

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

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Cathy McLeod's Oral History

Women and Leadership Archives

Loyola University Chicago

2020

## **PREFACE**

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Cathy McLeod conducted by Regina Hong on August 12, 2020. This interview is part of the Share Your Story: Student Life at Mundelein project, an oral history project to expand and enrich the Women and Leadership Archives' (WLA) records of Mundelein College's history through interviews with alumnae on student life.

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

## **TIME LOG AND OVERVIEW**

[0:00 – 5:00]: McLeod's family background, reasons for choosing Mundelein, reasons for getting interested in math in high school

[5:00 – 10:00]: Reasons for getting interested in math in high school, major at Mundelein, favorite classes at Mundelein, descriptions of memorable assignments in argumentative writing class

[10:00 – 15:00]: Memorable instructors, running the coffeehouse, food and activities at the coffeehouse

[15:00 – 20:00]: Reflections on the role and significance of the coffeehouse, Upward Bound program, memorable moments from the Upward Bound program

[20:00 – 25:00]: Upward Bound schedule in summer, reasons for involvement in Upward Bound, work at the Computer Center, description of teletype

[25:00 – 30:00]: Process of submitting programs remotely, math tutoring during college, reflections on the gender wage gap

[30:00 – 35:00]: Political orientation held during orientation week, ending of freshman tradition of wearing beanies, reflections on peers' and own answers to what they wanted to get out of their time at Mundelein

[35:00 – 40:00]: Reflection on answer to what she wanted to get out of her time at Mundelein, Beanies and the Big Sister Little Sister program, on-campus activist efforts, March on Washington, Kent State Shooting strike, wearing peace symbols at graduation

[40:00 – 45:00]: Informal nature of on-campus student activist efforts, interactions between students holding different political opinions, faculty involvement in and reaction to on-campus activism

[45:00 – 50:00]: Perceptions of the different cultures in the two dormitories, how roommates were decided, increased diversity of residential student population, number of roommates in one room

[50:00 – 55:00]: Application process for becoming an RA [resident assistant], memorable and challenging moments as an RA, floor meetings

[55:00 – 1:00:00]: Individuals McLeod conferred with for challenging moments as an RA, new students' apprehensions about the "L", recollection of the night that Martin Luther King, Jr., was killed, RA duties

[1:00:00 – 1:05:00]: RA duties, Conference on Curriculum [CONCUR], reflections on leadership opportunities and significance of time at Mundelein [Section from 1:00:34:22 – 1:02:20:17 redacted due to privacy issues. See WLA archivist for more information.]

[1:05:00 – 1:10:00] Social events on campus, political climate and effect on social and sporting events, Candlelighting ceremony in dorms

[1:10:00 – 1:13:16] McLeod's participation in religious activities on campus, reasons for shift in beliefs, current involvement in political activities, reflection on recollections

## **NARRATOR BIO**

Cathy McLeod was born in 1949 and raised in Washington Heights, on the far South Side of Chicago, Illinois. She was the first in her family to attend college.

At Mundelein, she majored in mathematics, where she lived on campus at Northland Hall for all four years. McLeod ran a coffeehouse with her classmate for her sophomore and junior years, submitted computer forms via teletype at the Computer Center and worked as a resident assistant (RA) in her senior year. She also volunteered and worked as a math tutor for the Upward Bound program in her freshman and sophomore years and was actively involved in informal student activist efforts on campus. After graduating from Mundelein, McLeod attended Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) for one year in a Master's degree program. She then moved to Cincinnati.

She also has an MBA from the Xavier University in Cincinnati. Cathy is now retired after a career in IT people and project management.

Cathy competes with the National Senior Games in Race Walking and Power Walking events.

## **INTERVIEWER BIO**

Regina Hong is a graduate student in the Digital Humanities program at Loyola University Chicago and a Sesquicentennial Scholar at the WLA. She was raised in Singapore and lived in Japan for two years prior to moving to Chicago.

Transcriptionist: Regina Hong

Session: 1

Interviewee: Cathy McLeod

Locations: Chicago, IL and Cincinnati, OH via Zoom

Interviewer: Regina Hong

Date: August 12, 2020

[BEGINNING OF INTERVIEW]

[0:00]

Q: The recording has started. For the record, my name is Regina Hong, a graduate assistant at the Women and Leadership Archives, interviewing Cathy McLeod, Class of 1971 on August 12, 2020 for the Share Your Story: Student Life at Mundelein Project via Zoom. I'm in Chicago, Illinois and Cathy is in Cincinnati, Ohio. So to start us off, Cathy, could you tell me a little about yourself and your family, like when you were born and where you were raised?

McLeod: All right. I was born in 1949, on the far South Side of Chicago, in a neighborhood called Washington Heights. And I went to Catholic schools in the neighborhood. And when it was time for college — I was the first person in my family to go to college and so I didn't have any, say — there wasn't parental guidance about that. And I ended up choosing Mundelein for a couple of reasons, at least. One was financial. That was a big deal because my family did not have a lot of funds to contribute. And I have always been very good at math and also at test-

taking, it helps a lot. So I got a major scholarship and the scholarship allowed me essentially to have my tuition paid at Mundelein.

And so with, with that and some other things — Well, the other big thing was not just affordability but respect. Because I was — I had been in a gifted math program when I was in high school at Illinois Institute of Technology. And there were very few women in that program. And it became clear to me early on that the professors were gearing everything toward the men, and the women who were in the program were, let's say, window dressing. And I decided that that's not what I wanted for myself.

