

**SHARE YOUR STORY: STUDENT LIFE AT MUNDELEIN**  
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Carol Spiegel's Oral History

Women and Leadership Archives  
Loyola University Chicago  
2022

## **PREFACE**

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Carol Spiegel conducted by Nathan Ellstrand on August 1, 2022. This interview is part of the Share Your Story: Student Life at Mundelein project, an oral history project to expand and enrich the Women and Leadership Archives' (WLA) records of Mundelein College's history through interviews with alumnae on student life.

Mundelein College, founded and operated by the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (BVM), provided education to women from 1930 until 1991, when it affiliated with Loyola University Chicago.

Readers are asked to bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose. The following transcript has been reviewed, edited, and approved by the WLA staff. Timestamps are provided every five minutes, within a few seconds of that exact point in the audio. Actions and sounds such as laughter are in parentheses, and notes added for context are in brackets.

### **TIME LOG AND OVERVIEW FOR SESSION 1**

[0:00 - 5:00]: Sister Carol's family and educational background, her interest joining the BVMs, taking her vows, and arriving at Mundelein.

[5:00 - 10:00]: Sister Carol's introduction to Mundelein, speakers at Mundelein, her upbringing, and choosing the BVMs and Mundelein.

[10:00 - 15:00]: Sister Carol's time with the BVMs, living in the Scholasticate, being a BVM at Mundelein, and taking classes.

[15:00 - 20:00]: Sister Carol's Scripture studies, struggling with her faith, choosing her major, her English studies, and Vatican II and changes.

[20:00 - 25:00]: Social justice movements, Vatican II, culture at Mundelein, Sister Carol's experience living on campus, studying, and Mundelein's campus.

[25:00 - 30:00]: Sister Carol's chores and studying, Sunday night dinners, silence in the BVMS community, recreation, special speakers at Mundelein, and Madeleine L'Engle.

[30:00 - 35:00]: Speakers on campus, life on the tenth floor of the Mundelein Skyscraper, Sister Carol's colleagues at Clarke University, the assassination of JFK and its effect on her and Mundelein.

[35:00 - 40:00]: Sister Carol's admiration for Martin Luther King Jr., his assassination, changes in America and at Mundelein, and her experience living in Chicago.

[40:00 - 45:00]: Sister Carol's student teaching, learning to be an instructor, her teaching career, restorative justice, and prison ministries. Technical interruption.

## **TIME LOG AND OVERVIEW FOR SESSION 2**

[0:00 - 5:00]: Reintroducing and discussing changes on Mundelein's campus. Sister Carol's teaching and transferable skills she gained at Mundelein.

[5:00 - 10:00]: Lasting impact of Sister Carol's time at Mundelein and closing remarks.

## **NARRATOR BIO**

Sister Carol Spiegel, BVM was born in 1941 to Carl and Bea Spiegel in Peosta, Iowa. She grew up on farms and in small towns in Iowa. After graduating from high school, she attended one semester of nurse's training and worked another semester as a filing clerk before joining the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (BVMS) in 1960. The day after taking her first vows in 1962, Spiegel went to Mundelein College to begin her studies. She spent two and a half years at Mundelein, where she majored in math with a minor in English, with the goal of teaching high school math. She graduated in 1965. Spiegel taught at Carmel High School in Mundelein, IL for five years and at Clarke College in Dubuque for 22 years. Looking for a

change, Spiegel studied community violence prevention. She created a workshop to teach peacemaking and conflict resolution through children’s literature, which she taught in several schools in Twin Cities, Minnesota 1998-2006. She also served in BVM leadership for nine years before returning to teaching at St. Catherine- St. Lucy Catholic School in Oak Park, IL. She retired from teaching in 2022.

### **INTERVIEWER BIO**

Nathan Ellstrand holds a PhD in History from Loyola University Chicago. Ellstrand studies twentieth-century transnational political and religious history between the United States and Latin America. His recently finished dissertation is titled, “Reclaiming La Patria: Sinarquismo in the United States, 1936-1966,” which he plans on converting into a book.

Transcriptionist: Chris Mattix

Session: 1 of 2

Interviewee: Carol Spiegel

Locations: Chicago, IL and San Francisco, CA via  
Zoom

Interviewer: Nathan Ellstrand

Date: August 1, 2022

[BEGINNING OF INTERVIEW]

[0:00]

Q: Okay, we're ready. For the record, my name is Nathan Ellstrand. I am a graduate assistant in the Women and Leadership Archives, Mundelein College Oral History Project on August 1, 2022. Interviewing Sister Carol Spiegel, class of 1965 by Zoom. Sister Carol is currently in Chicago, Illinois. And I am in San Francisco, California. To start us off, Sister Carol, could you tell me a little bit about yourself, like when you were born and where you were raised and your family?

