

SHARE YOUR STORY: STUDENT LIFE AT MUNDELEIN

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Susan Carlson's Oral History

Women and Leadership Archives

Loyola University Chicago

2021

PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Susan Carlson conducted by Chris Mattix on December 10, 2021. This interview is part of the Share Your Story: Student Life at Mundelein project, an oral history project to expand and enrich the Women and Leadership Archives' (WLA) records of Mundelein College's history through interviews with alumnae on student life.

Mundelein College, founded and operated by the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (BVM), provided education to women from 1930 until 1991, when it affiliated with Loyola University Chicago.

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

TIME LOG AND OVERVIEW

[0:00 - 5:00]: Introductions, family background, choosing Mundelein, and career goals going into Mundelein.

[5:00 - 10:00]: Classes she took, term in Switzerland, and experience of moving to Chicago as a teenager.

[10:00 - 15:00]: Experience of going to Mundelein during the Vietnam War, Kent State massacre, and strikes on campus.

[15:00 - 20:00]: Black student visibility and continuation of world events.

[20:00 - 25:00]: How the Vietnam War affected her time at Mundelein.

[25:00 - 30:00]: Changes in Mundelein when she attended, lifting of dorm restrictions, and regretting not getting to know the commuters more.

[30:00 - 35:00]: More world events, difference between living in Coffey and Northland Hall, and her roommate.

[35:00 - 40:00]: Coffey and Northland Hall continued, candlelighting, and working with Sister Jean at her campus job.

[40:00 - 45:00]: Working with Sister Jean and working with Sister Mary Frances O'Shea.

[45:00 - 50:00]: Working on Saturdays at the Chicago History Museum, not pursuing a master's in history, and applying to law school.

[50:00 - 55:00]: War protests being her extracurriculars, Upward Bound, and reading *Mundelein Voices*.

[55:00 - 57:30]: How a Mundelein ad got her to go to the school and wrap up.

NARRATOR BIO

Susan Carlson was born and raised in 1948 in Des Moines, IA. Susan was the eldest of four children. Her father was a convert to Catholicism, and Susan was raised in the faith. Her mother was a nurse, and her father was a draftsman for a local construction company. Susan attended public school for two years before attending parochial school. Susan later attended an all-girls Catholic high school operated by the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (BVMs). Between 1965 and 1966, Susan participated in the Summer School of the Christian Apostolate

where she first visited Mundelein College's campus along with 3,000 other Catholic teenagers. Susan chose Mundelein for its location in the "big city" and its operation by the BVM order.

Susan arrived at Mundelein with the intention of becoming a secondary school teacher but quickly decided to pursue a major in history. She lived in Coffey Hall during her freshman year, 1967-68, and during the first two terms of her sophomore year, 1968-March 1969. During her junior year, Susan lived in the Northland. She worked on campus 10 hours a week as a student aide in the Academic Dean's office. Initially, she worked for Susan TePas and Sister Jean Dolores Schmidt. Later, she worked for Sister Frances O'Shea, BVM as well as for Sister Jean Dolores. During the summer of 1970, she worked full-time in the Registrar's Office. During her senior year, Susan also worked on Saturdays at the Chicago Historical Society (now known as the Chicago History Museum).

During her sophomore year, Susan was able to study abroad in Switzerland, studying French. In addition to French, she also studied Spanish, Greek, and Japanese. She began classes following the events of Vatican Council II, which drastically changed the campus experience during her years at Mundelein.

Susan attended college during several pivotal moments in United States history, namely the war in Vietnam and the Civil Rights Movement, including the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. She remembers the activism of Black students and their fight to be seen at Mundelein including the hiring of a Black dean of students. Susan was active in opposition action to the war in Vietnam. During her junior year, Susan recalls the Kent State Massacre and her participation in a strike in response to the violence, headquartered in Piper Hall.

In her senior year, Susan participated in Mandala, the experimental college where students were more involved in designing their scholastic experience, during its first year of operation. She also audited a chemistry class during this time. Susan graduated from Mundelein in 1971.

