

**Oral History Interview with Mary Ann Rossi**  
**Interviewed by Julia Stringfellow**  
**June 3, 2009**

**[Start: 00:00:00]**

**JS: Today is June 3, 2009. We are conducting oral history interviews in the Archives with Emeriti faculty. Could you please state your name?**

MR: Mary Ann Rossi.

**JS: And what years did you teach at Lawrence?**

MR: I taught at Lawrence from 1959 to 1971.

**JS: And what subjects did you teach?**

MR: I began by teaching just simply the Latin 1. The reason being I starting teaching Latin 1 was that the Latin teacher at Lawrence was called up to the military. Paul Plass was suddenly taken into the army and they needed a Latin teacher very quickly, so I began to teach Latin 1 as well as Freshman Studies. So Freshman Studies and Latin 1 were the first classes I taught, before I got into my own field of Classics in Translation, Greek and Latin Literature.

**JS: Where did you grow up?**

MR: I grew up in Torrington, Connecticut. A town on mostly Italian and Irish immigrants from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and it's a little town named after Torrington, England, in Torrington Devon. I don't know whether or not we're aware of the association in Torrington, but there are a couple of Torringtons in this country. My Grandparents emigrated from Italy and they came to this little town of Torrington, Connecticut. Although my Grandfather first came to Quincy, Massachusetts and then to Torrington to found his road construction company.

**JS: Where did you go to college?**

MR: I went to college in Connecticut College, which was then women only, so it was called Connecticut College for Women. It's in New London, Connecticut, so I wasn't that far from home. I was just 80 miles away from my hometown, when I went to my college.

**JS: What did you get your degree in?**

MR: My degree was in Classics: Greek and Latin Language and Literature. That was in 1952 from Connecticut College.

**JS: After college, did you go right onto Graduate School?**

MR: Yes, I did. I went to Brown University Graduate School. And took my Master's Degree in Classics.

**JS: How did you think you became interested in Classics?**

MR: Well, I know specifically why I became interested in Classes, because I had the most wonderful teacher in the world. Her name was Mary Barrett. Mary Barrett taught Latin and she was just a new teacher when I was a freshman in High School. She taught Latin in Torrington High School and I happened to be one of her students. I took four years of Latin from Mary Barrett. She was the kind of teacher that inspired you. She makes you want to learn more. She makes you want to fall in love with the subject she's teaching and then want to do as much as you can in that field. I would say Mary Barrett being the most inspiring teacher ever known in my life, was the one who made me decide to be a Latin teacher.

**JS: With your college experience, and then looking at the college experience of students when you came to Lawrence, how do you feel that those may have been different?**

MR: That's a little difficult for me to answer now, because I know that when I went to college, our expectations were quite different in 1948, when I started college. I remember thinking that I wanted to get a good job when I was finished and do some good professional work. Then eventually get married and have a family. There were many restrictions on our aspirations and goals in 1948. There were very regimented perceptions and stereotypes of what a woman was to do in life. For example, looking over my reunion notes from my college, I noticed most people became housewives. There were only 5 out of 250 women in my graduating class, when on to higher degrees. So the expectation was that you would meet a wonderful man and then be a wonderful asset to him, being a very educated woman and being a wonderful wife and mother. So that was it. But now a days, I think, I'm not in touch with the students very much, but my perception is that there's a wealth of possibilities for both men and women. They think they can conquer the world. They think they can do or be anything, and I think that's a wonderful improvement in our perception of human potential.

**[00:04:54]**

**JS: When you got done with graduate school at Brown, did you go on to teaching?**

MR: I got my Master's degree. Before I finished my dissertation, my husband, who was also working on his PhD dissertation, took a position at a small college in Ohio called Muskingum College. We were married in 1954 and decided to go right to Muskingum College and do college teaching, before we finished our degrees. So we went to be resident directors of the freshmen men's dormitory, horrors, [laughs] and teaching full loads of courses there in our first year of marriage, which was very challenging for a couple. But it turned out a very good way to go, because my husband was able to build up the physics department. That was his alma mater, by the way. So that was good for him to build up his professional approach to his own field, and it was good for me to really learn to teach in college. We later finished our degrees. Later I wrote my dissertation and I got my degree in 1957 and I was expecting my first child, also born in 1957. Then Bruce finished his dissertation in 1959, that was just before we came to Lawrence.

**JS: So you went from the school in Ohio to Lawrence?**

MR: That's right.

