

MARGARET EGAN NAMOVIC

Interviewed by Mary Alma Sullivan, BVM

October 2, 1998

Mundelein College  
Oral History Archives

M. Sullivan: The following is an interview of Margaret M. Egan Namovic, Mundelein College class of 1951, currently residing at 7057 West Kedzie, Niles, IL 60648. The interviewer is Mary Alma Sullivan, BVM, class of 1951. And the date is October 2, 1998.

Peggy, would you say for the record your full name, including your maiden name, and your graduation class, your major and your degree?

M. Namovic: Okay. I'm Margaret Egan Namovic, class of '51 at Mundelein. My major was physics with a math/chemistry minor. And what else did you want to know?

M. Sullivan: Degree.

M. Namovic: It was a Bachelor of Science, B.S., degree.

M. Sullivan: Can you say something about your family and social background? Let me just give you - Well, maybe you don't need

some clues. For example, immigrant parents, working parents, brothers and sisters, war time experience, etcetera. Whatever.

MN: Okay. My father was a native Chicagoan and my mother was from Detroit. My mother had - her formal education only went through sixth grade but she was a very, very well taught, self-taught person. My dad was an attorney and aspired to be a judge but never, never . . . never did. He dabbled just a little in politics, Democratic party. And okay, I'm one of four. I'm the second sibling of four. Had an all Catholic education. My father was all BVM and Jesuit - Oh, no. And then he got his law degree at DePaul. And as I say, my mother was more than capable of holding her own 'though she always felt she was not educated. But she in truth was.

MS: And what about your siblings?

MN: Okay, my siblings - I have an older sister who went to Mundelein as well. Then myself and then my two brothers, neither of whom went to college. My brother just younger than myself, he absolutely hated school. But he became an excellent carpenter. Did all the fine finishing work, problem correcting and what have you. Really found his niche with his hands. My younger brother was a playboy kind of a scholar. [laughs] Didn't make it. Went to work. My dad said, "No point throwing education money at

him." But he did in his later life go back and get his degree. So, the three of us have degrees. My carpenter brother did not.

MS: And all your siblings are surviving?

MN: My brother, the one who's a carpenter -- he died. He died four or five years ago. He became his own . . . he went then into earth moving business. Became his own boss, entrepreneur. He never cared for authority. Never did. [laughs]

MS: Can I assume that your mother's work was keeping the family together and cleaning the household, that kind of thing rather than . . .

MN: Oh, absolutely. And occasionally, she would have to accompany my father to some social events, which she rather enjoyed. I think she rather enjoyed. My father became involved -- he was the attorney for the White Sox. And so they would go down to spring training and so forth. My dad was a real baseball -- White Sox, although he enjoyed the Cubs too. He was a personal friend of Gabby Hartman. So he really enjoyed baseball, both teams. But . . . And my mother always was very meticulous about her appearance and always presented a good wife image for my father. But, yes, her only "job" was to raise us.

MS: Or as they say today, her jobs.

MN: Her jobs, yes. Although she did have help, Mary. We had a woman -- and this is one reason I've never been racist. We had a

Black woman who came in twice a week, once to do the laundry and ironing, and once to do the cleaning. She was like family. Ate lunch at our table, of course. And so forth. When my mother went into the hospital to have my youngest brother, she stayed with us all day long for -- they used to stay in the hospital you know five, ten days. Ten days. And she didn't sleep overnight but she was there all day. The fondest thing that I can remember of this, she let me pick out what I was going to wear myself that day instead of my mother. And that was big time. [laughs] But I've never had any racist feelings. Etta was always part of the family.

MS: I think that's probably very important with people. Most of us don't. If we are . . . exposed to it and had a good experience, we realize that everybody has -- every group has problems. Problem people.

MN: Yes. And she was a very religious person and kept up with the news and everything. She was a fine, fine person.

MS: I'm going to stop just now, Peggy. [tape turned off briefly.] Peggy, now maybe you could say how it was that you came to Mundelein College.

MN: Okay. Very good. That's a good story. Okay, I went to St. Scholastica's High School. That was selected because it was primarily college preparation, which my dad was anxious that we

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would all be educated, the women as well as the men. He knew the importance of that. His sister was a Chicago school teacher and he knew the importance of education. And then in truth I did want to go to Marquette because -- for two reasons. It was co-ed [laughs], one reason. But the other reason, equally as important, was that it was a Jesuit school. My father had had the finest, the finest thoughts on the Jesuit education and I wanted to be well educated. I wanted to go to school to the Jesuits. But my folks said, "No, no, no. Mundelein is here. The BVMs are good." And you don't live at home; they were not ready to send me out of town. After the first year, I was just delighted with Mundelein and had no further thoughts of any transferring or anything. In fact, they had said to me, "Well, try it at Mundelein first." And I was sold on it and had no further thoughts of going to Marquette. However, four of my girls went to Marquette. [laughs]

MS: Living out Mom's dream.

MN: Yeah.

MS: That's a great story. Now, if you could recall the activities, events, experiences that you found most satisfying in your college career.

MN: Okay. From my high school, St. Scholastica had sororities. I was a fat little girl. I was not . . . I didn't have social

abilities whatsoever. I was not . . . A good part of my grammar school went on to Scholastica's. Scholastica's had it clicks, had it sororities. I was outside of all of that. I was not part of the mainstream, though I loved Scholastica's. But I was not part of the mainstream. When I went to Mundelein, this was going to be a new slate. I was going to be somebody. I knew I was somebody. But I was going to be somebody at Mundelein. So at Mundelein, I did. In freshman year, I put myself right in. The clicks from the various high schools hung together. I befriended and was spoke to and smiled at everybody who was not part of a click. And that was . . . that was a good portion. You know, there were girls, you know, two, three from this school, a couple from there, what have you. So we kind of became almost a group unto ourselves. And I ran for the student SSA, the student . . .