INTERVIEWER BIO

Chris Mattix was a graduate student in the Public History Master's program at Loyola University Chicago and a graduate assistant at the Women in Leadership Archives in 2021-2023. Chris received their bachelor's degree in history and human communication from Western Michigan University in 2020 and focuses on the history of the LGBTQIA+ community.

Transcriptionist: Chris Mattix

Interviewee: Susan Carlson

Locations: Lake Forest, IL and Chicago, IL via

Zoom

Interviewer: Chris Mattix

Date: December 10, 2021

[BEGINNING OF INTERVIEW]

[0:00]

Q: For the record, my name is Chris Mattix. I am a graduate assistant at the Women and Leadership Archives. Interviewing Susan Carlson, class of 1971, on December 10, 2021, for the Share Your Story: Student Life at Mundelein Project. I am in Chicago, Illinois, and Susan is in Lake Forest, Illinois. To start us off, could you tell us a little bit about yourself, your family, things like when you were born and where you were raised?

Carlson: I was born in 1948 in Des Moines, Iowa, and was reared there. The oldest of four children. My dad was a convert to Catholicism, but I'm a cradle Catholic, attended public school during my first two years of kindergarten and first grade, and then went to parochial school and then to the all-girls Catholic high school in Des Moines. Des Moines was small enough, or had a Catholic population small enough, that there was one Catholic high school for girls and another all-boys boys high school. I—my mom was a nurse. My dad worked as a draftsman for a construction company. I think I always wanted to go to college. I realize now that that was not the case for other people that I grew up with. It was basically a—we lived in a working class

parish, so I do feel fortunate that my life trajectory was what it was. And then I'm sitting here now talking to you about my college experience of more than fifty years ago now.

Q: When you did decide that you wanted to go to college, what made you choose Mundelein?

Carlson: Well, the all-girls Catholic high school in Des Moines was run by the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary—commonly known as BVMs. They are the Sisters who established Mundelein College, I guess in 1930. So I, of course, knew about Mundelein. I also knew about their other college, Clark College in Dubuque. And during the summers of both 1965 and 1966, I came on school trips to Chicago to attend what was called the Summer School of the Christian Apostolate, along with about three thousand other Catholic teenagers. And on one of those visits, we took the 'L' from downtown Chicago up to Rogers Park and visited Mundelein's campus. At that point, I was very interested in attending Mundelein, mainly because it was in Chicago. I really wanted to leave Des Moines and go to the big city. I was somewhat disappointed in Mundelein's campus. I mean, I knew what it was even before we got there. The Skyscraper building was basically the campus. But I decided that it was indeed better to go to Chicago to college than to the traditional college with ivy-covered walls. My parents were not keen on going that far away to school, but fortunately they went along with it.

Carlson: I got some scholarship money, got some loans, and then worked for ten hours a week to help pay for my private school education. My younger brother was going to a state school in Iowa, which would have been a lot less expensive, but I got to go to Mundelein.

Q: So when you did start at Mundelein, what did you study, and what were your courses like?

Carlson: Well, when I arrived at college, my career goal was to become a teacher—secondary school teacher. And I never got around to taking a single education course. And my poor parents did not realize that until I graduated because they just were not tuned in to college experiences of children the way modern parents are. They never said, "When are you doing your student teaching?" So, I ended up finishing with a degree in history. I knew early on I was interested in history, and instead of talking about where I ended up going from 1971 on, I'll focus on your question about what I studied.

[05:00]

When I started at Mundelein, they still had in place what was called the core curriculum, which had been developed just a couple of years or maybe five years earlier when they had done an extensive study of the college. And they had come up with this plan that you would take courses that expose you to the broad range of humanities. So I did take a music appreciation course, which I probably would not have done had it not been required. And I still remember very vividly going down to what was then called Orchestra Hall—still there in the same place they now just call it Chicago Symphony—to attend a live concert to listen to, I think, Brahms, because we're studying Brahms. I also took an art appreciation course. I passed out of a few courses that were part of the core curriculum. And to refresh my memory, Chris, I actually have my transcript here to remind me of what I studied. And I have to confess I look at some of these courses and have no recollection of what I did in them. But it's been a long time.