**JS: What attracted you and your husband to Lawrence?**

MR: We were confined by the Presbyterian approach. This means that I smoked and smoking was frowned upon at the college where we taught, and we did have a cocktail now and then. That was very much frowned upon there. We felt that we were out of step with the perception of what the faculty should be, so we stayed for four years. We did make many good friends and had wonderful students there, but we thought we weren't comfortable. We looked around for a place that let the faculty be who they were and do what they wanted to do. We had an interview with Lawrence and fell in love with Lawrence. It was Lawrence College then. We came one weekend, March 15, 1959, and met Doug Knight and Grace Knight, who put us up in their home. They were a wonderful, wonderful couple and we also loved them. After that weekend at Lawrence we decided to go to that college, please let them like us! And we got the phone call from Doug Knight, who said that "would you like to teach physics at Lawrence University?" It was just Bruce, of course who was interviewing for the position, although they made me assured that they would find me something, too. So that's the way we fell in love with Lawrence. Although I should tell you that March 15, the day I told you we came to Lawrence, there was the biggest snowfall in about 25 years. There were huge drifts everywhere. People had handkerchiefs on the radio antennas on their car to see if there was car coming around the corner. In fact, this winter that we just had in Appleton was the worst since 1959, when we were here. So at first, we were like, oh no, this is much too cold, we could get stuck on the street. And they assured us this was a very unusual winter. But even if it hadn't been, I think we still would have come to Lawrence, we loved it that much.

**JS: What did you think of Appleton? Your first impressions of the city?**

MR: My first impression of Appleton is very superficial, because we stayed always with faculty groups. We got to know the campus and the campus people. We did walk up and down the main street of Appleton, I thought that it was very small and very friendly. We didn't see anything bad about it, we just thought that it was just a small town.

**JS: The first course you taught was Latin.**

MR: Latin and Freshman Studies.

**JS: How do you think Freshman Studies has maybe evolved through the years? When you first started teaching it, through the 1960s and 1970s?**

MR: I think we had a certain set, a group of books that we taught in Freshman Studies then. My perception of this transformation of Freshman Studies in the last 5 decades is that it has become global; it has become outward-looking; it has made us realize how much we're part of the whole world; we have to understand other cultures or ethnic groups; we appreciate other modes of thought, modes of living. I think that Freshman Studies has profited by the globalization that has taken place in the whole society, of course. But here, we can see it in Freshman Studies and also the inculcation of music, not only classical, but also jazz, the inculcation of poetry, inculcation of all kinds of literature, not only our

own, but also foreign literature. Chinese literature, in particular, is a wonderful improvement in our Freshman Studies program.

**[00:10:33]**

**JS: Was there a particular work you like to teach the most, when you were teaching Freshman Studies?**

MR: Yes, there was. Because I am a Classicist and I have favorites. I would like to teach Euripides. So Euripides was my favorite, and I hoped they would have Euripides when they chose the Freshman Studies classes. Sometimes they did and sometimes they didn't. Sometimes they would have, of course always Plato, and sometimes Sophocles or Escalus or Homer. Homer, I would say was another great favorite of mine. I would say Homer's *Odyssey* and Euripides, sometimes we would do the *Medea*, but any of the 19 Euripides plays I would always pull for. One time we were able to choose, it was called "Freshman Studies Instructor's Choice." We were able to choose the one that we wanted to teach, so I always include Euripides in that one.

I wanted to add one thing to that, Julia. Well once we were doing a book called Kenneth Clark's *Dark Ghetto*. Now Kenneth Clark is a black anthropologist who did a study of the ghetto situation in America. That happened to be a choice of our Freshman Studies group that year. My discussion group was very unhappy with the book, and so was I. We thought it was very superficial, it seemed to be written by a white person. For my choice that year, we divided the class into three groups. Each group did six books, all by blacks. They were small, they were paperbacks and then they did a report on their six books. All by blacks, because Kenneth Clark's *Dark Ghetto* was not sufficient as far as we were concerned and we had a wonderful discussion called "Black Literature in America." That was my best year.

**JS: Do you remember what year that was?**

MR: That would have been about the mid 1960s. It was about the time of the death of Malcolm X. *Malcolm X* was one of the books we did. So it was about the time the popularity of *Malcolm X*.

**JS: I was going to ask, given all of your work with Women's Week and gender studies, how was the relationship towards women, here at Lawrence in 1959, and how did it evolve? So many great things happened here through the years.**

MR: Well, I had forgotten this, but in Charles Breunig's history of Lawrence University, he called me to remind me that Doug Knight had appointed me to a committee of three. We were assigned to be sure that women's needs and women's interests were seen to. There was never such a committee before, but Doug Knight decided to pay attention to women's needs on campus. So the three of us got together and we were the first Women's Studies group. You would say that the first Gender Studies now, because that's what they are called now. Also, Mortar Board was another one, where I was an advisor or something to Mortar Board. That was another thing they put me in touch with women's needs on the campus. I forgot the rest of your question.