MS: The representative of the class?

MN: The representative of the class, yeah. And I think in freshman year then I was elected a representative. Freshman rep. Sophomore year, I was the secretary. Junior year, I was the treasurer. And senior year, I was the President of the Physics Club! - which had about five members. [laughs] It was probably the smallest club at Mundelein. But I found myself at Mundelein. I really did. And as I say, I just couldn't break into that group at Scholastica's. But I'm not criticizing Scholastica's

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because I loved Scholastica's. I had made friends with some of the teachers there and I loved it, even though I was not part of the social scene. But at Mundelein, then as I say, I just jumped right and I said, "I'm going to be somebody here." And after the sophomore year -- oh, what was that student -- the National Student Association?

MS: Yes.

MN: I joined that. And I went to the convention up in Minnesota and there were international students that came. And we kind of hosted them and so forth. I wasn't . . . I was not active in any of the athletics. Oh, and I joined the . . . no, no. That was in high school, the writing club. No, at Mundelein, it was pretty much just the student government and my own kind of department -- the math department. There was no physics major, physics major. Sister Therese Lamberbeck was in Washington getting her Master's so I began actually as a math major. And then when she returned to Mundelein, then I became a physics major. But I . . . So I was active with Sister Mary St. Ida in the math club. I was . . . Yes, I was active in the math club. But that was about it. Student government and the math club.

MS: I'd say that's pretty good involvement.

MN: And then I met this lovely group of girls from Immaculata.  
[laughs] And they did include me.

MS: Well, I was going to say . . . As an Immaculata graduate, I would guess that probably Immaculata and St. Scholastica's would be providing the clicks that you were . . .

MN: Right, the two major groups. Yes. But then, there was Gladys O'Brien who was from Mercy and there was somebody from another school. I don't know. But, oh, and as I say I became friends -- Actually, at Mundelein, I had lots of little groups that I was friends with and that I kind of socialized with. I didn't stay in just one group. And I retained friendships from my high school as well who didn't go to Mundelein.

MS: Now what about things that you recall that would be unsatisfying, or dissatisfying to you? Was there anything, or were there any things that in your college experience that you . . . ?

MN: You know, Mary, to be perfectly honest with you, I really can't think of any. I loved Mundelein. I did. After the first year. As I say, I was disappointed I wasn't going away. But I jumped right in and I loved it. I mean, after . . . I could hardly tear myself away after school. We used to go for fries and catchup or a soda, what have you. [laughs]

MS: Which did nothing for our figures but did a lot for our community! [laughs]



MN: Yeah, I did. I put on weight during the four years in college.

MS: Well, that's great.

MN: No, I can't think of . . . I mean, I enjoyed the teachers. I enjoyed all the other kids. The building was very satisfactory. I can't . . . Really, I can't think of . . . Walking down, in the winter, facing the Michigan breezes was the only difficult part. Because I would come down Devon Avenue and then walk from Broadway on down. And in the winter, and that west door, that's the only negative.

MS: The next point I wanted you to speak to is the most challenging. It sounds like you've already mentioned one which was coming in with this idea that you were going to really make a life for yourself there. Which you clearly did successfully. Were there any other . . . Was there any other challenge that you . . . ?

MN: No, I would say in sophomore year, Mary, when we had the international students here and we were kind of hosting them. That experience opened up -- I feel I matured that year. That experience opened up all kinds of new worlds to me. You know, the fact that there were people out there not in Chicago. As a family, we had not traveled a lot. We went back to Detroit to visit my mother's relatives. But we had not really traveled as a

family. That was an eye opening and a maturing experience for me.

MS: Now when you talk about international students, you're talking about the sort of displaced . . .

MN: No, no, no. These were . . . This was through the Student Association. It was the National Student Association. It was the New York students who had arranged the trip. And they were going to host these college - they were college students who came to see the United States. And the New York students picked Chicago to be the "west". This was going to show the European students the west. Which I was highly incensed at because as you know, I knew the west was out in Colorado. But that was a maturing . . . And I remember hosting. They didn't live at our house. I'm not sure where the students . . . I'm not sure where they lived. But we came down daily and spent the day with them and weekends and all their activities.

MS: Now was this during the summer?

MN: During the summer. During the summer months. And Eileen Parker and myself became very, very friendly with the son of the Vice Prime Minister of Holland, Rob VonSteip. I remember his name. I mean, we just had lots and lots of fun. The students could handle English. As I say, this was a very maturing experience for me personally.

MS: And you never returned the favor by traveling say . . .

MN: I've never been to Europe, no. I've been to Canada and Mexico but not to Europe.

MS: Okay. What about your most enriching experience? Now, maybe you've covered . . .

MN: No. I would say, Mary, my most enriching experience was my acquaintanceship with Sister Therese Langerbeck. She was a wonderful, wonderful person, BVM. She was like - better than an aunt. Almost like a second mother in the last two or three years or something. We were very, very close. And I would say she was certainly enriching in my life. She . . . When I graduated, she wanted to get me a job at the atomic place out in - where is it in the west? West Chicago. Batavia? No. Where is it?

MS: I know where you mean. The nuclear . . .

