

Interview with Sister Mary De Cock
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Interviewer and transcriber: David B. Cholewiak
begin side 1, tape 1

Cholewiak: This is an oral history recording of Sister Mary De Cock on November 3, 1998 by David Cholewiak for the Mundelein College History Project. Let's begin with where you grew up. Where's home?

De Cock : Home? Where I was born? The place I was born was in Iowa. A little town, De Witt. Which is directly between Dubuque and Davenport, if that makes any difference to you, not far from the Mississippi River. It's in the Mississippi Valley, a little town. And it had the distinction of being called the busiest cross-roads of the world. I really believed that when I was a kid. Because it is where the Lincoln Highway, [route] 30, and [route] 61, which goes from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico crossed. That's the claim to fame of De Witt. That plus the fact my father was the mayor.

DC: That's my next question, what was your family like, what was the structure of your family? Any brothers or sisters?

MD: I was the youngest of three daughters. Both my grandparents on my dad's side and my great-grandparents on my mother's side came to Iowa not too long after the Indian Wars. And my dad's family came before the Civil War. I have it written down somewhere, I can't remember. My sisters are a good deal older than I am. One sister is nine years older and the other is eleven.

DC: Did they go into a religious life?

MD: No, no. My older sister is married and had six children and now has all kinds of grandchildren and great-grandchildren. My other sister married and had five sons. She also had a lot of grandchildren and great-grandchildren. They are both very good Irish[wo]men, named Kearney and Hurley.

DC: I guess Christmas and holidays must be crazy?

MD: I haven't been with them for a long while on Christmas and holidays. But yes, they are quite mad. We had a family reunion a few years ago. I think we had a hundred people at it, all generations at it. It's fun.

DC: I tried to get a sense of what you are doing now at Loyola, you are teaching a pastoral class?

MD: No, when Mundelein merged with Loyola I went into the Theology Department. I chose the Theology Department because I could continue to teach in the adult program in what had been the Weekend College, which is now [the] adult education section at Loyola. The Pastoral Institute is a whole different ball game. I was lucky I had the choice which one I went to and I went to theology for that reason. Although, actually, I'm not sure that my fit is not better in the Pastoral Institute, except I want to continue to work with Mundelein students. At this point most of them are graduated, there are very few left, but I have one now that's been hanging around. A course at a time, for a long while.

DC: She doesn't want to leave?

MD: Hasn't got the money to keep going. I think with a lot of adults what happens is they actually enjoy the study and they take it easy and there is no particular pressure to get the degree. They want the degree, but in the meantime they like the sociability and they like the learning experiences, so they really don't work too hard to push it. Few of those. Liberal arts at its best. You can enjoy your work for the sake of enjoying it. And not have to push to get your degree so you can pay off your college loan. [laugh]

DC: Let's go back to your education. Let's talk about your getting into Clarke College and why you chose to go to Clarke College.

MD: Actually I didn't. My parents sent me there. I couldn't make up my mind where I wanted to go. I was fooling around so long about looking at places I almost went to the College of St. Theresa, but I didn't like that one. So anyhow, we were coming home from vacation up in Minnesota and I was asleep in the back seat and I woke up and we were in front of Clarke. And my mother said, "We are going to enroll here today." So we did. I said, well you have to go somewhere.

DC: By entering Clarke College, did you in essence...

MD: My sisters had gone there. It's not because I didn't want to go there, I just wanted to do something different. But I couldn't make my mind up what to do, so my family just put me there.

DC: By entering Clarke College did you enter and then chose a religious life? I'm a little unclear on how you eventually moved on to becoming a BVM [Order of Blessed Virgin Mary].

MD: Sometimes I'm unclear of that myself. I certainly made my decision when I was a student at Clarke. I didn't know the BVM's other than the fact that my older sisters had gone there. I was aware of Clarke and I was aware of the sisters. I had not gone to school with them, I did not know them very well. And so my decision came while I was in college, really in my senior year. Before I decided to go on to Mt. Carmel.

DC: By entering Clarke does not necessarily mean you... There are many other people at Clarke who did not go on to....[a religious life]

MD: Oh, good heavens, no. Most of my class did not.

DC: Why did you decide to make that transition? Is there something that struck you?

MD: I think the theology of the times. If you had qualifications which were very simple as I look back. I think I entered because I thought somebody had to work for the church. Somebody had to save the Church. I don't know now why that was important.

DC: What do you mean, "save the Church"?