But I did take a history course during the very first term, also took French. I became very interested in languages, even though I now realize I don't have a particular affinity to language. But I studied French, which then allowed me to spend a term in Switzerland during my sophomore year in the French-speaking part of Switzerland—a program that was not sponsored by Mundelein but by another college here in the Midwest. When I returned from Switzerland, I continued to take—I took a French poetry class, also Spanish and Japanese, and it was all way too much, I think, to be doing three languages at one time. And then somewhere along the line, without it being a credit course, I briefly was like being tutored by the BVM Sister who was the Classics Department at Mundelein, and I cannot remember her name, which is very sad. Because I also wanted to learn Greek. I did not progress very far with my Greek studies, but I did learn enough French that I was fluent when I was in Switzerland.

And then I continued to take history classes and other humanity courses. Physical education was required. Nothing other than my venture into Japanese, nothing else that was terribly exotic. My history classes now that I'm more aware of how, until fairly recently, we focused always on the West in our learning. I did have a course in Latin American history—taught by a BVM who specialized in that—but I didn't study Asian history or African history. It just wasn't on our horizon at that point in time. But I did still have a very broad liberal arts education, and I'm very grateful for that. I really think that liberal arts is the way that you learn how to learn. And then once you have that, you can continue learning for the rest of your life.

Q: Were there any other experiences you had at Mundelein that you found meaningful either at the time or looking back?

Carlson: Well, the whole experience was meaningful in that I went from a very sheltered—almost nineteen year-old old at the time I arrived in Chicago—to, if not a mature adult, at least I had matured to adulthood. It was a time of great change in our country, in our society and the Catholic Church. So I look back on the experience, and it's not all happy, fun experiences. My college experience had a lot of seriousness to it.

[10:00]

Because of the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights Movement had started before I entered in 1967. But then April of 1968, my freshman year, Martin Luther King [Jr.] was assassinated, and the Black students on campus all of a sudden became visible. It's very sad to realize that they were there before, but they basically were able to then speak out more about their own experiences of living among us—nice Catholic white girls—who were essentially exhibiting many signs of racism. So I feel privileged that I was there to have that experience. The Vietnam War, of course, was not the last war that our country has been in turmoil about. That was a very difficult experience. During my junior year, the Kent State—Kent State happened. Which was four students at Kent State University in Ohio being murdered by the National Guard that had been called out because students were protesting because President [Richard] Nixon had ordered bombing of Cambodia, I believe. And so I, along with many other Mundelein students, went on strike for basically the rest of the spring term of 1970.

What's now Piper Hall, right? I get mixed up because that building has changed names several times in my experience. I'm not sure what it was when I first started there. It was the library, actually—it was the library until the Learning Resource Center opened, I think, in 1970. So by the time of Kent State, Piper Hall had become, I think, the Gannon Center—not the current Gannon Center—but it was basically like a student union, and it became the headquarters for the strike activities at Mundelein. I haven't been on campus for a number of years, but I suspect that it's now in much better shape than it was in May of 1970, when I don't think that we were necessarily focused on taking good care of the furnishings.

In my last year at Mundelein, I was in what's called Mandela, the experimental college. I think you might have referred to it as alternate learning experience, which it was. And I cannot remember how we came up with the name Mandela. I was in it the first year it existed. I think it went on for maybe four or five years, I'm not sure. And it came out of a conference that was held within the college in January of 1970 called the Conference on Curriculum—shortened to CONCUR. And I remember speaking out at that conference about the desirability of having an experimental college. I really didn't have a clear vision myself of what that meant, other than that a student would be more involved in designing her own learning experience. And I do remember because it was a label that got attached to me. I used as an example that if I wanted to study Alchemy, I could do that in the experimental college.

So senior year rolls around, and I enrolled as an auditor in the chemistry course, and the professor, of course, wondered what I was doing there because Alchemy, of course, has nothing to do with chemistry. But I did audit that class and I read a lot. And then I met with other

students in the college every week. And we had two faculty members who were the moderators, David Crosby and David Orr, and I think there were at least a dozen of us. I really now wish I could learn more about where it ended up like two or three years later, because whenever—you know, the prototype is always problematic. Right?

