

Oral History Interviews, Reunion Weekend 2006

Interview with Gladys Osborne Hall, class of 1947

By Julia Stringfellow

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[Start: 00:00:00]

1. Could you please state your name?

Gladys Osborne Hall.

2. When did you graduate from Lawrence?

1947.

3. What was your degree in?

Language and history.

4. What can you tell me about the Hundredth Club?

The hundred anniversary, the college was founded in 1847, so we were the hundredth class. Instead of just a weekend of celebration it was the whole week. And we had people come from all over, and we had a centennial ball. And there was just so much that was because of being the hundredth class, there was lots of history. So at that time we had the Navy V-12 Unit was living in Brokaw Hall and the gals were some in Ormsby and some in Sage. I was in Russell Sage, and during the war I even lived in the Sig Ep house in the quadrangle.

I suppose they don't have proms anymore, which we did. I met my future husband on a blind date, he was in the Navy unit.

5. Was he part of the V-12 program?

He was part of the V-12, he came from Michigan, and they decided to ship him over here. He was here, and when they decommissioned the unit, some went to Chicago to NROTC, but he went back into the Navy Air Corps until the war ended. His good friend convinced him to come back to Lawrence even though he was about 3 months late and that was where we met on a blind date. Got engaged the night before we graduated and married a year later.

6. How did the campus feel about the V-12 program being here? How did the V-12 program interact with the students here at Lawrence?

They were the only men on campus. Everyone knew everyone you know and they were part of fraternities, they were part of the whole social deal. Because of them, we had a real active sports program, a lot of stars you know, in Alexander Gym.

7. What were some other ways that the Second World War affected Lawrence?

There were no men here until you had the V-12 unit. It was fewer men, but there was always proms and they had things like the “Most Ideal Man” and for the women they had the “Best Loved.”

8. And the Best Loved, was it basically the class voted on who was going to be part of that?

There were about five women and they were voted on. Scholastic-wise, we had the Phi Beta Kappa chapter. I was Phi Beta Kappa my junior year and then my counselor was Dr. Raney who was my history professor, and he suggested I take an honors course, and at that time you had to do the research the whole first semester and the second semester write a thesis, and then have oral exams in front of 3 professors and that was the way they handled the honors, and graduated *magna cum laude*. There was one *summa cum laude* gal, there were five women. That is the story of the honors which is certainly different than now I suppose.

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9. Why did you choose to attend Lawrence?

I came up here because very dear friends of my folks had a daughter here. So I came up one spring with another gal from high school and visited Jo Ann, and I never looked at another college. I lived on the south side of Chicago in the Beverly area and at that time there weren't the real good interstates and all that. And so we would take the train from Chicago, the Chicago Northwestern and it would deposit us here. The town was so different, we had the Coney Island where you would get the hot dogs with the onions, then sometimes we would go all the way down to West End and have fried chicken and rye bread with tartar sauce. Those cold walks across the bridge to Alexander Gym.

10. Was the bridge over Lawe Street to get to the gym?

I think maybe just College Avenue, something like that, we would go by a paper company I know. There was a very good sports program with the Navy men who were really good and of course Ripon was our archrival. My husband-to-be played basketball, he was the third high score in the Midwest conference. He played Beloit and all those other schools. Some of the schools are changed now in the conference. They aren't the same schools.

11. What were athletics like for the women during that time?

I remember they played tennis, they played field hockey, but there wasn't an emphasis on women playing sports. It wasn't that equal at all. That was many years ago, fifty years ago.

12. Was the transition of going from high school to college a difficult one?

Well, I had never taken 3-hour exams in my life. I remember we would have to go to some hall and there were proctors, and we would have 3-hour exams. That was very unusual. I wasn't used to that from high school. At least for the courses I was taking, language and history and psychology, religion, I was taking all of those. The only science class I took was botany and just got a B.A. degree.

