

***Mundelein History Oral History Project***

***Interviewee: Kay (Heerey) Sullivan ('38)***

***Interviewer: Laura L. Carroll***

***Date: December 12, 2001***

***Location: Gannon Center for Women and Leadership, Loyola University, Chicago, IL***

***Begin Tape 1, Side 1***

This is Laura Carroll and I am interviewing Kay Sullivan and it's December 12, 2001 and we're at the Women and Leadership Archives at the Gannon Center, Loyola University, Chicago.

**Laura Carroll:** If you could just start talking a little bit about the reasons why you came to Mundelein [College], a little bit about your background, maybe the High School you went to, that kind of thing.

**Kay Sullivan:** Sure, I went Siena High School, which the Sisters of Mercy taught at. And it was [the] period of 1934 when not too many of us went to college. Two other friends came to Mundelein with me, one who dropped out the first year and the second one [who dropped out] the second year. A lot of it was the fact that there wasn't money available to pay for tuition. We started out with probably 250. Many of the girls were on scholarships, and when that was over our class dwindled. In fact, when we graduated in 1938, there were 65, I believe. I came to Mundelein, I guess because my parents, as they saw the the building being created, [said] 'this is the place for you.' And the BVMs were such great teachers. I had won a scholarship of four years to the Mercy college, which is St. Xavier's, but my father didn't care for me to be in that neighborhood. He should be here now! But, then, of course. They moved further south, they were at 49th, which I would have gone by streetcar to see what it was like. He came back, and said 'even if you have the scholarship, I don't want you traveling on the streetcars.' So we chose, they chose. I guess in those days, your parents said 'you're going here.' And I was thrilled to be going to Mundelein.

thrilled to be going to Mundelein. It was new, and the nuns were - [they] made us so welcome, we were delighted to be here.

I felt sort of alone, because the areas I was interested in, the gals that came with me, [they] had absolutely no interest in [them] at all. But I was welcomed by girls, women, who were juniors and seniors, and who had been active in the CISCA, which I'm not sure you're familiar with. But I was secretary of that for a number of years. But they made me feel so welcome. "We're glad you're here, and anything we could do." They went out of their way. In fact, everybody seemed to be glad, not only [that] I was there, but whoever my classmates were [too].

I thought I would like to major in the classics, which I took a year of. I decided this wasn't for me, because the other students (there were only six of us in the class that had Greek background) whereas I had a lot of Latin background, but the Greek [students] were way ahead of me. I just wasn't happy, and I loved Sister Donald, who was our teacher and head of the department. She really worked hard to make me like it, but I changed in sophomore year to the Home Economics department, with Sister Mary Pierre. Her mother was a Sullivan - later in life I heard that. Now at the time, you never knew who they were. But anyhow, she was just great, and I was happy. I had to go back and pick up chemistry and stuff like that. So I went to summer school in order to catch up, I guess you'd say. I loved the department, she was wonderful. We also had sister Mary St. Remi, who was in clothing, and that was fine. I got along fine, we did a lot of interesting things. But the knowledge that I received from Sister Mary Pierre is - I'm ever so grateful. Many a day I think about - she was a wonderful woman. She was not just a wonderful teacher, but she was a good friend, and we were her girls. And as we left school and married, our children were her babies. I mean she was just the greatest lady, and a good teacher. You probably know from working in the archives that she was honored many times for her home economics knowledge.

And so anyhow, I was involved in many things. I did the PR [Public Relations] for the college for a number of years. I climbed - there's a building across the street here of

the time, and I'm probably off sequence here, was Sister Mary, president, I should say, was Sister Mary Justitia Coffey. She was tremendous. And the dean was Sister [Mary] Evangela, a lovely, gentle, sweet woman. They both were great. But you knew who is in charge. Sister Justicia was in charge. I mean, there were certain things you could do, and certain things you couldn't do, and everything was building up a tradition. She was wonderful. We could never walk down the front steps until we were seniors and had our caps and gowns. She gave an address at Christmas time as we stood for the first time with our caps and gowns, which was beautiful. You felt you were really getting a awful lot from your education. I mean, it was impressive. There was no doubt about it. What else do you want to know...like involvement?