Spiegel: Okay. I was born in 1941 to Carl and Bea Spiegel, who lived on a farm in Peosta, Iowa. Peosta's about ten miles west of Dubuque. And lived on that farm till I was about three, and then we moved to another farm until I was in the end of the first semester of first grade. And in that farm, I used to walk from the— down our driveway to, I don't know if it's even a quarter of a mile, to a one-room schoolhouse for that first— So I had one semester and in a one-room schoolhouse (chuckles). And then we moved to Farley, Iowa, which is well, when I left it, it was population 920, and it's about twenty miles west of Dubuque. And I've always been very grateful for life in a small town because it was like a lab in human life. We could observe people at church, in the stores, and we knew practically everybody. And when I was a junior and senior in high school, I had a job in the local grocery store. I was taught by the Presentation Sisters from Dubuque who had a very solid education. There's a Catholic school in Farley, and then when I graduated, I went to one semester of nurse's training.

Spiegel: I had to check that out. And I always say a good course in first aid probably would have been more practical (chuckles) than a half year of physiology and half year of elements of nursing, et cetera. But during that time, things clarified, and I knew I was going to be religious.

By the time I got to the hospital floor, I knew I was destined for a teaching— for a classroom, not a hospital room (laughs). So that got clarified, too. And when it came to choosing the community, I considered the [Sisters of the] Presentations and I considered the [Sisters of] Mercies until I had my hospital experience and the BVMs [Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary]. And I told my mother what I was going to do, and she said, I just have one request before you make your final decision, go to Mount Carmel. Just visit there. We had been there all kinds of times because I had three aunts in the community. My dad had one sister who was a BVM and my mother had two. But I obliged her and went over one November day with a friend from nursing. And we walked through the grounds, and by the time we came out to the front gate, I said, "this is where I'm going."

Spiegel: It was very— it was a gut reaction. And I know now, I pieced a few things together. That was in November, and in September, a copy of our BVM Vista, which was our magazine, had come out, and it had "A Day in the Life of a Novice." And (chuckles) I read the Vistas all the time, I paid attention. And there was a picture of a nun— a novice— drying dishes, and she looked so happy. And I thought, if you can be happy doing dishes, this must be a good life. And I know that I often make decisions based on intuition, and that was one. Anyway, I worked for a year then, not for a year, for a semester as a filing clerk and accounts receivable at Rocheck store (laughs). It was clerical work, it was a good experience. All those things helped me mature. And so then in the fall of '60, I entered the congregation. There were 118 of us in our class, and this was in 1960 before Vatican II. Anyway, then there was six months as a postulant, two years as novice, then made my first vows on February 2, 1962, and left for Mundelein the next day. Because if we were going to major in math, we needed to go immediately to Mundelein instead of having the traditional semester at Clarke [University] so we could get into the math department, take some prerequisites for calculus.

[5:00]

Spiegel: Those two and a half years at Mundelein, they were ideal. I wasn't champing at the bit to get out on the missions or anything. I love to study, and we could focus on our studies. We had the luxury of not having to work and study at the same time. And I was always aware of that, how lucky we were. And Mundelein— I don't know why I'm getting teary (chuckles), but when I think of Mundelein is the essence of liberal arts. The emphasis on teaching the whole person was

so evident. One of the things I think of is the teachers we had, but the speakers we had. I don't know if there's a speaker's bureau or what the setup was, but every so often we'd have a lecture in the hall— I can't even remember what it was called, but the auditorium— and it was available for everybody. And it was just a given that we'd go to those lectures, and they would be across the board. Especially in the summers, we had scripture scholars come and that was really a very— where do I use— it was a time of new beginnings, I'd say, in scripture studies. And it was right at the time of Vatican II.

Spiegel: And that whole business was scripture. I'll come back to that later. That was very important part of our studies. Cecil Moran, who was Sister Mary Neil [BVM], was the head of the math department, and she was a really, she was a liberal arts educated person. Loved to read and just so much— interested in so many things besides math, and our curriculum showed it. When she taught, we would learn math history as well as math. Excuse me. That was a very good aspect to it. And she was a great teacher, too. I'll continue with that.

Q: What kind of—

Spiegel: Pardon me?

Q: Could I just take a quick step back? It's wonderful. You're delving into Mundelein and the BVMs, which is perfect, but I wanted to kind of bridge a little bit of your upbringing and talking a little bit more about Mundelein, if that's all right. So you said that you grew up in rural Iowa? Grew up on a farm.

Spiegel: Until I was six. It was a small town

Q: Until you were six. And then in a small town.

Spiegel: It was small town, but all my friends lived on farms (laughter). It was a farming community.

Q: (Laughs) Okay, so that's good, too, thinking of that. And then I was curious, too, I think you touched on this a little bit, but how exactly did you hear about the BVMS? And then from there, I want to know why Mundelein in particular. Why did you choose Mundelein from that?