[15:00]

I've never regretted that I did it because I learned that I needed more structure in my life than was provided by the experimental college as it then existed. But that was who I was then. I was into breaking barriers if I could. And so that was my major contribution, I suppose, was to be part of that experiment in education. And I don't know, I'm not privy to why they stopped, whether students didn't like it or it evolved into something that I would not have recognized even five years later.

Q: So you mentioned a little bit about the Civil Rights Movement while you were on campus and the kind of sudden visibility of Black students. How did Mundelein as a college respond to that?

Carlson: One of the things that they did was to hire an assistant academic dean. A Black woman whose name I cannot remember. And again, I'm hoping that all of this is somewhere in the archives and someday I can come down there and refresh my recollection. I'm pretty sure she was an academic dean, not like in the dean of students, because her office was where Sister Jean Dolores Schmidt's office was, and Sister Jean Dolores was at that time an assistant academic dean. It was somewhat uncomfortable. That's probably my major takeaway. It's going to be

uncomfortable when you have been in a position where you can comfortably just be the majority and not necessarily have lenses to focus on those in your midst who are not members of that majority. When they do start to speak up, you can be taken aback.

Carlson: At this point, I don't remember that they made that the Black dean, on behalf of the students, made any particular demands. They may have designed one or more courses on the Black experience. I would think that would have been something. But again, I'd have to go down and look in the archives to see what the catalog looked like in the years after Martin Luther King [Jr.] was killed. And then I don't know how long that persisted. And it was also difficult in that there were—I was not close friends with any of the Black students before April of 1968. I never had a Black roommate. Our classroom experience was mostly lecture rather than—now I know from—because I continue to go to school—and now a lot of times they break you into discussion groups, I think. At least when I was studying at Catholic Theological Union, some of our courses had us sit and talk in small groups, which exposes you more to your fellow students than when you're sitting in a classroom looking at the professor and listening to lectures. I don't remember like sitting in the Tea Room—which is what we call the dining room. I'm sure you know that by now, Chris—it was the Tea Room. I don't remember sitting with Black students, nor do I remember anyone saying, let's avoid sitting with Black students. And remember the Civil Rights Movement had started before we all arrived in my class in 1967. But I think that there was—after King was assassinated—I think that the Black students did tend to hang out together more. And I think most of them maybe lived in the Northland, which I then moved to. So that there was a drawing apart, which I understand they needed to be there for each other and to support each other. But I did not myself march in any Civil Rights marches.

[20:00]

Carlson: I don't think—I think actually, King probably was in Chicago, in the south suburbs, marching against the housing segregation. But I was not involved with that. I think my activities tended to be more focused on the Vietnam War, which of course disproportionately affected Black men. They were the ones who were getting drafted. Many guys at Loyola were worried about continuing their draft, deferments—the white guys. So in retrospect, I wish I could go back and have some do-overs or go back with the eyes that I now have and look at the experience and see if I could understand more deeply what I was going through at that time.

Q: So speaking of Vietnam, would you mind going a little bit more into detail about how that affected your time at Mundelein?

Carlson: Well, the war had been going on for several years before I arrived at Mundelein. I remember engaging in a debate, probably during my junior year of high school, on whether we ought to be in Vietnam or not. And I had the side of the debate arguing that we should be there. I won the debate even though I didn't really believe in what I was—the side that I'd been given. But I also realized that I had very little understanding of the issues. And one of the things that is most different for college students now, versus when I was in college, is the availability of information on the internet. Of course, now we're dealing with the problem of all of the misinformation that's on the internet. But as I mentioned earlier, we didn't study—we studied West—we studied Western civilization. So I knew where Vietnam was—I could find Vietnam

on the map, but I really had no understanding of French colonialism. I really didn't understand colonialism as colonialism. I worry about people who have stopped educating themselves after college because they're still thinking the way I was thinking back then. But it did not—so my opposition to the war was based more on opposition to war, rather than a particular war.