LC: I know you mentioned Sister Mary Pierre, and you went on to talk about the importance of her in your life, but I noticed in the book, *Mundelein Voices*, there wasn't much mention of her--

KS: [It] just said she's the tearoom manager.

LC: Of course, I'm sure ---

KS: She was a lot more than that. She did run what they call the tearoom. And that was all that they said about her, but she did everything---

LC: She was there for a long time?

KS: Oh, yes, many, many years. She was one of the last ones left, when she went to Dubuque, she still was in habit. She was one of the few that remained.

[Interruption---Mrs. Sullivan talks to husband outside the room]

[Interruption---Mrs. Sullivan talks to husband outside the room]

KS: She was a very, very smart woman, really. But she gave us a lot of background for us to move on to whatever field we might. [pause] We did a lot of naughty things.

LC: Any good stories?

KS: One time we had a demonstration, one of the tests that we had, and you demonstrated, [and] you had an assistant. And the gal who was my assistant - I had made a beautiful angel food - the girl that was my assistant, instead of putting it over on a table, she put it on a radiator. Of course, the two pan separated from the basic [pan]. All the dough went down into the radiator. Of course she cried, and I just went on, and Sister Mary Pierre said, 'Well these things do happen.' She was gentle. You know, that's like yesterday. I think one of the nicest things is that those gals who were in Home Ec[onomics] with me and a few others who said they felt like they were in home ec because we were there all the time - we've had a club since we were juniors in college, and we still meet. There's five us left, out of twelve. Which is wonderful. And we're in each others weddings, we had godmothers for our children. We're just real close, and we still chat frequently. I have one, my closest [friend], probably, she said one day to me 'When I die, no wait, when you die, who am I going to call?' And I said, 'Well, I don't know, you'll have to call someplace else.' No, we've enjoyed it. We are close, and our children - its interesting - are close to each other in many many cases. Friendship to me was very, very important.

LC: One thing I was wondering about is - when you went to Mundelein in the thirties, it still was not necessarily common for women to go to college. Did you feel--

KS: They didn't have the money to.

LC: So, it was more --

KS: Many of them went to business college. One of my classmates won a scholarship to Rosary College, and she said no way could she go, she was the oldest of eight. She had to go to work. And when I went to high school, there [were] two senior classes, one was in the business world, [and] the nun was a terrific teacher. I wasn't in that, I was in college prep. But many of them who were in college prep just couldn't make it. Finances were pretty hard. My junior year, because I got so involved in things I chose to live in Philomena Hall. I told you Jane [Malkemus] was one of my roommates, and she was a rascal. We had fun, and I'm still in touch with the other two gals.

LC: Did some of the girls live at the school and some commuted? Was that how it worked?

KS: Yes, it was mostly commuting. There were people that lived in the house. Probably thirty of us, and people lived on the 14th floor of the college. And we had our meals over at the [inaudible]. My senior year, my father bought my aunt's car, so I could drive back and forth. I would be here until all hours. It was great. There were only about three cars, and we parked right next to this building here - well before this building was [here] - and that was the parking lot. There were two girls...[inaudible]. My father said he felt that I was very safe driving. That's what I did, and it was wonderful, because I could go home for a while and come back for something at night. As I said, I did a lot of the PR. I was on the staff of the *Skyscraper*, and most, many of my hours were spent with CISCA or with sodality.

LC: Can you explain what CISCA is, just for the tape?

KS: It's the Chicago Inter-Student Catholic Action, and it used to be CISCORA -- Chicago Institute Organization for Catholic Action...And one of the bishops decided that wasn't the

right name, and it should be called CISCA. It changed a lot of things. Bishop Shiel was the bishop at the time, and it changed a lot of things. But Mundelein-- Catholic high schools, colleges belonged and sent their representatives. And we were secretaries for a long long time. It was moderated by the Jesuits.

LC: What were some of the activities?

KS: [inaudible] our lady committies, that was using Quigley, because these young men were studying to become priests. There was planning for future meetings, and they [were involved] in social issues, participated in a lot of things that kept the ball a rolling. Times were -- it was hard times. People did a lot of things. Off from that were the Summer Schools of Catholic Action, and they were located in different cities throughout the country. For a summer I worked with the *Queen's Work*, who was in charge of the summer schools. It was Father Lord, maybe you've heard of him --

LC: Yes, I have.

