

SHARE YOUR STORY: STUDENT LIFE AT MUNDELEIN

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Mary Anne Gibbons Oral History

Women and Leadership Archives

Loyola University Chicago

2021

PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Mary Anne Gibbons conducted by Melissa Newman on November 16, 2021. 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 narrator. Timestamps are provided every five minutes, within a few seconds of that exact point in the audio. Sounds such as laughter and actions are in parentheses and notes added for context are in brackets.

Transcriptionist: Melissa Newman

Session: 1

Interviewee: Mary Anne Gibbons

Locations: Washington, DC and Palatine, IL
via Zoom

Interviewer: Melissa Newman

Date: November 16, 2021

[BEGINNING OF INTERVIEW]

[00:00]

Q: Okay, we are recording. For the record, my name is Melissa Newman. I'm a graduate assistant at the Women and Leadership Archives, interviewing Mary Anne Gibbons, class of 1972, on November 16th, 2021 for the Share Your Story: Student Life at Mundelein Project. I'm in Palatine, Illinois, and Mary Anne is in Washington, D.C. So to start us off, Mary Anne, could you tell us a little bit about yourself, like when you were born, where you were raised and your family?

Gibbons: Great. So I was born in 1950 in August in New Jersey. I'm the third of six children. I have two older brothers and two younger brothers and a younger sister. I spent most of my time in New Jersey, actually, until I left for Chicago for college. And then after college, I got my first job in Pennsylvania, worked there for four years. And then I came to Washington, D.C. to attend law school and then stayed in Washington, D.C. So I've been in Washington, D.C. since 1973.

Q: Great. And why did you choose Mundelein for college if you came from New Jersey?

Gibbons: An interesting story. I had no plans to go to Mundelein College, but my parish pastor knew the then President of Mundelein College, Sister Ann Ida [Gannon, BVM], thought she was the best person in the world. Apparently she was on some commissions in Washington, and somehow he knew her. So he kept pestering me to apply to Mundelein College. Everybody I

knew was going to college somewhere in the mid-Atlantic states. But to get him off my back, I applied to Mundelein College, thinking I would tell him I didn't get in or made up some excuse. So then I started to get really nice letters from Mundelein College. I was like, "Oh, this sounds kind of interesting." They were all very personal. And then I may have been offered a scholarship at that point. So then I decided, "Well, maybe I should go visit the college. Maybe it sounds pretty nice." So I went to visit. And the interesting thing was, again, I thought well I'll go visit, but probably won't go there. And on that weekend, Sister Ann Ida [Gannon, BVM] spoke. I couldn't tell you today what she spoke about, but whatever she spoke about convinced me that it was a great college. And then I started to think, "Well, being in a big city, I grew up in the country in New Jersey, being in a big city might be kind of interesting," and that was kind of it.

Gibbons: The other interesting fact is the weekend that I was at Mundelein College was the weekend that Martin Luther King [Jr.] was shot. So here I am holed up in the dormitory, Mundelein College. I think the city might have been placed on lockdown and shots were being fired all over the city. It was a pretty crazy weekend. But again, that craziness in a big city didn't deter me at all. I thought Mundelein would be a great place. So that's how I ended up there. With no intention of going there.

Q: Did you visit there with your family or were you by yourself when you first visited?

Gibbons: I came with my father. Yeah in fact, I remember my father was walking down the street going, "You know, I think I heard some shots." I'm like, "Yeah, Dad, you should stay in your hotel. It's not very safe." But anyway, yes, I came with my father.

Q: And could you talk a little bit more about the reactions around the city and on campus when you were there and heard that Martin Luther King Jr. was shot?

Gibbons: Well, what I remember, so we heard about it and rioting broke out, I think, all over the country on that weekend. And Mundelein—I think it was mainly farther—more downtown. But again, my father was staying at some hotel not too far from the campus, and he was walking up to the campus like maybe there were some parent things. I don't really remember, but he was hearing gunshots. So I guess it was a pretty crazy time in the city. And of course, the news that Martin Luther King [Jr.] was shot would be a really big deal. And then after that, a lot of things started to happen in the country. So it was a pretty intense intense introduction to Chicago.

Q: Yeah, but it didn't seem to deter you at all.

Gibbons: No.

Q: So that ended up well. Okay. And could you tell me about what you studied when you were at Mundelein and what the classes and professors were like?

Gibbons: Okay. So my major was elementary education. I don't remember if that was my major or that was my minor, but I studied psychology and elementary education. Psychology, I remember really finding very interesting. It was a lot about development and all that, and I had never thought about that before. So I don't even remember how I picked that as a major.

Elementary education, I think I picked because at that point in history, a lot of women were kind of encouraged to become teachers. And somehow I guess I was encouraged to become a teacher.

Nobody in my immediate family were teachers.

[05:00]

Gibbons: My parents didn't even go to college. But somehow with my broader family, I guess I was told, "Well, it's good to be a teacher." So I would say I selected that a little bit on autopilot without really longing to become a teacher. So I studied that. I remember, so with elementary education, I remember going through all the classes, and then when I got to my senior year, it was time to do student teaching. I was at a school, some school in Chicago, and I was traveling to the same school with a classmate. What I remember about that is I'd be going to the school. And she was all bubbly and seemed to really just like love [unintelligible] and although I love children, I decided at that point that I don't think I'm as enthusiastic about this as you should be if you're planning to become a teacher.

