

**SHARE YOUR STORY: STUDENT LIFE AT MUNDELEIN**

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Mary Krieger Oral History

Women and Leadership Archives

Loyola University Chicago

2020

## PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Mary Krieger conducted by Casey Terry on November 3, 2020. 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.

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.

### **NARRATOR BIO**

Mary Krieger grew up in the Norwood Park neighborhood of Chicago. She felt stifled in Norwood Park and at the high school she attended and wanted an opportunity to grow. She attended Mundelein because of her sister's description of the excellence of its faculty and a generous scholarship. At Mundelein, Krieger strayed from her major and took a wide range of courses. By the time she graduated in December 1969, she finished with a French Major. Krieger attended classes as a commuter student and worked in anti-war activism.

### **INTERVIEWER BIO**

Casey Terry is a graduate student in the Public History program at Loyola University Chicago and a graduate assistant at the WLA. He did his undergraduate work at Valparaiso University in

History and Digital Media. His research interests include pop culture history, the early modern Atlantic world, and exhibit and program development.

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

[0:00 – 5:00]

Krieger's family background and decision to attend Mundelein.

[5:00-10:00]

Krieger explores her student experience at Mundelein, talking about life as a commuter and her courses.

[10:00-15:00]

Krieger speaks on what built her viewpoint on the Vietnam War, as well as a sit-in which took place shortly after she graduated.

[15:00-20:00]

Krieger reflects on the draft and the group who helped to plan a teach-in about the Vietnam War.

[20:00-25:00]

Krieger elaborates on the commuter student experience at Mundelein College.

[25:00-30:00]

Krieger talks about working in downtown Chicago and witnessing the Democratic National Convention riots. Krieger reflects on campus traditions and her favorite classes.

[30:00-35:00]

Closing Remarks

Transcriptionist: Casey Terry	Session: 1
Interviewee: Mary Krieger	Locations: Chicago, IL and New York, NY via Zoom
Interviewer: Casey Terry	Date: November 3, 2020

[BEGINNING OF INTERVIEW]

[00:00]

Q: For the record, my name is Casey Terry, a graduate assistant at the Women in Leadership Archives, interviewing Mary Krieger class of 1970 on November 3rd 2020, for the Share Your Story for the Student Life at Mundelein Project, by Zoom. I'm currently in Munster, Indiana, and Mary is in Manhattan, New York, New York. So to start us off, I was wondering if you could tell us a little bit about yourself and your family, such as where you were born and where you were raised?

Mary Krieger: Well, I was born in Chicago and I was raised I lived there till 1969.

Q: Wow, what was your childhood like?

Krieger: I grew up in a large family on the northwest side of Chicago and a very, you know, ethnic neighborhood as most neighborhoods in Chicago are, and yeah, I was a middle child of six, and we went to Catholic schools and Catholic high school. And, yeah, that's was a very — very strong community.

Q: So would you say that the influence from your childhood led you to Mundelein?

Krieger: Well, what led me to Mundelein was my father insisted that I go to a Catholic college, which I didn't want to go to. I wanted to go to the University of Illinois. I wanted to get—I felt kind of stifled by the neighborhood and I wanted to experience something new. But my father was a strong believer in Catholic education, and basically it was I could go to another school, but I'd have to figure out how to pay for it and get there, which was really beyond me. The high school that I went to basically had no counseling, there was I mean — there wasn't any counseling for college at the time I went to college. I think a third of the students in my high school in my graduating class got married right away after school when they were 18 years old and maybe another third became secretaries and then the other third went on to college.

So it was very much a working class kind of mixture for the most part, and that's the way it was in that day and age, in that neighborhood, in that part of my world. So I really just, I think that I guess I did very well on the National Merit Test and Mundelein sent me an offer of a scholarship. My parents had six kids. They lived on my father's salary as a tool and die maker, and my sister, my older sister had gone to Mundelein. And I knew that the order that staffed it [Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary] was different from the one that staffed my high school. You know, that order was not—was not—there wasn't a strong—let's just say there wasn't a strong interest in education or anything coming from them, but I knew that the teachers at Mundelein were competent and my sister had gotten a good education.