KS: He was in charge, and I worked there. I read proof, which was my specialty, for publications that he was doing. He was the guiding light, with the staff of ten Jesuits, and a staff of lay people. They traveled around, and they also had conventions. If they came to Chicago, they came to the Morrison Hotel, which is no more. It was wonderful, and I had a lot of friends and met a lot of people there. I was in a wedding party of one of the gals. I've kept up them - I've tried to - and it's been nice.

LC: What was Mundelein's relationship with Loyola like?

KS: Very close. We had some of the priests teach philosophy and theology. Farther McGaughlin and Father McCormick, Father Kelly. Yes, it was very close. We had tea dances where we wore hats and gloves. That's where many of the romances began. For

parties and dances and proms you usually were there with a Loyola boy. So, it was nice. It was a lovely relationship. I loved every minute of it.

LC: It sounds like you did.

KS: Not only a good time, but you had to work hard.

LC: Let's talk a little bit about the Home Economics department and your major. It's a lot different now -

KS: But it shouldn't be.

LC: Right, well I'm sure you have feelings about that, so go ahead and talk -

KS: I sure do.

LC: Well, I was surprised, because I looked at the requirements, and the classes that you had to take. You had to take chemistry, nutrition -

KS: [There was a] big emphasis on food -

LC: That is a lot different than it is now.

KS: But I shouldn't have changed. I contend that women, sometime in life, are going to have to prepare meals and raise a family. I just think its awful when our girls - We were at Regina Dominican, that's where they attended. While they were there, they were phasing out - even though the school was very new - the Home Ec. department, because people were not interested enough. I said to the nun, who is a good friend of mine who's in charge, 'This is ridiculous, because they're going to have to know these things.' Sister said,

'Well, they don't have staff.' That ended it. Now, its coming back into their curriculum. With the nutrition part under, not exactly the physical ed., but health/fitness [department] and what not. They told me here, that it has come back with the nursing department, and a few other things. For years I donated financial help to help buy books on nutrition and foods. Foods and nutrition was really what I loved. I really, really enjoyed it. It wasn't an easy course. We had a real difficult [course]. I took Organic Chemistry at Loyola, in the heat of the summer. But we were fortunately in the basement. The bacteriology nun was excellent, absolutely fabulous, but hard. If you tried to keep up with activities, it wasn't the easiest thing. But if you loved it, what difference does it make? As I went on, I would have liked to gotten my Master's in Foods. But to be honest, my folks couldn't afford to send me to where I could get a Master's, which I regret to this day. I went on and worked. I ran a catering department in a hotel in Oak Park before I married. And then I've been involved in foods one way or another ever since. I do have a business -

LC: Yes, I was wondering if you wanted to talk about that -

KS: Yes, I love it.

LC: I've seen some articles, and it seems really fascinating -

KS: I always wanted to own a bookstore or tea room. We shopped around before my husband retired. In fact we put a bid in for a bookstore locally, and the people decided to keep it. My husband said 'you don't want to take on a tearoom, it will be seven days a week, I don't think you want that.' Our family was still growing, so twenty years ago - Oh, I volunteered at Loyola and Regina forever. I mean forever, I'm still doing Regina- But, twenty years ago I decided I'm going to do something, and almost at the same time there was a teeny ad in the Tribune. This woman that I talked to said what she had, and she said that I better come right now. So, I went down and called our son - my husband was at work - I called our son, I said, 'Do you want to come with me? I'm going to buy some books.'

We got down there, and she just wanted to get rid of them, she had inherited them. So she said, 'they're all yours.' There were 1500 books. Now I have over 3,000. But I've enjoyed it. One of the reasons, I think, is because of my background - foods and nutrition. I have no problem helping people identify what they're looking for. I mean it's been a plus, and people have been really nice [and] really complimentary of the gracious manner that I treat them. It's bragging, but it's true. I spend a lot of time, and sometimes I don't always make a sale. My husband said I'd be discouraged if that was the case. He's more "drive, drive," whereas, I'm 'if you want it, you want it.' But I've done well, I've done real well. Two years ago I had a real good year. I think this year will be, [it] didn't start out well, but the last three months have been tremendous. And I've met some great folks, not only dealers, but clients. I have people now who come back to me, which is a compliment, if they're pleased with the service. [I've] never lost a book, never had a check bounce, and I've never had a book returned to me. To me that's a nice record. So I'm going to do it as long as I can.