And seeing the anxiety that it produced in the young men who were subject to—who had their draft numbers chosen by lottery. It was based on your birthday. So I have two younger brothers and their draft numbers were low, so we never worried. I don't remember worrying in my family that my brothers would be sent off to Vietnam. The younger one was probably not old enough to have been drafted, but my other brother could have been drafted, but he was not. So it was very immediate. And that—it wasn't now where we have a volunteer army and people volunteer.

There it was, you're going to get called up and you're going to go to a place you don't want to go. There was something called the Vietnam Moratorium in the fall of 1969 out in Washington, D.C., and I remember talking with someone that I had come to know, another girl at Mundelein, who wanted to go out there, but we did not go. But there was a student at Mundelein. She was the president of the student council, in fact, Marge Sklencar, who became very involved with opposition to the Vietnam War. She ended up dropping out of Mundelein. I think she wasn't that far from graduating, and she dropped out so that she could continue her activities. So I always had these people who were out there farther ahead than I was. And then, of course, in 1970, junior year, the student strike was about the Vietnam War. And I remember at one point we actually walked all the way up to Northwestern's campus in Evanston to join with them in some kind of protest.

[25:00]

We were out on Sheridan Road with signs at times. And again, I feel like I'd like to come down to the archives and look at everything to get a better picture, because now it's little fragments. But it was an interesting time to be in college, that is for sure.

Q: Absolutely. So we talked a little bit about some of the changes that had happened around campus while you were there. Were there any other changes you saw between the time you started Mundelein and when you graduated?

Carlson: Yeah. It was like being at two different schools, I think. I arrived in September of 1967. Vatican Council II had just ended not quite two years earlier. I was very excited about being there in Chicago. So when we got to orientation and either were handed, or found in our dorm rooms, red beanies that we freshmen were supposed to wear, that didn't fit in with my idea of what I was going to be doing as a college student. But the idea was you could not be seen on campus without your red beanie or you were subject to some kind of penalty. And that seemed rather juvenile. It was like, "Wait, we finished high school now we're college students." But we dutifully wore the red beanies. And I remember going to a talk that was given during, I think, the orientation week in September of '67 and in connection with my fiftieth reunion—which just occurred by Zoom a couple of months ago—there was some discussion on Facebook before the reunion about who was the speaker? And I thought it was a congressman from New York, but it turns out it was somebody connected with the University of Chicago who was addressing our group on a subject that, I don't remember.

But this man basically said, "If you Catholic women sitting out there wearing your red beanies, continue to stay in that mold, you've entered this place as small Catholic women. And you're going to leave it as small Catholic women." And it's been interesting to me that I was not the only person who heard that as a challenge. So we stopped wearing our beanies that day. So that was—we began the change during the first week. And we had hours. Do you even know what hours are in a dorm? You had to be in by a certain time. On week nights, you had to be in by 10:00 p.m., and I think it was maybe midnight on Friday and Saturday. And that—it might have even been lower than that for freshman. I don't remember that they ever did bed checks, but I think at some point, maybe before I got there, they actually had the on-floor resident come and make sure that you were in your room. So by sometime—I think even in sophomore year, there was a move to change the hours. And I lived off campus during my last year. But by junior year, we had no hours. I can't remember if you had to sign in or out. It's kind of scary now to think about it, given that life seems to be more dangerous now than it was then. So there was that lifting of restrictions. And in my case, I moved from one dorm to another, so that changed my experience of resident life.

One regret I have is that I never got to know the commuters very well. And, of course, we had a significant population of students who lived in the Chicago area and took trains and buses and spent a lot of time commuting to get to Mundelein and then hung out in the lower level of the Skyscraper—which was kind of a depressing area to hang out. I don't know what it's like there now—I need to come back and see what has been done to the building. Because, as I said, we didn't really have that much discussion in classes, so you got to know your fellow students more in the dining room and in the dorms than you did in the classrooms.