**JS: Just how it's changed through the years.**

MR: There was no particular attention paid...there was no particular group like the Ellen Sabin. We had the Ellen Sabin group that formed out of this attention to women's needs. We got an awareness that something wasn't being done for women on campus. In particular, I can point to the Best-Loved banquet. The Best-Loved was the senior women's decision to elect the four most popular women each year in the senior class. They asked me to give the talk at the Best-Loved banquet. I can't remember the year now, but it would be 1966 or 1967. When I was to give the talk to the Best-Loved banquet, I had to study what the Best-Loved was, who the women were that were chosen, why they were chosen, and I decided to read a little about women. I needed to say something at this women's banquet for women. I had never given much attention to women's rights, the work for vote for women, the struggle, so I started to read. And I came over to the Lawrence library and started to read about women's rights. Suddenly, I was taken up in the whole struggle that women had for the vote. By the time I got to my banquet speech, which I am sorry I don't have, I didn't keep that, I knew a lot about how we got the vote. I reminded the women at that banquet that it was a long, hard struggle to get that vote, and that we couldn't stop now, we had to keep going. One person who was listening to me that night was Jane Tibith Schullenberg. She was one of my students in Freshman Studies and she was at the banquet. At the banquet, she said that she took my words to heart and she decided that she was going to graduate school. It was Bill Chaney and I. She said that Bill Chaney and I made her decide to go to graduate school. I am so proud of Jane Tibith Schullenberg, as you know she is now a professor of history now in Madison and leads groups to Europe every fall and contributes to medieval literature in terms of women's status in the medieval period. Her latest book is wonderful. She's an amazing person, very accomplished research scholar. And she was in the banquet, so I was very pleased about that.

**[00:16:47]**

**JS: I am sure you were very instrumental in the creation of Women's Week at Lawrence.**

MR: Yes, as a matter of fact, I was. But there was no attention paid to my hand in it, because my husband and I went to a conference on AAAS, The American Association for the Advancement of Science in Washington DC. We heard there a keynote speaker, her name was Eugene Ramey and she's an endocrinologist at Johns Hopkins. Her keynote speech was on the genders. She clearly laid it out, that there are no differences between genders, except those lines which are socially constructed. There are certainly physical differences, but in terms of the socializing of the male and female, she made us understand that it was only because of our perception and expectation of the genders that we put them into various pathways. Out of that conference, my husband on the way home said, you know our students need to know what she just said, let's have a conference. We talked about it and he said to me, because I had been waving flags and participating in parades and speaking at rallies at this point, he said, "please leave this to me." He didn't want any antagonism. He asked, "would you promise to just take a back seat and not really take part, just don't say anything?" I said "sure, I'm just glad you're doing it." He got the speaker Eugene Ramey to come to Lawrence and she was wonderful. The whole week, I think, really depended on such a good keynote speaker. Another one was Harriet Sheridan from Carleton, she was the Dean, or Vice President of Carleton. She gave us great insights into affirmative action, because she had a terrible time at Carleton. She was not an activist or feminist. She did not consider herself a feminist, but she had seen things happen at Carleton that were detrimental to the

women's position. So she kept being drawn into the movement of affirmative action. When she came to us, she began by saying...I've got the tape, I'll give you the tape of all the talks of that first week and the discussion groups we had, I'll be glad to give you those. So she assured us that she wasn't a feminist when she began, but by the time she studied affirmative action, she could say that yes, she was a spokesperson for women. And her daughters were very happy. It was a good week.

**JS: Do you remember the year of that first Women's Week?**

MR: Yes, 1973. And I have the poster. In fact, I just gave you a poster of it. My husband named it the "Human Equal Rights Symposium," HERS. And on the poster giving what happened for each of the talks, he had a picture of the back of a graduate and the front of a baby. In other words, you couldn't tell the gender. He said that he had a contest and the contest was: "he or she?" And the students had to fill out the blank and do it to say if he was a he or she for consciousness-raising for that Women's Week. So it was the first women's week in 1973 and it went on until the '80s, and there was just a loss of interest in the '80s and it dissipated.