Krieger: So I thought, if I'm going to go to a Catholic school, I won't incur debt to go there. And my parents won't have to pay anything, which they couldn't have really. I would have had to— they could have paid very little and I'll get a good education, and that's the way it is, and there wasn't really any counseling, there wasn't anybody to tell me, you know, you can get because you have a large family, you could get state aid and you could probably go as a resident. You don't have to stay at home. You know, I didn't know that. I mean, I didn't know anything about applying for college. I showed up for the ACT with my number two pencil. That was it, I mean, that's what it was in that day and age. I was very naive about the college process, if there was a college process, you just went somewhere you could go and — and that was it. So, yeah — so I was a commuter, I think except for one quarter when my application for aid got messed up. So I had to become a resident commuter and I lived there for one quarter I think. But other than that I was commuter and it just didn't occur to me that there was a possibility that I could go as a resident. And that's just the way it was in my part of the world. But back to the teachers, I always expected that I would get a good education.

[5:00]

Q: Speaking of teachers, was there anyone in the faculty or staff that really stands out in your mind?

Krieger: Yeah, I think that was the best thing. When I think of my time at Mundelein, I think the very best thing was the teachers and the Sister Therese Avila [BVM] comes to mind. She was — I never took a class from her, but I was very involved politically. And she was involved in outreach to immigrants in the Uptown community and had a real social conscience and just was really just a wonderful role model for what a committed person committed to social justice could

look like. She put me in touch, I think she was involved and I think there was there was another faculty member, Dr. Chobanian.

I think maybe Sister Therese Avila put me in touch with her. I forget, they were both involved, I believe with clergy and laymen against the war. And they were very supportive of my efforts. And also just the teachers. So it was—from a, I guess I would say that Mundelein was important to me as a source of role models, really, for how it is to be a socially committed adult. And also the people, the teachers showed genuine interests in their [inaudible 00:07:06] and their students. And they were committed to teaching us and to guiding us intellectually. I think I had no really no teacher that who wasn't interested in that. And I also did a sociology class with Dr. Russell Barta and the Sociology Department, because I was really very interested in everything. And so even though I was a French major, I wanted to take classes in different departments. And also Yohma Grey in the English department was a wonderful teacher.

They really fostered intellectual growth in the students anyway, and I think that then in general, the administration and the school itself was really supportive of students. You know, students who were kind of searching and students who were interested in the world around them know that they — I think that I must have taken a sociology class, or maybe it was one of the introductory or requirement classes, as part of it, my group did a survey and different types students on different issues. And, I got a call — I think, from somebody in the administration saying, “Oh, would you like to follow up on that?” And in some way about the feedback about different classes, because — I think one of our findings was people really loved their the classes

that they were majoring in, but not so much the general required, not as much the general requirements.

And I thought that was really kind of a nice, showing a nice interest and being able to be reflective. I remember that the commuters were kind of — there wasn't much. The commuters would kind of come to school and take classes and go downstairs in the commuter lounge and eat lunch and then go home. So there wasn't really much social interaction. But I think at some point, someone from the administration said, “Oh, well, would you like to paint the commuter lounge?” I mean, they were trying to involve us. They did their best. Yeah. So, yeah, in general — and I think I was very touched. I wasn't there. I left.

[10:00]

Krieger: I—it's a long story, but I wound up graduating early and in 1960— the in December of 1969, I finished my course requirements. And so I wasn't around in the spring when I guess there was a big, big sit in. And I just was I thought, you know, it was kind of in character for them to say, oh, yes well — Mundelein character for the — for the administrators to say, “Oh, yes, you can come in and sit in, but just be careful don't break anything.” When I watch the account of it, because I didn't really know what happened after I left. So it was interesting to me to see at our reunion to hear the account of what happened after I left. But I would say that was its greatest gift to me, was that they encouraged my intellectual growth and they encouraged my growth as a person as much as they could, given the limited limitations of being a commuter there.