Spiegel: Okay, well, the BVMS, I had three aunts who were BVMS, and they were missioned, one of them out in California most of the time, so we didn't see her very often. The other two spent several years in Chicago and also Montana. Both of them were missioned in Montana. And then one of them in Nebraska. This isn't the reason I entered, it's the reason my sister entered, but that's not the reason I entered. Was that— one of the things I love is our mother house is in Dubuque, but we can go anyplace. And I don't know if you knew this little piece of history, but you know how some religious communities are divided into provinces according to their geographical area? So it might be almost as if you took the United States and cut it into quadrants, and those would be provinces. That isn't how ours was. And I never could figure it out how it was divided until one of our Sisters wrote a book about our history. It was according to the railroad lines. So you had the Northern Pacific, missions along that were one province, and you had the one that went down to southern California, and then you had the others that went more south, and then you had the east.

[10:00]

Spiegel: So those were kind of, roughly, the lines of provinces, but a person might be in one province and be switched to another, so they were never hard and fast lines. And to be honest, the provinces didn't really affect me very much because by the time I was teaching for less than five years, we could apply any place. So we weren't just sent to places in our province. But what had attracted me to the BVMS was my aunts would come home, and they'd have companions, and they had such a good time together. I knew they liked each other. (Laughs) You know, there was a real sense of joy that I felt in the community, and that was one of the things that was very attractive. And they were educators. I wanted to teach by then.

Q: So based upon your aunts and watching them and watching the sense of community that they had, you knew that you wanted to be part of that community. And then tied to that too, once you



realize you wanted to be a BVM and like you said in 1960 is when you kind of started the process. But why Mundelein College and why not someplace else?

Spiegel: Well, the BVMs had— Mundelein was our school (laughs). I ended up teaching at Clarke later for twenty-two years. But Mundelein, they had built the Scholasticate in the late fifties. I can't remember exactly what year it was that it started with the Scholastics. That was intended for Sister formation, that we would get our degree before we went out to teach. That was just a few years before I went out to teach. Before that— I was just talking this morning to one of our Sisters, and she was in the last class before the Scholasticate started. And it took her sixteen years to get her degree because she would be teaching and then go to summer school. She said she even went to night school. They really worked hard. They had to teach during the year and then go to school, summer school in the summer. So that was a hard way to get a degree. But we were lucky we were able to just go and concentrate on it. But it was partly because of the planning of Mother Mary Consolatorice [Wright, BVM], I think was the leader of that— that they had the building built for that purpose. And then, as you know, it's repurposed for a retirement center at Wright Hall, which tells— and now I just love what Loyola's done. To think what they're doing to help the Earth.

Spiegel: Those of us who have been fortunate enough to go through it are just so grateful to be using it that way.

Q: So you appreciate seeing wright now, what happened to Wright Hall. Now it's part of the School for Environmental Sustainability.

Spiegel: Oh, yes. It's so timely. So needed.

Q: Yeah. Well, this is great. You're touching on a lot of points I was wanting to know. So you talked a little bit about this right now. You were trying to start talking a little bit about it. What was it like being a BVM at Mundelein?

Spiegel: Well, for one thing, we had Sister Joan Therese Scanlon [BVM] who taught at Mundelein as well. She was the director. And of course [Sister] Jean Delores Schmidt [BVM] was her assistant. And the two of them were a great pair. They were like our formation directors in that stage. We had regular meetings where we had instructions and things. And to be honest, I don't remember a whole lot about that (laughs). I don't remember if it was once a week, or— it wasn't every day like it had been in the novitiate, but it was regular talks about religious life, and we had retreats and different things. But one of the things was, as I said, it was the time of Vatican II, and Scripture studies had opened up. And this is a (chuckles) personal story, but when I was in the novitiate and postulate, we had classes, but we never saw our grades. I don't know if they didn't want us to get competitive, or they didn't want us to get nervous or what the reason was. But when I was going to go to Mundelein, then I saw my transcript for the first time. And I was just horrified because I had a C minus in Old Testament, and I had liked the course.

[15:00]

Spiegel: And I thought. Oh, I didn't really learn that then. We had a half hour spiritual reading every day, so when I got to Mundelein, I decided my spiritual reading is going to be the Old Testament. And at that point, the press up in Collegeville, Minnesota, I think it was, had put out these paperback commentaries for every book in the Bible. So I would sign out a book at a time, started with Genesis and ending up with, no Habakkuk's the last prophet. What's the last book? I can't remember. But anyway, I went straight through the Old Testament with my commentary, and I just loved it. I loved sitting there reading for my half hour for the Old Testament, and it turned out— I had grappled with love of God, you know. I had a lot of guilt (laughs). They always say that's the gift that keeps giving when you're a Catholic. But anyway, I read the Old Testament, and these Israelites were so stubborn, and God never gave up on them. He might smite them and all that stuff, but that kind of rolled off. I wasn't bothered by that part. It was that he stayed with them, and I just was really appreciating that.