[00:20:25]

**JS: What was the reaction of Lawrence with the start of Women's Week? Was it a positive reaction?**

MR: Well this is why I am giving you the tapes of the discussion groups, because the people in charge of affirmative action who had been successful burying it and pushing it aside and not dealing with it, were very upset. They were very disconcerted, because after all, it showed them in a bad light. I won't name any names, you'll get them on the tape [laughs]. We had kind of a mixture of feeling. Among the faculty there was great interest and some said, "boy it's about time we did this," and some said, "I don't see why we need to do this," so there was a great disparity of viewpoints about this. But the students loved it. The students were very receptive, which is why it lasted for several years, the idea of women's studies. Because we had people speaking who gave us insights into how we failed to notice that women are unequally treated. For example, the Title IX speaker was from Washington DC and she was really a top research woman in Title IX, sports for women. And she gave us wonderful insights and I met her many times through the years at various conferences. Margaret Dunkle was her name. Margaret Dunkle always remembered coming to Lawrence for that first Women's Week. It was so successful.

Another thing that happened was Mary Poulson. Mary had been noticing in the gym and the phys. ed. department that women were not given any acknowledgement, let alone accolades, so she had a women's movement called WISAL, Women In Sports At Lawrence. We had a little whistle that we could blow. Through Mary's efforts over a couple of years, there came a place of women's photographs on the bulletin boards in the gym, women's trophies given to women winners, and all of a sudden women counted. You see, women didn't count at that point, and it got to the point where women counted and I think that this is the transformation we're seeing in the '70s and '80s at Lawrence. And all over the world.

**JS: Well I was going to ask, because you've published a lot on the subject and you've given me papers at conferences, is there anything in particular that was your favorite to publish, or your favorite paper that you've presented?**

MR: I think the best, I won't say favorite, but the most effective paper that I wrote was called "The Abuse of Women and Christianity," because people hadn't been thinking of those two together. It was like, why are you putting those two things together? I began to be aware that our Christian teachings made women susceptible to the acceptance of abuse. In my work in the battered women's movement in Wisconsin, as a member of the Women's Commission, I got letters from Christian women. One Christian woman said, "how dare you interfere with God's law, you should not say that women should leave her husband, under any circumstances, because that's what was her function in life and that was her burden to bear." And then I realized that was a mental set. It wasn't just one woman out in rural Wisconsin. Then I began to work on that, wrote a paper called "Abuse of Women and Christianity," and carried that to conferences all through England, eleven cities in England, and Amsterdam for an international conference. That was published in the journal called *Feminist Theology*. I can give you a copy of that, if you're interested. But I think that was the paper that brought me into the awareness of the association of Christianity and abuse, and also let me take it to other people who were astonished. They had not thought of that. So I think that was the most successful.

**[00:24:45]**

**JS: Working with the Women's Commission of Wisconsin, what were some of the activities that you did on that? How do you feel women were represented in Wisconsin as opposed to if you were in a big city on the east coast, or living in California, or something like that?**

MR: Usually if you were in a big city, you do have little conclaves of women's rights activists. But in Wisconsin, we had nothing until Kathryn Clarenbach. That was early 1960s. Kathryn Clarenbach was appointed by then Governor Lucey, to head up a commission. That was in effect for 15 years. As members of that commission, they looked to the laws to see where women were ignored or discriminated against and tried to work to correct those. I was brought into this commission in 1975, 15 years after it was founded. So Patrick Lucey also appointed me into this commission. On that commission we had 35 members of whom one was a man, Mort Perlmutter. I forgot where he was from, but we were all from Wisconsin, cities, rural areas, all parts of Wisconsin. Wealthy people, just eking out a living, all ages from the 20s to the 70s and 80s, 35 people representing the women of Wisconsin under the law. That's what our purpose was. On that commission, we had several task forces. The task forces were legislative. One was battered women, that was mine, credit granting, divorce legislation, estate planning, estate management, inheritance reform. I did say credit granting, which was a big thing, because women were discriminated against in credit granting, because of their husband's status. For example, I'm trying to remember her name. Somebody from Larson, Wisconsin called me to say that she was not able to get a loan from her bank, because her husband was unemployed, because of a back injury. She said, I have a quilting firm, I am the head of my quilting firm, but I can't get a loan, because my husband is not employed, because of an illness. So I said, well this is wrong. I had her come and I took her to Madison. She was my witness for a law that we were trying to have put in to make it illegal

not to grant a loan to a woman who was creditworthy. But the woman had to be creditworthy, of course. If she was, and if you didn't grant her a loan, then the punishment was \$2,000. We were able to put that into legislation. Because if you didn't have some kind of punishment, then the banks, they wouldn't pay any attention to any law. You had to have teeth in the law. But she was my spokesperson. With her testimony and about five others, they were able to get that passed through legislature. Yeah, it was fun.

