixer! And departed from Milwaukee-Downer College!

Then there was something else that was strictly Milwaukee-Downer College and it was great fun. I got, I had the great privilege of being invited to these parties. There was one girl who lived within 10 or 12 blocks of campus and she had a huge basement in her home. So the kids would just decide to have a party and it was a bring-your-own-beer kind of situation... so the girl provided nothing for the party... just the space. They invited me with some frequency to these parties. For entertainment we would sit around and sing and then we would do Hat Hunt acts. And I had to develop one. So I entertained them with my turn, too. But those, it was such a wonderful feeling of anyone could come. Absolutely open, but not faculty, you had to be invited. So it was a very great honor, you have to understand that.

J: Now where were... when the different, the Faculty Follies were held, what building was that usually held in?

M: Always held in Merrill Hall Chapel. That was where everything was held, including the daily chapel.

J: Okay.

M: I came to Milwaukee-Downer College faculty quite by accident, actually, because part of my job was to play the organ for chapel and I assumed having come from a Methodist school where chapel was once a week that this would be once a week. Had I known that it was daily, I would have accepted the other job! My failure to read the catalogue before signing the contract gave me the life I had!

[00:30:05]

J: Was there a particular denomination that the college was affiliated with?

M: I don't think so. I know it wasn't Methodist and I'm pretty sure it wasn't Presbyterian and if there is any other kind that has colleges... Episcopalians don't have colleges, do they?

J: They may, I'm not sure.

M: I don't know of any off the top of my head. I just think there was no church affiliation. Way back there may have been, but in 1948 there sure wasn't. But there was this daily chapel. Required attendance.

J: How long did it usually last?

M: About 20 minutes.

J: Okay.

M: I think it began at something like 1:00, and classes began at 1:30. So, there we were having chapel everyday.

J: Now, tell me something about the presidents of Milwaukee-Downer that you worked with.

M: They were both wonderful people. Miss Briggs, I would say, was a cultured gentlewoman. She was not a beautiful woman, but she was attractive and very refined, and her love for the college knew no bounds. I think it is true, I heard, from reliable sources, that when the trustees insisted that she have a raise that raise was given to the college. That gives you a notion of her... she had an apartment, she lived on campus, she had an apartment in Holton Hall. I think it had two rooms, and her invalid mother lived with her. That was their quarters and she would invite people in on a Sunday afternoon for a glass of sherry. That was the only liquor that was ever on campus. Miss Briggs' sherry. And nobody ever got inebriated from that, I can tell you. She had honorary degrees from everywhere, she was widely, in Wisconsin mostly I think.

J: She had an honorary degree from here because I have the correspondence between her and Henry Wriston when she received the degree.

M: And I think from other colleges, at least one other. So it was multiple honorary degrees. She had a very great love for music, it was just ... she would make the statement that her favorite Brahms symphony is the last one I heard. She just really loved it and she was a very kind woman. She could come up with some very pithy remarks. As in when somebody would forget something she would say "I have found that the shortest pencil is better than the longest memory. I've lived by that. I write it down."

And John B. Johnson was indeed a gentleman and a scholar. He was a man of honor, a brilliant speaker and a brilliant writer, and a marvelous, marvelous sense of humor. He did a lot to raise faculty salaries. When he hired new people, he hired them at higher salaries than we were getting and he endeavored to make things fairer by giving bigger raises to those of us with the lower salaries and smaller raises to the new people with the higher salaries. His sense of fair play was just remarkable. He established, not by himself, but he saw to the faculty's establishing requirements for tenure and promotion. Did you know that when we merged the Downer faculty had tenure and the Lawrence

faculty did not? And you better believe that changed in a hurry! Because that would be vastly unfair, but that was part of our equipment we came with. Those of us who had tenure had it, those who did not, did not... but we came with our tenure and the Lawrence faculty very quickly adopted our requirements for tenure and it was on.

He added more full-time men to the faculty.

J: Now, up until then the faculty had been a majority of women, right?

M: Right. There were part-time men and I think, prior to him, there had been one or two full-time men. But mostly it was part-time men, but he added full-time men to the faculty. He also hired some women, but he saw to it that there some men on the faculty because he thought that male authority figures were important, as much as women authority figures and I think he's right. I think if he had a fault, and it was a good fault, he put too much faith in the faculty. He had come up from the faculty ranks to be a college president and so his sympathies were with the faculty should be empowered because they were great, good people. It may come as a surprise to you but they are not always so. He simply put too much faith in the faculty and allowed decisions to rest with the faculty that should have been made in administratively. As I say, it was a fault in a sense it was a good fault... speaking as a faculty member.

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But he also put requirements for faculty performance that were impossible to meet. I told you there was always an advisor to everything the students did. Well, he decreed at one point that the faculty member would be held responsible for whatever the students did, but that they had no veto did for whatever the students proposed. Now, if you have full responsibility, but no authority to go with it, it's not fair. The first test case, that was mine. And I couldn't cope with it, I simply couldn't cope with it because the girls were stricken by the small budget they had for the dinner for their mothers. It was just a small budget and they wanted nice flowers. So one of them came up with the idea, we'll have our nice flowers, we'll go to the funeral home and get the flowers left over from the latest funeral. And I screamed, "No! You know you can't do that!" "Why not?" they said, and "they're fine flowers, and they're free." And they prevailed and I did not. Now to put that on my door as my fault was unfair.

And at the next Faculty Follies we had some one line that said something to the effect of, we simply pretended that we were at a dinner and said "It was a lovely dinner but there is just one thing: there was this ribbon on the flowers that said Rest in Peace!" It created something of a sensation! But they did it forever after, the kids thought it was such a wonderful idea that they haunted the funeral parlors and got their flowers from there. If he would not up the budget, what are you gonna do?

J: You have to work with what you have, I guess.

M: The kids were very, very enterprising and they coped very well with situations that went awry. There was one time that the menu printed for the mother's banquet listed, as the main course, Swill Steak. But the girl in charge of the dinner rose and addressed the assembled mothers and said I don't know if that was supposed to be Swiss Steak or Swell Steak, but I'm sure it will be both!

They could cope just wonderfully, they were marvelous girls.

J: Great! Who were some of the faculty or students that really impacted your life? That really made a strong influence while you were at Milwaukee Downer?

M: There were quite a number of faculty, I told you about the Presidents, both of whom impacted me. But the faculty member that impacted my life to the greatest extent was Miss Rossberg, who I think can be described as my mentor. Miss Rossberg was the Professor of German and she was a woman of uncompromising standards. Very difficult to live up to her standards, but they did not come down to your abilities, you came up to her standards or else. She was just absolutely a marvelous person, but with uncompromising standards, I repeat, that was what really characterized her. I did not really grow up properly until after her death, because I didn't have to. I could always ask Miss Rossberg, and she would make the hard decision for me. And I would then know what to do, but as I say she really was a mentor, I didn't, I was young, I didn't trust myself too much when it came to complicated decisions and she was always right there.