Spiegel: And then— I'll bring in another strand here. When I said what I wanted to do, I wanted to be a math major, and I wanted to major in elementary math because I wanted to teach middle school math. I thought that's a formative time of your life and really important. So I was heading for middle school, and I was hardly there a semester, I don't know when it was, probably about a semester. I was called in and, they said, "we really need high school math teachers. Would you

change your major? Would you change and be secondary math instead?" Well, I was of the mind if that's where I was needed, it's fine. But the big perk was, instead of having an elementary minor, I got to have an English minor (laughs). And I was so glad I got to take world lit. And Mrs. Spencer, Jeffery Spencer, talk about a wonderful teacher. She was just great. And so my favorite term paper I ever wrote was a comparison of Aeneas in the Aeneid and Moses in Exodus and Numbers. And I'll tell you, that really made me love the Old Testament, because their gods, the Aeneids— the Aeneians? — had to carry their little wimpy gods and Moses and everybody, Yahweh was carrying them.

Spiegel: And then the people, the followers of Aeneas were very docile, and the Israelites were stubborn and they had personality. And then the leaders. Moses was saying, "I stutter, I can't do this." And Aeneas was this noble person who stepped right up and led them. So those comparisons just made the Old Testament come to life. And that was very formative in my life, and it continues to be. I mean, that's where I learned the unconditional love of God. That was a wonderful experience. Now, how did I get off on that? We're talking about—

Q: We were talking about you being a BVM and then you were talking about you being a math— becoming a math major with an English minor.

Spiegel: That's right.

Q: Yes

Spiegel: That English minor turned out to be very important. The other thing that was happening, I mentioned Vatican II a couple of times. The rumblings were starting for change in our community and Ann Ida [Sister Ann Ida Gannon, BVM] was right at the forefront. And she was such a role model in every way. I mean, just so professional and everything. And then she was on— I don't know if it was on Irv Kup's Show, or whose show it was. She was interviewed. She was well known in the city. And I remember one time, it was before we changed the habit and somebody said, "well, would you change the habit?" And she said something like— it's probably written down someplace. Something like, "if I have to wear a polka dot dress to serve the Lord, that's fine with me." (Laughs) She wasn't wed to the habit, but she was just such a wonderful role

model. And as I said, we had these great speakers who talked about scripture and about theology and everything, but a lot was happening. A lot of fresh air in those years. The other thing that was happening is social justice. And I was really on the fringes of that.

[20:00]

Spiegel: But I was aware. I was trying to read my writing here— when Selma happened, that was the spring of my senior year. I know a bus load of students went down there. And then we had, I think, Mary DeCock [Sister Mary (Donatus) DeCock, BVM]. Donalda, was that her name? Anyway, Mary DeCock, I think she's one of the ones that went. They were real examples of going and being in the forefront of that movement. But as I said, I was kind of on the fringes just watching. And then, just being at the Scholasticate, the other thing is, it was a nice neighborhood and I remember just taking walks with other Scholastics. Enjoying the neighborhood.

Q: I wanted to build a little more off of that, if that's all right.

Spiegel: What'd you say?

Q: I wanted to build a little more off your time at the Scholasticate, if that's okay, at Wright Hall. So it's great. You've been telling me about what it's like being a BVM at Mundelein, and you're at Mundelein at a very formative time too, right?

Spiegel: Very.

Q: You think at Mundelein during Vatican II, which is huge and a major transformation in the Catholic Church. Being in the Scholasticate at this time, which you said was a fairly new building built in the late fifties, and you started Mundelein in 1962, so what was the culture like in the building itself? How do you feel that affected your time at Mundelein being in the Scholasticate? And then do you remember any of your roommates and who were they like?

Spiegel: We had single rooms.

Q: Okay.

Spiegel: Except one time (laughs). One time we were filled up because— I think it was during summer school and Sisters had come in from the missions to work on their degrees. And there were four of us that camped out, I'd say in what they called the "engineer's apartment." Now why it was called the engineer's apartment, I don't know, but it was the bottom floor and there were— I don't know if we slept on couches or what. I don't think we had bedrooms there. In fact, (laughs) we didn't. We must have slept on couches. And I remember two of the people, I don't remember the fourth, but we just kind of maneuvered down there. Because we had to keep silence a lot of the times, too, we weren't able to just have pajama parties and things. And I remember one of the people, there was a book or something that was sitting on a chair and, excuse me, that was another time when I was roommates with another person in a single room. I don't know what we did about that. I don't know how we managed that because the beds were single. Can't figure out how we did that. They rolled in a cot or what?