Gibbons: So here I am in my senior year. I'm like, "I don't think I want to become a teacher." And then, "Now what do I do?" So I can tell you how it went on from there. (laughs) At that point, I was like, "Alright, I got to figure my life out because I'm about to graduate." And I looked around and thought about what do I actually enjoy doing? And I was involved in activities on campus, and I had a lot of interaction with the dean of students at the time. I remember that her first name was Gloria [Lewis]. I don't remember her last name, but I thought, you know, she really has an interesting job. So I asked her, "If I wanted to get a job like yours, what would I do?" She told me I would have to get a master's degree in education, at least, maybe a doctorate in education. So I was like, "Okay, that's what I'll do next." So (laughs) then I applied to graduate school, applied to Northwestern, because I really loved Chicago, I loved being in Chicago. And got into Northwestern. And that kind of led me to my next degree.

Gibbons: And I was in a doctoral program, decided when I had got to the master's level that I was tired of going to school and actually wanted to stop and work for a while. So again, I was still at Mundelein, because when I graduated I got a job running Northland Hall—that was the second dormitory on campus. So I was still at the college. I still was interacting with the dean of students. And she knew that I was getting the masters, I was looking for a job, and she actually put me in touch with a college in Pennsylvania. And I interviewed there. She gave me a good recommendation, and that's how I got my first job after college and graduate school. So anyway, but a long, a long response to your question.

Q: Great. And do you remember any of the professors that you had at Mundelein and any relationships or good or bad experiences with them?

Gibbons: You know, I don't specifically remember my professors that I had, but I remember—well, I'll take that back. I think it was January of my senior year. I did a one month study toward—at that point, the college had trimesters, as it may still have had for a number of years afterwards. So in January, we had an opportunity to do something special. So I went on a one-month study tour in Washington, D.C., with David Orr, who was a professor at the college. I had never had him for any other classes, but we were in Washington, David took us all around to a lot of different, I would say agencies, I remember we're at the Pentagon, we're at the capital, went to a lot of different places to really teach us, I think, about politics, history, what was going on at the time in the world. And so that—I remember that that was a really interesting and impactful experience, because I got to know David a little bit, and I also got to know Washington. And that made me decide that at some point I want to live in Washington. I thought it was a great place and at some point I wanted to be involved in issues that required passion. So David was one.

Gibbons: The other professor that I remember but never had was Russell Barta, 'cause he was teaching at the school and friends of mine had had him and were really impressed with him. There was another nun that I got involved with, I think, on the Student-Faculty Senate because when I was there, they created a student position on the Student-Faculty Senate, and I think I was the first student that held that position. And there was a nun, shoot, I think her first name is Sister Eloise [Thomas], and I remember interacting a lot with her. I think she was on the [Student-Faculty] Senate at the time, so with her. I don't specifically remember any other professors. And

it might be because my major or my study of elementary education wasn't something that I guess sparked my heart.

[10:00]

Q: That's totally fine. And could you tell me maybe a little bit more about the Student-Faculty Senate? What exactly was that and what sort of things you did in your interactions with the faculty?

Gibbons: I think the idea of it grew out of Vietnam War protests because in my junior year, so that would be 1966 to '67. That's when protests broke out all over the country against the Vietnam War. Mundelein was very involved with those protests. And in fact, in the spring of my senior year—or my junior year—classes were canceled completely. And we spent all of our time discussing the war, protesting, deciding what we wanted to do. And students had a whole lot of interaction with faculty on the war and what we should do, what we should be doing. And I think out of that season of protest, the idea of involving a student in the Faculty Senate grew. And so we discussed policies at the college and what—my goal was to give student input. So if an issue came up, then I could discuss with other students what the student input should be. So it was similar to a Faculty Senate at any college where they get to try to influence the direction of the college and policies at the college. I don't know if it continued after that.

Q: So was this taking place during the semester where no one was having classes only? And you had—were you one of the only students on that committee?

Gibbons: I think I was the only student on this—I think there was one slot for a student, and somehow I got that slot. I'm not even sure if I was appointed or elected. I just don't remember. It was a long time ago, but I actually think—I don't know—I don't remember if it was during the junior year or during the senior year, but I think it was a permanent slot at that time. So I was just the first one to get that slot.

Q: And what sort of policies, if you remember, came out of these conversations that you would have? How did that affect the college going forward? Do you know?

Gibbons: You know what? I don't remember. This is a long time ago. (laughs) Okay? You're back now about four or fifty years, I believe. (laughs) So forty, fifty years, so I don't really remember, but I just remember that they wanted student input, and that was part of my role.

Q: Okay. Let me see. So with the Vietnam War protests that were going on, what did you think about it? I know that you said Mundelein was very involved and that you were on this Senate to kind of talk about policies, but what were your personal opinions at the time?

Gibbons: Well, I guess one thing that really strikes me as I think back is that I think at other colleges, the faculty may have not been that supportive of the protests, but at Mundelein, the nuns were right in there with us. There was no hesitation. They thought it was really important that as individuals that we have a position on the war. They were willing to have meetings, discuss anything that students wanted to discuss. They protested with us. There was one big march from Mundelein up to Northwestern, which is about five miles away. Students were in the march, nuns were in the march, and we spent a lot of time just with them listening and sharing and helping us to really form opinions on the war. And what I remember I mean, I had never been involved in anything like that in my life. I came from a small town, a small area in New Jersey. Pretty quiet life up until then. Now all of a sudden, boom, there's a war going on. People that we know are going off to war. We think it's terrible. And it was a very passionate time. And I think that's a first, one of the first times that it really—that I got involved with anything that caused that much passion. So it was a big deal. Big time in my life.