**JS: I was going to ask, switching subjects, you did a lot of traveling and doing excavations. I was wondering if you could talk about the travels that you did while you were here at Lawrence?**

MR: One of the trips, I think you had this in mind when you said excavation, although I never was a part of the excavating group. We observed excavations and archaeological digs, because my field was Classics. The other Classicist at Lawrence was Dan Arnaud at the time. This was in 1966. He and I planned a classical tour that was three weeks. That was doing the sites of Greece. It was such fun, we had a wonderful time. My husband and I also did later, as a reflection of that because we liked it so much, later we did it with our family in a camping bus. But this was going to various sites like Corinth, Athens, and Crete. We did the Heraklion and the Knossos, the Temple of Minos at Knossos. I remember my husband going through the remains of the palace of Knossos. He had studied that. On our first trip to Europe in 1962, we went to Rome and he looked at the ruts at the cobblestones in Rome near the Colosseum. He said, look, this is where the Roman chariots rode, this is where they passed. He was so inspired by that, but he suddenly realized that that all happened there. With that, he was drawn into the ancient world. He began to study my field, so he was very well read and a spokesperson for going back to the ancient sites. And we did that several of times. We just love ancient Greece and Rome.

**[00:30:32]**

**JS: You talked about some students. Were there particular students or other faculty here at Lawrence that made a strong impact on your life, influenced you?**

MR: Yes, I have to speak to result of having met somebody. Her name was Margaret Shea Gilbert. She was the head of the Biology Department, but Margaret Shea Gilbert came to Lawrence as a faculty wife. Her husband Paul Gilbert happened to be a physicist. He was the man responsible for Bruce accepting the invitation to come to Lawrence. He thought the world of Paul and Paul is the godfather of our son, Robert. But Margaret Shea Gilbert came to Lawrence as an adjunct, as a faculty wife, and was maybe given one lab course in geology or something like that. They would let her know at the last couple of weeks that she had to do one lab course in geology. So she would do her lab course in geology, although her field was biology. For a number of years, she was treated like a secondhand citizen. Which is how all faculty wives were at that time. Julia, I have to tell you that this was the way of treating faculty wives. She persevered; she became more able to teach more and more courses. And soon, she was in the Biology Department. And now we're going to leap ahead to Doug Knight. Because when Doug Knight looked at Peg Gilbert's record and realized how much she had done for Lawrence and how important she was, not only to Lawrence, but to everyone, he decided to promote her to full professor. We had had titles like lecturer, the women who happened to be faculty wives were called lecturers, and that's

what Peg was called. And she was jumped to a full professor. Then her salary was increased exponentially. So Margaret Shea Gilbert is the one I would say who influenced me the most. She made me realize what teaching was all about. Margaret Shea Gilbert dedicated herself to her students, she was dedicated to them and to her field, and to her family first, her husband came first. He had infantile paralysis and was crippled, so he was her main concern. And her three daughters, and then her field, and her students. She never reneged on any of those. She was a wonderful person, a beautiful person. When I came to Lawrence, I was lucky enough to be under her wing, she took me under her wing and told me about college teaching and what we try to do here at Lawrence and every good liberal arts college. I would say that because of Margaret Shea Gilbert, I think I became a good teacher, under her guidance. She wrote a book called *The Biography of the Unborn*. It was translated into, I don't know how many languages. It was a best-seller. The Reader's Digest picked it up. I think you'll have *The Biography of the Unborn* in this library. As you can see I never stopped loving Margaret Shea Gilbert and I love her memory now.

**JS: Were there students that you stayed in contact with after they graduated?**

MR: Oh yes. I think I will just name a couple, there were several. They are so good about keeping in touch and coming back. But I have to mention a David Parkinson. Now David Parkinson is now a curator and appraiser of art. He works in New York City. His wife is the Program Director of CBS. He's the one that I'll have a long letter from, a phone call, an invitation to visit, or he will see us to visit when he comes here. He was just somebody that appreciated and it was a little course that I had called "Classics in Translation." He seemed to be impressed by some ways that we had discussions. I'll give you one example. We did *Hamlet*. One year he was watching *Hamlet* in Canada at the Shakespearean Festival. I got the program of the *Hamlet* and he said, "Remember our discussion? This was a perfect Iago!"

Another one is Randy Rimmel. I used to have a program called "Latin Carol Service" here. But all of the Latin carols that we sang were medievally constructed, you couldn't sing them. They didn't go with the music we had. So Randy Rimmel was an excellent Latin student in the Classics Department and so I asked Randy if he would just go through and translate about 15 Latin carols. And he did it to such a point that we used it for about the 13 years we had the service. And now he lives in Portland, Oregon. And I saw him when he came through town for the last two times. He always comes and stops and visits. It's very nice to have students like that.