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And Miss Hadley who was my predecessor, as Honorary Hat Girl, was a perfectly wonderful teacher and a wonderful human being. She, unlike Miss Rossberg, was more understanding of human foibles. Her standards were equally high, but she understood that people sometimes did not live up to them. I told you about Miss Pinney. I should tell you about Miss Chase. Miss Chase taught History and she was a tall, slender, distinguished looking woman with white hair. Rather lovely, rather beautiful, but she was one of the most fastidious people I have ever known in my life; and I was utterly intimidated when one day at lunch we were served bananas. Just whole bananas. And I only know one way to eat a banana: I peel it and eat it like an ape. Not Miss Chase! Miss Chase slit hers with a knife, spread the two halves apart and ate her banana with a spoon. I took my banana and left the table.

Miss Heimbach, Althea Heimbach, she was head of the PE Department. She was, she had one of the most delightful senses of humor I've ever encountered anywhere, anytime. She was just a joy and a delight to be around. I remember a faculty meeting, we were discussing an issue that was very hot, the opinions were very divided and emotions were running high. Henrietta McNary, more of her later, rose, smiled at everyone, and addressed the subject for five minutes, at the end of which nobody knew what she had said! She was very eloquent, but she was not totally clear in what she had to say. Whereupon Miss Heimbach rose to her feet and said, "Henrietta, tell me just one thing, are ya fer it, or agin it?" Whereupon Henrietta rose to her feet, spoke again at some length and we still didn't know!

Henrietta McNary, I think she founded the Occupational Therapy department at Milwaukee-Downer College, whether she founded it or not, she made it famous. As I say, she was an eloquent speaker, but not clear. Another example of her not clearness... a friend of mine who taught science was wishing to introduce a course in physical science which would be sixty percent of the first year physics and sixty percent of the first year chemistry combined in one course, and that sounded like a pretty good deal. So, she spoke to Henrietta one day and said, "Miss McNary, how will this change, impact the Occupational Therapy department?" Henrietta thought that over and she said, "I think that that would be better in some areas than others," smiled, and walked away. Very eloquent, but not totally clear. But she had charm coming out of her ears, utterly charming and a very beautiful woman, I think. She went to an Occupational Therapy convention in Texas and so charmed the people down there, they made her an honorary sheriff of Pitken County, Texas and gave her a badge which she wore with great pride.

Then there was Miss Kelbic. Miss Kelbic was the Head Resident of Johnson Hall where the faculty lived, but some students lived there, too. Miss Kelbic had a very, very strong personality. It was

almost a physical force. People seemed, the students seemed either to adore her or despise her, one or the other. There is no middle ground with Miss Kelbic. She had a tremendous devotion to the college and her transfer to Lawrence was not a happy one. It did not last. She departed almost immediately. One year, I think was all she stayed. Some plants can't be transplanted.

Those are the long timers, I won't give you my own list of personal friends because they were more newcomers. These people were there and entrenched before I even came to campus.

J: Where there any students that you had a strong relationship, that you stayed in contact with after they graduated?

M: Oh, my, yes. Not in any order, just as I think of them, I think first of Barbara Allen. Barbara Allen had a mother who had come to Milwaukee-Downer College, her name I believe was Charlotte Drummer Allen. I don't know what class she was in, but Barbara has the distinction, she was one of the most brilliant students I've ever had anywhere or anytime. She went through Milwaukee-Downer in three years. I think an English degree. She went on for advanced studies and she, after a brief time of teaching at Principia, she went into Foreign Service. And she served in a lot of places, she was in Tanzania, she was in, what was then called Leningrad in Russia, and then she went back to an African nation. She was moving up in rank each time. In the African nation she was getting on a plane to come home and something bit her, by the time she got home, she was dying, and she promptly did die. At a very young age, early 40s I think. The healthiest specimen you could ever imagine. But when she was in Leningrad she came to visit me, I had a sabbatical in Paris, so she came to visit me and stayed. I had not a spare bed, but a sort of couch that we put on the floor and would be okay. And she stayed with me and while she was there, my apartment became the center for immigrant Russians and my phone would ring and the voice would say, "May I speak with Ba-ba-ra," so then the conversation would proceed in Russian.

[00:46:20]

So I don't know what all that was all about, but she had brought messages from people in Russia whose families had come to the West. They were eager to get those messages that she had for them. Good old diplomatic pouch. And there it is. But she was utterly and completely memorable. She was in my theory class. She was a very enterprising girl. She organized a kidnapping of me one day when the class kidnapped me and took me off somewhere, we partied for the better part of a day! It was delightful. We didn't get much taught that day. She was just a memorable, memorable student. I just loved and adored her. She got some sort of a posthumous award from Lawrence, I urged it, and made a good enough case for it.

And then there was Marty and Muggy. M-U-G-G-Y, a nickname for Marguerite. Marty and Muggy. They were in the class of '53. They were both piano students and music majors. They became a two-piano team that played for many programs. I had them doing the Vio Scaramouche and the Brahms Haydn Variations, I don't know what else, but at least that. They played everywhere. They were just a joy and delight, the both of them. I saw Muggy for the last time at a Milwaukee-Downer reunion class of '53, I think, at Bjorklunden. I went up to be with them for that. She died that winter. Marty didn't make it to that one, but Marty made it to the next one for that same group, and I went to that, too. So I've seen her in the last five or six years, and we're in touch by phone or mail or whatever. Marty has had a stroke so she doesn't write, but she can pick up that phone. Her mind is fine, but her hand, her right hand, is just a claw. It just sits there. So I've been in touch with Marty.

Then there was Rae Seifert, her real name was Aurelia. She was probably, she was one of the most talented students I had at Milwaukee-Downer. I only had her for two years, I inherited her, she was a junior when I arrived. And she studied with somebody else her junior year and then that person left and I got her her senior year. She was just a brilliant pianist; she had stayed out of school one year after high school and done nothing but practice the piano for eight hours a day. That does build technique. She was something pretty special. Our relationship was purely professional, we were never close personally.

[00:50:46]

And then there was Diana Alagna, now Diane Andreoni. She was a brilliant talent, I was simply thrilled when her former teacher called me and said, "I've heard your recital and I think that she should be studying with you." Wahoooo! I'd heard the girl play and I knew she was very gifted, so I enjoyed her enormously. When I retired she was, the Dean organized a concert in my honor, for the weekend that I retired, and she was the Milwaukee-Downer student, former student. They came from all areas of time in my teaching, and she was the one who came for that.

And then there was Sharie, Sharie Olsen. Diane was class of '61, I think, I'm close, it was a purple class anyway, if that was '61, that's what she was. Sharie was green class, class of '59. She was just a joy and delight, we became very close personally, as well as professionally. We still exchange Christmas letters. Diane is not a good writer, but I saw her at the last Milwaukee-Downer reunion, she was back. We had a wonderful breakfast together. Had to catch up on 20 years, I think I hadn't seen her for that long! It was good.