Q: Most definitely. And how did the protests form? Was it just with Mundelein students? Were you—was it like a Chicago-wide sort of thing? What exactly was the organization like?

Gibbons: There was coordination between colleges. I don't remember who it was I mean, I wasn't one of the ones in contact with other colleges. There was another student named Katy Hogan, who is a pretty famous graduate of Mundelein.

[15:00]

She owned and operated the Heartland Café in Chicago for years. I think that closed a couple of years ago. Anyway, Katy was a really big leader on campus in terms of the protests, and I know—so I'm thinking there was coordination between Mundelein and other colleges because in this one, we were marching from Mundelein up to Northwestern, and then I'm not sure where we went from there, but I think colleges all over the country were protesting. So likely there was interaction between the different colleges in Chicago and probably around the country. I know at one point Katy came to Washington because obviously there were protests in Washington as well. I just remember thinking that was a pretty brave thing to do. You know at that point in my life, I guess I would have been about twenty years old at that point. Leaving campus to come to Washington to protest is nothing I would have really thought about. So I was pretty much in Chicago.

Q: Right. And so for the protests themselves, was most of Mundelein active in it or was it kind of clear that maybe a minority of students or a majority of students were participating? Could you get a sense?

Gibbons: I would say it was the entire Mundelein student body, as far as I could tell, because classes had been canceled. We were at numerous meetings in what was then called the Learning Resource Center [now known as the Sullivan Center]. That was the newer library, and there were no classes being held at all. I think so many people—the faculty, administration—must have seen that so many people were getting involved in the protests that it was pretty useless to have whole classes because these were big burning issues in the country. So my recollection is that every

time we had a meeting, everybody came to the meetings. It was huge on campus, including faculty and administration.

Q: Right. So and then how did that affect the running of the college? I mean, if no classes are being held, but you're still paying to live in the dorms, I imagine, or eating on campus, facilities are still open. How did that work?

Gibbons: Well, you're right. Dorms were still open. We still ate in the cafeteria. But obviously there had to be a way for us to get credit for that semester. So what they did is we finished the school year. Everybody went their respective ways, went home or whatever. And then when we came back for the fall of senior year, they devised a method for us to get credit for our various courses. So I remember that I had to write papers for whatever classes I had that spring in order to get credit for the spring semester. And then we went also right into the senior year. So they figured out a way to give us credit. I don't remember how far into the spring semester we were when classes were canceled, but it felt like for most of the spring semester of junior year, we didn't go to class. We did meetings and protests and discussions and whatever. So it was a pretty crazy time. But I think the school was pretty creative in terms of finding a way for us to both be engaged with the anti-war effort and then also gain credit for that junior year.

Q: Great. And this also—first we had the Martin Luther King [Jr.] Assassination and anti-war protests, but then there was also the Kent State massacre in 1970. Do you remember any

reactions from that or any subsequent protests that you or other Mundelein students may have been involved in?

Gibbons: Yeah, I think, and then that would have been right—I don't remember what month that was, but so my senior year was '71 to '72, so my junior year was 1970 to '71. So that would have been right when Kent State happened and when protests were breaking out all over the country. And so I think everything fed into everything, everything else. In terms of sparking protests against the war.

Q: Right. Yeah, very contentious time, (laughs) definitely.

Gibbons: Mhmm, mhmm.

Q: Okay. So maybe moving slightly away from that stuff, were there any experiences at Mundelein that you found meaningful either at the time or kind of looking back and remembering?

[20:00]

Gibbons: Yes. So as I thought about the interview, I guess the one thing I would say, I have children now, a son who's college-age. And I always tell him, I'm like, "Honey, college is about

the best, one of the best times of your life." And so for me, I come from a small, rural area in New Jersey. Now I'm in a big city and I'm living with a lot of different people, and I still am friends with, I would say a big number of the women who lived in my dorm. Like my roommate, my—I had the same roommate for three years. Then I had a different roommate my last year, and then some of the other women who lived on the dorm floor. And we've stayed very close for years. And so I think forming those friendships, I would say—I'm gonna get emotional about that—one of the best parts of being away at college, it was wonderful. The other interesting thing when I thought about what do I remember from college, this kind of sweet little thing that we did in our dorm. I was in Coffey Hall. Whenever somebody got engaged, our dorm—it must have been a resident assistant—would call us to the lounge. And if you've been in Coffey Hall, you remember all the lounges in Coffey Hall are right on the lake. And it's beautiful. They had curtains all around. You could open up the curtains at night. The moon reflected off the lake. It was lovely. So they would call us to a lounge at night and somebody got engaged and we would pass around the lighted candles. It was called a Candlelighting. Just pass around, pass around, pass around, pass around. And then whoever got engaged would blow it out. So it was like a big deal.