LC: What are some of the ways in which your experience at Mundelein influenced your business now?

KS: I think it gave me a great foundation, [and] a lot of knowledge. I don't mind a challenge, I can handle it. I can only say anything good about the college. In addition to my very close friends, other Mundelein people each other. Like in our parish, one of the gals always talks about the "Mundle Bundle's" - 'Are there any new ones in the parish?' For a while we gathered as a group locally, and now most of those are gone. But my group lingers on. They're pretty well, [but] they're not all well. Another gal and I are really better than the other three, but that comes with age.

LC: I had a few things that Carolyn Farrell asked me [to mention]. I don't know if you worked with her, but what about Sister Mary Bernarda?

KS: Yes, and Sister Evangeline, she was the dean.

LC: Are there any stories?

KS: No. [But] some of the gals were absolutely crazy about her. My favorite dean was Sister Evangeline. I think one of the reasons is she left and we kept up over the years, even when our children were born. I just felt real close with her. I didn't feel that close to Sister Bernarda. And I have classmates who to this day would feel close. Sister John Michael was in the residence hall with Sister Donald when I lived in the residence hall. She was an absolutely superb teacher in education. If we didn't know it, it wasn't her fault. She still lives, as far as I know. She must be 90 plus plus. Last I heard, I never heard she died. But she was excellent, [and] a very good, wonderful teacher. She became president, and she might have been [inaudible].

LC: I know you mentioned Sister Justitia Coffey and there is a lot written about her. But Valerie was telling me, she is still kind of an elusive figure. I don't know if you can fill in any stories. I know you said one always knew that she was in charge.

KS: When I visit the college and I see people running up and down those stairs! One of my other nice memories is the lovely chapel. We had our class reunions there and our mass there. I think often of that chapel. Time often praying before various things, or for various things. It was a nice quiet place to really pray, and hope for the best. I was in the choir for a while.

LC: Was Sister Justitia the president the whole time you were there?

KS: No, we had somebody [inaudible] Sister Consuela, then Sister Justitia came back. Money - even our children don't have an idea. Sister Mary Madelina, who I was very close to, lived and died in [room] 306 - she said she never had so many eggs in all her life. They

had eggs and cheese, and eggs and cheese. They just didn't have money for things. One time when I was sick and had surgery, they came to visit, and I offered them something. They had come on the "El" and we were almost in Oak Park, [so] it was a long trip, and I offered them something, and my mom offered them something. They said no, but later Sister Madelina went to the ladies room - and I never knew this for years - but my mother gave her something to eat. She said she didn't want to tell me. Sister Mary Pierre was "rules were rules." She told us when her mother died, she sat on the steps and watched the funeral go by, she couldn't go by.

LC: Why not?

KS: That was the rule. I don't know, those were BVM rules. They would know more about that than I. Yes, I spent hours in [Room] 305 typing copy for papers and reading proof and it was a fun place. If you had a date on the weekend, you brought your corsage to Sister Mary Madelina, and she would post in on one of the bulletin boards. She was fun.

LC: When you went on dates, did they always bring you corsages, even on a regular date?

KS: Well, not always. Maybe just a boutonniere, they were big and long. You'd walk in the door, and she'd say, 'What did you do on the weekend?' She listened to everybody's love story, and she was always going to help us match up with somebody or the other. That was room was great. A lot was accomplished there.

LC: That reminds me, I was looking at some of the pictures books, and there are some of the model apartment. Did you have a lot to do with that?

KS: We never lived there! We always thought -

*End of Tape 1, Side 1*

*Begin Tape 1, Side 2*

KS: -- [inaudible] we had a few children there, but the apartment, if there was a tea or something nice there was a kitchen. I guess that's all gone, or is it still there?

LC: I don't know.

KS: Well, I know they remodeled, but I don't know if they took that down or what. But it was lovely, and Sister Mary Pierre often entertained people who came and people who recognized her in her abilities. She was deeply honored by the Home Economics world. She knew all the biggies.

LC: I read that she established the school at St. Louis University - the Master's Program, which is pretty big for the time.