There were lots and lots of others, but those are the piano majors that come to mind and once I get outside that, there are just too many. One more! Ilene Hanson, that's not her married name, which at the moment I can't think of, Ilene Hanson, that's I-L-E-N-E. She was a very nervous pianist; she was not the sort who would want to give a whole concert. So for her senior project, she was also very good in drama, we invented a sort of lecture recital for her. She talked and played, so she was not playing the whole time. It was all humor in music, is what it was all about, and it was a good show. And she has gone on and gotten her DMA, so she got that from Indiana. When she was on her way to receive her diploma, she stopped by and spent the night, and we had a good catch up visit and then the next day she went on to get her diploma. We always do the Christmas letters. She was a very brilliant girl, just a brilliant girl, but a nervous pianist. She just did not take to it quickly and easily, she could play, but not for people!

They were my top piano students.

J: Did you give a lot of recitals while you were on faculty at Milwaukee-Downer?

M: One a year.

J: Were there any composers in particular whose music you liked to perform?

M: Oh, yes! Debussy and Chopin particularly. Then I would go beyond that and do some Bach, who's the hardest one I do, and maybe some Mozart and some Brahms. Lots of Beethoven there, I haven't done so much Beethoven up here, but I did a lot of Beethoven down there. And in addition to that, I was called upon to play for almost everything that happened there. As in I did all the processions for any academic occasion, except commencement, because I played the organ only the first year there. I found it was interfering horribly with my piano technique. My touch was going to

hell in a handbasket, and I had to quit it, so the next person hired took over the organ. Organ was always played for commencement, but all the other academic processions were held in Green Hall and it was piano and I provided the processionalists for that. Then I was always asked to play for the Mother's Day program. That was an onerous chore for me because it was always on the first Saturday in May, and in my life, the most important thing that happens on the first Saturday in May is the Kentucky Derby. And they always had it at four o'clock in the afternoon, which is precisely when the Derby is run. I would have friends with a radio planted in the classroom, while I went upstairs and played my schtick, whatever it was for the day, come back down, and they would give me the results of the race. But I never got to hear the Kentucky Derby! All that time! So that was a great loss.

[00:55:31]

J: For 16 years!

M: Always getting it after the fact. Got the results, but didn't get to hear the race, always there I was playing that piano at four o'clock in the afternoon on the first Saturday in May. And you know you can hardly say, "You're going to have to change the date." It seemed to me that I was always playing a piece, but not a full recital. One recital a year and then as needed.

J: Were there opportunities for you to go horseback riding while you were at Milwaukee-Downer?

M: Yes. There were a few years that there was enough demand from the students for horseback riding as a sport. They would take... the Joy Farm would come and take a load of us out there. I would bring my riding togs to school and change in my studio and then we would leap aboard the bus and go out and ride our horses and come back. Singing all the way there, and singing all the way back! Downer girls did sing, still do! I don't know, here I was not very tall and short legged, and they would always give me the tallest horse! And here I am in these tight, knee tight pants, getting a foot bent up into the stirrup, to get on the horse was always a great problem!

It was fun to do, but... one time the Milwaukee Journal was in, did a huge article, did a huge article, they thought it was so weird that this musician was so enamored of horses. They went out and took pictures of me riding at Joy Farm, and pictures of me playing piano. Did a huge story on it. So there was a little bit of horseback riding, but it was a minor factor in my life. Had to be. And I had no transportation to get out there, so! And no time, if I did have the transportation, so there we were.

J: What was the relationship like between the city of Milwaukee and the College? Were there a lot of activities that the students and faculty would go out and do in the city?

M: Only Lantern Night really. There may have been other things I wasn't aware of, but Lantern Night, you know all about Lantern Night, I don't have to explain that, but the girls would go out and sing their carols at these, there was an itinerary sort of, were we went from one, not hospital, but like sanitariums, the TB sanitarium where we always went. I don't know were all else. I went with them a lot of times. It was very festive, the lanterns with the candle lit inside, and the colored paper, a tremendous fire hazard! But, one never knew one of them to burn, so don't quarrel with success! There may have been other ways that they interacted with the community, but not much... except this! The Chicago Symphony came to Milwaukee and did a series of 10 concerts and they gave a tremendous price offer to students. They did 10 concerts for something like \$13. And the kids signed up for that, and we would just go in droves. Leaped aboard the bus on Monday nights and go down to the Chicago Symphony, as I say it's only 10 in the year, but that's almost one a month. And of course

it was, we heard some of the really great soloists. It was wonderful. We saw all these conductors, good, bad, and indifferent. When we first started going it was Raphael Kubelik, he was sort of an associate conductor who had replaced what's his name.... whose name escapes me at the moment, but the guy who had been there and had left, and they without a proper conductor, and so Kubelik was doing it and he was not a very satisfactory conductor by anybody's lights. And a few years later they got, don't tell me, I can't think of his name, one of the most marvelous conductors of all time... we'll come back to that. Fritz Reiner. Fritz Reiner. And when Fritz Reiner came to the Chicago Symphony, before he even came to Chicago, he fired all the women and replaced them with refugee Hungarians.

[01:02:02]

J: He fired all the women?

M: All the women. And you better believe that the union did not turn a hair to help those women. This is about 1951 or '52 somewhere; I may be off a couple of years, but the first half of the 1950s. Nobody rose up, I accompanied one cellist who was the friend of another faculty member, and she came out to play some concerti together, and she was good! She should not, she sat about second desk in the orchestra, she really was good! There was no reason to fire that woman. I can't vouch for any of the others who were fired, but I can tell you she didn't deserve to be fired. She could not have been replaced with somebody better. As good would be the best thing to hope for. It was...

J: You wouldn't have been able to do that today!

M: No! No, I don't think the union would still help, but the government would intervene. This was before the days of women's lib, by far. So he could do it and get away with it. But he was wonderful conductor, musically speaking; I do not fault him in any way, shape, or form. I have a moral reservation about his treatment of those women. He was brutal toward the orchestra, but then conductors are, that just goes with the job. He's the last conductor I remember with great joy. I don't know who came next.

J: That was a great opportunity to be able to go down to Chicago...

M: We didn't go to Chicago, they came here! They came to Milwaukee, all we did was get on the bus and go downtown.

J: That was a great opportunity!

M: You bet! For 13 bucks, 10 concerts, right here in Milwaukee. It was a big deal. And the girls recognized it. I always announced it in my music appreciation class and my music theory class that there was this possibility of sign up, \$13 so we could order the tickets, and boy they did. Lots of girls. It was just such a good thing to have.

J: How do you feel the opportunities for women changed from the time you started at Milwaukee-Downer until the time that Milwaukee-Downer consolidated with Lawrence?

M: There's not so much difference at the time of the consolidation, as what happens later. Let me tell you about my first theory classes at Lawrence and it'll give you an idea of the women's attitudes more than anything else.