I guess at that point, getting married, getting engaged was a pretty big deal for women. I think that's changed a little bit (laughs) since then. Not everybody feels like it's a big goal in life to get engaged and get married. But at that point, it was this very touching, sweet thing. So whoever got engaged wouldn't tell anybody. And then we would have this lovely little candlelighting thing. Anyway that kind of popped into my mind that that was just a very sweet thing to do. And my roommate actually got engaged, I think, during her junior year. So it was real special because

I knew who she was, and we did the candlelighting ceremony. So that was good. You know the friends for life was really—were great.

The other thing that really struck me, I had gone to a high school with nuns who were very conservative and very strict, and they would never befriend you or kind of get on your level to discuss anything. And then I went to Mundelein, and these were nuns who were among the first to come out of their habits. And they were very progressive and fabulous, and they would engage with us on a level that was something I'd never experienced before with a member of a religious order. So that was very special. Even Sister Ann Ida, President of the College. I mean, one time she said to me, "You know, Mary Anne, you could be a college president." I was like, "Oh my God!" I never had seen myself as being—I could be a college president, that's a pretty big deal. So I think their ability to get to know us, their ability to spark something in us was pretty fabulous.

Q: Yeah. Sounds like a lot of good connections then between your community memb—or dorm members and faculty. And since you were coming from New Jersey and very much away from your family, how was it kind of adjusting to that for the first time? And did that influence the connections that you made with the girls living in Coffey Hall with you? Can you talk a bit about that?

Gibbons

Well, I'll tell you something funny. So before we went to college, they would exchange roommate information, as I think many colleges do. And then you had an opportunity to write to your roommate. So my roommate was from Iowa City, Iowa, and I'm from this little podunk location in New Jersey. So I remember being all concerned that she's a big city girl. "How's she going to like me? I'm just kind of a country hick." She told me later she's like, "Oh my God, she's from the East Coast. That's a really sophisticated place. How will she like me?" (laughs) So it was so, that was just comical because we each had a concern, but they were completely misplaced. So I was from a big Irish Catholic family, she was from a big Irish Catholic family. And as it ended up, we had a lot in common. So that was kind of the first thing that we had to get figured out, that we're actually pretty similar, backgrounds are quite similar. I loved being away from home because my mother especially was very strict, and I was not even allowed to date in high school.

[25:00]

So now I'm kind of let out of the cage, and here I am in Chicago all by myself. Being a woman's college, we had invitations to parties, fraternities, and balls coming out our ears. And so my first year, I got to date just an unbelievable amount. I used to keep a calendar of all the different dates that I had because this was such a new experience to me, (laughs) and it was just great fun. In fact, funny story, in those days, we had a curfew, so we had to be back in the dorm on the weekend, either at eleven o'clock or at midnight, I don't remember. First weekend at college, I got in trouble for breaking curfew. (laughs) I don't remember what we did. I think we must have gone to some party, and I got back late. And if you got back late, then the next weekend you

weren't allowed out at all. You had to be on desk duty at night. So I got reined in pretty quickly. But that was just so funny. (laughs) So I don't know if I broke curfew again, but that was a whole new experience, being free and all that.

And then, of course, being in Chicago was great. It's a great city. So we could hop on the "L" [Chicago's elevated public transit system] and go downtown and go to museums and do whatever. And that was really a great experience. So I was really happy being away from home because college was great, city was great, had a nice roommate, a lot of nice people on the dorm floor and in the dorm. And so I would say it was a great experience.

Q: And in terms of those invitations that you guys got, were the fraternities from Loyola, Northwestern? Or are these non-collegiate fraternities?

Gibbons: They were all over the city. I remember IIT, Illinois Institute of Technology, which is not, I don't think it was that close to Mundelein, but I remember getting invited there 'cause I think my first college boyfriend was from IIT, so I must have met him at the party or else he came to our college. I don't remember getting invited to fraternity parties at Loyola, but we certainly got to know a lot of people from Loyola just because the campus was right next door. We had a good friend from college, from Loyola during college, as well as some graduate students from Loyola, that somehow we all got to know. And we were good friends for years. In fact, still semi in touch with some of them. So the invitations came from all over the city.

I'll tell you a funny story. One night (laughs) we didn't have cell phones, obviously, and there weren't phones in the rooms. There were phones at the end of the hall, and somebody would call for you. And I remember my mother kept calling, like, every week, and they'd be like, "Mary Anne, your mother's on the phone again." Obviously, she was missing me a little more than I was missing her. (laughs) But one night somebody called the dorm, and they like, two guys called, and they had a formal to go to, and they were looking for dates for the formal. So my roommate and I agreed to go to the formal (laughs) with these two guys that we'd never even met. They were fine, they were safe (laughs) it was all okay. We had a good time. And then I think they wanted to date us again, and we didn't particularly fall in love with them. So I don't think we ever dated again. But we somehow scraped up formal dresses and went off to a formal somewhere. They were not from Loyola. I don't even remember where they were from. But we got invitations from all over the city because we're a woman's college, and I guess they figured there's a lot of women there. So.