- MD: The Church in the 1940s when I went to Clarke which was just before World War II, it was a growing triumphal place to be at that particular point. The work of the Church was burgeoning, the pressure was on to find people to do the work of the Church. The people who did the work of the Church were the priests, the nuns, and the brothers. The lay people didn't get involved at all. And I think my motivation was that's where I was supposed to be, so I'd do it. I can't say I was ever attracted to religious life. I enjoyed it after I got there, but the thought of it was not a happy one for me when I was looking in that direction. Oh well, this is I guess what I'm supposed to be doing, so I did it. [I] discovered there were other people there for the same reason.
- DC: For someone who's not in a religious life, or feels somewhat distanced from their own religious life, trying to understand people who do move into it is a conundrum.
- MD: The culture you are living is so much different from the culture I was living in. And I had people in my family, my dad's sister was a Sister of Humility and my mother's sister was a Sister of Mercy, my grandfather's two brothers were priests, one of them founded the parish where I grew up. I grew up in kind of a "churchy" family, as I look back. It seemed like the thing to do, religion was a... I don't know that we were very pious people.
- DC: But it was a very viable option in your lives.
- MD: It was a viable option. It was one that... I wouldn't say my family was happy about it. In fact they were unhappy about it, about the fact that I decided to be a

BVM. I'd wanted to transfer to the University of Iowa like my sisters, but they wouldn't let me. My mother's reaction was, we should've done it, we should have let you go. But once you get there don't leave [laugh]. You have your mind on it, go and make a go of it.

DC: Do you think in the forties and fifties it was division between going into a religious life or following a secular career, and in this day and age we are moving toward a growing segment of people graduating from college going into social service careers? Do you think that's picking up where the religious has withdrawn or pulled back?

MD: I think the whole Church has changed since that particular time. When I was in high school and college there were three vocations for a young woman in this order: religious life, married life, or single blessedness [laugh]. Did you ever hear of that one? Single blessedness meant career women, who for one reason or another never married and didn't join a religious life. The work of the Church was done by the priests and the nuns, and the Church grew greatly because of their assistance. I don't know if you've studied any American Church history.

In the nineteenth century, the sisters were very important in building the Church, including the order I belong to, but since Vatican II, that theology has changed. The whole idea of baptism as bringing all people into the Church on an equal basis is the way the people see themselves now. So single blessedness is something I haven't heard about for years. You brought it to mind for me.

But the theology at this point does not look at a religious life as a higher form of life, it does not look at marriage as secondary to religious life, which it did at that particular time, so the split between laity and religious has dissolved.

Now, technically, sisters were always laity. There is no sacrament for nuns. There's a little ceremony. But the dissolve that post-Vatican II has brought about has gotten rid of the idea of perfection, and the first to get rid of it was the nuns. They never really felt themselves perfect by any means, but also didn't like the idea that they were set aside as a different class of people, which were neither here nor there. They were neither officially part of the Church, and they were called laity, but they were really not part of the laity. So you are kind of here in the mushy middle. That was the way a lot of us looked at it.

With the changes of the Church in Vatican II, where baptism is your entry into the grace and life of the Church, we commit to rethink our whole framework of religious life, recommit to rethink the vows that we took, rethink the way that we live. It was amazing how angry some women in the Church became to see the nuns get out of habit and start choosing to do what they wanted do.

DC: That was because of a traditional sense of what [nuns do]?

MD: A traditional sense of what happened. If we changed, and became more like them, then that sort of unbalanced them a little bit.

DC: Who were the angry ones?

MD: A good many women.

DC: Lay women?

MD: Lay women. Lay women. Lay women were angry at the nuns, particularly for getting out of habit. I don't know if they thought we were going after their husbands, or what. But we'd stepped out of our role. And when we'd stepped out of our role what did that do to theirs—it also upset a lot of clergy. But clergy had much more pragmatic reason for not liking it. The nuns took upon themselves the right to make more decisions, the right to choose where they wanted to go.

I remember one pastor, the story is told, and I believe it's true, who said what he hated most about the change is the sisters got out of habit and they went back to their family names. He said, now I have learn them. I used to be able to go to the convent and say "Sister," and it didn't make any difference who they were [laugh]. Get the picture.

DC: Going through your file, and speaking of Vatican II, and also the inability of women to go through the sacrament of ordination, you wrote an article on a "Ceremony of Affirmation." Do you remember that? Could you briefly explain what that "Ceremony of Affirmation" [was], and its purpose, and what is meant by a "positive protest"?

MD: If we are talking about the same article, one of our sisters, Rose Marie Lorentzen, is that the one? [article shown] That's it. Sister Rose Marie Lorentzen had been sent by the congregation to Jesuit Theological Seminary which was on the south-side of Chicago, that had opened up to women after Vatican II. She went into a program leading to ordination. And at that point in time there was no particular ruling against it. Everyone knew it was a daring thing to do, but anyhow Rose Marie, along with a lot of other people had finished up to the diaconate.

DC: What is that?

MD: The deaconate... There are three steps to ordination in the Church hierarchy, and I guess there still are, the sub-deacon, the deacon, and the priesthood. Each one of those allows you to do more things in the Church, more official things, and when Rose Marie and her class reached the stage of deaconate they were told they could not be ordained deacons and they were angry. So there was a protest.