[01:05:11]

When I first started at Lawrence, I had a class, I had the top theory class and it consisted of some brilliant girls and quite a number of dumb boys. In those days Lawrence had an unfortunate enrollment philosophy. They wanted more men than women on campus because they thought everybody would be happier that way. And so therefore they had to accept some applicants simply on the basis of wearing trousers. We got those, some of those were in the Conservatory. I don't know why they wanted to major in music, cause they didn't have much talent either. There wasn't much to recommend these boys, so here I was with this class of brilliant girls and dumb boys. They weren't all dumb, some of them were brilliant boys, too, but there were too many dumb ones. And those brilliant girls, if I threw out a question for discussion, those brilliant girls would just sit there with their teeth in their faces and say nothing. And the boys had nothing to say. I would shout out an idea, and whup! on the floor it went. Just right there, so I soon learned I don't even try. So, there we were, but that was in 1964.

I can't give you a year when it happened, but I can guarantee you by 1969, that was not true. Let the boys look to their laurels, those girls, those brilliant girls were going to speak right up. It was just this huge difference in the attitudes of the girls toward their role. And it may have happened before '69, but I know it happened then because that was the best theory class I ever had anywhere, anytime, the fall of 1969. It was an unusual class that was predominantly male. You don't get that in the Conservatory, but it was, and they were brilliant boys. The girls always were smart, in any class, but they were talented, they were brilliant, they were... it was a magnificent class and we had a tremendous love affair between them and me, and I created a course for them. I wrote all the materials, I made some mistakes in the process, but they were very, very forgiving of any mistakes. They loved having it done for them, they were the first to get it. They were just wonderful... why am I telling you about that class? Oh, to tell you about the difference in women's attitudes and their willingness to participate without thinking about what the boys will think.

Boy, between 1964 and 1969 something happened that was fairly dramatic.

J: Great, that's good. Good that they learned to speak up.

M: Yes! And they, it's a case of, let the boys look to their laurels. Nobody was going to protect them from brilliant girls, nobody, ever.

J: Let's see, you were going to tell me about the dating rooms?

M: Oh, yes! The dating rooms have always tickled me. The dating rooms, that I was aware of, were on the main floor of Holton Hall, two of them on either side of the main door and they had instead of doors, they had curtains. And the curtains could be closed, but there would be 12 inches space between the bottom of the curtain and the floor. There was, I don't know if it was a written rule or an understood rule that during the course of a date, both the boy and the girl must have both feet on the floor at all times. Which I got a big kick out of that, not a bad rule!

I would like to emphasize, just for the record, that Milwaukee-Downer College was not a finishing school, not ever. It purely was an academic institution, but the girls were exposed to assorted social events. They were expected to learn from observation. The Dean gave formal dinners every year, just some were invited at a time. During the course of those formal dinners inevitably one poor girl drank from her finger bowl.

J: And that was taboo...

M: Humiliating! Humiliating because everyone else would stare! But, I don't know if it happened every year, but it happened more than once.

There were no regulations about behavior, it was simply assumed. There was not, I didn't think there was a formal dress code, but we always wore skirts to classes. Then as soon as classes were over we all got into our blue jeans, faculty and students, at least this faculty! And then we could run around and do all our laundry and whatever else we had in mind in our blue jeans. The senior class would raise money by selling the privilege of wearing Bermuda shorts to class one day. And everybody would buy into it and they would raise money. But other than that it was a dress, I don't know that it was spelled out, but it was simply understood that we would all wear skirts to classes. There I was coming to school at 20 below zero in a skirt! That's ridiculous! That was the way it was.

[01:10:45]

J: While you were at Milwaukee-Downer, what places would you travel to while you were on break or when you were on sabbatical? You had mentioned Paris earlier.

M: I didn't do too much traveling; I would go home to be with my family at every opportunity. I had at that point a mother who was living and a brother and his wife. They had two girls who were just the joy of my life, and I wanted to be with them at every opportunity. When I traveled it was in connection with further study. My first venture was in '51; I took my first flight to New York and spent the summer studying at Julliard.

J: How nice!

M: It was nice. I stayed one week longer and went to plays, because I didn't have time to go to plays during my study. But during that week I went to everything, one day I'll never forget I spent the – I couldn't afford the tickets and they didn't have them anyway – but I could buy standing room, and in one day I saw *South Pacific* standing in the afternoon, and *Guys and Dolls* standing at night. You don't forget a day like that! That was my first travel and that was to New York.

Then after that I went to Aspen, I think that was '53. I loved Aspen; it was just sort of a heaven. I got to study with Claudio Arrou. The reason I got to study with him was this man whose name I don't recall right now, but he was picking up the tab for everything that was expense beyond income for Aspen festival. Arrou at that time was charging \$50 a lesson, and I think I was paying \$30. So he was picking up the tab for the excess of my lessons. Then he got very angry with Aspen because they scheduled, the town, scheduled a rodeo during one of the concerts, and that was it, he pulled out, so angry at the town he withdrew his support from the festival. And that was sort of punishing the wrong people.

But that was the glory days of Aspen, I got in on one of those, but I went again in '56 and it was not as wonderful, it was still wonderful, but not that wonderful. Because without this guy to underwrite, they had to pay their way, so they couldn't have faculty of the Arrou caliber, like Lynn Harrell, cellist, it was really just top notch people, the first time, the second time it came down a little in the quality of the faculty. It's still worth going to. Love Aspen anyway.

But that's what I mean about travel, to New York and Aspen twice, but it isn't travel for travel. I didn't have all that much money. My going to Paris started when I came to Lawrence, because we did

not have sabbaticals at Downer. So my first sabbatical would have been '66, '67. Not only would have been, it was. I had written to and been accepted by Myra Hess as a student. I had no foreign language and so I was going to, well, not much foreign language, I was going to go to an English-speaking place for my sabbatical, she had accepted me and I was all set, and then at the end of November she died. And James Main said to me, you should study with Jeanne-Marie Darré in Paris. He said I'm going to Paris for my sabbatical and you could come, too. I had never heard of Jeanne-Marie Darré, but shortly thereafter I heard her play on the radio and she was spectacular. Well that's alright, I have a reading knowledge of French and I can speak it, I don't understand it, so off I went. I loved Paris so much ever thereafter, anytime I had a sabbatical, I dreamed up a project that could only be done in Paris. So I had three of them, three sabbaticals in Paris. Really loved that city. Profited from all my sabbaticals.

[01:15:54]

J: You had mentioned that the student enrollment at Milwaukee-Downer had dropped towards the consolidation with Lawrence. Was there reason for enrollment decreasing?

M: Yes. Yes. I'll give you the whole sordid history. In the fall of 1948, there were more than 400 students, that's a full house. I think that absolute top enrollment happened the year before that. And they had in the fall of '47 they had the biggest freshman class they ever had, the green class of '51. That was the absolute top. And they were still in the 400s when I came in '47. In the fall of '49 the freshman class fell to under 100. Among the older faculty there was great cause for concern. There were mutterings it was bad. And then in the early '50s, I can't remember an exact year, what was Milwaukee Teachers College became University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and that was the first time the BA had been offered by a public institution in Milwaukee.