Q: Okay. That's so funny. (laughs)

Gibbons: (laughs) It was funny. You know we also got invited to—there was a military hospital that I believe was maybe felt like it was an hour away. I don't remember the name of it, but I think periodically the hospital would bring maybe a bus load of injured military people to the college for us to talk with. 'Cause I remember a couple of times having those visits. And then sometimes these poor guys in the military, they're injured in war, this Vietnam War, and they're now stuck in a military hospital, and now they're meeting these nice young women, and they want to jump into a relationship right away. And I remember—I was kind of a free spirit at that

point. I had no real interest for a long time in having a very serious relationship 'cause I was having too much fun just dating around. So you know, but I do remember that they came, we were nice to them, we talked with them, sometimes we corresponded with them later and, you know whatever, life went on.

Q: Could you tell me more about maybe some of your particular friends and connections that you made, like your roommate or some of the other girls in Coffey and what you guys did together on campus?

[30:00]

Gibbons: Yeah. So my roommate, her name at that point was Maureen Hurley. She's now Maureen Eme, E-M-E. Maureen from Iowa City. And then there was Cathy Griffith. She's now Cate Cahan, who's a pretty famous radio personality in Chicago. If you look her up, you'll find a lot of interesting information about her. Mary Kay Regnier. She's now Mary Kate Blankestyn, Cindy Puchalski, now Cindy Miller, Carol Bak, also married, different name. Mary Ann Perga, she was a year behind us. She's still Mary Ann Perga, although married.

Anyway, so one of the things that we used to do is I remember all the time, stay up probably till two o'clock in the morning every night during the week, literally talking about life. We would be—go to the lounge, turn out the lights, open up the curtains, and then the atmosphere was great. You had the moon coming off the lake [Lake Michigan]. It was really pretty. And the

sound of the lake, especially in the wintertime when the lake freezes over and you have those big blocks of ice and they're click-clacking together. So we had—it was a great atmosphere, but we would just sit up after we finished our studies and talk till two o'clock in the morning. And then I always—I'm an early bird, so I always took 8:00 a.m. classes, so I'd get up, do my 8:00 a.m. classes, and then just sleep it off on Saturday. We all slept till noon on Saturday mornings. (laugh) Recover from the week. Anyway, so I just remember the talks about whatever whatever whatever it was late into the night. A lot just about life or whatever was going on with us. So that was wonderful.

We also—none of us had much money. We all came from pretty, I'd say, simple backgrounds. So one of our big treats was to hop on the "L" go downtown to Marshall Fields [Chicago department store that has since been acquired by Macy's] and spend one dollar to buy a Frango Mint candy bar. That's all we could afford. And then either walk back to campus or take the "L" back to campus. So that was kind of a big treat. I still loved Frango Mints for years. Anytime I got to travel through Chicago when I was working, I'd always, if I could get to Marshall Fields and bring home Frango Mints because they were great. They probably still got great Frango Mints there, so that was good.

The other thing, Mary Ann Perga played the piano, and at that point there was a piano in the lounge on the first floor at Coffey Hall, and she'd always have a piano fest. So we'd be around the piano, singing and playing and whatever. That was a big deal.

Q: Did you go home for most of the holidays or did you stay on campus?

Gibbons: I went home probably my first Thanksgiving and then obviously Christmas and then probably Easter, I'm guessing. Then in some years I didn't go home for Thanksgiving just because it was expensive and so I'd stay in Chicago. At that point, I had a brother who was in graduate school, still my brother, (laughs) but at that point he was in graduate school at Ohio State. So I remember one year he flew to Chicago to be with me at Thanksgiving. I think another year I may have flown to Ohio State—Ohio, Columbus, to be with him for Thanksgiving, but otherwise I'd go home for—certainly for Christmas and then probably for Easter as well, and then at the end of the year. What I remember is that my family didn't have a lot of money and so I would babysit a lot to earn my money for my plane fares home and back and for my spending money.

Q: Were there any traditions on campus leading up to holiday seasons or special services or events to go to?

Gibbons: I don't remember there being those. There might have been, but nothing pops to mind as far as that goes. I know since then they have a number of things on campus that I've seen after graduating, and I'd get invited back to some things. So I remember that, but not while I was there. I think you're mute—

Q: Sorry, yep muted. Thank you for alerting me to that.

[35:00]

Q: You'd mentioned a couple times kind of relationships with Loyola students or using some of their facilities. So could you talk a little bit more about what the relationship was like between Mundelein and Loyola and how much interaction there was between students?

Gibbons: I don't think there was a lot of formal interaction in terms of us taking classes there or students taking classes at Mundelein. So a lot of it would be if we happen to meet somebody while walking around the campus. One time, (laughs) I remember one friend that we got to meet, there was a panty raid by guys from Loyola where they were literally (laughs) climbing up the windows of Coffey Hall and demanding panties. (laughs) And then the Mundelein girls retaliated and ran to Loyola dorms and had a jock raid. And as part of that, my friends and I met this one guy from Loyola (laughs) who remember his name was Marvin Orin Bates the Third, and he actually became a good friend of ours. And I remember I kept in touch with him for a while after graduating, but that was one way that people got to meet each other. (laughs)

There was also on Loyola's campus, there was a coffee house and, at that point in time, folk music was really in vogue. And so we would frequently go to the coffee house, and then that's another way that we would sometimes meet people from Loyola. In fact, I know one of my boyfriends for one of the years I met at the coffee house. And the guy that my roommate got engaged to, she met him that same night at the coffee house. So that was just another way to meet people from Loyola.

Q: That is very cool. (Gibbons laughs) Did you—oh, I also saw that in the 1971 yearbook that you were on the Coffey Hall Judiciary Board. Do you recall participating in that and what that might involve?