[30:00]

And the Vietnam War just hung over everything. And, of course, the church was continuing to change in the wake of Vatican II. Some of the BVM Sisters were leaving the congregation while I was still at Mundelein. It was a time of upheaval—of social and political upheaval. It was during my freshman year that Lyndon Johnson—who was elected in '64, after he took office when Kennedy was assassinated in '63 and then LBJ [Lyndon B. Johnson] was elected President in '64—and then announced in '68 he was not going to seek a second term. Because the Vietnam War was something he could not disentangle himself from.

And I was done with college by the time Watergate happened. I guess every four years of education has its own set of crises and changes. But I do think that going from having to be in at 10:00 at night to having no hours at all was—certainly allowed for more freedom. It also then required more responsibility. I myself did not end up in trouble because of that relaxation. But I suspect that for some of my fellow students, it might have been a problem to go from having such tight limits to having few limits.

Q: Absolutely. So you lived in Coffey and Northland Halls, correct?

Carlson: I did. I can tell you about both of them.

Q: Yeah, go ahead.

Carlson: So I think I picked Coffey because it was new or relatively new. And I had a view of Lake Michigan from my dorm room. I mean, I could hear the waves at night because there was no air conditioning. So at least—in the fall and in the spring, we would often have the windows open, and you could hear the lake. I mean, Madonna della Strada was just across the way, and there is the lake. And I've often thought of how, well—I could never afford to live that close to the lake now. I am in Lake Forest where the lake is a mile away, but I don't have a view of the lake from my room. I had a roommate who—she and I were roommates up until—for all of freshman year and then the fall term of our sophomore year. And then she got married to a man she had met at Loyola who was a couple of years ahead of us. I then cannot remember what I did in the winter term of 1970. Maybe—I just don't remember where I was or who my roommate was. I'm sure she was not my roommate if she had gotten married.

But then I soon went to Switzerland for the spring term of 1969. And when I came back, I moved into Northland. So I was in Northland just for, I think the one year. I had only two roommates. One of whom I saw maybe twenty years ago, the other one I lost contact with soon after we finished. And we were—I think on the third floor of Northland, on the east side, which was next to the Spanish Arms Apartments, so it was very dark. My memory of Northland—there was like no sunlight that was fighting its way down from—I think the sixth floor down to our third floor window, where we were, literally the back porch of Spanish Arms Apartment was right there. You could almost touch it, I think. So you were much more enclosed. I think there was a lounge that maybe where the laundry room was.

[35:00]

People didn't spend time as a group at Northland. You hung out with your roommates. Whereas in Coffey Hall the lounge was at the eastern end of the building and I do have vivid memories of being there more than one night as the sun came up as I was pulling an all-nighter finishing a paper. Although most of the time when I had to do the all-nighters I was down in the part of Coffey Hall known as—the name just went out of my head. It served as a cafeteria. They had a lunchroom room. I'm sure—it's where the mailboxes were. I can still put myself there very clearly because I did spend a few all-nighters in Coffey. Because you didn't want to be typing up in the lounge because it would have been disturbing the students whose dorm rooms were right next to the lounge. But apparently I was, I don't know, doing something, writing by hand and watching the sun come up. So it was absolutely a beautiful place. Coffey Hall was beautiful, and we would spend more time in the lounge because that's where the TV was. There was no—we didn't have phones, tablets, computers. You did not have any kind of visual thing in your room. If you wanted to see TV, you went down to the lounge. And speaking of phones, if you wanted to talk on the phone, there were hall phones—pay phones. Which of course, you had to take turns using. But I rarely used the phone because long distance was expensive. So my mom would write me letters, which was kind of cool.

But we also had a tradition in Coffey—which I don't know what they did in Northland—of having—this happen more for students in the later years. Well, that would happen to my roommate, I guess. When they got engaged, they would not tell everyone. And then we would be told we have to gather in the lounge because—I'm sure the term was not candlelighting—but a candle was lit. And it was passed around the whole room to every girl that was there. And you

wanted to know who got engaged, so you went. And the candle went all the way around the room. And then it started around the second time. And on that second time around, whoever it was who got engaged blew it out. And since we're doing this at night, you couldn't even tell until they turned on the lights who had blown out the candle. And then, of course, everyone is exclaiming and wanting to see the ring and the whole business. I don't think they did stuff like that in the Northland. I don't remember ever doing it during my year in the Northland.