Up to that point Milwaukee-Downer College was the only non-Catholic College to offer the BA degree. And so the student body had become more than 50% city students. There was no competition for that BA degree, if you wanted it and you were a girl, you had to come to Milwaukee-Downer College, or leave town, or go to a Catholic school. You couldn't get it at Milwaukee Teachers College. Then came University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. And they offered the BA degree at much lower tuition.

Enrollment declined precipitously. And continued to decline to the end, because women's colleges were losing favor throughout the country. We along with them. The women simply wanted to go to a co-ed school, they didn't even want to think about a women's college. There just seemed to be no turning around. Once you have a very low enrollment, people visit the campus and they see it. The quality of the education continued undiminished, but the girls were just not coming.

You might be interested to know about our first integration. There were no black students, ever, at Milwaukee-Downer College until the early '50s. And then we had a girl from a southern all-black school who wanted to come. Now we had a policy, an enrollment policy, that if you were in the top 10% of your graduating class, you were admissible, flat-out. Never mind test scores, never mind anything else, you're in the top 10%, come in. Well, she was in the top 10% of her graduating class, but it was an all-black school and don't tell me separate but equal. They were not equal. She was a lovely girl, but she couldn't hack the work at Milwaukee-Downer College, she simply couldn't do it. And so President Johnson consulted with the NAACP and asked if they would be at all offended if we made an exception to our policy of top 10% admissible and exempted and did not include the all-black schools in the south in that. And they of course welcomed that because it said loud and clear, it is not separate but equal.

So they endorsed that, so from there on out any black student from the south had to have test scores and everything else demonstrating, because they were just lousy schools, they just were not equipping people for high level college work. Then as time went by, we got integrated schools, and then we got educated black women coming, not lots of them. They never came in droves, but we had a few.

But our first experience, bless her heart, was a total flop. Because she was a lovely girl, and she had done brilliantly in her high school, but brilliantly there wasn't good enough. If she had had a chance at a decent education she could have done it, but she had no background. She was smart enough to do our work, but she just didn't have the background. So that's a sad story, but there it is.

[01:20:24]

J: So when did talk begin about Milwaukee-Downer possibly merging with another college?

M: There never was any talk about it. Never! It came as a bolt out of the blue on, I believe it was October 22, 1963. There was a special meeting of the college community called.

Let me interrupt that with the background to that, prior to that meeting, because of course, the trustees had talked about it. And the President and the Dean of Milwaukee-Downer were aware that something was in the offing. There were only three options, when it was clear... Oh, what happened was UWM approached the College and said, "Make your plans, we are going to take your land by eminent domain." You can't fight the State of Wisconsin, so that...

J: That's awful!

M: It's awful, but look at it from their point of view. There's this 40 acres with a college with decreasing enrollment every year. The option is to buy up the houses and move the people out of them who don't want to move. They had to have more land, they had to have it, had to have it to build, had to have more land. So they simply said "that's what we going to do," so they sent word to the President or to the Board of Trustees, but the word came through, "make your plans, we're going to take your land by eminent domain."

Okay, three options. They can take the money for the land and build a new campus further out, that's not a wise option with a completely diminishing enrollment. Also, you get further out, you lose the joy of being close to downtown Milwaukee, which is one of the selling points, so that was not a good option. The other one was, you could take the money and simply give it to another women's college, the endowment money was tied up with restrictions, some of it for education for women, some of it for education in Wisconsin, now you can't give it to another women's college in Wisconsin, because there isn't any! The third option was merger.

As I understand it, our trustees approached Lawrence, Lawrence College then, first. They were met with this comment, or at least that's how they interpret it, "we'd love to have your money, but we have no interest in your faculty or your students." So they picked themselves up off the floor and went to Ripon.

Ripon was singing quite a different tune, but Curtis Tarr was not going to let 13 million dollars slip through his fingers and he cracked together whatever heads were necessary. Lawrence suddenly developed considerable interest in the Downer faculty and students. So once Lawrence was singing a different tune, it was very clear that, at least in our minds, that Lawrence was the best, and that's who

we would rather merge with. But they had to show some interest in our personnel first! And once they showed a little passing interest in the personnel, it was clear that this was our, this was the way to go. So here we are.

[01:25:01]

J: And so at the meeting in October 1963, this was all announced.

M: Now back to that meeting, it was a special meeting called, all the Downer community, faculty and students alike, never mind classes, come! It was absolutely imperative that everyone be there. And this was the formal announcement and was complete with photographers. Photographers flashing their cameras in the faces of startled girls with tears streaming down their face, and it was, it was an awful, awful time. It was just an awful time. Because they wanted no part of that. But there it was, it was simply fait accompli, it was no question, “what do you think about it?” it was, “this is how it is.” This is how it is, and how it’s going to be. It was pretty much announced that neither administrator was part of the deal, but the faculty who wanted to, could merge, the administrators would be, they accepted the deal that they would be out of jobs.

J: Wow, that was just the conditions that were laid down in order...

M: That gives you a sample of the honor of John B. Johnson, Jr. I was telling you that he was a man of honor. He would protect his faculty and his students to the death, but he would sacrifice himself in the process. So he sacrificed himself and the Dean, and gave the rest of us the chance to come here if we so desired.

But it was an absolutely traumatic time and those photographers were not welcome by anybody, but I guess they had to agree to let newspapers in on the meeting. Somehow or another they just demanded that, and there they were! It was a terrible, terrible time, but we lived through it, and then I came, I brought my students who were interested in coming up here, to come up here and sit in on a music theory class. To get a feel for the place, tour the campus and talk to people, talk to students. We investigated the place and a number of students did come, I think I had my best theory student come, she was a Japanese girl, from Japan, not just Japanese-American, regular Japanese girl, Ishee Kubiashiee, I believe was her name. She had a fine ear and a language problem, but if she didn’t understand what you said, you could play it on the piano and she’d know what it was. She came and I don’t think any of my other music students came, didn’t have many, but she came. I don’t know if she graduated, or not, but was at least there for one year.

The students were not happy when they came here. Unfortunately, too many of the faculty made an unwarranted assumption that Milwaukee-Downer girls would be less bright than the Lawrence students.

J: They were in for a rude awakening!

M: No, they weren’t because they simply kept that assumption. It was an assumption that they had and they held right on to it. The girls recognized it for what it was and resented it bitterly. They were, I had a steady procession of unhappy Milwaukee-Downer girls peaking in my studio door, all that first year and it was bad, it was bad. I just encountered one of them at last year’s reunion and she was just going on at some length about how bitter she’d felt that year. So it was not good, this was not uniform throughout the college, some faculty members were wonderful, but there were too many who were

not. It was a very bad, it was two very bad years together. One of heartbreak and then one of resentment.