A lot of people, and I guess I was one of them, went to the ceremony and wore blue bands and stood up and protested all the time the men who were being ordained. The women were standing up there and looking angry. This was at the JSTC, the Jesuit School of Theology [The Jesuit of School of Theology, Chicago] on the south-side. We were sort of angry they didn't allow them to go through with the ceremony. And we were angry that they were not allowed to be ordained to the deaconate.

At that point, I was what they called a "regional representative" for a group of sisters in Chicago, a kind of an administrative role in the congregation. These are the things I was doing when I should have been finishing my Ph.D. [laugh] Indirectly related. So we created a ceremony of affirmation for female deacons who were excluded from ordination. We had it [unclear] over in Wright Hall, which is across the street, and we invited the faculty of the JSTC and Bill Thompson showed.

DC: Bill Thompson is...?

MD: In Loyola right now. He was on the faculty. He was the only man who had the courage to show up for the whole thing. That's what it was. We used some of the symbols that they had used at JSTC and really got in trouble with all kinds of people over that. They used the "lay on hands" and they used the stole. And we just lifted, I lifted, I did it, sections right out of the JSTC catalog. I was accused. I wasn't accused, but they felt it was a misrepresentation of the JSTC catalog. [laugh] Look at it. So it was a flash in the pan, over in a short time.

Rose Marie's attitude toward the whole thing was "the things they were ordained to do, I've [Rose Marie] been doing for the last ten years anyhow." They were allowed to teach, they were allowed to help in the Church. I can't remember all the things she told me now, but she had been teaching in the elementary school system and in the elementary school system you have a lot opportunity to deal with parents and children, you work with the poor. She had taught at a poor school, done all the things they were being ordained to do. She said, "I've done them." That was part of what the affirmation was about. We affirm her ministry. Declared her, in our eyes, the equivalent of a deacon. The thing that it did for her was make it very difficult for her to get a job. Because she had a M.Div. [Master of Divinity], pastors were very leery about getting a woman. So what she did is go into work with the homeless. She runs one of the biggest centers for homeless in the state of Illinois, out in Aurora. She's had all kinds of awards, being supported by grants, primarily.

DC: It shows the power of human will.

MD: It does. Yes, it does. The organization she belongs to is Hesed house, "Hesed," being the Hebrew word for "justice." The organization that she formed that

supports this, [unclear], she's the head of it, has all the Protestant parishes churches in Aurora as members. She has a very ecumenical thing going. And is a big lobbyist down in Illinois, in Springfield for all the causes of the homeless. Thompson and Edgar have not been necessarily supportive of the kinds of causes she wants and she took them to court over schooling and [unclear] at one point. So she has become quite a well known Church activist as a result of that affirmation.

DC: That's an interesting flash point, as you said. Let's get back to your career. In 1968 the [undergraduate] religious major was approved, as I understand, and this is a point in your career at Mundelein where you go back to school at the University of Chicago. You were a journalism/English teacher up until this point, and then you go back to the University of Chicago to study social ethics. Am I correct?

MD: Actually, I was not a journalism/English teacher all that time. I was brought to Mundelein as an English/journalism teacher back in '55, and I did teach English, and my job at that point was to help out. My degree from Marquette was English and I had some courses in journalism because I had been running a high school newspaper, in Des Moines, Iowa. So they brought me to Chicago, I mean, I practically walked out of Marquette with my diploma in hand and came here. Literally, not literally, but figuratively kicking-and-screaming. I really didn't have any particular desire to come here. I liked what I was doing. I liked my job. I didn't particularly want to come here because I knew I was going to be in the public relations office.

In 1957 the person I had been helping in journalism/public relations went to Clarke, and I suddenly became chair of the journalism department and within two years I was also head of public relations. For that period of time, from '57 until '66, I directed the school newspaper for awhile. I don't think I taught anymore English from that point on, I taught journalism and pretty soon Sister Sharon Rose came in to take over the newspaper. I went into public relations and from that to development, which I didn't like. I never really wanted to be a public relations person.

DC: That's one of my questions. You really made a huge shift after that.

MD: Yes, I certainly did not like development. Public relations was fun because I had a good group of faculty and administrators to work with. But what happened at that particular point in time is very significant because in 1961, which is about the time I stopped teaching very much, Sister Anna Ida, who was then a new president, had a total new administrative team. (Coffey Hall, the new dormitory, had already been built.) The dean was Sister Ignatia, a good friend of mine, as was the Dean of Students; Sister Mary Assisium, whose name is Mary Cramer. We had a man, Dan Cahill who came in as Vice-President for Public Relations and Norbert Hruby, who came in as Vice-President for Research and Development.