And so when an opportunity came to go to a women's college — And I knew of Mundelein because the math program when I was in high school would host contests and invite women to come and participate in the math contest. So I had participated for several years, so I knew of the math department at Mundelein. So women's college, it was affordable, it was close enough to home that I didn't have to travel much, far enough away that I lived on campus, so it was a good match for me. Yeah, that's it. Oh, the times where I was born, where I lived — it was [a] very interesting time. The late '60s, early '70s, lots of social change going on — certainly lots of social change going on in Chicago. So that framed a lot of what happened to me and what I thought when I was at Mundelein.

Q: I see, thank you for that. Were you looking at other women's colleges in the area as well? I — if I understand right, Mundelein College — was it the only one in Chicago or were there other women's colleges as well?

McLeod: There were others. There were — In fact, there was one very close to my home, which was Saint Xavier — where I could have lived at home and gone to school there — and several of my high school colleagues did, but that was too close. And, basically, I'm a city girl and not a suburban girl so being in the city was a big deal.

Q: I see.

McLeod: More vibrant — I didn't drive so it was easy to get on the "L" [the elevated train system in Chicago]. If I wanted to go home, I could get on the "L" and a bus and simply do that.

Q: I see, that makes a lot of sense. And did you always want to be a residential student at a college?

McLeod: Well, honestly, I hadn't thought about it that much. But when I had the opportunity — no, there was no reason to stay home (laughs).

Q: Great! And how did you get interested in math at high school? Or in your schooling career?

McLeod: I had — Well, one, I have an aptitude for that, so that was the first thing. Genetics worked on my behalf and I had some (emphasizes) incredibly wonderful women teachers in high school that — so that I got to participate.

[5:00]

And I think one of the teachers prompting — went to the Illinois State Science Fairs with a project that was in math. And so I had, what was it, finite geometries and two-dimensional finite geometries, three-dimensional finite geometries. And then when I got to my junior and senior years — particularly my senior year — had a wonderful instructor who then gave several of us the opportunity to go to the gifted program in IIT [Illinois Institute of Technology]. And I just loved it, I loved the logic. It was just fun.

Q: That's great. And when you came to Mundelein, were you already intending to study math or were you still considering other majors?

McLeod: After the first semester — I was thinking history — but after the first semester, it was just math.

Q: I see. And I saw in your notes that you were talking about some classes you took that were very memorable. Could you share more about your favorite classes at Mundelein?

McLeod: All right. Well, I took math, a lot of math classes. In fact, I probably had more math hours than anyone else who graduated from Mundelein. And I liked pure math rather than applied math, if you care. The other classes that were particularly interesting were philosophy classes, kind of applied logic. And I had, early on, “The Philosophy of Work and the Philosophy of Play”. I remembered that I enjoyed those classes. The math classes were calculus the first year, so they were not particularly exciting — that’s not my math area.

We had a class in argumentative writing and I loved that class. It was wonderful. The instructor made sure that she was engaging. Some of the — There are two assignments that I particularly remember. One was that we were given a list of words and said there has been a new civiliza — we have discovered a civilization or it’s a newly-discovered old civilization, and here are the only words that we had from that civilization so take these words and infer what this civilization was like. And so it really amounted to being precise, thinking through what was said, what was not said, and then how — we structure how we created that civilization. And then afterward we went through class and then said why did you say this, does — does the evidence support your conclusion, why or why not. A lot of evidence — well, of course, that was the title of the class.

And then, the second assignment that I really recall having when Lyndon Johnson said that he was not running for the presidency, which was a surprise. And our assignment was to take three newspapers, read the editorial that followed the day after the newspapers, [interviewee clarification: “newspapers” emended to “speech”] and then understand the bias and the opinion

of those three newspaper editorials about the speech. Now, and I don't remember the details, but I — again, it was critical thinking and I really liked that.

Q: Wow, the first assignment sounds like something I would love to do it. So interesting —

McLeod: Oh yeah.

Q: Do you remember what the civilization you were describing was?

McLeod: No, and the point was you didn't know! I can tell you one of the things that stuck in my mind is that — one of the words or phrases was “raw meat”. And so I said that the people here did not — they ate raw meat or they didn't have cooked foods. And I was very wrong about that! And the instructor said, “No, you have a word for ‘raw meat’. Clearly, that distinguishes it from some other kind of meat. Therefore, you can reasonably infer that the people cooked, rather than not.” So, that's, that's the one that I remember because I got that one wrong!

Q: Oh yeah! Yeah, actually I would have thought the same thing as you did but I guess it makes sense [that] if you distinguish between something that's raw and something that's not, that means its opposite must exist.

McLeod: Yes!

[10:00]

Q: That's great. I'm going to ask you a bit about instructors later on or depending on when you want to talk about it. But I recall that you mentioned you had some friendships with "smart activist instructors" when you were at Mundelein. I was wondering if you could share a little bit more about those instructors.

McLeod: All right. Let's see. When I was a freshman, we lived in the Northland dorm and that year, there was an experiment where several of the Sisters who were teachers were also the RAs [resident assistants] in the dorm. And that was a new experience for them too. And I remember Sister Mary Jo was on our floor.

Let me go back a little bit. When I was a kid growing up, my uncle was a diocesan priest. And he happened to be stationed at the parish where we lived. Purely coincidental. So, early on, I understood there was a difference between someone's role and someone's personality. That there were things that one did in your role because it was expected and then there was the person. Because I got to see my uncle in two roles. When he was in his role as a priest at the parish, that was very important to, to keep essentially [a] professional position. But otherwise, you could be informal. So I think it may have been easier for me than some of the other students on campus to, to split the role that Mary Jo had between an instructor and someone who — a friend or a colleague who lived on the floor. So, I recall that she happened to be a very liberal person in her political beliefs. And she was teaching an English class. I was not in that class, but I was incredibly flattered — I mean like over-the-top flattered — when she asked me to help her out.