I was very lucky in the transition because I, well I was sort of a utility infielder, I can do what needs to be done. There was nobody on the piano faculty that was going to teach piano pedagogy, well I had done it before, I could do it again no problem, but I was a low woman on the totem pole, from the eyes of the Dean, partially because I was a woman and partially because I was from Milwaukee-Downer College. So I got my first year pretty much the dregs of piano students. Had to work my way up from the bottom of the pit. In time, things worked out alright, but in the meantime my colleagues were welcoming me and that was wonderful, I was, as I say, I was doing some of the work that they didn't want to do and I was getting good results with the students, and they were pleased about that. So I was welcome from day one, and I appreciated that very much. It was not true of all the Downer girls.

J: When you first came to Lawrence to visit the campus, what were your first impressions of it? Of Lawrence and of Appleton?

M: Appleton looked awfully small!

[01:30:04]

J: Yeah, compared to Milwaukee! I'm sure it did!

M: I remember going back to Milwaukee to visit someone my first year here. Ohhhhhh! I drove down this wonderful tree lined street that I just loved the houses on it. Whatever made me think I could live anywhere else?

But I could, and I became very, very happy here. I enjoyed not having to drive half an hour to get to a friend's house. That was just par for the course. Or worse yet, having to take the bus, you know. In the days when I didn't have a car. Did I answer your question?

J: Yes, what were your thoughts of the campus?

M: Oh, my thoughts of the campus, I thought it was a lively, the Conservatory, I was simply blown away by the facility. So much better than what I had at Downer. It was, I thought the facilities were wonderful, the practice rooms were awfully tiny, but practice rooms always are. Anywhere you go. And there were pretty bad pianos in the practice rooms. And there weren't any grand pianos in the practice rooms, but where are there? You can't complain about things that are the same everywhere else. It's not a fair criticism.

I want you to know that things have changed. We have grands in practice rooms now, and before I left we had grands in practice rooms. Every time the grand was replaced by a better one the old one got put in a practice room so the kids didn't come to a lesson with no practice at all on a grand.

J: Well, moving from Milwaukee to Appleton, did the Milwaukee-Downer or Lawrence community help with that transition, having to pack up and move two hours north? Was there any assistance from either of the communities with that?

M: Lawrence paid the way. They paid the moving expenses for all of us. I say they paid the way, but it came out of our \$13 million! But anyhow we did not have moving expenses to come here, so that

was a help. Nobody helped us find places to live, we had to come up here and do that on our own. We came up and shopped around to see what was available and took the, there wasn't much in the way of apartments in those days. Appleton is a place of homeowners, and those of us who wanted to rent really didn't have a lot of choice. So we took the best available and made the best of it. And then sooner or later bought houses. But not right away.

Nobody helped with the girls. I think some of the students were very good, very nice. And some of the faculty were very good, but there were too many bad apples and the bad apples spoiled everything else in the barrel and that's unfortunate. Just don't get the impression the whole community was hostile, because it was not, it was welcoming and good.

J: Were there, did we cover everything that you wanted to from Milwaukee-Downer?

M: Not quite. I wanted to talk a little bit more about Christmas.

J: Okay, let's do that.

M: Christmas was very big at Milwaukee-Downer College. It all started off with Christmas Bazaar. It was quite a deal. Everybody wanted, people came from all over town to Christmas Bazaar. Because the Occupational Therapy and the art students had made things to sell, such as screen printing and block printing, placemats, napkins, what-have-you. And they would make ceramic things, in the ceramics class and sell those. The, I don't know, there were just all sorts of things that the kids had made to sell and the Home Ec sewing students did some stuff, but the Home Ec cooking students had a Tea Room that was just glorious. I would always go and order a schaum torte. And it was just wonderful with strawberries and ice cream and it was just delicious. Other good things too, but nothing could compete with the glories of a schaum torte. So they would make a lot of money, I forget what the cause was, they were making money for a great cause of some kind or another. That's how the Christmas season began. So way in advance of Christmas, they were thinking Christmas, in making these things to sell at Christmas Bazaar.

[01:35:48]

So then they came and made their money, we all went and had a wonderful day. Right after Thanksgiving, we began in daily chapel, singing and for the freshmen, learning, the many, many, many Christmas carols that were traditional there. I had never heard "What Child is This" before I went to Milwaukee-Downer College. And there were quite a number of others. And I had never heard "The Twelve Days of Christmas." Enough about that. That's all been in the paper. You don't need me to tell you any more about that.

We were singing different carols everyday and the girls were learning them so that by Lantern Night, they knew them. And they could go forth and sing them. But after the Christmas Bazaar, was Miss Brown's Christmas play, before my day, we redid one one time, we redid one with a faculty cast and I was assigned the part of the fool, which my friends very kindly told me was typecasting. It was a fun thing, but it was very stylized. But, for what it was, it was a fun thing to do. But the thing that was really different at Milwaukee-Downer College, was the fact that Miss Rossberg, my mentor, she put on a German Christmas play, in German, with the German girls. It fell to my lot to teach those, she used her German students only, never mind if they could sing. It was my job to teach them the music to those Christmas carols. Then it was my job to give them the pitch, they sung them *a cappella*, to give them the pitches at the right time. Now mind you, I did not understand one word of German.

So here I was at this German Christmas play, sitting at the piano, nervous as a cat. Wondering when I should give the pitches for the next carol because I didn't understand a word they were saying and I was supposed to know when to do this. The woman who was supposed to give me a cue was not much more advanced in German than I. It was a very tense time, but anyhow I learned a good deal more about German pronunciation, I didn't understand the language, but at least I knew what they said in German! That was a big help!

The angels were clad in wings; they all had white gown type things with wings attached. They looked quite charming. Halos, I believe they had. They would sing these, it was a Christmas play, what went on in the play I have no idea, because it was all in German, the songs, of course were all in German, there were German music, it was a big deal and people came from all over Milwaukee to see it.

And then Miss, for weeks in advance, Miss Rossberg had cooked. She made all kinds of traditional German cookies and she made marzipan fruit. She formed them by hand into strawberries dipped in red sugar and peaches and I don't know what all else. I loved them! Just loved them! That was a very, very big deal.

We've already talked about Lantern Night. Because that was, Christmas was a very important thing, it started before Christmas with the preparation for it and then all throughout Thanksgiving to Christmas. We had, we were on the semester plan so that we went right up to just a very short time before Christmas, then went off for Christmas, came back and had three weeks to finish up the semester before exams. Most people think that that is bad education, but I still like it in two semesters instead of three terms. Doing two thirds of the work after Christmas is too much. I never really adjusted happily. I adjusted, efficiently, but not happily to the three term business. You just did by the time June rolls around, two thirds of the work, ugh! Anyhow, we're not here to... nobody ever wants to listen to me to change that, so there we are.