I know the dorms have—they have like a reputation that Coffey would have been more preppy and Northland was a little more artsy. That's probably not totally inaccurate, but I'm glad I had both experiences. Although I'm sure now if I actually could be transported back in time and saw my room in Northland, I would be appalled at how decrepit it was (laughs). I think like paint peeling and the bathrooms were ancient. And of course I'd be appalled if I went into Coffey Hall and realized I actually lived in this tiny room with another person.

Q: Absolutely. I can tell you residence life has not changed that much.

Carlson: (Laughs) I'm not surprised to hear that.

Q: So you worked in the academic dean's office. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

Carlson: Yes. As I mentioned, I worked with Sister Jean Dolores. More—now known to all of her fans as Sister Jean. But when I was there, she was Jean Dolores, which is her religious name

within the BVM community. I realized that—I thought she was old. Of course, she was not. Now I think it's okay to say that she's old because she's 102.

[40:00]

But she certainly was not all that old. But when you're nineteen years old, you think everyone over twenty-five is old. What I mainly remember about Sister Jean was her kindness, her voice. She still has one of the kindest voices that you can ever hear. I remember I sat at a desk, which was near the door that opened up into, like—not a waiting area—but into a larger room that then had two offices, one of which belonged to Sister Jean Dolores. So I would, I guess, answer the phone, take messages, did some typing. My major memory was that sometimes she had to issue memos that then needed to be duplicated. And even though the college had a Xerox machine, it was up on the ninth floor, and it was used as little as possible. And so lots of the things were duplicated through Mimeograph machines and a gestetner machine, which was my—I always dreaded that I would have to do something that made use of the gestetner machine. Because you had to type the document on a stencil, which meant you had to be very careful about not making errors. And then you took this delicate stencil and kind of wrapped it around the drum of this gestetner machine. Which then somehow applied the highly aromatic ink mixture to it. And then you cranked out these copies. Of course, that assumed that you actually got the stencil on the drum correctly, which I almost never could. And so I was always having to go back to Sister Jean Dolores, who never yelled at me, who never expressed, "Susan, can't you finally figure this out?" She would just come and fix whatever I had not been able to handle. So I have wonderful memories of her.

But then I think during my junior year—senior year—it's all rather vague now. My work then was focused on helping a different academic dean, assistant dean named Frances Shea [Sister Mary Frances O'Shea], who was also a BVM. And she was focused on the freshman. And I do have warm memories of conversations with her and in fact ended up visiting her at Mount Carmel because she became ill and had to move to Mount Carmel. I also came and visited her at Mundelein after I graduated a number of times. Because I lived in the Rogers Park neighborhood up until 1986—for fifteen years after I graduated. So as I went, commuted to law school and commuted to work—unless I took the 'L'—I would take the Outer Drive Express bus, which would take me by Mundelein. So it was a long time before I left Mundelein.

Working in the office, the other thing about it, it gave me an exposure to the names of the students. Because Sister Jean Dolores would have been involved with the schedule—the class schedules. And so I knew a lot of the names of the students and the faculty. And I realized that—my memory, though, for these names has not been used for a long time. I worked in the registrar's office during the summer of 1970. Instead of going back to Des Moines and working a summer job, I stayed and worked in the registrar's office. And I'm still not sure—I don't remember what we were doing. I'm sure it had to do with preparing the course schedules for the coming year. When I was working for Sister Frances Shea [O'Shea], academic dean. Her office, there would not have been enough room for her in the area where Sister Jean Dolores was. So she was in a room that now I don't think exists. I think the elevators now are going through it, but it was a room on the second floor. I think it would have been above where the Tea Room is. There was a great big—it was more like it was, like imagine a hotel lobby. But they had ended up using it, putting various desks and not cubicles, but you were just out in the open.