And then when we went to Germany, there were about 15 students that we had through the year that were class of 1972 and 1973. We were so close to them, because we had one term with them in Germany. And now when they come back for the reunions, we have wonderful reunions and show slides of the times that we were together there. Especially Linda Larman. I'd like to mention Linda Larman, because she was a particular favorite and Laura Miller as well. But every year now, when we have our emeriti faculty retreat, Linda Larman and Laura Miller are my guests for our guest night. They always manage to come back. Linda lives right in Fish Creek and Laura lives in Milwaukee. But we always manage to get together, because Linda is so active for the Alumni Board. But I have many, many good friends who used to be my students.

**[00:37:03]**

**JS: I was going to ask about what life was like here at Lawrence during the late 1960s and early 1970s when so much turbulence was going on in the world and student protests were going on here at Lawrence, and ask what you remember about that time period.**

MR: Well the recent exhibit at the Outagamie Museum called "Times They are A-Changing" was very helpful for me to restore the memory of several of those particular events. Like Fred Flom, who was missing in action. Of course the big thing that comes to mind immediately was the visit of George Wallace to our campus. He also spoke in Neenah. A group of faculty went over to Neenah and we had constructed signs. I have a newspaper article with that, a photograph as well that said "Free Speech for All," that's what we said on our signs. We were marching, we were about 15 strong, and other people came and supported us, because George Wallace was giving this racist speech inside. Then there was George Rockwell, the head of the Nazi Party, who gave a talk in the chapel. We carried candles and marched up and down outside. My husband and I were drawn to participate in these events that Lawrence had, because it was important for the students to see that we had to take a stand, too. The students were quick to support us and to come along with that, too.

There's something else that almost came to mind. Oh yes, the conscription of our boys. Five of us women decided that we would stand against the bus. The bus that took about 25 or 30 young men from this area to Milwaukee to be conscripted for the Vietnam War. It was going to leave at 6:00 in the morning and Mary Alice Martinez who was a wonderful faculty wife and a wonderful person, married to Hugo Martinez at that time, got us together. She was the organizer. She had her sheet to read for the press release. Betty Breunig and myself, Sandy Shackelford and a few others, whose names escape me, got together at 6:00 in the morning, it was a very chilly morning. And we held hands and stood in front of the bus.

**JS: I think I have a picture of that.**

MR: Yes, it was written up in the Post Crescent. So we stood there and Mary Alice Martinez read her press release, why we were standing there, saying that we did not want our boys to go to war, this war was unjust. We were against the war and then some members of the VFW were standing across the street, drowning us out with singing national songs, like "America the Beautiful" and our national anthem. But anyway, she was heard and the Post Crescent took down her words and printed them. But the bus driver said to us, "now look, you can do this, but I have to go, and at such-and-such, I hope you get out of the way." And we looked at each other. We all had husbands and children at home. We realized we were not going to be knocked down by the bus, we were not going to go that far. So when the bus started to move, we just walked away from that. But that was the most dangerous, the most risky thing that we did. But we wanted to make a statement against the Vietnamese war, which we thought was so evil.

**[00:40:53]**

**JS: Lawrence has paid a lot of attention to individualized learning over the last few years. I was curious about, now obviously individualized learning has been at Lawrence for many, many years, and I was wondering if you could talk about individualized learning in the late 1950s and 1960s and 1970s.**

MR: My husband and I are amazed that such attention is given to individualized learning as if it were something that was newly introduced. My husband always had tutorials. In fact, and this is very important for my husband's work in his life, one of this tutorial students, Paul Steinberg, was taking a course in physics from my husband. One day Paul asked my husband, "Professor Brackenridge, have you read Newton's *Principia*?" And my husband was taken aback, because he had to hesitate. He did not answer right away, because he was so shocked to know that he had to answer no, he had not read Newton's *Principia*. But I have to say that that question from one student who was Bruce's tutorial, changed my husband's career, changed his life. Because he indeed started to read Newton's *Principia* and the rest of his productive professional life was based on research on Newton's *Principia* and he became a world-known scholar on Newton's *Principia*. Because Paul Stein asked him the question, did you read the *Principia*? [laughs] But my husband always had tutorials. I myself didn't, because I didn't teach at Lawrence in that capacity. In London, Bruce would always point out students in London, that I should take to the women's library, the Fawcett Library, or I should take to the Florence Nightingale Museum. So I always did individual things with students on the side in London. But I know many professors who, through those years you mentioned, always had individual students. They always encouraged students to do projects on their own, because that added so much to their understanding of how to study.