And I was happy because, one, she felt comfortable enough to approach me. She felt that I would do the task and that I would be discreet about doing it. And the assignment was that — she felt that people in the class were writing papers based on what she wanted to hear, and not, not their own opinions. So she needed to have a strong paper written that had an opinion opposite of hers. So all I did was type it — I mean, I didn't, I didn't contribute to it — and as it happened, our positions were pretty much aligned. So that was one spot where I just felt em — probably empowered and trusted, more times.

There was a woman in the math department that I was close to — her name was Carol Fritz. She wasn't there for a long time. But I really admired how she managed her life. She was a mom, she was an instructor, she really knew her stuff. And at that time, it seemed that she had things under control in her life and we would eat lunch together, we liked — about the same time and we liked the same kind of sandwiches so we often just chatted there. And there were some others but that was where the — especially some of the philosophy professors — that I could really get into and again, philosophy in many ways is applied math.

Q: Thank you for that. So now I'm going to ask you a little bit about your involvement in running the coffeehouse which you mentioned. Could you share a little bit more about what running the coffeehouse was like?

McLeod: All right. There was a small storefront that was between the dorm and the main campus building — of course, none of it is still there. And my friend, Kathy Kennedy, and I did that and

I think we did that for two years. And Friday and Saturday nights, we would make coffee and popcorn — and both the coffee and the popcorn were just terrible — as everyone told us, but hey, the price was right, it was free (laughs). And people whom we knew, [or who] were new friends of friends, would come in and play music or we would just sit around and talk. What — and we did that together, we were open until like one o'clock, two o'clock and then we would close up — you know, clean up, close up, go home.

[15:00]

What was important — to me — was that we had the opportunity to do this as students. No one came in and checked on us — there was nothing to see except bad coffee and you know, taste bad coffee and bad popcorn (laughs). But it was comfortable. A couple of years after that, it moved over to Piper Hall — at that time, the library — and it just didn't — we didn't move with it and it just didn't stick, it kind of faded away. But I think we had it there for about two years — would have been my sophomore and junior years.

Q: I see. So — correct me if I'm wrong — was this a student-initiated thing by yourself and Kathy Kennedy or was there like a call for ideas and you guys responded to it?

McLeod: I do not recall. If it were student-initiated, it would have been Kathy's idea. I would have been along for the ride. But she had more vision about that than I did.

Q: I see. And so what got you interested in actually doing this thing?

McLeod: Didn't have a lot to do on weekends. Didn't have a lot of money to go places or do things and it was a convenient place to get together. And you could have men and women. Because at that time you didn't have men coming into the dorms.

Q: I see. And do you recall any memorable moments from your time being involved in the coffeehouse?

McLeod: No, I mean, I remember it was there, I remember more the feeling than I do any individual operation about that. I do know that we were lucky that we lived in a neighborhood that was — [had] a heavy Jewish population because we had candles on the table. And we would go to the local store and buy Sabbath candles — because they had a large collection of Sabbath candles — so we were always able to keep ourselves in stock.

Q: I see! Oh, that's so interesting. So now I'm going to just ask you a bit more about another program. You mentioned that you were involved with the Upward Bound program. Could you share a little bit more about what this program was?

McLeod: All right. Recall at the time, this was the Great Society and also a lot of time of social unrest particularly surrounding the Civil Rights Era, the racial Civil Rights Era. And so Mundelein had as an outreach program a summer program that would bring in young Black women, typically from the West Side, and bring them into Mundelein for the summer program. It

included classes — and I was mostly involved in the math class — but it was living on campus so an on-campus experience. Which was very different from what most of the young women had ever imagined for themselves. And sometimes it worked out okay.

I do recall — the second year that I participated in the program — that the requirement changed for the students to go home on the weekend because part of what happened is that while folks lived away on campus, they lost touch with their, their home community. And so it was creating divisiveness, rather than building a path forward in a respectful place they, they came to. I can remember — no, it wasn't exclusively Black young women, other persons of color too, so, so we had some Latinas also.

I remember going— because I was teaching math — I would bang on someone's door in the morning and say, "You have to get up for class." And they would say, respond "No, I'm dead!" I said, "I know you are not dead. You have to get up." You know. "I don't mean to know any math." "No, you have to get up and you have to do this class." With few exceptions, there was no enthusiasm. I mean, but that don't slow you down. You got a job to do.

Q: How long — Oh sorry, yeah, go ahead.

McLeod: That was it.

Q: How long were classes for on the weekdays, when you were in the Upward Bound program?

[20:00]

McLeod: It had to be at least double periods, because we were trying to get a whole year's worth of class into six weeks. And, I mean, so you had to move through it. And math is a hard subject to compress because it takes some learning. But I did — and I was not particularly trained in classroom management — I mean, but I was careful enough to be able to do but — I knew what the materials were, I knew I had to have assignments, I knew I had to have tests. So I can't say I was the best person ever, but it was — I certainly wasn't the worst.

Q: How did you come to know about the Upward Bound program and what got you interested in it?

McLeod: I volunteered. They needed math tutors during the year and so I was a math tutor and I think what we did — let's say, I think it was Wednesday night, but some night during the week — several of us would be driven over to the West Side, one of the projects, where we met with students and we helped with homework or things like that. So that's how I knew about the program.

And then, there was an opportunity to work in the program over the summer and stay on campus. And I — staying on campus was a lot more fun than going home so it was easy for me to do that.

Q: I see. So you mentioned, some, I guess, challenges in getting people up to go for classes. I was wondering if you had any other memorable moments from teaching in the program you would like to share.