KS: Yes. At least she didn't realize (inaudible) But the woman who followed her was excellent. We had a daughter that finished there in 1968, and she was in the clothing area. This [refers to dress that she is wearing] is one of her products. She's still designing and making clothes and bridal outfits. She had a Miss Powell I believe. Mary Pat excelled more in the clothing area, whereas I went into foods.

Going back to when I worked. It was a small suburban hotel, [that is] still in existence, and they still cater. But it was fascinating because I met a lot of interesting folks. In addition to that I planned weddings for some really nice - food service - for some really great people. We had quantity as well as quality. Thanksgiving, one year, we had twenty-seven weddings. It was from 8:30 in the morning to almost midnight. It was hard work, but I enjoyed it. One of the gals that was the food manager became one of my very dearest friends. Those things were nice. Lets see what else I have down here [looking at notebook].

Well, I guess one of the highlights, Sister Madaluna - before the computer, we sat and typed and typed for hours, our corsages, our dates.

LC: Well, I learned from Sister Ann Ida that Alpha Omicron was the Home Economics national honor society. You were involved in that, right?

KS: And I was also involved in Kappa Gamma Phi when we graduated. That was a biggie. It's interesting. I have a granddaughter who's in Phi Beta Kappa. She said, 'Were you?' 'No,' I said, 'but we were [in] Kappa Gamma Phi.' She's at Amherst. It's still going strong, but our chapter has sort of died because the people involved are gone, [and] there's no one to pick it up. It's kind of unfortunate.

LC: Well, I was wondering if you wanted to talk a little bit about Mundelein. Well, I'm going to Loyola now, and I didn't know that much about it. I think that if I didn't work here -

KS: You wouldn't know anything -

LC: No, and I think that's really -

KS: Too bad -

LC: Personally, I do, yes, because there's so much. It is really great that the book came out, but there's not the presence anymore. I was wondering what your feelings were about that?

KS: You mean, that it's not here anymore? Well, I'm sad. Because I would have liked our granddaughters to attend. But, this is not going to happen. I was there the day it - I was at a board meeting, I was on the alumni board I don't know how many times. I was at the

meeting when Sister Rosetta, she was the moderator, and she announced what had happened, and Sister Carolyn was coming on board. I guess I cried. You know, you're working so hard, so I believe they had financial problems, which is hard to believe. But I think it's true with all colleges, well maybe not today, but it has been. That the alums do not support the college like they should. I feel very indebted and we always have supported [Mundelein] and we've increased as time goes on. They were really happy years, and I really feel that the knowledge that I got came a lot from my BVM education. Not that I didn't have a great high school education, but I think you get a little different look. [They were] brilliant women that taught us, really. In philosophy there was Sister Basiline who was above and beyond us all, but she was marvelous.

You often think back about different things you learned and different classes. (inaudible) But I've tried to keep in touch with my class. [I'm] not bragging, but we never would have had reunions if it wasn't for me.

LC: I noticed that. I think one reunion you succeeded in getting almost everybody, or at least locating everyone. That must be a lot of work.

KS: I've enjoyed it. We had our twenty-fifth here, we had our fiftieth here, and the reception was in the yellow house, and we had a luncheon. That was when the problems began, and [for] the fifty-fifth they wouldn't come to the college, so I had it our house. We had a real good showing, and a wonderful time. But some of them are just, it's just not the way to be. The sisters couldn't help it. We've heard that maybe they just didn't have the financial knowledge to run a business. It was a hard time, and people became bitter, between getting out of habit, and this happening. I didn't feel this way, I accepted it, I mean I will agree that I cried, but it just (inaudible) you have to remember. So for our sixty-fifth [anniversary] we'll get together. For the sixtieth, they came. Seven or eight of them came to mass and then we visited. When I come back from something, I get on the phone to all those who should have been here, "Where were you?" [laugh] Yes, some people you have to go and get and to bring -

LC: Some people just need that extra -

KS: This one girl said, 'Well if you called me, I would have gone.' And I said, 'Mary, you could call me.' Many of them are not well enough to come, and they think its too far. One of our gals, for our sixtieth, came from Michigan and she brought her son and daughter. She said she just didn't feel like driving the car alone. And I said 'Well, that's fine. They are more than welcome.' So, as I say, I'll take credit for the reunions.

LC: One thing that I thought of, just because I've worked here with Sister Ann Ida. I know you weren't at the school when she was president, but I'm sure your daughter was, right? I was just wondering if you had any stories or any thoughts?