**JS: I was going to ask about the Gender Studies program here at Lawrence and ask if you knew when it was first talked about having a department like that here on campus and what was Lawrence's reaction to that?**

MR: I can't speak to that, because that was a time when I was not at Lawrence. But let me just say this. I was at the University of Wisconsin Green Bay. The first time I taught there was in 1975 after I had lost my job here. And then for a couple of years I was just substituting for a couple of schools in Appleton and being in the PTA and the Human Rights Council. But then I started to teach at UWGB, which was just getting started. So they didn't have the kind of classes I wanted to teach. They said, "would you please design your own class?" And so I did. I designed a class called "Crisis in Society: Sexism in our Society." And the other one was "Sex Role Stereotyping in Northeastern Wisconsin." I taught those two courses in particular and Classics courses as well. So I wasn't on the beginning of the Gender Studies here, but I assume that it was like UWGB, because I was the beginning one to give a Women's Studies course there. And "Women in Antiquity" was another one. And I think what happened in our Women's Week, we would always have people in, like Fanny Lemoyne from Madison, who gave a talk on women in the ancient world. And suddenly the Classics Department got insights into Gender Studies. You see, Gender Studies was insinuated in terms of professorial offerings at Women's Week conferences and suddenly people realized that we didn't have anything like that actually and that something like that needed to be offered. So Judy Sarnecki and Eilene Hoft-March, wonderful women like that, who were so instrumental in starting the Gender Studies program, I think had a hand in starting that movement here for Gender Studies.

[00:45:41]

**JS: How long did you teach at UW Green Bay?**

MR: I taught for – 1975 to 1979, four years.

**JS: And what are the different types of activities that you've done since UW Green Bay?**

MR: After UWGB, I had a National Endowment for the Humanities Grant. That was at Princeton. And my director there was John Gager who was in the Religion Department at Princeton. The book that we were studying was *The Making of Late Antiquity*. So *The Making of Late Antiquity* was bringing together all kinds of sources from early Christianity and trying to decide how did Christianity come from this disparity of backgrounds, pagan and Christian. It was one of the best things that I ever took part in. This was the beginning of my interest in early Christianity, 1979. I needed a topic for a project and I wanted to do a woman. There was a woman, because the one in *The Making in Antiquity* and I'm forgetting the name of the author. Anyway, she was mentioned and it was Perpetua, she was one of the early martyrs of the Church. So Vibia Perpetua wrote a diary of her time in prison, which was then edited by Tertullian or some other early Christian. It was 203 AD. And I took her diary and did my summer project on that and later published on that and later in life, went to the site of her martyrdom in North Africa and went into the arena where she had been martyred. And we took out her diary and I was reading it. That was kind of a moving thing. But that was the turning of my attention to this particular era when women began to express themselves. And then I realized women were there. They were teaching. They were preaching. They were doing everything. And yet, they were not acknowledged in the history of Christianity. And that brought me into the research on women in the early world.

I had one other grant that I got for a summer, NEH, that was at Rome. It was a study of 14<sup>th</sup> century Rome. I had a choice. I could either do the Theatre of Marcello, which would go back to Latin roots of ancient architecture or – this happened accidentally. I was at a women's bookshop in Piazza Farnese and I walked out of the women's bookshop, down the street, and there was a darling little convent. A beautiful little convent. And I walked up and knocked on the door, which I did in Rome, and said, "could you tell me about this church?" And they said, "well yes, come in, come in." It was the Convent of St. Bridget of Sweden, who lived for 20 years in Rome in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century. Now I had no idea. I had never heard of St. Bridget of Sweden. And I thought somebody brought me from the women's bookshop to the door of St. Bridget's. It's called the House of St. Bridget, La Case di Santa Brigida in Piazza Farnese. So she took me in, showed me around, and showed me where Bridget died in Rome. I thought, well, this is my topic. That was my topic for the summer. Later, I published on her. Many people did on her 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary for her canonization, so my paper was on the social work of St. Bridget and her time in Rome. So that was that one.

I had three NEH grants and the third one was in Greek religion in Stanford University with Michael Jameson. He was wonderful. I was so lucky to have excellent...I should have told you, in Rome it was Robert Brentano. Robert Brentano is a very well-known medievalist. No longer living, and also my other director died since then, Michael Jameson. But he had a wonderful discussion group on early Christianity at Stanford in 1986. So all these three NEH grants brought me into the field of early Christianity. When I

was at the Secret Archives of the Vatican library, which you probably saw in the recent movie *The Da Vinci Code* or *Angels and Demons*. I studied in the Secret Archives to find a letter from St. Bridget to the Pope of that time, saying “could you please loan my son some money for his trip?” So it was really a remarkable experience to be part of that library.