McLeod: No, that's the big one. But I guess, I had — and perhaps it was me perceiving this myself, rather than the reality — is I had a comfort level with the students. And I, I — to some degree, I think that was real.

Q: That's great, thank you for sharing that. So I'm going to ask you also about your involvement in the Computer Center. You mentioned that you were working there — what were the working hours like?

McLeod: Oh, this was very early on. It was late in my math career — it was more senior year, because until senior year, there were no computer classes offered. And that was just kind of at the time. And so I would go over a couple of times a week — two or three times a week, it was short periods of time. Let me tell you, this goes back so far, we didn't even have punch cards and a key punch. We had ticker, like ticker tape punched holes in this tape and that was your program and it was FORTRAN [abbreviation for a high-level computer language named "Formula Translation"]. And so you would — Students would go over to the lab, key in the program but not submit it — so just keep it wrapped up in a rubber band — and then my job was to collect

these programs that were in the rubber bands, submit them — and the computer was actually at IIT, it was not even on campus — so submit the jobs, get the printouts, put the papers and the printouts together — I mean, clerical stuff — and then make sure it was there. But it was very early on, very early on. Pretty much primitive IT.

Q: I see. Because I'm not very familiar with the terms, is that what you were referring to when you said "submitting computer forms via teletype"?

McLeod: (nods) Right, so it was a remote job entry function. So there were two components. You would write your program and so you might write it out by hand. Or then you would actually have to key it into a medium and — so that was the program — and then, when you — the remote job entry was, okay, here are the computer instructions. It had to be bundled with the instructions to the computer to say "Read this. Know that this is a program. Generate some output or error messages." And then collect that response to the — and have it ready for the student. At that time, the whole concept of pers — even, you know, remote job entry, and personally having everybody submit the job — that just didn't happen. We had a window, probably a window of time when we were able to submit our jobs, which is why people didn't do it themselves.

Q: That's such an interesting thing to know. So what was this window of time like? Was it an hour? Was it at fixed periods on a certain day?

[25:00]

McLeod: It was probably — I would go over in the evenings, maybe six o'clock and I don't — I don't think I did it every day. But it was a work-study job, I did it some days. And so, and did that. And also, just to get some money, I would also do some math tutoring for some local high school students. I do remember one student that I had — a good story. And the assignment — She was a senior and she was looking at schools and the assignment that she had in this book was that — Something along the line of, hey, if Johnny needs to earn seven dollars, and he cuts grass for a dollar an hour and Emily wants to earn seven dollars, and she babysits and she gets thirty-five cents an hour, so what should Emily do, you know, to get her seven dollars.

And so, the student says, "Well, I guess I would go through that —" and I said, "No, no, no, the answer to that question is that Emily gets a lawn mower." (laughs) She didn't get it, but that was certainly the most important lesson to be learnt — for me — from that assignment.

Q: Sorry, I think I didn't catch that. The connection faded for a bit —

McLeod: Okay.

Q: — I only heard the "loan mall"?

McLeod: So what happened is the young man was earning a dollar an hour. The young woman was earning thirty-five cents an hour. And the assumption was, if she wanted to get some money,

she would simply work more hours. And I suggested, no, why not you do the other job and earn a dollar an hour?

Q: I see. That makes a lot of sense.

McLeod: Oh yeah.

Q: Yeah, and I suppose — Was the wage gap something that you discussed at Mundelein as well, or was that something that people weren't very aware of at that time?

McLeod: Oh, folks were aware. I don't recall so much at Mundelein talking about it. I do remember that I had a Christmas job working in a department store downtown and so, you know, a bunch of the staff — this is the time when you would go downtown and, you know, buy your gifts for Christmas. And one guy that I had shared with came out of his training because at some point they divided up people, whatever. And he was laughing like crazy! And he immediately told me, "Eh, so we went in there and they told us that we were going to make twenty-five cents an hour more than you would. And that's because we were supposed to be able to lift packages." And I was like "Hmm." So that immediately struck me. Now, I didn't go back and say, "Hey, I want twenty-five cents extra an hour", but I was aware, very much aware that things played out differently. And not so much in wages, but even when I was in high school, I could see that — I

went to a co-ed high school so I could see that the men, particularly in technical areas, were treated differently than the women in technical areas and that, that didn't sit right with me.

The beauty of being in a technical arena — because later I went into management, I did that for a profession — is that it's easy to quantify your contribution to the bottom line. So I was — it was a lot easier for me to have wage parity than it is for someone who's teaching. Say, a preschool teacher. Now, in the big scheme of things, someone who's an excellent preschool teacher probably can generate more impact on a person, on a society than someone who makes more money for people who already have money. But it's easier to quantify the financial impact. So I'm aware that there's what pays and what's really important. And it's nice to get what paid.

Q: That's very true.

McLeod: And it doesn't mean that wealth is worth.

Q: Yeah.

McLeod: But wealth is nice.

Q: Yeah, definitely! And it would be nice if people actually got paid what they needed to live a good life.

McLeod: Yes.

[30:00]

Q: On that slightly political note, I would like to shift us to your involvement with political activism on campus. Could you tell us more about your involvement in those efforts?

McLeod: Okay. It's — I came to Mundelein from a — the year that I graduated from high school, we had civics. And the school that I went to, the head of the school had a very conservative Republican orientation, so made us watch "Communist bad", you know, "America good", really cheap, terrible videos (laughs). But it was so obvious, slanted and biased that we made a joke out of it. And it was also time when there were — the beginnings of the protests in the street against the Vietnam War, all right. So that was the starting point.