Gibbons: (laughs) No, that's so funny, I don't! (both laugh) I don't remember if I pulled out my yearbook, but I couldn't find my yearbook, actually. It's somewhere in this house. No, I don't remember that at all. I was trying to remember what I was involved in, but Judiciary Board, I—my God, that must have been for disciplinary purposes or something like that. I don't know.

Q: Okay. No worries.

Gibbons: That might have been a precursor to my legal career (laughs) because after graduate school and after working for a while, I became an attorney. But I had never—when I was on campus in college, I never thought about becoming an attorney. That whole idea came up much later.

Q: All right. Well, you also mentioned that you worked at the Library Resource Center.

Gibbons: That's right.

Q: Could you talk a bit about that and what that involved?

Gibbons: Yeah, as part of my financial support for college, I had a work study—I guess "award" they called it or whatever. So even when we were in what I think might now be called the Yellow House—the pretty little home that they now use to store a lot of the archives—that was the library when I started. So my job at the library was shelving books, working at the desk, checking books out, checking books back in. And then they opened the Learning Resource Center, the other big building on campus, the brand new library. And then I moved over to that library. So it was mainly shelving books, working the desk, checking books in and out. That was my big job, but that's how I got my work study money to help pay for my tuition, room, and board.

Q: And do you remember any particular events that might have taken place at the library or any supervisors, coworkers from your time there?

Gibbons: I don't remember any specifically, but it was a very easy job, shelving the books, and you got to see everybody who came through the library. So it was a pretty fun job as well, but not physically very demanding. But my supervisors must have been fine because I don't remember any particular issues with anybody. So that was an enjoyable job.

Q: And did you get to choose where you did your work study or did you apply for the work study as well? Or is it something that was kind of automatically awarded based off of your—

Gibbons: I think that was part of my financial aid package because I had work study, I had a student loan, I might have had some scholarship money. I can't remember. Somehow they put together a package that pretty much covered my tuition, room, and board. I don't think my parents had to pay anything towards college.

[40:00]

I don't remember for sure, but when I finished college, I had a student loan that I could pay off over time. So I don't know if they assigned me that job—I'm guessing they assigned me that job, but I don't really remember.

Q: All right, and another activity you said you participated in in your questionnaire beforehand, and in the news clippings you sent me was the campus cleanup day.

Gibbons: Mhmm!

Q: So what exactly was that? How did it come about? Was it an annual thing?

Gibbons: No, that was—college—some, I guess—for some reason, I think I was one of the people that came up with that idea or came up with the idea that as students, maybe we could do something to help the college. Probably financially. So I believe myself and maybe two other people, I think my roommate, Maureen Hurley and maybe Mary Ann Perga—I'm not sure who

the third was—but I think we went to meet with the director of development at the time, and we somehow came up with the idea that it cost money to clean up the campus. And so in a spring, maybe we could organize groups to clean. And so we actually rounded up lots of students who were interested in helping and then assign them to different cleanup committees. I think I was outside. I think there are pictures of myself and some others outside cleaning up the grounds. But other people were in buildings, actually cleaning buildings. So it was set for a particular either day or weekend. I think it might have been a weekend. And then we got to work. And they invited in the media. I think I was interviewed, and we showed up on some local TV station in Chicago, and then it was in that little newsletter that I sent to you. So it was in interest to just give something back to the campus. And it was a lot of fun. It was in the spring, nice weather. And so we all got to work. And actually, I think faculty and staff also participated with students. So it was a very good bringing the entire campus together to really do something that was constructive and helpful.

Q: And you just decided this and brought it to faculty members? And it kind of blossomed there?

Gibbons: You know, I think so. I think I remember that I was a big part of the leadership of it. So whether the idea grew out of perhaps that Student-Faculty Senate that I was on, I don't remember exactly what sparked the idea, but I remember that the idea was to give something back to the campus and do something that would actually help the school.

Q: Okay. You'd mentioned some interactions with Sister Ann Ida [Gannon, BVM]. Could you expand on some of that a little bit more? Talk about any memorable interaction, stories? What do you remember of her as a person?

Gibbons: Yeah. Well, obviously before I came, whatever she spoke about really impressed me. So that was a big deal. Because it was a small college, she was there. She was around. You could see her all the time. She certainly was not a person that hid in her office or stayed in her office. And I think because of some of the involvements I had with the college that I must have interacted with her a fair amount, because that comment that she made to me about "Mary Anne, you could be a college president" was shocking (laughs) to me because I guess I never saw myself as anything like that. So I think I had a lot of interaction with her. I remember when I— there weren't very many students from the East Coast at Mundelein. I think there were maybe three. Most of the students came from the Midwest. So she somehow, she got to know me because I remember when my parents came for graduation, she actually invited them to come for tea. And I was like, wait a second, why is she inviting them? Maybe because they had traveled farther than most of the other people. And I think in part, she was Irish. My parents were born in Ireland, so I think maybe she had some, you know, felt some connection with them or else was just trying to be really nice. But I thought it was so nice of her to do that. In fact, I stayed in touch with her for years. When I'd come back to Chicago, I visited with her. She met my children, my husband. We always corresponded at Christmas. I think probably she lived to 100 or more, probably well into her nineties.