MN: Yeah, the nuclear, because this was new stuff. This was where it was going to be. I didn't have a car and I couldn't . . . I couldn't take that job. But she really mentored me very, very much so. And she was my highlight at Mundelein.

MS: Great. And she was there the last two years that you were.

MN: Two, maybe three, Mary. I'm not sure when she came. I know freshman year she was not there.

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MS: Well, you've already sort of introduced the next point which is to recollect something of your relationship or ships with different faculty members. Your experience with them.

MN: Okay. Besides Sister Therese, of course, there was Sister Sylvester. She was in the department also. She was a little tougher. I had a little trouble with calculus. And I would say to her, "Why is this wrong? Show me where I made the mistake." "That's not important. This is the right way." Which infuriated me. [laughs] Because I . . . I think that was the reason I went into physics. I wanted answers "why". And I remember with calculus. That was a negative, Mary. That was a negative. Sister Mary Bernarda was the dean. And Sister Frederick Seal was in the office down there. So being with the student government, I mean, I had occasion to kind of know her and interact with her. What are we talking about?

MS: Your relationship with different faculty members, your experiences.

MN: Okay. Then through . . . you know, through you, Mary, I kind of knew Sister Mary Irma a little bit. And the chemistry kids. Of course, I took . . . Oh, Sister Mary Morena. And she always said, "Oh, Peggy." She said, "You'll never be a chemist. You do cook book chemistry. You follow a recipe." [laughs] And that's what I did. I never understood. I never understood why the colors were changing. [laughs] But I followed the directions

and they changed and that's all I had . . . And I knew from the textbook why it was but I never really understood chemistry. So, I had two years of chemistry. I don't remember who the other teacher was. But I do remember Sister Morena. That was a little difficult for me. The English, because we had to have English. We had to have history. Nothing comes to mind.

MS: Language?

MN: Oh, I took German because at that time, the science students were expected to take German. And we did have some - just a little bit of German. I only took two years. I had taken Latin at Scholastica's. And there was just a little bit that we would kind of - oh, yeah, that's familiar. That's familiar. Now my sister . . . . [banging sound of killing a gnat or some such.] My sister was a biology major and she had taken a lot more German. She had taken German in high school and then continued at Mundelein. And so she could read some of the German. But again, being in the science field, German was the thing you took in a language. She was very close to Sister Colista. I didn't take - I don't think I took German from . . . I might have . . . from Sister Colista. But I don't really remember. I think I only took the one year, Mary. I don't have a big memory of that. I might think of more later on.

MS: Okay. Feel free. Now, what about some recollections of your relationships with different classmates?

MN: Okay. Well, again, to perhaps be repeating myself, I made friends with girls who had come from all different schools and parts of the city. Gladys came from the south side. You and Jean had come from Edgebrook. I was still living in North Town area at that time. And again, with the student government, there was a little interaction between the other classes. My sister was a senior when I was a freshman so I knew some of her friends. However, she did not want me tagging along with her socially at all. I can remember my mother had a birthday party for her somewhere and my sister was incensed that my mother said I could be there with her friends at my sister's birthday party. So my sister did not want to include me in her social circle at all. I was much too young and what have you. But I did know . . . and her friends. Her friends were always very, very kind to me. So there were other girls in other classes, you know, that I . . . that I knew. Oh, oh, oh. I also joined - This was shortly after the war. There were a lot of veterans. And I was involved in the Red Cross, Mary. And I think I was chairman of the Red Cross, getting back to the activities. So there were girls from all classes in the Red Cross activity. We - I don't know. We knitted. We prepared things for the veterans and then we would

go out to Great Lakes once a month and play cards with the . . . in the hospital unit there where you'd visit, write letters, read, whatever with the veterans in the hospital. So I knew girls in all kinds of areas. But as far as socializing though, it was outside of school, it was pretty much just with my own class and primarily the Immaculata girls primarily.

MS: We wanted to elevate the quality of our group! [laughs]

MN: [laughing] Or bring me up to standard. We'll never know.

MS: What did you do in the first ten years following graduation?

MN: Okay. My first job was at Hot Point out in Cicero. I had the physics degree. Ohhhh. Nobody was looking for a woman physicist except, you know, through Sister's influence I could have had that one job. I had interviewed for a job where I would read magazine articles and then write - I always liked writing too even though I didn't do a lot of it formally. But I would read the magazine articles and write a condensation for . . . so that the other scientists, what-have-you, would be able to just say, "Oh yeah, I better look up that article." Write a synopsis. Again, I couldn't take that job because I didn't have a car. That was out near O'Hare. So my first job was at Hot Point. My sister had a car and she was working at some hospital out there in Cicero. So she drove me. That gave me the transportation. I was in the quality control lab at Hot Point. We did the refrigerators, the inspection work of the materials that went

into the construction of the refrigerators and the stoves and ovens. And it was a one woman lab. I was it. I was trained. But then I was on my own in the lab testing the materials. It was located near the receiving department so I would test the materials before they would be okayed to go into manufacturing. And of course, make reports. I did have to call my boss twice a day, in the morning to tell him what I was doing, at noon - no, at noon and then at four o'clock. I would have to call him twice a day, which after two years infuriated me because I had ideas on how we could improve on the testing techniques or just other ideas on how to keep the records or what have you. And he would hear none of it. He was the boss. I was the technician. Period. So I left there after two years and the family had moved to a section of Chicago called Wildwood, part of Edgebrook. And I went around, still having no car. I interviewed around just on my own. I went to A.B. Dick and some other places that I could walk to, again looking for laboratory work. I had enough chemistry to have in my background to do almost anything like that. Again, this was in the quality control lab. It was similar. But we were testing the chemicals that were used in the . . . the chemical vats that were used in the manufacturing process. Some of the raw materials. This was actually - Well, both places did use my physics because we were testing density



and varicosity and terms that you hear in physics classes. And so that . . . but I did a little more chemistry work actually at A.B. Dick. It was at A.B. Dick that I met my husband. He worked in the room - it was part of the lab but it was a separate room. And the very first day when I walked around, being introduced to people, and I came back to my own desk and I said to myself, "Did he have brown eyes or blue?" [laughs]

MS: That was a tip off.