Spiegel: But anyway, our spaces were so cramped and this book was sitting there and finally one day I said, "do you need to have that book on the chair?" And she said "I thought it was yours." (laughs) Both of us have been skirting around it, just trying to respect each other's space and (laughs) work with the space. And that's what it was kind of like in the engineer's apartment. We were good sports about it, I think. And we somehow managed to study, probably went to the library to study, I don't know how that worked. But the other thing is, it was such a beautiful building and the chapel there was so beautiful. It was really neat to be there. I'll tell you a funny little story I remember. I don't know if it's every Sunday night— and not every Sunday night, but every— once a month on Sunday night instead of eating in the dining room, we'd go up to tenth floor. Tenth floor, we loved to be on the tenth floor, because you could be up there and you can see— well, if you walk the whole tenth floor, you'd see 360 degrees. And the part where we gathered for activities, you'd see Mundelein, you'd see across Sheridan Road, you'd see out to the lake and then you'd see back towards the city.

[25:00]

Spiegel: So it was quite a view. It was very nice and I'll tell you more about that in a minute. But this one time a group of us was helping out. We had chores, and I was trying to think what were my chores (laughs)? I couldn't remember. I just remember cleaning the stairwell with somebody, and they were just housekeeping things. We weren't worked very hard because we were given time to study. I mean, it was ideal. But anyway, we were helping out for this Sunday night dinner, and Jean Dolores [Sister Jean Dolores Schmidt, BVM] was up there with us, and she was pulling out drawers. We had these cabinets that had like tablecloths and napkins and all the wares. And we had leftovers from Halloween celebrations, Christmas, St. Patrick's, Thanksgiving. She said, "let's have holiday inn." So we set up the tables and each table was one of the holidays— and we might have had three tables for Thanksgiving and two for St. Patrick's or whatever— but I just always thought that was the most clever thing. It was a lot of fun. So we did do things. As I said, we weren't worked hard. Our time to study was really respected.

Q: So you had time to study, but you also said you had silent time as well.

Spiegel: That was just a given in our community. Wasn't until the late sixties that we would talk outside of recreation. I was out on the missions when that happened and things were loosening up in our schedule and we could talk at breakfast. Some people didn't like it because they were used to not talking at breakfast. It was a real decision. So there was a lot of silence. And there were a lot of times— and always we were told though, and this was from the Novitiate, if it's the charitable thing to do, you talk. If there's somebody in trouble, you don't say, "Well, I can't talk, I can't do anything because I have to keep custody, look down, and keep quiet." So they tried to help us be human, but sometimes some of us got real scrupulous like myself (laughs). We'd carry it to extremes. As I said in every evening, I think we just went up to tenth floor and I don't know if we played Scrabble or did whatever, but we had time to recreate.

Q: So you ate meals together, you recreated together and then you said there was a chapel in the building as well. So it's all kind of self-contained then.

Spiegel: It really was. We went to classes, and some of the people were in courses that required them to be there after hours. Like if some of the art majors had to work with their art things. And so that's what they did. But that was the exception. Most of us were in our room studying after

hours (laughs). It will be interesting if you interview more people who are Scholastics. It's going to be really interesting to find out what their experiences were.

Q: Yeah, I'm curious how they're similar and how they're different from your own experience. Yes.

Spiegel: I'd be interested in that myself (laughs). One of the things that happened up on ten was that we'd have some special speakers. And one of our Sisters, I think it was Sister Mary Donald, was a good friend of Madeleine L'Engle, is she familiar to you? She had just written *Wrinkle in Time*. You know, I'm an Old Lady.

Q: Famous book. Of course (laughs).

Spiegel: She came and talked to us, and I'll never forget that. It was so wonderful to hear her. And she talked about reading, and she said, "if a child wants to read a comic book, that's fine. They're reading, and they'll eventually outgrow whatever they're reading and get to more serious reading."

[30:00]

Spiegel: And the other thing was— and if a child reads something sad, that's okay. And she told how when her daughter read *Charlotte's Web*, for about an hour, she just sat and kind of cried. And she said, "that's okay. She's learning about life." But she was just— it was a great thing to have her talk to us. And then we had somebody else (laughs), I don't remember her name, but she taught, I think it was phonics, and she had created a curriculum with phonics or something. And at one point she stuck her head out the window and whistled or something. I can't remember what the point was. But we had these colorful speakers that would come and that would take place up on ten. A lot of good things happened up there.

Q: And that's really fascinating to hear, too, because what I've read in the *Skyscraper* [student newspaper] is usually about how these speakers are either speaking at the Mundelein Auditorium

in the Skyscraper [building] or they're speaking at Coffey Hall. But I've never heard before that they spoke specifically to you all. And that's really amazing. So they went into Wright Hall to the tenth floor, and they presented directly to the BVMs.

Spiegel: Yeah.

Q: Wow.

Spiegel: And I know Madeline L'Engle came because she was a friend, it was a friend of our librarian. And I don't know if that was Donald or if Donald taught Latin. I can't remember which BVM it was, but she was a friend of one of our BVMs. And then somebody else got this other person out. But that's true. Yeah. And I don't know how many other talks there were, but those are the two I remember. There was activity going on all over the place.