The period between '61 and '68 we went through a total educational revision. We started with the continuing education program for adult women, of which Norbert Hruby was really the founder of that program, though he turned it very quickly over to Catherine Byrne to head it. He put together what we called an institutional analysis, which was a very involving process that took in faculty,

staff, administration, alumnae, and students. We brought in a young man who was working at the University of Chicago on his Ph.D. to put together the questionnaires and the measurements, and so on. As a result of that, the controlling question was, "Does Mundelein deserve to survive?" Obviously, we answered the questions yes. But we had a great batch of data, which I'm sure, is up in the archives somewhere. Out of that came the total curriculum revision. We went from a two semester system to a three term system. We went from a more traditional curriculum within the school to a very strong basic studies required core.

At that point we also began working toward a religious studies major, because within that period two things happened: Vatican II occurred and the Civil Rights Movement bloomed. The real trigger, I think, that moved me back from English into sociology. My original degree was sociology at Clarke, although I was thinking about getting a double major but I never got around to doing the final paper that I needed to do for the English major, so... [laugh]

DC: There's a theme here. [In reference to her starting many things but never quite finishing.]

MD: There's a theme, that's right. So I ended up with a major in sociology and minor in English and history. But I really got involved in the civil rights movement and I was one of the faculty that went with the students to Alabama at the time of Martin Luther King's march and came back to Chicago. James Bevel was in Chicago at that point. After looking at the fact of segregation not only in the city of Chicago but in the Church, in the Catholic school system itself, it was really through that involvement in the Civil Rights Movement that I decided I wanted to

go back into sociology. So I applied to the community [BVM community] to go back to school. [click of checking the tape]

I looked over the Department of Sociology at Loyola recommended by friend Russell Barta who was teaching here at that point and then I looked at the University of Chicago and I really wasn't sure I wanted to move in the direction of sociology. Strangely enough, it was Andrew Greeley that suggested social ethics at the University of Chicago. He was in that center for research and study that Kathleen McCourt was in. So I interviewed at the University of Chicago for Social Ethics and got into that program. It was an interesting experience. I was the only Catholic in the program. I was the only woman in the program. I was the only nun in the program. I think Anne Carr [and I] were the only two sisters in the Divinity School at that point and time. It was kind of a global program. We used to jolly around about the program, we described Social Ethics at that point as a program in search of a discipline. [laugh] And in a sense that was right. It was a highly interdisciplinary program. The requirements to get into the University of Chicago required a variety of tests in scripture, theology, and psychology, and politics, in areas where ethics would be.

Any how, that's how I ended up in Social Ethics. So in 1967 I started full-time at the University. Part of the requirements of the program I was in was participatory research in some kind of social change. I elected to do it with my own community, which was deep into social change.

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So, that was how I made the transition from journalism into social ethics, and the logical place for teaching social ethics would be either the Sociology Department or in Religious Studies. So, in the meantime, I taught courses part-time. I taught a couple of courses in sociology and some courses in religious studies at Mundelein while I was going to the University of Chicago, and religious studies was just a better fit because they were also working on an interdisciplinary program for religious studies. So that's where I ended up, was in the program for religious studies.

The other thing that needs to be said about the University of Chicago—my particular focus in my Ph.D. dissertation if I had finished it was on racism. Jesse Jackson was, in fact, part of the student body at that point in time. He was really a student at Chicago Theological Seminary, but there was an exchange program between the two. Jesse took a lot of courses from Alvin Pitcher who was my advisor. I was thinking about that last night, thinking about my education. Jesse Jackson at that point was a young man. My advisor was on the Southern Christian Leadership Board.

But the one thing the University of Chicago had not discovered was feminism for women. I wouldn't say there was discrimination against women in the program I was in, we were a novelty. I think there were two women besides me in that initial class. By the time I left there were more. Studies of women were just beginning in the Social Ethics Program, so in the meantime we had changed with Vatican II in the community, we had all sorts of changes in the community. Feminism was alive and well at both Mundelein and the BVMs. It was a novelty in the Social Ethics Program. And here I was working on racism at a time when whites involved in racism was not necessarily a benevolent thing to do. So I just quit. I suppose it was a rash decision. I had a good team at that

point. My dissertation committee had changed a couple times. That was another thing, every time you got a change of committee (somebody moves off to another school), you got a new person, who put in a new dimension into the direction you are going. I finally ended up with Alvin Pitcher and David Tracy and Jim Gustafson who was in ethics. Tracy was in phenomenology and theology. Pitcher was the only one who was really in Social Ethics as it had started. The program was changing, I had changed a lot in that particular period of time.

In 1974 the Weekend College had begun. I got myself onto the planning team for the Weekend College which was very involving, very interesting, and that really had a strong feminist dimension to it. It was at that point I said "oh, heck I don't need to [finish it]."

DC: What was the administration's take with all your work? Were they very supportive of both going down to Alabama and your feminist take on everything?