I came to Mundelein and they — at that time, had a special orientation — I would call it a week, I'm not sure it was really a week — but special programs for freshmen who were entering the class. And one of — the head of the student body arranged for an orientation, kind of a political orientation during the freshman period. And I actually went back and read the *Sky, Skyscraper* newspaper [student newspaper at Mundelein College] because I didn't remember the details and

I didn't want to get it wrong. Because I had a very vivid memory — as it turned out, some of the details were wrong, but the rest of it was correct, all right.

So Marge Sklencar was a senior when I was a freshman. And I'm not sure if you or anyone else have had an opportunity just to speak with her. I Googled her several years ago and I tried to find out whatever happened to her and I never could. But she was — in the following year, there was a March on Washington, a Moratorium March on Washington. And there were four people who organized that, who were paid committee, and Marge was one of those people. So she brought — and I don't know how she became politicized, I don't know how that happened. But she along with people from [the University of California,] Berkeley and from Columbia [University] drove this.

So meanwhile, back at the ranch here, so it was time for the orientation and there were political speakers and part of the tradition at Mundelein up to that point was that the freshmen all wore little red beanies and so that was kind of a mild hazing for the students. And one of the speakers came and said to us, "Well, Marge came and invited me to speak to you about some social awareness." He said, "And I didn't know what to expect because I was going to a small Catholic women's college." And he said, "And I thought that it might be for small-minded Catholic women." He said, "But, you know, maybe I'm not correct." And thereat, he encouraged us not to be small-minded Catholic women. So then, he referenced these red beanies that we were wearing and said, "Why are you doing that?", you know. "That's kind of dumb." And I do remember that the tradition ended there. That lots of us took it off and said we are done with this, that's not how

we are going to do this. So that's what I recalled then, that in the first week there was a challenge to step up, be aware, take action. And I took that seriously.

It was interesting when I went back and read that article that month in the *Skyscraper*. Someone had interviewed incoming students to see what the number one thing they wanted to, to get out of a career at Mundelein, you know, what was their reason for being here. And what was reported as the number one comment — it said, “Well, I want to grow up.” And I'm — I thought back, and I don't want to grow up!

[35:00]

I wanted to grow up, I wanted to come to get married [interviewee correction: I didn't come here to grow up, or get married], I wanted to come and be smart and be respected. And my daughter tells me too, you know, that I have to be careful, that I'm not normal, so I have to, when I participate in things, I have to be very careful that I don't project my feelings and opinions on others. Again, she said, “You are not normal.” I take that as a positive thing, but who knows. Some days it is positive for her.

Q: Yeah. No, no, go for it!

McLeod: And I wasn't sure — I was thinking back to what the question — Oh, how did I get involved? Okay. So we did that and then on campus, there were some protests, peace protests,

candlelight vigils. We would walk around the neighborhood, kind of a peace and justice thing. Very mild, super mild things. But activist at least.

And then sophomore year became the March on Washington. I do remember being involved on campus in a leadership role. All of this was very informal, we didn't have any branch of, you know, Students for Non-Violent Action, or anything else. It was just very fluid, very organic. So I collected a bunch of money, and, you know took the "L" over to the West Side, scared that I was going to be mugged all the way because I had this money in my pocket and it was all cash. And then, you know, that was our bus fare to get on the bus to go to Washington in a big caravan. So I do remember that.

And then, as things progressed, there was the shooting at Kent State when I was a junior. And then Mundelein was one of the probably several dozen colleges in the country that actually went on strike. So we did that. And again, in the big scheme of things, this was a pretty mild response. But we did that and I remember my instructors were supportive. They may not personally have done that but I was able to finish out all my classes because there was still some time left, take my exams and I wasn't penalized for my political action in my classes. And then, kind of the final piece of mild resistance, I think, came our senior year and I do recall this though I have no pictures.

We had — it was coming time for graduation and my buddy Pat and I were still in the dorm because we were RAs [resident assistants] and we cut up a sheet and we put peace symbols on

these strips of sheet and passed them out to anyone who wanted to wear them at graduation. So as we marched across the stage, from left to right to get our diploma, a lot of us had on our right arm the peace symbol on our — to make a statement, you know, our statement for graduation. So, I recall that one.

Q: Thank you so much. I have quite a few questions based on you said. So, first, about the beanies, am I right to say that the class of 1971 was the last class to have those freshman beanies?

McLeod: Yes.

Q: I see, and what were the seniors' reaction to that? Because I understand there was the Big Sister Little Sister program and a big part of that was actually ensuring the freshmen wore their beanies or they would be punished.

McLeod: I do not recall that not wearing the beanie was seen as a repudiation of the Big Sister Little Sister. I think it was just the symbolism of the beanie that went away.

Q: I see, that explains a lot. And I was wondering for the actions that you [sic] were taken, the civil rights actions, how did students get together to organize these? Was there kind of an informal leadership in the college body that did that?

McLeod: It was informal and I guess we would put up signs. I try to recall what it was.

[40:00]

I do remember that we would say, hey, we are going to get together at six o'clock in the basement of what was then Piper Hall — I don't recall what we called it then. And I remember walking over there, thinking, I wonder who's going to speak to the group today. And as I walked over there, I realized it would be me. So I knew that I was there. The class ahead of me had several leaders too and so the group was there. It wasn't only in our class, but the Class of '70 also. And by that time, Marge had gone. And there were several instructors who were very supportive, I don't want to say it was totally a student thing, but there were instructors there too. I do not recall an organized, anti-war resistance movement to the group. I know that certainly not everybody participated.

Q: I see. So for the students that didn't participate in the war efforts, how did the two groups of students interact with each other? Were there conflicts or not very much at all?