MN: Yeah. So that's how I met my husband.

MS: So he's a scientist as well?

MN: Well, his background - He was floating. He had some engineering. He had been in the service after the war. He was with the Air Force and he did aerial photography work to see what damage had been done by the war. So he wasn't in any danger but it was over in Europe. And when he came back, there was the G.I. bill and he . . . his own background - His mother was widowed when he was thirteen months old. She had eight children. So he didn't get a . . . She had to go work. This was Depression. He didn't get a lot of family - what would I say? A lot of family support. You know what I mean? He kind of was a little bit on his own. His sisters watched out for him. But he could see that education - His mother was not educated. She came over as a peasant from Lithuania. And he saw as he grew up how difficult

it was for a woman to be without education. So . . . and he recognized the quality of education. And so he was going to school. He went to I.I.T. Then he transferred to Loyola on the G.I. bill. So he was in . . . Yes, he was working in the lab. But after about a year, year and a half, somebody from upstairs, the offices, recognized his abilities and brought him - we always say we brought him upstairs. So he really didn't do lab work all that long. And then he was in the business end of A.B. Dick. I continued in the lab. We thought nobody knew we were going out. They kind of suspected. So when we knew that we were going to be married, then we said it isn't good for both of us to work here. It would have been allowed. A.B. Dick was a very family company. It would have been allowed. But we just thought it wasn't a good idea. So after two years at A.B. Dick, then I transferred to a - I went to work at Kraft Foods in the chemistry research. Jean Schaffer Wojohowski worked there and she said they had an opening. She told me to interview and I got the job there. This was pretty much all chemistry. The physics was kind of left behind. And I worked there. During that period, we developed some of the salad dressings. We developed the flavored Philadelphia cream cheese.

MS: Oh really?

MN: Yes, we developed that. I weighed out the solids on the scale and dried them out and analyzed them. And came up with

this product. And Imperial had come out. Kraft wanted to manufacture a competitive produce so they again worked on the research end of that. And Kraft did put on the market a competitive market called Kraft Deluxe. I worked on that. But Imperial had taken the market already. It was dropped after a time. After working in the general lab area, I became . . . I went to my own smaller lab and I was the fats and oils girl. And it was . . . And here again, I improved on some of the procedures. I organized the lab to my own liking.

MS: And you didn't have to call your boss.

MN: And I didn't have to call my boss. No.

MS: Stop for a minute. It's okay, if you want. [tape off a moment]

MN: Okay, so I'm at Kraft Foods in the research and doing the fats and oils. The oils in the salad dressing, the oils in the cream cheese, the oils in the margarine. So that was my area. I was married during this period. I was married in 1955 which was . . . well, that was four years after graduation, yeah. And then I became pregnant. And I was making \$400.00 a week. I was making \$400.00 a week. And I was pregnant. My baby was due in March and I wanted to work - since I wasn't meeting the public. You know, I was in a lab. I was actually qualified to continue working. I was due for a raise but because my time was going to

be terminated, they did not give me the raise to \$425.00 a month. I stayed at \$400. And I argued with them, "Well, you know, if anything should happen, if I have to go back to work, if there's a problem, I wanted to leave at the higher salary. That that would be on my resume." And my boss refused to give me the raise. This is some of the inequality in 1957. Yeah. But I enjoyed my work there. And lab work is fun. You know, you're socializing, you're laughing, you're talking about the TV. Lab work is fun. I enjoyed . . . I will say I enjoyed all three areas of lab work that I worked in. I must say at A.B. Dick, I had a mentor, an older woman, too who was very, very good to me. The woman that trained me at Hot Point was wonderful to me before she moved on. And Jean and everybody in the lab at Kraft was . . . I didn't really have a mentor there. But everybody was very friendly. Lab work is very satisfying. So okay, now I'm only up to six years. You want ten years. So I had my first baby in 1957. I had a daughter. I had another daughter in 1958. I had another daughter in 1959. I had a son in 1961. That brings me up to ten years. The first three children, the first three girls were all born within two and a half years. [laughs] I had diapers. And I nursed my babies. I wanted to nurse the babies. I had a wonderful doctor. I did not want to be out during delivery. He wanted me awake and alert. He was a conservative

doctor. He liked that. I was ahead of my time in that era because almost everybody was out during delivery. But I was fully cognizant and saw my babies immediately after birth. More the way it is done today. But that was a little revolutionary back then. Even the idea of nursing was revolutionary. You didn't nurse. You did not nurse. Maybe peasants did, but you didn't. You, an educated woman, didn't. But I did. I nursed all six of my children. So within ten years, then I had worked and I had four children.

MS: So clearly, after you left -- one of those gnats is still pestering us --

MN: Some of them get through the fine lines on the screen. We've had a terrible problem this year.

MS: So after the first baby, your work was cut out for you in the home.