And then also, the other openness I found was in high school, I had read, you know the books, the standard books you read that a history of Vietnam. And so I—pretty—by the time I was a



freshman, I had opinions about the war and I was able to find some like-minded students, by the end of my freshman year and we — we created a teach-in, we wanted to have a teach-in and we recruited people from the faculty. And I think there was somebody from outside, outside the school, also to speak, at the teach-in. And you know [unintelligible] we invited all the faculty members and the school was very good about providing a space. And it was filled with—we publicized it at Loyola and we publicized it at Mundelein and the room was filled. It was a big room, and it was—I forget which. It's that room in the newer building McCormick Lounge maybe I don't know. It was a big room, the big room and the ground floor of the building next to the skyscraper [Mundelein Center] was filled with people. And the school was very cooperative about our efforts and encouraging. So, you know, that was—I mean, because of those efforts, you know really were coming. Yeah, I mean, they could have — they could have been negative and they weren't.

Q: So when were those events that you were helping to organize?

Krieger: Well — this one — actually, my husband went online and he found this article in the Skyscraper [Mundelein College Student Newspaper] about the teach-in. And I think that was nineteen—I think it was nineteen—April 26th, 1967 was the teach-in. So this was—there was an article that he has the speakers there and I moderated the panel, so I'm in the middle of them. So it's in the Skyscraper, I don't know, I think I have a link somewhere I could send it to you. I don't know if that's important because you probably got the Skyscraper archives. But, yeah, I mean — I think at the time we thought if only people were educated and if only they knew the history and why this wasn't going to work, they would change their minds and the war would end.

Q: Yeah, you mentioned a little bit that your reading of Vietnam kind of formed your viewpoints politically, and I was kind of wondering what got you into antiwar organizing?

Krieger: Because it was I think that I grew up in a household where my father didn't agree with me on the war, he was you know — he's been in the Navy in World War II. And this was you know, this was, it was a different mindset, a different time, a different war. But he was a man who really had principles and strong, strong moral spine. He was somebody who was, he was a tool and die maker. But I think something he never talked about it. He never preached to us. But I think his experience of being in the service in World War II made him — somehow made him very sensitive to racial inequities.

And when I was in high school, we lived in a very segregated — very segregated neighborhood of Norwood Park on the northwest side. Somehow in the neighborhood, he heard about some kind of interfaith interracial group, and he joined. He would—we would—they would have picnics in the local park in the summer and — and we would go and have a barbecue together with the people, and it turned out—I mean, I found this years later that the local neighborhood kids would beat up my brothers because we were at this interracial picnic and he never said anything about it. But he put a support open housing bumper sticker on his car. But that was the only one in Norwood Park.

[15:00]

Krieger: He never talked about it, you know, [unintelligible] in light of some of this came out after he passed away at the funeral, like I was just a high school kid, you know, I didn't — I was kind of oblivious, but he really, really took a lot of courage on his part in that day, in that place. And so I think he did have very (a computer makes an email alert sound) strong feelings for social justice and that I think he felt, if you believe something you should be done. And so I think maybe that I believed it was the war was wrong, that it was really killing people unnecessarily and damaging us and damaging them. So I think that impetus when I kind of reached those conclusions, I couldn't just sit back and I think I came from my father and my mother. Even though we disagreed about the war—my father anyway.

Q: Was this part of a formal group on campus? Did it have a name or was it?

Krieger: No

Q: This group of students who felt—

Krieger: No, I identified that most people didn't think about the war, most people were not interested. Most people were interested in, you know, whatever college kids are interested in. And they were pretty well, I don't know, apathetic. They didn't — it wasn't an issue for them because they weren't going to be drafted and they didn't have boyfriends yet. So their boyfriends weren't going to be drafted.

You know, I don't know if you know about the draft, probably people your age don't know about it, at that time there was a system set up, which was kind of a relic from World War II, that there would be local groups of people called Selective Service Boards in every community. And they would get to decide who had to enter the army, was forced to enter the army and who could do other things. So there was a system of deferments and one way to get out of it was to go to college. One way to get out of it was to get married. Another way was to get done the kind of tweak that a little — they weren't getting enough people. So another way was to get married and have a kid so people would try to get out of it if they could. Most people would. But if it didn't personally affect them, I think it's like the way people are, just the way they are. If it doesn't affect them personally, it's not too important in your life. And I think, that's how it — what kind of the feeling there was so.