MD: At that point it wasn't a feminist take, I would say, when we went to Alabama. It was really involvement in the Civil Rights Movement. The leader of that group was the academic dean of Mundelein College, who was at that point Sister Mary Ignatia who later left the BVM and went back to her name, Mary Griffin. Other people, other faculty members were there, I think there were eight faculty members. It was with the sanction of the administration. I don't know that Dan Cahill particularly, the person who was in charge of development, was exactly happy about having what to a lot of people at that time looked like a bunch of radicals. It didn't make his job of fund raising any easier for the college. I would say that no one ever suggested we get out of it. Sister Ann Ida never said, "Don't do it."

DC: There was no pressure to going down there or..

MD: There was no pressure to either go down or to get out of what we were doing. Although there were people in the institution who thought it was giving the institution a bad name. But there were a lot of people who were supportive of the whole thing too. One of the things that had come out of the institutional analysis was that the faculty and staff were formed into committees—I can't remember the names of the committees at this point—and one of the books we were all asked to read was the *Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan. And that really divided the faculty right down the middle. The Home Economics Department thought it was terrible. [laugh] The Business Department thought, it was great. Of course, Theology was also one of the few places that thought it was a pretty good thing, more in the spirit of self-definition and agency for women. I don't remember exactly where I started that sentence, at this point.

The feminism dimension that came out of the institutional analysis was very strong with a segment of the faculty. When the Weekend College came into existence in 1974 that feminism was built into it, and by that time we had a Religious Studies Program. I had been director of that program for a year and a half, while Carol Frances went off on sabbatical. I had initiated a lecture series during the summer on women. Matt Fox had come to Mundelein and Matt was working toward feminism in his program. David Orr was my co-partner in the community studies area, and David was very supportive of both the racism and feminism dimensions of the kind of work I was doing. We put a whole dimension of women's studies into that program [Weekend College]. That was why all of sudden what I was doing at the University of Chicago became sort of

irrelevant to where I was at. I thought, oh I don't need that. And I was not about to start over. [laugh]

DC: Though it might have crossed your mind.

MD: It did cross my mind. It did cross my mind. I thought it isn't worth the effort, I'm doing fine the way I am. So, let it go at that. So I quit.

DC: Let's pull it up into the seventies and eighties. By the early eighties you were not only involved with feminism and civil rights, you now were getting involved with Liberation Theology in Latin America. In 1983 you made a tour to Nicaragua and led a group there. Is this a continuation, do you feel, of what you were doing prior?

MD: It was a continuation of my work with the BVMS, really. We had reorganized the government of the congregation in 1968. We had kind of a landmark chapter, which redesigned the government of our community. One of the goals was to put more hard, decision-making in the hands of the sisters. In order to do that the governing of the community organized what we call a "senate." And I was elected to that senate. Then we organized an experimental region of sisters here in Chicago, and I was elected the representative for that region. Well, that was really a full-time job. I made it a part-time job. (I was looking at what I was doing in the 1970s, and I was really out of my mind to tell you the truth as I look back with all the things I had my fingers in.) That put me into this group called the Leadership Conference for Women Religious, which is the heads of religious

orders in the United States. I was one of the group. I was on our administrative counseling board for BVMs.

The whole idea of Liberation Theology and the whole idea of moving from the kind of religious orders where women were told what to do to women responding to the preferential options of the poor really came out of my work with the BVM community and the leadership conference. The Church in Nicaragua was really something that I wanted to explore. It was something the community at that point was sort of encouraging to happen. We are an American community and we had very few missions overseas and so they wanted us to get the experience of Latin America.

Our Mother General had made an agreement with a Jesuit group in Bogota and some of our sisters went down there to teach. Joan Newhart was one of them, she's in the Computer Department here, at Loyola, just retired. One of our sisters worked in the Eighth Day Center for Justice, which you may not have heard of. It's a group here in the city which is made up of delegates of religious orders and supported by the religious orders. And Chuck Dahm, who is a Dominican, who is now pastor of Saint Pius Church, but at that point was at the Eighth Day Center, organized this study tour to Latin America in 1981. And I had gone with part of that study tour, about fifteen of us—Jesuits and Scholastics, a few women, some priests—and we went to Mexico, Nicaragua, Ecuador, and Peru.

We spent the whole summer down there looking at the Church and the life of the people. We traveled on a shoe-string, lived in fourth-class hotels. When we came back, the students asked if they could take a trip to Nicaragua. So I organized this trip to Nicaragua for a group of... very few Mundelein students

ended up [going] in the end, they were graduate students. We spent ten days in Nicaragua.