MN: Right. We were renting an apartment in . . . on North Shore Avenue in Rogers Park here. A basement apartment. And it flooded and times were such that you . . . Everybody was moving to the suburbs. They were building like crazy. They were getting the loans . . . the loans were . . . I think we got a mortgage for 4½% through a friend of my father's, which was an excellent, excellent mortgage. So during that time too, we moved from the apartment when my daughter was six months old. We moved

to the home in Niles. And then I was pregnant again and established out there. And tried to furnish the home and work around the home, the garden. You know, I loved gardening. And I wasn't sewing then. Later on I sewed. But I mean, I was busy. And I was a full time homemaker. There were lots and lots of kids in the neighborhood on the street. All the homes were new. We all were putting in our grass together. Everybody was pregnant or had the babies. So at one time on our city sized block plus half way around the corner, there were 120 children. I had six. The next one had six. That one had four. That one had six. Over the period of time. So we had a lot of support from each other, from each other. Ginny had . . . she lived next door. She had five before she moved. I think she had the twins there. And we would get together very haphazardly, nothing scheduled. But we would get together and somebody would say, "Oh, I'm going to bake a coffee cake. Come over about 10:30." And the kids would play together pretty much in the summer. But in the winter time too. When some of the kids were in school, the younger ones that we were at home with, 'til lunch time. And we would coffee clutch. That's something that my girls don't have at all. And that's kind of a pity. Because we just enjoyed each other and compared our problems and in-laws and the husbands. [laughs]

MS: You became mentors to one another.

MN: Absolutely. Absolutely. And in fact, when my third daughter was born, we had come home. We parked the car and all of a sudden, I saw water under me, and called the doctor and he said, "Come over." He didn't live too far from us. He said come on over. My two toddlers I just took next door to my neighbor and said, "I'm going to the hospital." You know, everybody just helped everybody. We were friends. On a Sunday, somebody might be barbecuing and the neighbor next door would say, "We're going to barbeque too. Why don't we eat together? What are you making?" And we would share. It would be like pot luck. There was a lot of neighborhood support which my girls today don't have family wise. It was good.

MS: Well, I'm just wondering, because you spent - I mean, you've committed a lot of your time, your life, to the Niles community

MN: Yes, I have.

MS: Did commitment to the community, to something in the community beyond your own immediate neighborhood, is that part of

. . .

MN: Okay. The parish. We moved here because we could walk . . . We knew we . . . I wanted a family. I was one of four and I said to my husband, "That isn't big enough." Because my sister never wanted me around. I wanted more options for my own children, that they would have more opportunities. So I said I would

like probably six children. And he said, "If you can take care of them," he said, "I'll support them." So when we were selecting the place for our home, we wanted a home that we could walk to the church and to the school and that the children would be able to walk to school. And so we became - wherever my children were, I was. At the grammar school, then I joined the women's club. And it was. It was an outing. The one night a month was an outing! [laughs] And Ginny became the chairman of the refreshments committee so I helped her with that. So that was once a month. That was for two years I think.

MS: What were your women's meetings about?

MN: The women's meetings were about - Sometimes it was - We always had a speaker. Occasionally, not often, it would be before the elections it might be kind of reviewing the candidates. But they had interesting speakers, Mary. Oh, sometimes it would be a religious person. Perhaps a missionary. It might have been a demonstration on maybe flower arranging. Very, very similar to what they are still doing today. They didn't have - or at least I never took advantage of some of the women's club trips, or retreats or something that they have today. I don't even remember if they had those. As I say, I didn't avail myself of them if they were. But there was the business meeting and then there was a little, as I say, a little talk of some sort.



And then the refreshments and socializing. So it was an evening out with the girls once a month.

MS: That's great.

MN: And it was. It really was. Yeah. And as far as any other social life, Mary, was concerned, I really didn't help over at the school until my last one was in the grammar school because I was busy then over the time with the six children. The other social life, my husband was going to night school at Loyola, so he had night classes. Then he had home work. And so I really had the care and raising of the children. He also was doing a little traveling. I would drive out to Midway. O'Hare wasn't out there then.

MS: You finally had a car.

MN: Oh yeah, I finally had a . . . He had the car. He had the car. It was that classic Belair. But he had the car. And if I needed the car, I used to - Really, I did my grocery shopping on Saturday. I didn't even have the car during the week. There was a grocery store that I could walk to. It was about three quarters of a mile. If I needed something, we would walk up with the stroller and hands, holding hands. And the library was up there for the children. So there was a little bit of activity that I could walk to. But I did my major grocery shopping on Saturdays with the car. Otherwise I did not have the car. When my youngest one was born, then we did - We got the second car. Because

I just had too many commitments and so forth. But the only other social life, Mary, with my busy family was my husband joined one of the fraternities, one of the business fraternities, a night school fraternity. So there were occasional - They had six events a year. A Christmas party. This and that. So I would go to that. I would go to wakes. [laughs] I would do things with the neighbors. And that was about - Initially, some of us girls would still get together. Initially. But that petered out pretty fast because everybody was busy with their children. And so that was about the extent of my social life. And as I say, beyond the immediate neighbors, only over at the parish.

MS: Sounds good. I'm going to stop for a second.

MN: Okay. I would like to say . . . it sounds like I was really housebound. I would like to say that I loved, loved being with my children. We would look at the ants in the grass. We would look at the stars. On cloudy nights, we'd watch the sunsets. We would look for the rainbows. I loved being with my children. We all did a lot of reading. I didn't. I didn't. But I saw that that the children had the library books and I loved raising the children. I liked sewing for them, my girls in particular. Although for my son, I did make flannel shirts because his arms were long and he was very skinny and nothing fit him. But I

loved sewing for my girls. I loved the gardening. I loved being a homemaker. I loved my career of being a homemaker.