Q: That's pretty phenomenal, too, that you had these speakers who focused on your own community as well, which was really great. And then it wasn't only them speaking at you. Did you have a chance to be in dialogue and have a question and answer, or was it more— ?

Spiegel: We had questions.

Q: Okay.

Spiegel: The other speaker we had and I just thought of her now, was Sister Mary Xavier Coens. C-O-E-N-S. And she was one— she and Jeremiah, Jeremy, Mackan, Therese Mackan— they both taught at Clarke, and probably Anne Seacrest. Anne is probably the one that had taught the singers. They took a group on a USO tour from Clarke and they entertained the troops. Actually, Xavier wrote a book, *GI Nun* (laughs), and told about that. But she came and talked to us after she had written her book. And it was delightful when she told us the different things that happened on those tours. Yeah, that was neat. So she came also to tenth floor.



Q: This is great. This is giving me a much better idea of what Wright Hall was like than I had even imagined.

Spiegel: Okay.

Q: Yes.

Spiegel: Now, one of the big formative things that happened.

Q: Say that again.

Spiegel: Was the assassination of JFK (begins to cry).

Q: Yes.

Spiegel: And I knew at the time I felt like that was a loss of innocence, and I thought, that's a strange way to put it. And, you know, yesterday— I get Richard Rohr's meditations each day— and yesterday, and I wrote it down. This week, he's talking about loss of innocence, etc. And he said the Latin word innocent means not wounded. And that was really the first time I felt evil affecting my life personally. For one thing, the day it happened, I had a physics test, and I always carried a book between classes (laughs). I would eke out reading time. I was reading *Profiles of Courage*. Are you familiar with that book?

Q: Yes.

Spiegel: I know if I got the book, I could go back to the chapter and find out which chapter I was reading, because I had been getting such a kick out of his writing. It was about some Southern representative or senator. And then at one point, he started imitating the Southern drawl, I think, in his writing. But anyway, so I was enamored of JFK from the beginning. And then we went to

physics class, and the teacher said he had been shot. We had a test that day, and I think it was like a one o'clock class. So we took our test in kind of a zombie mode. And at the end of the class, the PA came on and said he had died. So we all went to the chapel in Mundelein and prayed the rosary. For the rest of that weekend, we just stayed up on, not the part of ten that looks at the lake, but the other part, watching television. It was just really painful. And that was tied in with my Mundelein experience.

[35:00]

Q: And that goes back to what you were saying before as well, about how this was just such a major time of change, not just for the Catholic Church in Vatican II, but just upheaval as well. Right. So to have him being assassinated, like you said as well, that people from the Mundelein community went down to Selma to participate in the Civil Rights—

Spiegel: In sixty-five. And Martin Luther King, when I was in the Novitiate, we didn't have — in the fifties, I would hear some stories about how people might have a television (laughs). They might put a screen over it, so it was like a radio, and they'd hear some shows or something. But television was not part of their lives. But in the Novitiate, our people who are in formation were realizing we needed to hear the daily news, so we would have news at night. And that was the first time I saw Martin Luther King. And I was just— I think my mouth was open. He was so Christian. He spoke more like a Christian than anybody I had ever heard, the way he talked. And then he was killed when I was at— was it he who was killed? Who was killed in April fourth? That was in sixty-eight. He was killed. Wasn't it Martin Luther King? I'm trying to think.

Q: I believe so. I'm going to double-check.

Spiegel: Yeah, but I'm trying to think. We had some African Americans on our food staff, and I remember one of them being really affected.

Q: He was assassinated in 1968.

Spiegel: Sixty-eight, yeah.

Q: Yeah. Yes.

Spiegel: Who was killed in— I mean, JFK was sixty-three—

Q: And then his brother was later on in the decade, Robert [Kennedy], and then eventually—

Q: Yeah, that was awful. Seems to me there was something that happened in the Scholasticate as well. But anyway, as you said, it was a time of change.

Q: Oh, no, I was just going to say too, just to build off of that too, right. It goes to show that you're not just— we were talking about just a moment ago about how hall Wright was self-contained. You did a lot, but you're still affected by the outside world. It's not like you're divorced from that. They're interconnected. So I think that's really, really interesting too. So I just wanted to add that as well. Yeah.

Spiegel: That's a good point. And when I did my student teaching, Pat Peach is another BVM. The two of us were math majors and we both taught at St. Scholastica for student teaching. So we take the city bus over to student teaching. And I can remember one time we were in full habit taking the bus and I was reading a book and I can't remember, it was something like maybe *A Day in the Life of Ivana Denisovich* or something, and there was a murder or something in it. And I remember sitting across the aisle from some young guy and I thought to myself, I bet he has no idea what I'm reading (laughs). There we were swathed in our black habits but able to read. And we were always encouraged to read. The other thing is we talked about being in the city. They started having two days a year when we could go any place we wanted in Chicago, to museums or whatever. So we would pick our places and a group of us would go. That was fun. And we got to see a little bit of the city because it was really wasted on us. We were living there but didn't take part in too much that was going on. Those are about the main things that I thought of when I thought about my years. Kind of a motley collection (chuckles). But that's my collection.