[01:40:23]

J: Were there any other activities that you can think of at Milwaukee-Downer?

M: Hat Hunt was the big one, I talked to you about enrollment. Yes, I wanted to tell you about the individual attention. Lawrence is very proud of the individual attention that they have, we had even better.

The advising was taken very, very seriously. With a great many of the faculty at Lawrence, the statement is made that the student's education is his own responsibility. Now that is all well and good to say, but when you come right down to the fact that an 18-year-old kid is not an adult. Therefore, they need advising, and they got more of it at Milwaukee-Downer College. We were, I was always pushing, if they needed to have a foreign language, now you choose, they would choose the language, but they had one. Pushing for a History course, pushing for, they had no choice, they had to take English, Freshman English was required. There were no Freshman Studies, substitutes for Freshman English, and they wrote better for it.

And of course, there was independent study, same as here, no difference there. But the big difference is that no one ever at Milwaukee-Downer College, came up to graduation a course short. The advising saw to it that that didn't happen. A kid was not allowed to skip that course in Music Appreciation and come up to graduation without it and if they did, they wouldn't graduate. There would be no special dispensation with extenuating circumstances. They met the standards or they didn't graduate, but the advising was such that they met the standards.

Although advising could not be perfect, we tried. I had one advisee that broke my heart; she had no grades on her record but As or Fs.

J: One or the other. Wow.

M: One or the other. If it was Math or Science it was an A, if it was anything that involved writing it was F. She had this fixation about not being able to write. I hauled her in one day, we were going to talk about this, get rid of this fixation she had, and by the time we finished, I couldn't write either!

It was a long time! I used to be able to write freely and easily! No more. She made me see all the difficulties of it. Now it comes with great strain and pain. I understand where she was coming from anyway! She couldn't write, she, it was just too much to it, she could not come to terms with it. And I pled and pled, don't throw her out yet, give her another chance. And after she'd taken Freshman English for the third or fourth time, and flunked it every time, she had to be thrown out. But, it broke my heart, because with the straight A in Math and Science, you know there was a mind there. But with this writing fixation, it didn't matter what the course was, if it had a term paper, F. So I couldn't do everything, you can't make a kid do the assignment, but you can at least see to it that they are aware of what they are.

So, I don't mean to say that everything was always a lovely success, but we sure tried.

I think that's everything on my list.

J: OK.

M: Unless you have other questions that I, I couldn't anticipate all the things that you might want to know.

J: Let's see if there is anything else that I didn't cover. How has, since you retired in 1987 and coming back to the campus today, how have things seemed to stay the same and how are they different?

M: Well, the people are still wonderful. They're warm and friendly and generous and caring and they're wonderful people, that doesn't change. At least in my circle, I don't know about the younger people. But my friends are still absolutely wonderful human beings.

The Conservatory is so big! And now they are saying they don't have anywhere near enough space and there's no place to enlarge, except right out in the middle of the grass, as near as I can see. And it just keeps growing, I am amazed at how it keeps growing. When I first came in '64 we had two sections of Freshman Theory, that took care of all the incoming freshmen and kept a class level at or below 20, we did not have too huge a class. And one year, I don't know if it was last year or the year before, they had six sections of Freshman Theory. That's just mind boggling! And they're getting all these string players. We used to just have a dearth of string players, they just didn't have any, could hardly have an orchestra. We had to borrow people from the town to have an orchestra. All these string players, I don't know what the piano situation is now, but it was bad for awhile.

I think the piano situation became nationwide with those kids of the sixties and their passion for the guitar. And they brought their children up and didn't make them practice the piano, if you don't have

parents who are going to make their kids practice the piano, you don't have pianists in the next generation.

[01:46:12]

J: That's true.

M: The organ situation, organists come from pianists, they play piano first. The organ situation nationwide is dire. Simply dire. I still think it goes back to those kids of the sixties, they caused so many problems!

J: Were there any popular activities here at Lawrence that you were involved in, any popular student activities?

M: Not much, because I didn't have time. The faculty load in the Conservatory, is just, it's a seven day a week job. I simply would take one day of the weekend to cook for the week, because if I came in on Saturday for student interviews, prospective student interviews, then I would stay home and cook on Sunday and not go to the concert, or reverse. But I could not, would not give up both days, I just couldn't live, because I had no time to cook all week long. I had to cook a great huge kettle of soup and bread or something, fix five lunches to carry so that I did all that on the one weekend day when I cooked, I cooked for the week!

No, you don't get involved in student activities much, I was involved in something, the Honors Society for Sophomores, was the name of it.

J: The Honors Society for Sophomores?

M: Well, you don't know it, and I've forgotten it! But there is one, and it was started out for Sophomore women, and then they made it co-ed, and the minute they made it co-ed, they promptly elected a boy as President. That's the way things go, but I just don't remember its name. I remember the kids who were in it, but I was some kind of an advisor to that. But I didn't get involved with the college students, unless they were mine, unless they came over to take piano. I got involved very much with, this is an interesting story that maybe should go down in the records. I better not use names.

J: Okay, alright.

M: I had this very brilliant young man from the college who came over to take piano lessons. We had a good time, he was a good pianist and he practiced, not a lot but enough to get some progress. So we had a fine working and good personal relationship. Well something happened on the campus and he came to my studio one day, it was not lesson time, and he came and there was smoke coming out of his ears and green and purple lights flashing from his eyes and he was angry. He was angry! He says, "I want to know what the procedure is for disciplining faculty." Well, I said, "that all depends. If it's a senior faculty, the discipline will have to come from the Dean, if it's a junior member of the faculty then conceivably a senior member could do the advising or whatever," treading carefully because I didn't know where we were. Then it turns out that I should tell you this student that I'm talking about, my brilliant student from the college was the one who organized the gay organization on campus.

[01:50:36]

J: Oh, GLOW.

M: Is that it? He got that off the ground and started. And his anger was inspired by the fact that a student in the Conservatory who had come out of the closet had been talked to by a senior member of the faculty. And the senior member of the faculty made it clear to him that he felt that he had done a bad thing in coming out of the closet. And he ended up with, “and I hope I don’t have to punish you.” Whoaaa!

So finally we get down to cases and names, so I tell my young man that he really needs to take this story to the Dean of the Conservatory. And the minute he walked out the door, I was on the phone to the Dean to tell him what was going to walk into his door!

J: Yeah!

M: And he dealt with it very well, and the faculty member was reprimanded, and should have been. The faculty member was way off base! Way off base! But anyhow that was a moment. Didn’t get close to many college students, but a few!

And there were others that I became close to, but they were few and far between because mostly my schedule was filled with Conservatory students and I didn’t have time for them. It was my loss.

J: When you’re telling family and friends about your experiences at Milwaukee-Downer and Lawrence, do you have a favorite story that you like to tell? Besides all of the ones that have been shared in this interview?