[45:00]

I was still in touch with her. I would still get a Christmas card. I would still send her a little update on my family. So, yeah, that's—so we definitely had a bond in college, and then it continued for years.

Q: That's just wonderful. I hear a lot of good stories about her.

Gibbons: She was an amazing, amazing person. You know, another story I remember about her? I think probably my first reunion back at college would have probably been my five-year reunion. And that was when the Women's Movement was really gaining steam. And Ann Ida was maybe in charge of the Women's Movement for Illinois or Chicago. She had a big role in trying to get the ERA passed—the Equal Rights Amendment—passed. So we went back to our reunion and she said, "Okay, how many of you are doing anything to help get the ERA passed?" I'm not sure anybody in our class at that point was actively involved. And she kind of chastised us. She's like, "Hey, ladies, women, you need to get involved. This is a really important issue." Again, Ann Ida in a leadership role for the country. She was just an amazing person.

Q: Yeah, she sounds like a powerhouse, that's for sure.

Gibbons: Oh, my God, she was! She was, she was, she was.

Q: Did you notice any changes on campus from when you started at Mundelein to when you graduated, whether it be physical changes, rules, traditions?

Gibbons: Yeah, there were some big changes. So as I mentioned earlier, the first year we had curfew at midnight—no guys were allowed in our rooms at all. I think we had to dress up maybe just on Sunday to go to the tea room—that was what the cafeteria was called—and then it seems to me, by about the second year or the third year, we didn't have to dress up anymore. Everybody was in jeans at that point. We're heading into the anti-war protest and nobody's dressing up anymore. I don't think the curfew lasted too long. At some point, I think we were allowed to have a guy in our room, but we might have had to keep something in the door open a little bit or something like that. So, yeah, a lot of that certainly changed. So just in terms of the rules by which we lived, things were changing fairly rapidly between freshman year and certainly by senior year.

Campus, the changes on campus, the Learning Resource Center got built. And that opened at some point during those four years. And that was a big deal because that was a big, beautiful building that really expanded study space and classroom space and all that. Physically, I don't think there were any other buildings that were built 'cause we were kind of on a contained little area. I don't remember any other major changes. We still had the Tea Room, and that was our cafeteria, and we still had all that.

Q: And I also noticed that the "Skyscraper," which was the student newspaper, it stopped production in 1969. So I was wondering if you recalled how students may have shared news, like

campus news or events, something like that. Do you remember how you heard about what was going on on campus?

Gibbons: Well, obviously, we didn't have cell phones. We didn't have any computers, anything like that. I think it was all just talking, probably those late night talks, that word would just spread. And it's a small enough campus that it was pretty easy to interact with people. So probably at breakfast, lunch or dinner at the cafeteria, and then I think in the dorm literally just talking to people, because there really wasn't any other easy way to communicate.

Q: Right. And were there any other maybe social activities that I haven't brought up that you participated in on or off campus?

Gibbons: We did the frat parties and all the other parties. Did the candlelighting. Let me just see, I actually was trying to make a list of some of the things. Let me just check this.

[50:00]

Nothing is really coming to mind. A couple other—some other kind of—two other things that did come to mind that we didn't cover earlier. So I told you that I came from the East Coast, and there's three of us from the East Coast, and now I'm in the Midwest and everybody else is from the Midwest. Well, my natural way of interacting—and this would be very typical of people from the New York, New Jersey area—was to interact with people using "zingers." Little

comments that are not—they could be a little mean, depending on how you take them. They're not necessarily meant to be mean. They could be quite funny. And if you're good at them, we can go back and forth like that. We can spar like that. So now I get to the Midwest, and I'm just using my zingers. And I realized really early on, these Midwest women don't really appreciate my zingers. (laughs) And so I had to change. I've learned to change. One of the other women who came from the East Coast never learned to change, and so she kind of had a little harder time making friends. I just remember that was like a pretty big learning. Like, hey people actually—people in the Midwest, I found to be a whole lot more open than people from certainly New York, New Jersey where I grew up. It was just that we're in a whole lot of layers keeping us apart. It was just, "This is who I am, and I'll just tell you who I am. And if you do that, okay fine, we can be friends and we'll relate," but not a lot of sizing the person up and deciding whether or not I don't like them or not. So I learned to change, fortunately. And I thought that was actually a good thing. And that stayed with me pretty much the rest of my life. Even when I came to Pennsylvania, then to Washington, D.C., for work frequently, I would go back to New Jersey, New York when I worked during my working career. And I'd interact with that again, and I could get right back into it if I needed to. But that was not my normal way of relating.

The other funny thing I remember, we didn't have computers to type papers. Somehow I had taken a typing course in high school, so I was really good at typing on the manual typewriter. My roommate was a pecker, one finger at a time. Throughout my three years of having my roommate, Maureen, at night she would be pecking away typing her paper. And I'd be like, "Maureen, let me just type it for you." And I would type most of her papers because the slow would be like, "Oh, my God, this is going to go out all night." So I would just say, "Tell me what

you're typing." And I would just fly through that paper and get that paper done for her. It would certainly be different from the college experience of people today where you got your nice computer typing at it, and everything is wonderful. That was just, that was so, that was just funny. (laughs) I don't know, I think that's pretty much it.