MS: And it's a formidable one, I'll tell you!

[End of Tape 1, Side A]

[Begin Tape 1, Side B]

MS: In what ways, Peggy, has your life been influenced by the years you spent at Mundelein College?

MN: Oh, that's an easy answer, Mary. At Mundelein, I learned to be self confident. After Mundelein, I felt I could do anything. Perhaps it was Sister Mary Therese. I'm going to credit her, though I don't know that to be true. She said the idea is not to know everything but to know where to find it if you need to know it. And I did. I mean, I knew how to use the library. I knew from being in the government . . . I don't know if you remember there were some faux pas I made on that stage. Sister Mary Bernarda called me down. [laughs]

MS: No! Like what?

MN: Like what? It's burned in my memory, Mary.

MS: Well, it isn't in mine, I'll tell you that.

MN: Back to the Red Cross, when we would go and visit. And I was trying to drum up a little more participation from the students. And on the stage, on the mike, I said, "And we go out

and visit the sailors in bed." [laughs] Sister Mary Bernarda called me down on that. That's burned in my memory. But I learned to speak on a mike, Mary. I learned . . . As the president of the minute physics club, I learned how to organize. I learned how to keep records. I had complete confidence in myself. There wasn't anything I was afraid to tackle. And that really carried through. My mother never had that confidence. I didn't realize it at that time. Before she died, when she was in her eighties, it hit me - she never had that confidence that I got from Mundelein. Education is not just books. It was learning to interact with people, knowing how to find what you need, learning how to handle yourself, learning that other people's feelings and opinions and what have you. That's what I learned at Mundelein. So that influenced, Mary, my whole being. My whole being I would say.

MS: Describe in general the review of education, the kind of education you received at Mundelein. This is more of a focus on education.

MN: Yes.

MS: And the educational environment in which you lived for those four years.

MN: Okay. While I wanted to go to a co-ed school, Marquette, I was delighted to be at Mundelein where I was just with the girls.

I didn't have to compete with them. I could be the officer. I could learn how to handle things on my own. On my own. My father always took care of the business end of things. But I learned how to -- as the treasurer, junior treasurer -- I learned how to handle records and books. And it was an education for life, Mary, that education. And I recognized also I was grateful to my father that he wanted his daughters educated. Because a lot of my friends did not go on to college. And one of my friends went on to a language school and she became a bilingual secretary, which was fine. Which was fine. But my father education. It was in our family. It was just understood that we would go to college and do something. And that opportunity was not presented to every woman in 1947 when I graduated from high school. So, . . . and my husband, I'm going to say, he is 100% behind education. He saw it in his own life how a lack of education can affect somebody, and especially the women. So education has been a thrust in our whole married -- in my life before marriage and in my life after. It's a valued, valued thing.

MS: Did you feel that -- focusing just on the curriculum, did you feel that your education made you -- your education at Mundelein made you as competent, as say maybe a counterpart who had gradu-

ated from Marquette? Did you have any reason, in other words, to doubt that your education was an excellent one?

MN: Oh, no. Not at all. To the contrary. To the contrary. I felt [laughs] with your small physics - I was the only physics graduate that year. There were two ahead and there was one behind. That was the extent of the physics graduates.

MS: Well, now, don't apologize because now we're trying to get women into the sciences.

MN: Yes.

MS: You were kind of on the cutting edge.

MN: Yes. And that's what I wanted to say, Mary. I just felt that, "Boy, I'm top of the line here. Boy, Mundelein is giving me something that I would not get some place else." How could I have competed? I took in preparation for Sister Mary Therese's return and knowing that I would be able to handle a physics major, that there would be a department, in the summer after freshman year, I had to take freshman physics, or general physics or something like that. I took it at Loyola in the summer school. Loyola was all boys except the summer school did permit women in. So I was in the class. I think I was the only woman in the general physics class at Loyola in the summer time. And I could see how I was a nobody in among all these men. And I did my work; I got my grade, and so forth. But I was a nobody. At

Mundelein, you could be whatever you wanted to be. So class-wise, every opportunity was open to you. You were denied nothing education-wise. You were not inhibited, except unless the teacher \_\_\_\_\_ [laughs]. But you were not inhibited by the male presence at all. And that, of course, is something that I had experienced in high school as well. And I think that's a tremendous asset to women. My girls went to Scholastica's High School but they did want to go away to college and my husband said they have to learn to be on their own. But they will echo me today that those high school years with all women were just precious, just precious, just invaluable to their growth. So class-wise and what have you. And no. And as far as content - oh my! You know, the BVMs were great teachers. They were education teachers. They were not - I mean, some of the other orders not quite so - didn't have such a high standard. But the BVMs had a high educational standard. And they presented it in class to us. They didn't hold back.

MS: Like Sister Mary Sylvester!

MN: [laughs] Right. Didn't hold back!

MS: It's interesting, Peggy, that clearly you come from a Catholic background.

MN: Yes.

MS: And obviously you have educated your own family, your own children in the Catholic tradition.

MN: Yes.

MS: But you haven't said much about your days at Mundelein and its - the role it played, if any, in terms of religious or Catholicity or whatever you want to call it.

MN: Yes. I used to go to the chapel, Mary. All the time. "St. Ann, get me a man" was my constant prayer.

MS: It was crowded in there!