M: Let’s see. There are so many, I told you about Henrietta McNary and Althea Heimbach, that’s one of my favorite stories. There are just too many, I can’t corral one of them. I’ve been through the mill with some of my friends here, and it created real bonds, there were some funny stories and some not so funny. I’m looking for the funny ones now, but the others are the only ones that come to mind, so there we are!

J: Okay, is there anything else that you want to add or say, that covers, I feel like we’ve covered things really well, but is there anything else that you want to talk about?

M: The main reason I set up this interview was that I wanted, while I’m still in my right mind, and before any Alzheimer’s hits, I wanted to share my memories, because, it, when the newspaper article about Miss Brown’s Christmas play, and the interview with me concerning that, I suddenly realized that I’m the last living faculty member who was there for as long as 16 years, full time. And that I have to have memories that no other living person has, and I better get some of them on the record, so that’s why I got in touch. Somehow or another I got in touch with you, then you called me. Then we set this up because I thought you would want those memories, too.

J: Yes, absolutely!

M: I have lots of wonderful memories of both places and both sets of students. I loved my Downer girls and I think that in a sense I was possibly even closer to my Conservatory students, because it’s, it was so much individual attention in the Conservatory and when you are, the only word you can use in groomed, when you have groomed a student for a Junior recital and a Senior recital and maybe even

an appearance in the orchestra playing a concerto, there was nothing that happened at Downer that would forge a relationship like that. This was just so intense and so wonderful.

[01:55:39]

But I should tell you that now I'm doing another kind of teaching. I'm working with high school dropouts who want to get their GEDs. And I have worked with some Kentucky born people and I'm working, right now I'm working mostly with Hispanics. In my part of the world we have a great influx of Hispanics. For many, many reasons, which I won't go into, but they're there and one of them I'm working with, in just English, speaking and understanding it. She is a new mother, a mother with a new baby. And the other one is a man who aspires to his GED. He speaks fluently, very bad English, but speaks fluently and understands whatever I say to him, which the lady does not. He has a math hang-up so I have been teaching him mostly math.

But the thing that amazed me was, I thought that all my 10,000 years of experience teaching music would be as nothing, I'd have to start all over from scratch, but no! Music and any teaching reading is still a matter of sounds and syllables. And so that my past experience was a big help.

My very first GED student I worked with for three and a half years, twice a week, and he had left school basically after the second grade. His step-mother put him on the bus, but he had to change buses, and he never got on the second bus. He got on the first bus and came back home. She had so little interest, she didn't know that this was happening, so we started his lessons for learning reading and spelling and writing at second grade level and in three and a half years, he had his GED.

I would write people about this and I said it's like coaching a gifted student for a senior recital! It's the same glow of pride in your student who got his GED. He worked for a company called Mashusta, which was taking a job with the Japanese. The day that they came into an existence as Mashusta, there was a letter from the Japanese people faculty, not faculty, workers in Japan that was sent to be read and my lad was chosen to read that letter, and there was a video tape and he brought it over to the Literacy Center and we all watched it and cried. So it, I have continued to teach, but not music. Moved on to other things, finding out what else there is in life.

J: That's really great. How did you choose to move to Kentucky after Wisconsin?

M: That was very easy. Because I have a passion, and I have nursed this passion my entire life, for the thoroughbred racehorse. In Wisconsin, at least when I was here, they would not even print the news, the results of the horse races. For fear somebody might gamble. Now the Wisconsin newspapers will fight to the death, to defend the right of the child pornographer, but they will not print the news of the racehorses. I could have, there was no way I could follow this passion and live in Wisconsin, so I decided, I'll just go where they are.

[01:59:55]

So I moved out to the blues, so I went down, I knew I needed a college town, I spent my life in college towns, I needed to be where there was a college. To meet my kind of people, so I went down and methodically went through the bluegrass and looked at every college that was there, with one exception which was obviously overly religious, it wouldn't be my kind of college, but I found Centre College in Danville, Kentucky, which is directly comparable to Lawrence. A little smaller, but has the same concern for the students, individual attention and standards, very high standards there.

Wonderful people. It was because of the college that I chose Danville. Because I, and I had made a number of friends among the college faculty there.

I wanted most of all to get acquainted with the horse people. And that was, just to get entre to the farms, they had too many visitors who came and smoked and tossed their cigarettes all around, and there's all that hay! So they don't welcome visitors, they just flat out don't. So I had a letter of introduction to one farm from an Appletonian, and I got in there on the basis of that. And several others I've gotten in on the basis of calling and saying "I'm knowledgeable about horses, I will not spook them, I do not smoke, it is not a problem, and what's more, I'm an expert baker of sourdough bread, and I'll bring you a loaf." That got me in one that was absolutely closed to the public! I go armed with a loaf of bread and get in most anywhere I want to go.

I haven't done it yet with the brood mares, this was just to see the stallions. It's easier to get to see the stallions, the brood mares, that's more a family affair. But I did forge a very fine friendship with the lady who owned the farm very near to Danville and I was really was in there, I went in and groomed the brood mares for her and they called one night and said your favorite mare is going to foal, if you want to see it, get out here. So I got to see her give birth to her first baby. But unfortunately that marriage broke up and the woman remarried and moved to California. There went my farm!

So there's a great hole left in my life, and I don't have, there may be another one developing. When I was coming up here one time, I think, I got on the plane, I was reading Blood Horse magazine and the man across the aisle handed me a newspaper and he says, "I see you're reading Blood Horse, I think you'd like to read about Azeri." Of course I'd like to read about Azeri, she's a wonderful mare. I said, "are you in the business?" "In a small way, yes," he says. He says, "I have several brood mares." And I got to thinking maybe he is one of the people I've been reading about, so I said, "do I know your farm?" He said "probably not, it's just a small farm near Danville, Kentucky." So I went out there to meet his brood mares and he invited me in for a drink, and introduced me to his wife. His wife is the former President of Mt. Holyoke College. So it's not only horses, but it's academic. And he was on the faculty there. So this has great potential for development.

I've been too involved in my Bridge playing to cash in on it. I play Rubber Bridge and Duplicate. Quite a lot, but my friends play even oftener; they're outclassing me. I don't want to give it any more time, that's enough. Every Monday and every Tuesday night and an occasional Wednesday, and most Thursdays. That's enough, I don't really want more. If they're going to outclass me, so be it.

I've got, there are some stallions I've not seen, that I've got to get out an look at, but that's fairly easy I can call up and mostly they'll let me just come, if not I'll bribe them with the bread and away we go.

So that's how I chose Kentucky.

J: It's a good way to do that.

M: It's been very rewarding, I go to the races. But that's not much, that's six weeks a year, and I go to the sales. That is pure heaven. It's all free, they send me my catalog to study, free, parking is free, admission is free and there I am. I see them lead in one gorgeous animal after another. Wonderful.

J: Is there anything else you want to add before I turn the recorder off?

M: I don't think so, I've given you more information than you cared to have about life in Kentucky.

J: No, you've given me wonderful information!

[End: 02:04:10]