Of course, it was after the Sandanista had taken over the government, so it was really exciting. We worked with the Franciscan Sisters who had been in Nicaragua teaching before the revolution. It was a wonderful trip. We ended up with interviews with Ernesto Cardenal and Francesco Cardenal, and Miguel De Scoto, the priest [who was] the secretary of state for the Sandanistas. We had an interview with the head of the army [unclear]. It was a wonderful trip. It made a big difference in the life of the students who went there, but my interest in Liberation Theology grew out of the original trip to Latin America. I mean serious interest in Liberation Theology, I was interested in it before that, but once you're there, once you see the Indians, once you live, once you stay in the houses with some of the people who are living at the ragged edge of survival, experience a little bit, you come back with a whole different attitude.

DC: What a professor once told me is that you don't understand your own culture until you live in another. Once you see the theory in action...

MD: All of sudden you become self-conscious about the fact that you call yourself an "American." Because you are a "Norde Americano," [laugh] you are not really an American, you're a North American. There's a big difference there and people look at you differently. And yet some of the people that were working hardest, the poor priests that were involved in the government at that point. Miguel De Scoto, a priest, had gone to school in the United States, his father was a diplomat here. Francesco and Ernesto Cardenale were priests and they had spent time in the United States and studied in Europe, both of them. I like to think that they

were probably the stabilizing influence on the Sandanistas at that time, even though Danny Oretaga was the head of state at that particular point. The division in the Church in Nicaragua at that point was quite fascinating; of course we were visiting all the liberal base communities which were just beginning then. It was a wonderful experience.

DC: Let's move on to look at Mundelein itself. In a larger scope of your time at Mundelein, you have been here with some affiliation for about forty years? [Actually] forty-three years. I am wondering how you would divide Mundelein's history, while you were here? How do you see Mundelein's history?

MD: Having come here at the time that I did, I think the BVMs tend to look at in terms of administrations. It's interesting that this Mundelein College History Project that you are participating in had planned to give papers on the history of Mundelein College at the Conference of the History of the Women Religious, that was held here at Loyola in June. Are you aware of that? Anne Harrington and Prudence Moylan are both part of that group. Anne was the local arrangements chair for it. We did provide a panel for one of the sessions.

One of the key members of our project was Mary Griffin, and Mary was supposed to give her impressions of the college from the time that it began until it ended, because she was here in the 1930s as a student and had come back here to teach, had been the dean, she was also involved in the Civil Rights Movement. So Mary spent three years teaching at Alcorn State University in Mississippi, which was an all black college, then came back to Mundelein and was really the brains and the administrative head of the Weekend College. She was not the administrative head, she was the head of the planning committee for it and very

involved in it, as was I. Bill Hill ended up in the administrative head of the Weekend College.

Unfortunately, Mary went with me to Mt. Carmel to see what Mt. Carmel had about the foundation of Mundelein College and she had a brain aneurysm and died there in Dubuque. [faint voice] It was quite a painful experience, personally for me. It also was a painful experience for our history group, because Mary was one of the people who was bound to be interviewed; we never got the interview or the oral history. Nobody could take her place in the project that we had going and the program had already been printed. It was that late.

So we ended up, each of us giving a little bit of the history of our experiences at Mundelein and I did write this paper. [Referring to short article she is holding in her hands.] This is only two pages here of my experiences at Mundelein and I used the divisions that Carolyn Farrell has made. Carolyn Farrell is the Vice-President for Loyola, she became the President of Mundelein for a short period of time before the merger. She has done a lot of work with the alumnae of Mundelein.

Carolyn sees three Mundelein Colleges that alumnae claim. One of them is from the foundation period to 1957, which is when Sister Ann Ida became president. The immediate president before that, Sister Mary John Michael had been in the original group that opened the college in 1930 and she retired in 1957, and Ann Ida came in. We ended up with a whole new Mundelein, all of those things I mentioned happened under her watch—the Civil Rights Movement, the Vatican Council, the institutional analysis, the college went residential on a national basis, we had a very active alumnae association, a different kind of alumnae association then we had before. So that would be the second period.

And the third period would be starting with 1974 with the beginning of the Weekend College which really tipped the mission of the college, I believe, to adult students. Certainly there were as many, almost as many adult students, as there were undergraduates [unclear] at that particular point. Between the continuing education, Weekend College and the graduate programs in religious studies and the liberal arts which had come in, we had a big adult population. So those are the three Mundeleins that I lived through. And that's what my little piece about experiences of Mundelein are, so you may have that. [Hands short article to interviewer.] Add this to your collection. You will find out what I thought the experiences of Mundelein were. Those are the three divisions of the College, and I think they are good ones.

DC: Let's talk about the final years of Mundelein, Mundelein College as it merged into Loyola.

MD: Not my favorite topic. [strongly voiced]

DC: I believe it's not. I touch upon it simply because I think it's important.

MD: Oh, it's very important.

DC: What are your thoughts on the merger? What do you think caused it? What is your impression of Mundelein now? Were things lost, were things gained?