But, you know, people came to our teach-in, so they had some interest. What we did was just, you know, maybe Mary Rose Streube, Kathleen Cummins, Mary Rose had a younger sister and me. And I'm trying to think Joanne Marrow, she was — she was a year ahead of me if she was involved in this, too. I know she agreed with me, but it was just a very just a few of us that — and I think with the teach-in, I don't know, the article said something like that. There were some people planning it. So maybe Mary Rose talked to some of her — her people she lived with. She was a resident. She talked to some of her friends in the dorms, maybe too. Publicized it or something a bit, I don't know, it wasn't a formal group, and then we had a few — at some point, we had a couple little demonstrations in conjunction with other demonstrations nationally, like

little local ones that we publicized also at Mundelein, Mundelein it wasn't at Loyola. It was just a group of people, wasn't anything formal.

Q: How did you go about meeting your group?

Krieger: Well,

Q: It wasn't formal and you mentioned it was hard as a commuter to build community

Krieger: To socialize. Yeah, because we didn't eat in the dorms. We didn't — yeah, I think I met them through classes. I have a feeling because I noticed on the survey, I think Kathleen and Mary Rose may have been in the group. I think I must have met them in that class or something. We must have. I don't know how we got to talking, and then there was a group of us in 1968 that went to a clergy and laymen conference in New York — in Washington, D.C., and there were five of us. So I can't remember what the other people that went, but that was kind of — we were the antiwar movement at Mundelein, basically that was us. So that was 1968 that we went. That was like an overnight bus ride to Washington, and we heard Martin Luther King speak and William Sloane Coffin and Abraham Joshua Heschel.

[20:00]

Q: Wow, that's amazing. You mentioned that you studied French, were you always intending to study French, and if not, what inspired that?

Krieger: No, I think I just like the language and I was — I think — I had plans of — I wanted to go to France and I think it just sounded exciting, and so that's I think that's why I wound up majoring in French, but I had other interests too, so I didn't have a minor. I just took what other classes I felt like taking that were interesting to me. So I took a little history, a little sociology, a little Spanish. You know, I took a smattering of other classes. Yeah. I didn't really have any — I was very much — I think, kind of typical, shall I say, for that time. That I didn't really have a career focus, I think everybody has to have a career focus now because college is so expensive and you have to pay off your loans. So it's very — and women think about having careers and coming out of you know, in high school, I didn't know anybody that had a career. Women were either teachers or nurses.

Those were your two choices, or it three, three social workers. And I didn't want to be a nurse, I had terrible science classes in high school. I mean — that was — they were really poorly taught and just so I had no interest in science and I didn't want to be a teacher. Because I was bored a lot as a student in high school and school — I didn't particularly want to be a teacher, so I didn't really have any career plans. And I just like French. And I thought, well, after that, I'll have to figure out something. You know, to have to get a job, probably. When I thought I would do — but, you know, while I'm in college, I'm going to take what interests me, so that's what I did.

Q: As a commuter student outside of anti-war organizing, was there any way that you tried to stay involved and active on campus?

Krieger: No, not really. I didn't really have any connection, basically — other than — you know, that, you get to know other students in your major a little bit. But as a commuter, you came and you took your classes and then, you know, took an hour and a half to get there on the bus and an hour and a half to get home. And I was working, too, because I basically — you know — I bought all my books and my spending money and my commuting costs and my clothes. I mean, I took care of myself, so I always had a job. So I would work one or two days a week and in an office in the loop [Chicago business district], and I didn't really have time to just hang out or socially. I think the time when if you're living on campus, you hang out, it's like at night or in the evening.

I mean, that's when a lot of socializing goes on or maybe at lunch time. But, you know, we were eating, bringing our lunches and eating in the basement. You know, so I would socialize with the other commuters, but they didn't really have the same interests that I did. And as far as, you know, anti-war stuff, they were pretty — pretty conservative, but we were friends. I had good friends from them, but we didn't really see each other outside of school. I mean, that was it. It was kind of a very truncated college experience that — you know — I'm kind of sorry that I didn't have the kind of experience that other college people do that live on campus, but that's the way it was.

Q: Could you tell me more about your job that you had in the loop, who did you work for?