13. What activities or organizations were you involved in when you were a student here?

Well I think the main thing was I was a member of Pi Beta Phi sorority and at that time we had rooms in Panhellenic House. There were no sorority houses, so I lived in Sage in a suite and there were all different sorority gals in my suite. It wasn't very exclusive. I think it was kind of nice because you knew people from all different sororities other than just your own. But at the time there would be 80 members in the sorority. One pledge class might be forty. It was a very small independent group.

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14. What were some activities that your sorority did? Did you all have dances or charity work?

The Pi Phis had a project, right now it's literacy, I forget. But we did have volunteer things around the campus. Mainly a fraternity and a sorority would get together and there would be dances. It was quite social because we did have the Navy men here and they were older.

15. What were some traditions at Lawrence while you were a student? I know that the ROCK was very popular.

My husband-to-be was Treasurer of the fraternity and at one time they decided that that ROCK that was out in front of Main Hall, it should go out to Alexander Gym and be out there. So he paid money out of the treasury for them to hire someone who picked up that big rock with a crane and at that time, they had a little sign where the ROCK was missing, it said, "Kilroy was here." I had never heard of Kilroy, that was what happened. They moved the ROCK out there. As far as other traditions let me think. Well all those other things I mentioned like Best Loved and the Honors and the Most Ideal Man and all that stuff. Those were traditions. I was noticing up in my dormitory where I am now in Hiatt, they have pictures and they're trying to get us to identify them.

Yes, I'm trying to do that.

There was a picture of a May Day celebration and crowning a May Day queen. And my friends and I were able to identify about five of the gals. We know who was doing the crowning, but we don't know who was being crowned. We got a few to help you. But it was things like that, those were the traditions.

16. Was there a teacher or teachers here who strongly influenced you?

I think Dr. Raney, he was a history professor. His wife also taught, Mrs. Raney, and she was my French teacher. And then Jackie Joyce was my Spanish teacher. I had 4 years of both Spanish and French. I wrote my thesis in history using some Spanish research materials. I don't know if they have to do that today. I still have my thesis.

17. How was the relationship between the students and faculty and the administration while you were here?

I think it was real good. The Dean of Women was Dena Wollaeger, Dean Dushane was the Dean of Men, and we didn't have any complaints for the professors. Most people enjoyed their classes, you know.

18. Now that you're here at Lawrence as an alumna, how has Lawrence and the campus changed, and how has it stayed the same since you were a student?

Well we love to see Main Hall and that lighted dome and the flag on top. We tried to get a picture of that with the five of us in the background. The Chapel is beautiful and so many new buildings. Our library was nothing like what it is now. While we were here we lost a couple of presidents, Dr. Knight went to Duke and Dr. Pusey, when he gave us our diplomas, our degrees, soon after that he left for Harvard. One day my husband was down in Chicago and someone tapped him on the shoulder and it was Dr. Pusey. So he went back to work and said, "I have just been tapped on the shoulder by the president of Harvard University!" He was impressed with that. It was small enough so he knew all of us. And I think a fun thing was when his son came here, Dr. Pusey's son, and they asked him what his father did and he said he was a teacher, he never said he was the president. No one was trying to be real big on campus. We were pretty normal.

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19. What was it like living in the dorms? I know that the women in the dorms were locked in at a certain time.

Oh sure, we had hours and we had housemothers and stuff like that. And it wasn't a co-ed by any means and we were expected to be in, there were penalties for coming in late. Each fraternity had a housemother. So it was much stricter. We would study on the banks overlooking the river and sunbathing at the same time.

I heard that sunbathing on the balcony of Sage Hall was very popular.

Oh very. That was fun. I had lived in Ormsby, I think I was in Brokaw after the Navy left. But the hundredth (anniversary), I think it was a special week. In fact all the presidents that were still alive, they came back. Another professor that I liked so much was Thomas Kepler, he taught religion. And I attended the Congregational Church, and his family attended and were students at Lawrence. And I sang in the choir and participated that way. But when the war was over all of us rushed over to that little church across the way and gave thanks that the war was over. Another thing when Roosevelt died, we mourned that on campus. So those are the things that I remember.

20. Well, I think we're about done, is that anything else you would like to add?

I don't think so.

Well, thank you.

[End: 00:18:37]