MN: No, no. I would go off hours and after school and what have you. But, no, I found myself in the chapel praying, truly praying that I would . . . I wanted to be married. I wanted to have a family. I found myself in the chapel frequently, Mary, praying that he would guide me to a good man and that I would have a good marriage and a good family. And so in the chapel, yes. The Sodality. There was the Sodality. I went to some of the Sodality things. I didn't participate a lot in the Sodality. I think we had - I'm quite sure we had annual retreats. Oh yes! With Father Murphy. Oh yes, oh yes, Father Murphy. Oh! Father Murphy! [giggles] Oh, yes, and the philosophy classes, Mary. There - Oh, I can't remember. Father Curan? Father Curan? A Dominican. The philosophy classes opened up new worlds to me too. Oh, logic! Oh, I loved logic! But as far as strengthening



my faith, Mary, or contributing to my faith, I admired the nuns for their life that they were leading. And of course, I guess every little girl at some point wonders should she be a nun, would I like to be a nun? But I really and truly want to be married. In my little Shirley Temple book when I was six, in my little childish print, when the question was posed in there -- I still have this -- what do you want to be when you grow up? I wrote "a mother". So while I might have some aspirations somewhere along the line, "Oh, maybe I'll be a nun", no. I really wanted to be married. But as far as enhancing my faith, Mary, I don't know. I think I've had a personal faith all my life. The religion classes don't bring anything back to my mind. I was in the Catholic environment and that was fine with me. But I don't know that I had any particular faith growth as a result of Mundelein. Mundelein gave me the confidence that I needed, that my decisions would be good. I was capable of making decisions along the faith lines as well, I'm sure. I went -- During Lent, I would oftentimes go to daily mass but that would be in my parish, St. Timothy's, before classes. The retreats -- I think my recollection of the retreats, Mary, oftentimes was, "Oh, what hypocrites. Oh, these girls are just saying what the priest wants to hear." Or "Oh, they're hypocrites." So as I say, I think my own faith was kind of a personal faith.

MS:           So the college provided an environment

MN: Absolutely.

MS: which didn't intrude on that faith

MN: Right.

MS: but was not inconsistent with it.

MN: I think I would have to say that, yes. I do remember Father Murphy saying - he was always putting us down, us girls. Not always, not always.

MS: Well, pretty always.

MN: But I do remember him saying, "You don't reach the full bloom and beauty of womanhood until you're thirty-three." So I remember waiting to be thirty-three and then a year or two after and thinking, "Well, I'm perhaps still blooming." And after that, "Well, it's down hill." [laughs]

MS: [laughs] He was wrong about that too.

MN: He was wrong about that. Perhaps he was thirty-three at the time.

MS: Or Jesus was thirty-three.

MN: Maybe that was where it came from. But I do remember aiming for thirty-three.

MS: He was something else. Today, Peggy, of course, a lot of universities, Catholic and public, private and public, are into service learning where the students get out in addition to their class, or maybe as part of their class, they are encouraged to go

out and to apply for example some of the things they're learning to help out some kind of local civic group that's trying to get organized for something, or whatever. Or in general, to be socially responsible.

MN: Yeah, and give of themselves.

MS: And I'm wondering if your experience at Mundelein College, back there in the late forties and early fifties, provided any kind of environmental stimulus or experience to you.

MN: Yeah. The Red Cross, Mary. I mean, that was a service club. That was a service club. We felt we were doing something. Even the fact of the departmental clubs, while it was closed, still and all, it was a type of a community, but not beyond your own boundaries. But as far as giving of myself, I worked. I worked at Woolworth's during the whole time, the four years there, as well as during high school. And I know that I always tried to be very nice to the customers just by virtue of the fact that they were people. Not that I was trying to sell more. But I respected them as people. And tried to be very helpful. You know, find what they were looking for, be courteous to them, thank them for the sale and so forth. That was not part of the job description. But I just . . . I liked people and I liked to be nice to people. At Mundelein, well, I don't know. I don't know where this came from, Mary. If I'm some place and I see somebody standing alone, I will go up to them and either invite

them into whatever little group or just talk with them or . . . I see somebody sitting along, I'll say, "can I sit with you?" so that they have somebody to visit with. I don't know if I learned that at Mundelein. I don't know where I learned that, Mary. But I like to reach out to people. But I don't know where I learned that. It could have been at Mundelein. I don't know. Because at Scholastica's, we didn't do anything. As I say, the Red Cross, that was a reaching out. I see this in my own children. They're all doing something. One is tutoring in their college. So I know this is a thrust today. And I don't know . . . I won't say . . . I don't know that I can credit Mundelein but I won't say I didn't learn it at Mundelein.

MS: Do you consider - This is kind off . . . I mean this is an additional piece. And the word - I know the word "feminism" or "feminist" is a loaded thing because it means so much to . . . I mean, it can mean anything. But in general, is there - Do you see any relationship between - At this point in your life, fifty years after you graduated - Do you see any connection between the fact that you observed women principally at Mundelein College in jobs that women really at that time were not - There weren't many of them. I mean, administering the college, doing . . . handling student affairs, handling business affairs, teaching juniors and

seniors in major subjects like physics. Do you think that had any influence on you?

MN: I'm not sure.

MS: I know for myself at the time that never occurred to me. I mean, it never – It was never a conscious thought.