Q: Oh, this is wonderful. Thank you. And sorry for me interjecting along the way. I do have some kind of follow-up questions as well.

Spiegel: Oh, don't be sorry. That's fine.

[40:00]

Q: But this has been great too. Right? You touched upon a lot of the points that we wanted to discuss today. So one thing to kind of go back towards is what you studied and what your courses were like. So you told me that you ended up becoming a math major with an English minor, and then you were just mentioning, too, that you're training to be a teacher in particular. So was that kind of built into Mundelein as well?

Spiegel: Oh yes.

Q: Can you talk a little more about that too? Like, not only the major itself, which you could talk more about, but also talk more about learning how to be an instructor?

Spiegel: To be an instructor?

Q: Yeah, both.

Spiegel: There was a core curriculum. I know, like educational psychology and some courses like that, that we took, and they don't stand out for me the way world lit did (laughs). Are you frozen?

Q: Do you still see me?

Spiegel: Can you hear me all right?

Q: Yes, I can hear you.

Spiegel: Oh okay. Because your screen was frozen a couple of times.

Q: Okay. Is it working now?

Spiegel: Yes. Somewhat.

Q: Okay (laughs). Sorry. It should be working. Okay.

Spiegel: You have a glitch.

Q: Such is technology. But you were telling me about learning how to teach.

Spiegel: I think we probably had a lot of talks about that, that I don't remember (laughs). They didn't stand out the way Madeleine L'Engle did. It was just funny. We had the student teaching, and we always had an emphasis on being teachers. You'll have to find it out from other Scholastics. I just don't have those memories.

Q: And that's okay (laughs). I was just curious about that too. Because you ended up going on for much of the rest of your life becoming a teacher. So I was thinking about that.

Spiegel: Yeah. I taught at Carmel High School in Mundelein the first five years, and then St. Louis for four years, and then we closed that school. And then I went to Clarke College in Dubuque for twenty-two years. And then I was ready for a change, and I had a sabbatical, and during that time, I learned about restorative justice. I had visited a prison once, and I knew if I

ever had a chance, I'd investigate prison ministry. But I went to a meeting of prison ministers and heard about restorative justice, and that just hooked me. And then I went up to the Twin Cities, where there was another BVM, and we got a minor in community violence prevention. And again, term paper. Term papers (laughs) are real important in my life. I wrote a term paper on violence prevention in grade schools, and I was hooked. And then I had a workshop in using children's literature to teach peacemaking and conflict resolution and ended up teaching in I think it was six or seven schools in the Twin Cities from '98 to 2006. Then I was in BVM leadership for nine years, and then I got to come back to this here in Oak Park at Catherine Lucy School [St. Catherine- St. Lucy Catholic School].

Spiegel: For six years I taught there, pre-K through eight (laughs). It was just a wonderful experience, one half hour a week for each of the classes, and just ended that in May. And there are some women who are going to carry it on.

Q: And that builds off of your past experience, too.

Spiegel: In my past experience, yes.

Q: I wanted to ask a little bit about your studies and teaching. So that answers it to some extent, too. And then another thing I wanted to ask was in particular about—

Spiegel: You're coming in and out.

Q: Can you hear me? Should be working.

Spiegel: Your voice is coming in and out, so I'm not getting everything you say. Should we sign off and come back?

Q: Yeah, we can start this over again. How about that?

Spiegel: Okay, I'll sign out and I'll sign back in.

[END OF SESSION 1 of 2]

Transcriptionist: Chris Mattix

Session: 2 of 2

Interviewee: Carol Spiegel, BVM

Locations: Chicago, IL and San Francisco, CA via  
Zoom

Interviewer: Nathan Ellstrand

Date: August 1, 2022

[BEGINNING OF SESSION 2 of 2]

Q: This is part two of an interview between Nathan Ellstrand and Sister Carol Spiegel. For the record, my name is Nathan Ellstrand. I'm a graduate assistant at the Women's Leadership Archives, Mundelein College Oral History Project on August 1, 2022. Interviewing Sister Carol Spiegel, class of 1965 by Zoom. Sister Carol is currently in Chicago, Illinois and I am in San Francisco, California. And I am following up on the first part of our interview that got delayed because of some Zoom technical difficulties. But we're back to it. So lastly, we were just talking about your experiences and what you studied at Mundelein, in particular your training to be an instructor. And so that's kind of where we left off. And then you talked about how you were an instructor for many years after Mundelein College, but then eventually that you pursued practicing restorative justice. You worked in that. So I'm curious too, to kind of touch on some other topics just to follow up from our conversation earlier. Another topic that I wanted to talk about was working on Mundelein College itself. So what changes did you see on campus from the time you started that Mundelein to when you graduated?