Krieger: I think I had I worked for Arthur Andersen. It was an accounting firm, and there was a project that they had like basically a Facebook — like in the old sense — like a description of all

their partners all over the world. And basically, I worked with somebody and proof read the text, the copy with her, it was a very boring, boring office job, but it supported me. So I did it. The only perk to it was that it was in a building that overlooked the Daley Center Plaza and in 1968, because of the convention [The National Democratic Convention], there was a lot going on and I would go to my summer job. I worked there full time during the summer.

[25:00]

Krieger: And so one time everybody was looking out the window and it was the day that the yippies came to the plaza and released a bunch of pigs that were running all over the plaza. It was kind of fun but to watch. So we watched it from on high. So, yeah, it wasn't a job that, you know, was pretty deadly. Secretarial job.

Q: Was that the same job, I know that we when we had talked previously, you told me about witnessing the Poor People's Campaign. Was that the same position that you witnessed that from?

Krieger: Oh, no, that was in August of 1968 when the Democratic convention was in Chicago. There were many thousands of demonstrators came to Chicago, anti-war demonstrators came to Chicago. And, I was like doing my summer job working. And after work, I went over to join the demonstrators and I got to Michigan and Balboa in front of the Hilton and the Poor People's Campaign. And Martin Luther King had been assassinated in April — I believe, of 1968. So, a few months earlier, but his colleagues kind of carried on and they had a like a wagon coming up



Michigan Avenue going north toward the intersection of Balboa and Michigan. I was kind of standing around watching. And there were all these demonstrators sort of milling around and shouting “The whole world is watching, the whole world is watching.” And I was standing there and watching. And all of a sudden I looked up and there was this line of Chicago cops coming with their white helmets and their billy clubs and their blue shirts coming like right at us. And it was pretty terrifying, I have to say. And I was like maybe five people in from the window of the haymarket restaurant or bar, I guess. And the Hilton and so — boy — I ran and they were beating people up and macing people like the person I was going with at the time, my husband — who's now my husband — was, I guess with the demonstrators that were being I think pushed. They were I think they had left Grant Park and were coming south, maybe down Michigan Avenue, and he happened to be also in front of the Hilton, but closer to the curb, and they were really beating people and macing them. He got maced but not beaten. So it was a pretty scary place to be, and — but luckily I wasn't one of the people that was pushed through the window. There were, I think, five people or so, a few people were pushed through the window. It's like the latest movie is wrong about that — it wasn't like — you know, leaders were somehow pushed through the window, it wasn't that organized. It was like whoever was there got pushed.

Q: Yeah, wow, that is fascinating. I just have a couple more questions. So you've told me that you weren't really active outside of anti-war organizing, were there any events on Mundelein campus, social events or anything of that sort that you do remember or participating in, such as campus traditions?

Krieger: No, no, because I was really like — you wouldn't go all the way to school to participate in a — I mean, I think I remember maybe my freshman year there was still a dress code and they still had these once a month assemblies where you wore a cap and gown, I think, or something. I can't remember if that the cap and gowns went out — maybe there was one. Or maybe I just remember hearing about them from my sister. I can't remember. But there was a dress code at least when I started. But they used to have assemblies where people had to wear caps and gowns like these academic assemblies every so often, apparently. But I don't know whether I actually attended one or whether that's a false memory from my sister telling me about them, I don't know. But I know there was a dress code, which seems odd now. I mean, but that's the way it was.

[30:00]

Q: You were telling me that you kind of took whatever classes you wanted to. What were some of your favorite courses?

Krieger: Well, there was a history of South Africa that was really interesting. I like Yohma Grey taught a poetry class, American poetry class. That was really nice. Yeah, those are nice. Yeah.

Q: All right, I think that is all of the questions that I have. Is there anything else that we haven't covered today which you would like to talk about?

Krieger: No, I really wanted to — you know — to talk about the importance of the teachers as role models and as intellectual agents of intellectual growth. And yeah, that was really the important thing for me to share. I think it's the most the important thing for me.

Q: Well, thank you then, so much for your time, for your stories, I will be stopping the recording here.

Mary Krieger: OK. All right. Well, thank you, have a great day.

[31:39]

[END OF INTERVIEW]