MD: Definitely things were lost. I have very strong negative feelings about the merger and they have to do with what I consider the irresponsibility on the part of the

board of trustees of Mundelein. They were a lay board, who were well-educated themselves, but had no particular interest as I can see it, or certainly expertise in higher education. They were successful men in their own right, but Joe Sullivan, the chair of the board of trustees said one time in a group that I was in—it was kind of a public statement—that his two favorite charities were the refugees in Thailand and the BVMs at Mundelein. Now I took that as a major insult. This is not a serious job for Joe Sullivan, being chair of the board of trustees.

Two things that bothered me very much about it was the college was in financial troubles as a result of an appointment of a male president, just before our final two presidents here, the first male president we had, who really in less than two years, managed to run the college two million dollars in debt. We had a cash flow problem. I don't believe... There was not enough financial need for the board of trustees to declare a financial exigency. A financial exigency is one of the things a college does when it really has so few financial resources that it can't afford to support its faculty, it can break tenure-track, fire people. Mundelein was never in that position. It was valued at the time of the merger at sixty-five million dollars. Now that is not exactly a poor institution.

I was a member of what they call a board of corporators, it's an elected position. In the charter of Mundelein College it was a two tiered board, the board of trustees at Mundelein I think grew up to thirty people, but there was also a board of five corporators—all BVMs. There were only two or three things that board could do. Trustees could not change the charter of the institution without the vote of the BVMs, they could not alienate property, and we didn't have to, but we did, go to all the board of trustee's meetings. So we knew there was financial distress. The trustees also knew that there was a committee working here on

ways to restructure the college that would be less expensive. In the meantime, they're working on a merger and we were never told about it.

DC: A lack of communication?

MD: A total lack of communication. It was not only a lack of communication it was a real effort to exclude, I think. We know that their meetings were held downtown, sometimes the president of our community who was in Dubuque, didn't get information to come to the meetings until it was too late. There was a total lack of communication.

It's also interesting in retrospect that the president of Loyola at that particular point, and the president of Mundelein's board of trustees, and one of the lawyers that was part of the Loyola team went to the Harvard Business School together, and were in the same course on mergers. Does all this strike you as being something more than coincidence? They gave away the college to Loyola. From my point view, from the point of view of a good many faculty. And I say it here because if this is going to go in the archives I want it in the archives, because it has not been written.

DC: You mentioned the name of president who...

MD: John Reichert. He was hired to really rejuvenate the college. Susan Rink was the president before that, she done a pretty good job of balancing the budget and bringing in new programs. It was Susan who opened up the possibility of the Weekend College for the adult population, the Masters program came in. So, he was hired to sort of give the college a fresh start.

DC: Unfortunately...

MD: Unfortunately, he was totally unrealistic about...[searching voice]

DC: What did he do?

MD: Oh, gosh, I can't remember exactly.

DC: Did he start new programs that were not financially feasible?

MD: He tried to do some out-reach programs that were financially not very feasible. He also managed to alienate the faculty very, very quickly. He did not have a lot of cooperation from them, although we had a good dean we liked. I can't remember exactly now what the situation was, but he ended up firing the dean. [laugh] Who was really his link to the faculty. He really had no particular... If he had any expertise in curriculum or educational design we never discovered it. He was big into sports, he was big into building up the sports program and doing some physical changes in the college, which needed it. He was redoing the dormitory.

But I don't know, I haven't give a single thought to this period in a long while, I'm really talking off the top of my head, when I'm talking about this period. I just know it was a very unpleasant period to live through and it was a very unpleasant period when we shifted from him to the new president. Then the board of trustees, I don't think, did their job of cooperating and communicating

with the faculty who were working hard to redesign programs. It came as quite a shock to us to discover that the merger was about to take place.

Now we had really as a board of the trustees, as a member of the corporation of the board, we had been asked by Joe Sullivan to go to Dubuque and to ask them for...

[end of side 2, tape 1/begin side 1, tape 2]

We had been asked to go to Dubuque to put in a word with the congregation to make a loan of several million dollars, I don't remember exactly how many, two or three million, to help the college meet its cash flow needs. The agreement was made that if they broke that contract that they would close the college. It was not long a time before that contract was broken, and by that time there had been rumors going around about the board of trustees, that people at Loyola were talking about the fact that Mundelein might merge. I mean, this is the gossip line that was going on.

Anyhow, that accounts for the fact that what I'm saying here speaks for a lot of faculty who really felt that they were had. We were allowed to work and to plan and be misinformed, or not so misinformed, as not informed, led astray in our thinking. And Loyola faculty and department heads had no reason at all to know that they were going to inherit us. It was as big a shock to Loyolans as it was to us. That suddenly they got 58 new faculty members on their hands, and not necessarily faculty members they needed or wanted. It was very difficult the way it was done.

DC: What do you think was lost by losing Mundelein? What do you think is gained?