Q: These can be physical changes. These can be changes in rules. Were there anything that you noticed that changed over time between your time at Mundelein between 1962 and 1965?

Spiegel: To be honest, not a whole lot.

Q: Okay (laughs).

Spiegel: That was kind of a short time. And as I said, maybe that bus trip that students took down to Selma. That would have been something I don't know if that would have happened in '62. But it was pretty consistent. And when I just heard you give the summary, I was thinking, I'm just so convinced of the transferable skills a person gets when they get a liberal arts education. Because the fact that I could (laughs) be a math teacher in high school and college and then go into grade school classrooms and teach peacemaking and conflict resolution. And it was all natural, it all happened very naturally. I just think that speaks to being very grounded in my early education, which I can't remember very well when it comes to how to teach (laughs). But I think that's kind of funny. I did always just assume I was getting some of the best teaching that was going on, and people were very serious about being professional and doing well.

Q: Yeah, because I remember you were saying earlier on in the interview as well, that you felt very strongly that Mundelein really taught you, as a student, to care for the whole person. It was very holistic in that sense. And so that was really one thing that I took from what you mentioned earlier. So not only just as a student, but, transferable skills, like you saying, for the rest of your life as well. So kind of building off of that, too. Talking a little more about Mundelein as an institution, were there any experiences you had at Mundelein that you found meaningful either at that time or looking back? How did Mundelein impact you for the rest of your life?

Spiegel: Well, as I said, some of it was because of the time in my life. But that world lit course. Just recently — I belong to a book club and we did some reading, and one of them, I think it's called a world— *The Written World*, something like that, I just kind of drew on some of my familiarity with some of the books that we were discussing in world lit. I'm trying to think what else, just generally. It's just part of myself. Over the years, I've observed Mundelein and it's always seemed that the students there have been very much integrated into the world and aware of issues.

[5:00]

Spiegel: My sister taught at Wahlert [Catholic High School] Dubuque when they were starting the Gannon Scholars. And I remember just being really impressed with some of those students



that were accepted as Gannon Scholars. So it's continued to be— and then Gannon Center itself and I've attended some events there. Just keeping up with the world of women and being involved in changes. But it's more as an observer at that point.

Q: Yeah. So rather than be part of the community, more kind of observing it after the fact.

Spiegel: I'm glad that Loyola recognized the place of the Gannon Center. I'm grateful for that, that they realized the value of it. I know talking to Nancy, the fact that Carol Mosley Braun gave her papers, things like that, says a lot of value with the research.

Q: So you think that even though what used to be Mundelein is now part of Loyola, the kind of legacy still lives on.

Spiegel: That's right.

Q: So this brings me to the last part of this interview, which we've covered quite a bit, talking about your upbringing, your time at Mundelein and what you've studied and your time with the BVMs. The last question for you is just simply is there anything else that you'd like to say on record? Anything else you'd like to add that you might have left off earlier?

Spiegel: Well, I learned through the interview, too (laughs). It's just puzzling to me. I've always been intrigued by what we remember and what we don't. I always think, what is it? That there are some memories that are as clear as a bell and then others where we spent hours and days and years can't remember at all. They're foggy. It's a mystery. So I'm still kind of intrigued by the fact that I can hardly remember my education classes (laughs) or other classes too. I was thinking about the liberal arts. I did get to have one course with Blanche Marie Gallagher [BVM]. We had a requirement to have some art appreciation or something, and my schedule didn't allow for the regular art appreciation. So I got to have Introduction to Art with [Sister] Blanche Marie. That was a treat. Real treat. There was something oh, and then we had some kind of a swimming thing for gym and I was only able to survive if I was paddling, I could float, I could float on my back, but I couldn't tread water. And so we just kind of muddled through that. Did the hours. (Laughs)

I don't know what kind of grade I got. (Knocking) Excuse me. Somebody's at my door. Would you open the door, please?

Spiegel: I should have put up a Zoom sign. I usually did.

Spiegel: That was one of the brothers that lives in this building. He's leading prayer tonight. We pray on Monday nights. And there are twenty of us that live in the building that are retired religious. So we're all asked to bring a poem that we find meaningful or a thought from a spiritual reading book. Or a favorite Bible quote. Tell why we brought it. It's kind of neat.

Q: Yeah, that is neat.

Spiegel: Anyway, I'll draw from my rich liberal arts background (laughs).

Q: Yes, indeed (laughs). It all comes back full circle.

Spiegel: That's right.

Q: Well, thank you so much for your time. I very much appreciate talking to you. And thank you for sharing your recollections.

Spiegel: Thank you, Nathan. Now.

Q: I'm going to stop the recording unless there's anything else and we can talk a little more.

[10:00]

Spiegel: Fine.

Q: Well, thank you very much.

Spiegel: Bye.

[END OF SESSION 2 of 2]