McLeod: Not much. And again, I would been either mildly aware or perhaps even unaware because many of my friends were in the same political grouping. I do know that my friend, Kathy Kennedy — who's still a dear friend of mine although we are separated a lot — she and I did not have the same political opinions. However — and it would become a little tense if we would have conversation, but we were still friends. And then there were other folks — we had

the 1968 Democratic [National] Convention in Chicago during the time that I was at Mundelein so that was a lot of controversy there, a lot of folks were not keen on — I don't really want to say here. There were a lot of people who were far more vocal about their anti-war sentiments than I was. Again, it was pretty modest, plain vanilla-type stuff. I can't say that I was completely or even sufficiently insightful at the time, but it was a big deal to me.

And then I ended up working for some campaigns — I didn't work so much for national campaigns, but I worked for local campaigns so I actually knocked on doors, went to polling places, did that type of thing.

Q: I see. And for the Kent State protests, you mentioned that Mundelein was one of several dozen colleges. For that, do you recall if Mundelein students worked with those other colleges to coordinate efforts?

McLeod: No, I don't. I don't.

Q: Yeah.

McLeod: I remember we would stand up on the curve at Sheridan, on Sheridan there and, you know, with signs and kind of "Honk for Peace" or things like that, but no, I don't remember a lot of the rest, any major coordination.

Q: I see, thank you. I was also wondering — were there any particularly memorable moments or challenging moments from your involvement in these student activist efforts?

McLeod: No. And I say that with a good respect to the faculty. I mean, we would have sit-ins — Again, in the big scheme of things, pretty minor stuff, we didn't have major van — you know, there was really no vandalism that happened. And the faculty was — and administration — was open to whatever we wanted to do. And I'm sure other people felt it in a similar way. But no, there was — I never had a sense that we were fighting with the administration to do anything.

Q: This is very helpful information, thank you so much. Because it's one of the things in WLA that we have been wondering about — what student involvement in these activism efforts were like, so what you are sharing has been really helpful. Thank you.

McLeod: Okay.

[45:00]

Q: And I would also like to ask you about your experiences being an RA. You mentioned that you and your friend, Pat, were RAs in the Northland Hall and you also mentioned that you were living in the dormitories. So first I was wondering, were you living in the Northland dormitory for all four years or did you live in another dormitory at the beginning?

McLeod: Oh, all four years. And my buddy, Kathy, was actually [interviewee clarification: an RA in] the last year — the three of us whom were, happened to be close, were, all happened to be RAs. We were the third, the fourth, and the fifth floors covered with what we were doing. No, I lived in the dorm — there were two dorms at the time, so there — one was Coffey Hall and the building — I'm not sure if the building is still there anymore — and the other one was Northland. And they were — The dorms had different personalities. And so the — how do I want to say this — the more traditional dorm — I'm going to characterize this as more traditional dorm, young Catholic woman going to college experience probably happened in Coffey Hall and the other, not quite as traditional experiences would happen in Northland. And I do remember someone who lived in Coffey Hall —again, this is total stereotyping and gross, gross, gross things to do. I would never allow anyone to say this but me, because it's so terrible.

But the thing was, well, if you lived in Northland, you never ironed your clothes (laughs). And so it was that. And there were not a lot of people who moved back and forth between dorms. It was unusual. In Cincinnati, there is an East Side and a West Side and there are stereotypes about the East and the West Side. In that sense, it was similar that you had the East dorm and the West dorm and that they took on a culture and persona of their own that affected the individuals who lived there and it was kind of a cycle like that. And people do cross over, you know, and, but similar thing. A little bit different cultural — culture in the dorms. And Northland was an older building, a set of suites so — with an ensuite bathroom rather than the dormitory that had the bathrooms down the hall. So people interacted in different ways just by, you know, how they passed one another in the hallway.

Q: That's so interesting to know about the different cultures of the dorms. Could you choose which dorm to live in when you first entered Mundelein?

McLeod: Yes, and I don't recall why I chose the one that I did. And someone was in charge of assigning roommates. And I don't know who that was, because I think the only questions they asked were maybe, what are you interested in studying and do you smoke or not, because at that point you could — I think you could smoke in the rooms. But yeah, someone had — I don't know who did it but someone did a decent job because there were not a lot of people who were switching roommates. And then as we got closer to my junior year and senior year when the population became more diverse and particularly the Black students were forming identity groups, then the general theme was that the Black students would have a — would be in a room together. Not so much they had to choose a Black student but that's how things kind of started up. And I must say — well, my other buddies remember different stories — but having a lot of Black students or non-white Catholic young women on campus was a diversity change that occurred while I was there. At least, again, in my view — became more prominent.

Q: This is really good information to have. How many roommates did you have in a room?

McLeod: My freshman year, there were four of us. And then, four freshman, sophomore and junior years and then there was just me when I was a senior.

[50:00]

Rooms came in twos, fours and sixes so some students would have six people in their room.

Q: Oh, that's a lot of people in one room!

McLeod: Well, I mean, they were — they had like — the building had originally been apartments and converted. So [interviewee clarification: for the suites of six] there were two small bedrooms, and then one main room which also served as a bedroom for two people. So there were clusters of two, except the two people who had the middle room had the whole thing. I mean, they had to be the entertainment center.

Q: I see. And you were mentioning that you were an RA in your senior year. So what's the application process like to be an RA? Can anyone be an RA or do you have to be of a certain school year to do so?

McLeod: The year — They aimed for seniors, the year that I was an RA. And you did apply for that. And I don't recall what we — we had to answer some questions and go through an interview. I'm sure there were more people who applied than people who got jobs. The year before, there were some students who were paired up, so were pairs — in some cases, there were pairs of RAs. And I don't know what caused the thinking to change, the going from two people to one person in the rooms.