I'll tell you another funny story. So I told you about student teaching. So I went to student teach and realized this other woman is just so bubbly every morning. And I decided, "God, she should be a teacher. I'm not feeling like that." So years later, I went to a reunion, and she was there. And I was like, "Guys, she's probably a principal by now." Well, by then I was an attorney. So I went up to her and said, "Okay, so tell me about your teaching career." She said, "No Mary Anne, I went to law school. I'm an attorney." So she also ended up not becoming a teacher, becoming an attorney. I also, after I went to law school and was working as an attorney, I did end up teaching at night in law school. And what I realized is I loved teaching at that level. I just wasn't excited about teaching at elementary school level, even though I love kids. It was just kind of interesting how life works out.

Q: And one of the last questions I have on here for you is from the graduation announcement that you sent me from the news clipping said that you won the Mary Blake Finan Award. Do you remember what that was and how that was awarded?

Gibbons: I think it was an award, it was certainly an award for service. So service to the college, maybe for leadership, a couple of criteria. So I guess that was, I guess related to graduation that I got the award. I think service and leadership, I think were the two things. There might have been

a third component. But I'm guessing that was because by that point we had done the campus cleanup thing, I'd been on the Student-Faculty Senate, I think I was—I had some natural leadership skills. And so I guess I was using them in different ways, and that's probably why I got the award.

[55:00]

One other thing, when I think back on Sister Ann Ida—and I think this will be typical of maybe people who went to a woman's college—so you have lots of opportunities to just be yourself, be strong, be a leader, be whatever, which sometimes when you go to a co-ed college, if the faculty and staff don't work hard to make sure that women get as much airtime as men, or push as much as men are pushed, sometimes you don't develop either the skills to be a leader or to really follow a dream or the ability to do that. But I think being at Mundelein, it really kind of taught us, like you could do whatever you want to do. You could really push to be a leader. You can push through glass ceilings and all that. And that really helped for the rest of my career.

Q: That's really wonderful. I hadn't thought of it that way. First thinking of a woman's college, but especially at the time that you were there, I think that would be a very important factor.

Gibbons: And I think the way that the faculty interacted with us, they took us very seriously. If somebody takes you serious when you're young, you're like, "Oh, I guess I am something. I guess what I have to say and what I have to think about is important." And so it really does help

your mind to develop. It helps to develop your confidence. And they were great at doing that. They took us very seriously. So it was good, all the way up to Ann Ida.

You know, one other person I haven't mentioned who I also kept in touch with after college, who was pretty amazing, was Sister Joan Frances Crowley [BVM]. So the first year, she was in charge of our dorm. I think she would be called the head resident. I think after that, it doesn't seem like we had a nun as a head resident—I'm not sure who it was, but she was there the first year. And what I remember, here we are, a bunch of young women away from home and sometimes getting into a little trouble or missing curfew or whatever. And she was so wonderful. She would just be kind of like, "I don't know, girls," kind of shake her head but never make us feel like she's shaking the finger at us. "Yeah, you should really do whatever." She was just the most wonderful person to be in charge of a dorm 'cause again, she wanted to talk with us, she took us seriously, she'd ask us a lot of things and be very, very friendly and supportive. So she was a person who I thought was in the perfect job. She was also a professor, and she was a professor of, I think, Russian history. So I did keep in touch with her. When I went back to some different events at Mundelein over the years, and it was always fun to get in touch with her.

Q: Alright. That's the last of my questions. Thank you for sharing these other memories that have come to mind. Is there any other stories, memories something that I haven't asked about that you would like to talk about?

Gibbons: Let me just see if there's any—let me see if I have anything here. I do remember the long winters in Chicago. New Jersey weather had a fair amount of snow at that point, but it was

nothing like that. It just felt like certainly before Thanksgiving, it was already freezing in Chicago. It didn't get to spring until we were right ready to begin studying for exams. So (sighs) when we want to go out in the winter, remember walking around the corner to get on the "L," where you have to kind of walk around that curve and get to the "L." And it would be so windy that tears would run down your face, and they would freeze on your face. You probably have experienced that and you'd be pushing against that wind. So that was kind of a new experience. (laughs) And then in the spring, the first day of spring would be right when we were ready to study for exams. So we would all take one day off, go out, run around, and play outside, and then be like, "Okay, now we have to get serious and study for exams again." So that was a little bit of a difference, (laughs) it was a little bit of a shocker for us. They were some interesting things.

You know we had—when I was there, there was a student who was either maybe a year behind me or two years behind me who was blind. And very petite. And she was accommodated by Mundelein. I remember it was interesting. I don't know what her technology would have been at the time. There must have been some ability to have Braille books or maybe—I don't think she could have recorded things. Maybe she did. Anyway, but she was in our dorm, and she was accommodated by Mundelein very well, ended up graduating from Mundelein at some point. I think she was about two years behind me, but was on my dorm floor and somebody that I stayed in touch with for a bit after college. So that, obviously they were able to accommodate people who had differences in learning ability. Oh, you're on mute.

Q: Thank you! I feel like I thought I hit it, and then I guess I didn't. Well, thank you for sharing all these stories with me. It's really been wonderful to hear about your experiences at Mundelein.

And I appreciate the time that you're taking out of your day for that, as well. I'm going to hit the—I'm going to stop recording, but I'll stay on so we can and talk about next steps and all that.

Gibbons: Okay. Great.

[1:01:27]

[END OF INTERVIEW]