**[00:50:38]**

**JS: I was going to ask you about the LUX group. The Lawrence University Ex-Professors.**

MR: Yes, the professors and their wives [laughs]

**JS: I was going to ask you when that started and how that came about.**

MR: Well, Dick and Nancy Winslow. Dick was in the Spanish Department and his wife Nancy decided that we should make use of this wonderful place we had in Bjorklunden in Door County. So they said, let’s get a few faculty together and they got permission from whoever was the director at that time. I don’t think it was Mark yet...

**JS: Was it Joe?**

MR: Yes, I think it was Joe at that time. Got permission to go up and just have a little gathering. I think we paid \$15 a day and the kitchen staff helped us and we pitched in and did things, swept the floor and did the dishes, we put the dishes in the dishwasher, cleaned our rooms at the end. At the end of our week there in 1997, we said, “wow, let’s do this again, this was great!” So we did, we sat down and said, we have to have a name. And I’ve got the paper for when we were discovering what name, and several suggestions of names. And Lux was light, because light was associated with Lawrence. Lux turned out to be Lawrence University X. X can be for ex-professors, either gender and their spouses, either widows or widowers. So we let Lux stand for this group of gathering emeriti who wanted to spend a week in this beautiful setting in Bjorklunden. So this is how it started in 1997, and now we are in our 13<sup>th</sup> year and I’m directing it this year. This is the second time I’m directing it. But it’s easy. All you do is let people know it’s coming, they let you know they’re coming. Mark Breseman is a wonderful director there. He often gives us a tour, a walking tour around. But it’s turned out to be a very warm experience where we get together, renew our acquaintances, and four of us present on any topics that we happen to be engaged in at the time, researching something. Bob Rosenberg is doing two articles now and he’s going to be presenting them. Rik Warch is going to present and Stella Lauter, who is wonderful, is going to do a topic on a famous woman writer. Mary Poulson will do something on her latest trip. So we just love this group and we’re so fortunate to have Lawrence support us. Jill Beck, when she stepped in, took over from Rik Warch in giving us a coffee every month. We have a monthly coffee, which they pay for and then they give us the possibility of going up for a week every fall.

**JS: Now when did the tradition of meeting in the Grill each month and having coffee start? Did that start in '97?**

MR: Yes, '97. Just after our first week up there, we decided to get together each month and Rik Warch said that he would foot the bill for the coffee. So Jill Beck took that over afterwards and we still meet, as you know, every first Tuesday. You were with us last time.

**JS: Yeah! It was a very fun group.**

MR: It is. And about 20-25 people come every month.

**JS: Is there anything that we haven't talked about that you would like to?**

MR: I can't think of anything in particular. I think you've covered so many bases, Julia. I would just say that it's so nice that you're doing this particular kind of oral history. I'm so pleased that you're giving us a basis of research later on in various groups, and also the in history of Lawrence. And I want to find out more about where Lawrence stands now on women's rights and what's the attitude now towards affirmative action, which they were so many reluctant to take on in 1975. I'd like to know now what the status of that is.

**JS: How about my last question is, since coming here in 1959 and then now, how has Lawrence stayed the same and in what ways do you think it's changed?**

MR: Well, I am constantly amazed after 50 years, I should say it's been 50 years this year, that I've been here, at the growth of popularity of Lawrence University. I know that it's among the top liberal arts colleges in the country. Although I agree and I think it is. But it is always pleasing and also surprising to find that your little Appleton college has made it in the big time. So many people have worked toward that. For example, John Brandenberger in his physics programs has drawn people from all over the country and teaching them what's on offer here and 85 or 90 percent of the students brought in on these weekend programs apply to Lawrence and come. So I think that innovative people like John Brandenberger, have really instilled the knowledge about Lawrence and the love of knowledge in the high school students who are ready to come to college. And also another thing is, of course, we can't neglect to mention the Conservatory. One of the most outstanding conservatories in the world, I think. But to think that we...I just go across the street to the Chapel, and I hear the most amazing concerts, the most amazing recitals, and I think we have the highest quality of cultural achievement in Lawrence. Of course, with the Performing Arts Center added to the Appleton scene, it's just an idyllic place to come to school and to live. My children often say, I am so happy that you decided to raise us in Appleton. They still love Appleton and it's a wonderful place to bring up your children or to live without them. [laughs] Which I am doing now, living on my own. I cannot tear myself away.

**JS: Well, unless you could think of anything else, I'll go ahead and turn off the recorder.**

MR: That's fine. Thank you.

**[End: 00:56:49]**