Q: I see. And you mentioned that during your graduation ceremony, you kind of tore up some sheets to — as peace bands. Were there any other memorable moments or challenging moments during your time as an RA?

McLeod: Oh, yes. So the year I was a senior, the, the student population was a lot more diverse. And the floor that I had, I'm going to say at least a third of it, maybe a little bit more, were freshmen. And most people lived on campus for at least three of the four years, so you would normally have a bigger spread of upper and lower classmen on a floor. And I recall that the students included individuals — white students who had never gone to school with Black students and Black students who had never gone to school with white students. So, while there was no hostility, there was certainly some uneasiness. Everyone kind of getting to know one another, "hey, this is a little bit different than I'm used to, how this, how that."

And we had one student on the floor — And things were very fluid, people — a lot of times, people didn't lock their doors, folks moved from one room to another pretty easily, it was a very casual and welcoming environment, all right. So one student — it became clear after maybe four weeks — was stealing things from other people's rooms. And we had a strong sense of who it was, but not enough information to say, hey, I know you, Jane, and you are the one, the one who's doing this so cut that out. And we had no idea what we would do! With a student who was stealing from someone else. We were like, oh, we haven't encountered this before. What happens now?

So, we had a floor meeting — and those were common, we would have everybody on the floor would come and sit out in the hallway and cover some business items or there used to be a ceremony when people got engaged, they would announce it to the floor. And I remember having a meeting and some students from other floors coming, coming down and just coming to see what was going to happen and it was a long meeting. And again, I was conducting the meeting because I was the RA on the floor but I had no freaking idea what I was doing, you know. But kind of talked through, and a lot of what came out of that meeting — again, my recollection of this is that people verbalized, students verbalized that they were unfamiliar with people from another culture. And said, you know, what are we going to do about this, how are we going to kind of get through it. Again, this is not— this is my recollection, which is very vivid.

[55:00]

It was not insightful, this was not, you know, oh my god, isn't this wonderful and something changed. No, it was a little piece but it was vivid to me. Now, I'm just happy that I survived it. I stood up for an hour leaning on the wall and when the meeting was over, everyone went back, I went back into my room, I remember my knees were shaking and I was glad that I had been standing against the wall so that, that wasn't obvious. And then ultimately, the student who was stealing stuff was privately asked to leave. We never — During that meeting, she was not publicly identified.

Q: Wow, yeah, that sounds really challenging. Did you reach out to any of the nuns or was there someone that you could go to for advice on how to handle the situation?

McLeod: (nods) Yeah, I remember we did that. Again, I don't recall the specifics of how things played out and at that time, there was — and I'm not sure if she was there or not — a non-traditional student who was at Mundelein — and she was a nurse — and so she was — she lived on one of the floors and I'm sure I would have consulted her, she happened to be a Black woman, you know, an older Black woman. I would have been there. And there were some other students whom I knew from the Upward Bound program, I would have conferred with them too. And certainly, there was a recap afterward. But again, a lot of the — what imprints the memory to me is my feelings about it, not that it was a particularly significant event, you know, in the grand scheme of things.

Q: No, I'm sure it sounds pretty important that — like you said, it was probably the first time that students from such diverse cultures were coming together, living together and navigating a common space together so that sounds really important that — unfortunate moment, but a pretty important flash point for people to consider certain things.

McLeod: Mhmm. And there were a lot of folks too — we were near the “L” and so, I mean, driving on campus, I mean, that just didn't exist at the time. And so, there were a lot of people who came to school who had never ridden the “L” before they got to campus! And were like, how do I do this, there are all these strange people standing on this “L” platform, you know, how do I do, what do I do, how does this work. And I had the benefit of, you know, doing that before

and I was familiar with public transportation so it wasn't a big deal for me, but it was a major — I don't want to say challenge — learning experience for a lot of other folks.

Q: I see —

McLeod: I would say —

Q: — Mhmm?

McLeod: I would say other things that I can remember that were kind of learning things that happened in the dorm. I remember we had a weekend where people could come and stay overnight. In the dorm, new students. And we had new students in the dorm overnight the night that Martin Luther King, Junior, was killed. And so the, the city was burning and we were all on lockdown. So I admit it was— everyone trying to be cool and we will kind of get through this, but we knew that it was an important night.

Q: Wow, so the students who were staying overnight, they just stayed on campus, people didn't go out? How — Did you all have a space to kind of process what was happening?

McLeod: I think what we tried — I wasn't, I wasn't in a role as an RA at the time but what I do remember was that it was important not to freak out. You know? [About the] Violence. Do what we can in here, let's get to know one another. But no, we didn't think how crazy.

Q: I see, thank you for sharing that. And I wanted to ask you what, if you recall, what your duties as an RA were? You mentioned floor meetings, were there any other duties that you had to do as an RA?

McLeod: Every — I had one night — two nights a week that my job was to be kind of the person in charge on the floor and what I would — be available, so kind of an on-call role.

[1:00:00]

And then I would hourly walk all the floors. There were six floors in the building, so I would walk from the front to the back, making sure that nothing was open. Another vivid memory is that I would always check that — we had a garbage room down on the first floor — and that was kind of creepy because I would open the door just to check that the door to the outside was still locked. There were rats down there so that was not too cool but (laughs). But that was it.

[Section from 1:00:34:22 – 1:02:20:17 redacted due to privacy issues. See WLA archivist for more information.]

Q: So I'm — are there any other moments that you would like to share about your time as an RA or living on the dorm?