KS: I hadn't thought about that. I've just always admired her, even when she was in habit, she came to all our reunions.

LC: And she was president for a very long time, a changing time, through Vatican II?

KS: Of course, I love her dearly. She and my husband always have to something to chat about. I really have no stories. Now Mary Pat could fill you in a whole lot, because she was here. That's when they went to Selma and all those places.

LC: Right, there iss some stuff about that in the book.

KS: Yes, I sent her a copy too. She has a different slant on things. She was so thrilled when she learned that I was going to do the oral history. She said, 'That's wonderful, Mom, you'll love it!' Because she's done this with [inaudible]. I don't think I have any Ann Ida stories.

LC: Oh, that's okay.

LC: What was your job on the *Skyscraper*?

KS: I was an assistant editor. I did most [of], all [of] the proof. That was my specialty, no matter where I was. I read the directories of Loyola Academy, and I read them at Regina, and I enjoy it. They tease at our house that Mom can pick out anything, find an error.

LC: Well, I have some papers that might need some work. [laugh]

KS: Need proof?

LC: Did you like working for the paper? I was looking at some of the issues, and I was impressed.

KS: Yes, it was wonderful. And we took the paper, we tacked in on long yellow sheets, and we took all the material, well we laid them out, and we took them to Parkway Press. Parkway Press, and the owner was Peter Patrando. A little man, who is now in heaven. But he was so good to us, because Annamarie Masterson, who was my classmate, and who was the editor in my time, and Jean McKeever. She was - there was a not a lot that we didn't know, but a good bit that we didn't know - and he was so patient. Showing us, 'girls this is it,' and 'I'll help you with it.' That man was so good to us. After that, after I finished college, and our girls were at Regina, for seventeen years I did our Alumni newsletter. He laughed, and he'd say, 'you're back again.' He was good to me at that time. We became very dear friends. But it was quite a trek. We first went from here on North Ashland Avenue on the streetcar. Then when I drove, it was wonderful.

LC: It was a weekly newspaper?

KS: No, our paper was a monthly paper. Regina Dominican Alumni came out four times a year.

KS: No, our paper was a monthly paper. Regina Dominican Alumni came out four times a year.

LC: And you used your experience from working at Mundelein -

KS: That's right. I did that for seventeen years. I like to have something to do -

LC: Yes, it sounds like it.

KS: [I] don't need to look for anything. And we're avid readers, and I don't get to read as much as I used to. But the business keeps me busy, [there is] lots of running around.

LC: I'm sure. And you have lots of grandchildren?

KS: Nine.

LC: I saw in the newspaper articles that you like to cook?

KS: I love to. We do all sorts of interesting things, loads of Christmas time cookies.

LC: You're still doing that? You're still up to it?

KS: Right, I'm up to it. I can bake from morning until night. I love it.

LC: I think that's one thing that - you were talking about this earlier. When I was in junior high, we could choose to take either art or home economics. At that time I was going through that rebellious stage. My mom did all that stuff, so I didn't want to do it. So I took art. So, I've never -

KS: Never gotten into it.

LC: I never learned how to cook, I don't know anything about that.

KS: Our boys know how to cook as well as our girls do. I didn't insist but I encouraged them. Its amazing some of the things that they do. I'm amazed sometimes at the things they do, and I'm happy for them. But I think it's important. I sold fruitcakes one year, my great grandmother's recipe. I still sell about four to regulars, which I haven't done yet this year.

LC: I've never had fruitcake before -

KS: It's wonderful. Ours is all fruit. A lot of them are nuts, and a lot of other things. But one of the orders that I have is from a husband of a friend of mine, and all he wants is fruit, and not any of that other stuff. So, I did that. As I said, I'm always thinking of something to do.

LC: Is there anything else you would like to talk about?

KS: I think one of the big things is the friendships that - oh they're precious. I've kept up with my high school friends. In fact one of the gals I talk to every other month, from high school, she lives in Massachusetts. Well, we've kept in touch. My classmates - so many are gone. But Mundelein people I've kept up with, I've loved it. I really do. I have no regrets that I chose the college. The education was wonderful, and it was really fun.

LC: That's what it seems like, that there is always a story. Thank you.