MN: Well, now Sister Mary Therese, when she was at . . . getting her Master's . . . or Ph.D. She was getting her Ph.D. actually. She did some astronomy work and I just thought that was as cool as could be. And for my senior project – we always . . . everybody had a senior project, I think, in their department. I did at least. But she was able to get the photographic slides for a particular area of the sky. And I plotted the path of a particular star using these photographic plates. I plotted its location. And this was going to be published in some kind of astronomical journal or something like that, that this work had been done. This research had been done. I just thought that was the coolest thing that I could be doing that. I don't know if I thought of myself as a woman doing that, where perhaps it had only been done by men. Marjie Boyd was a graduate ahead of us that Sister was very proud of. She worked for the Naval Department in the wind tunnels, again doing research. So it impacted me that with an education, women could do things that men had only done. And this excited me that we're every bit as

smart. We can do the same thing as men. We've got the brains. We've got the education. We can do it too. Even though I wanted to be a mother. But I knew I could do what I wanted to do.

MS: Well, in a way - I mean, knowing that kind of affirms the fact that you did become a wife and mother and do your work principally in your home because you had options.

MN: Yes, yes.

MS: You had options.

MN: And I thoroughly enjoyed my lab work, Mary. There were more men, even at Kraft . . . I believe there were . . . eh, no. Maybe that was fifty/fifty, because that was chemistry. Women were kind of permitted into chemistry but not physics, not this lab work. And, of course, Mary, at Hot Point, they hired me, a woman, because I would work for less than a man. I had the education and they could get me for cheap. I don't think that was the case at A.B. Dick, although the woman that was with me, the mentor, she - I mean, she was a woman. We two women handled the lab, perhaps again because we would work for cheap. I don't even remember what my husband was making at that time, if he was making more or not. And, of course, the boss was a man, not a woman. But the fact that Sister Mary Therese had done this, had worked on chemistry. She had contacts everywhere in all the observatories in the United States. And I think Sister Irma was

published. This was big stuff, you know. This was big stuff. And I remember Virginia Denine, she was going on to law school. Oh! Well, you know, my father was a lawyer, but, you know, she was going on to law school! So, the world was . . . this was the first opening. Before that, women went into secretarial work, teaching and I don't know what else. Sales persons. Nursing, and nursing. Only professions really were teaching or nursing. But through the nuns - I can't save the world, but through the nuns at Mundelein, I could see that women could do anything.

MS: That's been my experience. And I'm saying that not because I'm a BVM but I'm saying that because when I look back on it, I feel kind of the same way you do.

MN: Yeah. We were ahead of our time, Mary. I mean, we could see this before the word "feminist" came into being.

MS: Well, Peggy, this is all I . . . You're probably saying to yourself, "When will she ever end?"

MN: Oh, no, no.

MS: Is there anything . . .

MN: It's always fun to talk about yourself, Mary.

MS: Is there anything that I have not asked that has kind of popped into your mind that you would like to say about your Mundelein experience?

MN: Okay. Well, I don't know about my Mundelein experience, Mary, but I had five girls, none of whom went to Mundelein. You

see? Even though I loved it and went to all the reunions and everything. They knew Mundelein was part of my life and I had an affinity for it as a school, as an educational institution. None of them opted to go to Mundelein. They . . . After their four year experience - And this was brought out when Mundelein was talking about the fact that they couldn't handle it on their own any more. They had the four year experience. They felt they had their feet on the ground. Now, they knew they'd have to work in a world with men. They wanted to go to a college with men. None of my children dated. None of them were real social butterflies or anything like that. It wasn't the social scene. But they knew they'd have to work with men. And so they opted not to go to Mundelein, as good as they believed the education would have been. But they opted to go so they would learn how to work with men. So, I don't know if that answers anything that you're asking. [laughs] And it's sad. It's sad but the world has moved on. But I still think it's important for the high school years. I really do. And I have a nun - I have a nun - I have an aunt who was with Mary Grove College in the Detroit area. And they did not join up. The University of Detroit wanted to absorb them. And I don't know. They had the wherewithal or something. They've been able to maintain themselves as a women's college. And I always said to my aunt, "That's wonderful. That's wonder-



ful." Because, in truth, you can learn to work with men. It comes. It comes. But the education with women, I think, is . . . I believe in that very strongly. At least a portion of your education with women.

MS: Okay. That's great. I'll get this off here so we can really get down to business. [tape turned off momentarily]

MN: The one additional thing I'd like to add, Mary, that my husband thinks I have been so well educated, he compares my education to his own, which - I mean, he did end up getting his degree. It was at night. But he thinks that my education was much more enhanced than his own. That much more was offered to me as a student than he ever received as a student.

MS: Would that be the environment or the curriculum?

MN: The nuns who were extremely dedicated. You see, I think everybody at Mundelein ended up with a nun friend. Well, maybe not everybody. But I would dare say a good portion of the girls ended up with a nun friend. The fact that it was nuns teaching. I don't know how he credits . . . In truth, I don't know what he gives the credit to but he just feels that I have had a much better education in total than he has, even though he's got his master's and I don't. But there's lacks in his education. He can't spell worth a darn. Well, that's not Mundelein. Well, maybe it is! [laughs] But he just thinks that Scholastica's and

Mundelein did great things for me. And he can see how capable I am. I'm not afraid to tackle anything. I might beg off and say, "I don't have the time. I don't have the time." But I'm not afraid to tackle anything. And he says that my education was absolutely a plus in raising the children. You know, that the thrust was there that they go forth and do good things too.

MS: They're all college educated.

MN: College and master's or one is an attorney. And the others all have their master's. John has two master's. And we helped them with . . . we helped them . . . We didn't hand them. We could not hand college educations to six children. But we helped them with the college. And then the master's and the law degree, they did on their own.

MS: This concludes the interview with Margaret Egan Namovic.

[End of interview]