McLeod: There were, there were — and I'm not going to be the best person — but for my class, we had a “Conference on Curriculum”, which was called CONCUR. As I recall, it was either between my sophomore and junior or between my junior and senior years, I don't recall which one. But it occurred during the summer and a number of us — students and faculty members — came together and had workshops — it was like a little convention. But the group — I don't know if we were invited specifically or if anybody could come in or just selected to come. But we were asked to review the curriculum and determine if we should still have a structured liberal arts environment or loosen some of the requirements and, say, the majors, and allow people to do different things.

And ultimately, we relaxed the curriculum. And again, these were recommendations that were made to the administration, not demands that were coming from the students specifically. But again, what I do recall is more the feeling that I had than the specifics of the event, which was that being trusted to be a fair arbiter of what should happen, to be an equal participant in what was happening and that's what I recall. And I kind of mentioned in some of my notes too that the big thing that came to me, what I wanted from Mundelein was an experience where I could be smarter and treated fairly as a woman. And I think what I got in addition to that is a lot of leadership opportunities which were expected of me and I feel that I had an opportunity to respond.

[1:05:00]

So for me, it was a wonderful experience. Other people didn't have the same experiences. And that's part of why I wanted to share my story because I thought it was really important — to me.

Q: That's great. Thank you so much. So I just have a few more questions. I was wondering if you could share a little about the books and movies that were popular when you were at college?

McLeod: Oh dear. No, I can't. Not because I won't but, unfortunately, pop culture is not my thing. Even then, I was a total nerdy person and I simply do not recall (laughs).

Q: That's fine, that's completely fine. I was wondering, if you recall, were there any interactions with the Loyola students that you had?

McLeod: Yes. Well, I mean, some. Certainly, there were a lot of guys there which we didn't have on campus. We would go to programs there. I can only remember one program we went to at Northwestern, because that was really within fairly easy distance. There weren't a lot of things going on. At that particular time when I was in school, sporting things were not as popular because it was a political thing in a time of change. So what would normally have been, hey, let's go to the basketball game or let's do these things on campus, weren't as important. There were frats down the street, there were frat parties and again, I was a real nerdy kid, and I just didn't go. They were there to do that or to have fun, it just wasn't my thing. I can tell you that a

year later, I did ultimately end up marrying a man from Loyola but that was not someone whom I had dated while I was in school. I did date a couple of guys steadily, but they were people I knew from the coffeehouse and not people that I knew from campus.

Q: I see, thank you for sharing that. Did your class have any particular traditions during Class Day or some other traditions that they did?

McLeod: In the dorm they had what they called “Candlelighting” ceremonies. So someone became engaged, there would be a floor meeting and then a candle would get passed around the floor and then, you would — someone would have a favorite song and they would play the favorite song and when the candle — when the woman who wanted to announce her engagement was there, she would, she would stop the candle and then she would say, oh, I’m engaged. I don’t remember a lot of other stuff, I’m sorry. I remember hanging out on, on the lawn or some other things, but not a lot more. Sorry about that. I’m not good with all that.

Q: Oh, no, this is great! I have learnt a lot from what you have been sharing actually. So for the Candlelighting ceremony, I was wondering, is it the same — Was there a ceremony of the same name during Christmas? Because I have seen in *Skyscraper* photos where they had candles lit up in the windows of the Skyscraper building to form a cross? And they called that a “Candlelighting Ceremony” as well, so I was wondering if you had something similar during your time at Mundelein?

McLeod: I don't recall it. That doesn't mean that it didn't happen, it just means I don't recall it.

Q: I see. But that's really interesting to know, I didn't know that there was another ceremony of the same name going on at the dorms so that's great for our records.

McLeod: Okay.

Q: And I have one last question for you. So I was reading recently about various religious traditions at Mundelein, such as the May Crowning ceremony. I was wondering, if you recall, if you could share about how religion was part of Mundelein student life?

McLeod: (nods) It was — All right — Now when — My religious tradition at Mundelein moved. I grew up Catholic, was certainly very much in the Catholic tradition as I — when I entered Mundelein. After I left Mundelein, while I had a great appreciation of the tradition, I'm no longer a practicing Catholic. Or anything else, for that matter.

[1:10:00]

But there was a group, a religious group that met at — at that time, it was called the “Yellow House” — it was on Sheridan and it was kind of a religious affiliation. There were masses there, but it was not in the chapel. It was neither in the Loyola chapel or the Mundelein chapel. But it

was a more progressive Catholic religious group, probably more social justice focused. And I do remember attending mass there and being there. Not so much in the traditional places.

And what happened is, rather than kind of personal religious experiences, my own faiths and belief moved more toward a social justice, humanist perspective rather than a religious perspective. And also, there was just the whole reality that women, in my estimation, were not treated as full religious participants in the Catholic church. So that was not okay. And then, you know, I was taking more feminist positions, too, than the church would take. So that was also something that would separate me from the traditional, religious, socially conservative beliefs.

Q: I see, thank you so much for sharing that. So that's all the questions I have on my end actually, but is there anything else we haven't covered that you would like to share about your time at Mundelein College?

McLeod: I don't think so. Again, there were a lot of things that were extraordinarily important to me but in the big scheme of things, were, you know, were not earth-shattering or transformative on the large thing. I mean, I still — I have not run for office, I still, you know, do all my electoral stuff, today I, you know, contribute to my, my favorite causes, you know, which are, you know, League of Women — I'm a participant of the League of Women Voters, the local Democratic party, Planned Parenthood. So I have got my things that I, that I do that are my — essentially feminist value oriented.

Q: That's great, and I have to say it's been very insightful, all these things that you have been sharing with me, so I would say they are pretty earth-shattering to me because you have taught me so much about things I wouldn't have learnt otherwise from the records. So thank you so much for your time, Cathy. I will be stopping the recording here and we will talk about some of the administrative steps after.

[END OF RECORDING]