MD: What was lost was the fact that Mundelein was a very vital institution for the education of women. And what was lost was that. Loyola has a Women's Studies Program, and the people who were most welcoming of us at Loyola were the women's studies people, who were delighted to have our faculty come over there because they recognized what we had. That's what was lost. What also was lost was the sense of community and camaraderie that existed in the Mundelein College as it was. You had a theme here of teaching at Mundelein. The teaching at Mundelein grew out of the fact that we had a strong community and that we had a lot of cooperation, we had a lot of interdisciplinary action, we had a lot of team teaching, we had a strong faculty association, which I was the chair for a long while, and we had a great deal of involvement, we thought, in the college. That was lost when we went to Loyola. Loyola is a red-tape bureaucracy if I ever saw one, and they will be the first to admit it. On top of that the faculty were totally unprepared for this whole group of people who'd come in. Some departments really threatened the promotion and tenure of their own faculty. You are brought into a department all of a sudden, and people there who are looking to get into the tenure track discover that they are not needed anymore. That happened in a couple of cases. It was not a happy situation for us.

I think what was good about it, was for the younger members of the faculty. I was within two years of retirement, I was in the last year in which retirement was mandatory. Bill Hill and I were the last two people and Blanche Gallagher, who was really forced into retirement legally. I think for the younger people, Loyola has a lot of money, and they have been able to develop their careers in a new direction. The emphasis on teaching at Mundelein was rewarded in our structures for promotion and salaries, such as they were [laugh].

At Loyola, at the time that we merged, and we did a study of this in the Women's Studies, there were no rewards for teaching in the Loyola system. There rewards were for publication. There were certain requirements for involvement in committee work, but the rewards for teaching were minimal. Now, I think that has changed. I'm sure that some of the people interested in making that change were part of the Women's Studies group, and certainly Kathleen McCourt, as dean was very instrumental in trying to put a new emphasis on teaching.

Of course, our students were more angry than the faculty, so they raised quite a fuss in some of their classes, when they went to Loyola. They actually had a meeting before they went and they said, "Listen we've got four years at most to make a difference, so we have to go and make our voices heard." So they did. They did it fairly well. They managed to get one faculty member's contract not renewed [laugh] on a sexual harassment charge. They got themselves a special page in the Loyola Phoenix [Loyola's student newspaper] and it took a little bit of teasing. They got their athletic scholarships recognized. From the point of the view of the faculty, I think the emphasis and their career paths have changed, in the long run they've changed for the better. Their salaries were brought up to Loyola's in five years like they were supposed to be, brought up to the Loyola faculty schedule. That was a good thing for [unclear]. I don't know if all have reached it yet, but some of them have. That was a big benefit; the fact that they were asked to do more of the things that they were happy to do, but did not have much time for at Mundelein, like publication, like research, has been very good for them. Their involvement with national academic organizations has been remarkable, you know. I know the BVMs have went over there, the ones I know best, it's been good for them.

- DC: In trying to wrap this is up, looking back over your four and half decades with Mundelein and Loyola are there things you would have done differently or things you regret not having done?
- MD: I suppose if I knew I was going to end up at Loyola I would have finished the Ph.D. It would have made a difference in the rapport at Loyola in the department that I was in. Actually, no I don't regret doing what I did.
- DC: You seemed to have had a very full, full in the sense that you have done a great deal...
- MD: Oh, I look at my resume and try to straighten it out in terms of chronology, I really was quite insane [laugh] to take on as many things as I did. But, no, I don't think I would have changed. Yes, the thing that I, and a good many of the people who are part of the faculty who I was mostly associated with, would have done—made a greater emphasis to change the mission of the college to put even more emphasis on adult education. There were those of us who felt the college was spinning its wheels to be trying to compete on the undergraduate level with some of the women's colleges that had more money and were able to do the sort of thing we didn't have. Where in adult education we were quite financially capable and academically capable, situated in a good city to do that sort of thing. If I had been in a position of decision making, which I wasn't, obviously, I think that Mundelein would have set itself back by trying to put an emphasis on recruiting the 18 to 22 year old student at a time when the student pool was shrinking, when the finances of the college would not allow it to support the kind

of activities 18 to 22 year old kids need and want. That is one thing I would have changed if I had been in position to do anything about it, which I wasn't.

DC: Other than that, looking at your resume, I aspire to have such full career.

MD: Well, good luck. I hope you stay healthy and have a lot of energy, because it requires it. Don't get used to eight hours sleep. [laugh] It's been good. Read that little paper I wrote for the history conference you will see that it was good. I'm still involved, not very deeply, but I really enjoy teaching a course a term, which I'm still doing at Loyola under their Senior Professor Program. I'm not in any particular hurry to get out of it because I like to keep my finger in the academic world.

DC: Well, thank you very much for your time.

End of Interview