[45:00]

Very early use of that open office concept by Mundelein College. So I have kind of vivid visual memories of being there with [Sister Mary] Frances Shay [O'Shea]. And ten hours a week now seems like a lot. I was able to fit it into my other activities and classes and homework without it ever feeling like it was a big burden. And I really do think that it's a good idea for students to work to put something of themselves into their own college education. So I'm glad I had the chance to do that. I made a dollar-sixty an hour by the way.

Q: Did you hold any other positions during your time at Mundelein?

Carlson: You mean jobs?

Q: Yeah.

Carlson: At some point I guess—I'm unclear, maybe it was senior year. I ended up working on Saturdays at what is now known as the Chicago Historical Museum [Chicago History Museum]. It was then the Chicago Historical Society. So I would take the 'L' from the Loyola 'L' station down to Clark and Division and then walk up to the Chicago Historical Society—which now has like a whole new wing added to it. I was there when it was just the old building, working for a man named Archie Motley. And I much later realized that his wife was, I think, the head of the Gannon Center some years back. But I didn't realize that until after she had left. And so I was

like putting documents in chronological order that had been donated to the museum by people that the public might later be interested in. As I've said, I was a history major, so it sounds like a perfect job, right? And it was in that it made me realize I do not want to go get a master's degree in history. Because I knew that I needed more people contact than I would get doing that kind of work in a museum.

Also, I was not encouraged by the person who came in—I think in 1970—the head of the history department came in from outside. His name was Kenneth Portnoy, and his specialty was Tudor England. And I did find him a delightful professor, and he was then my advisor. And he basically advised me that I probably should not go get a master's in history. I've always been grateful to him because, when I did finish, I didn't know—as I said, I had not taken any education courses I was not qualified to teach. And so what else was I going to do? I did go to someone, I think [Sister] Jean Dolores sent me to a woman who was doing placements who specialized in placing college-educated women. And she explained to me my major choices would be to get into a management training program at either a bank or an insurance company. Neither—I'd worked at an insurance company during the summers when I was in Des Moines, and it seemed totally boring. And banks didn't seem that much more interesting. And so I didn't—I thought, what if I hate it, and I've signed up for their program. I'll feel committed. So instead I got a job working at a downtown hotel at the front desk. Which was good, it exposed me to life in a way that Mundelein College had not.

And while I was there, I applied to Northwestern Law School and was accepted. So after that one year hiatus, I went back to school, got my law degree, and have been practicing law ever since.

Although ten years ago, I started taking classes at Catholic Theological Union in Hyde Park. And two years ago, I finally finished and got my Master of Divinity degree. So I think I am a professional student.

Q: That's awesome! Were you involved in any extracurriculars while you were Mundelein at all?

[50:00]

Carlson: You asked me to think about that question. And I basically come up dry in that I don't remember, like, being in a club or any society. Again, if I could refresh my recollection by looking at what was available, I might say, "Oh, yes, I did that, or I did this." And it wasn't as though I was in the library all of the time. So I sometimes think, what was I doing? Besides the war protests and all of that. But I remember that there was a football team, and I definitely was not on the football team. So no, I hope that—I see that my class of '71 is going to continue to get together virtually. I just heard from one of my classmates this week. And I'm hoping that that will allow me to remember what else did I do when I was there? I made some notes to see if I—to make sure that I didn't forget to talk about some of my—well, there was one thing that I did that I'll mention now because you asked me to think about did I participate in any kind of charitable activity?

I associate what I did with a program called Upward Bound. So I'm pretty sure it was through Upward Bound that—once a week for maybe a whole term—I got in a car that was driven by a BVM, whose name I can't remember. She was very young, and we went to the Englewood neighborhood of Chicago and tutored students. I wish I knew—again, which high school it

was—tutored high school students for an hour and a half or so, and then got in the car and drove back home. And that was really my only time that I actually went into the very heavily segregated Chicago that still exists, frankly. And saw what it was like to be a public school student in a heavily Black high school. And I can't remember why I stopped doing it—whether I did it, and then the school year ended. I know I did not do that for a very long time. So that was an extracurricular activity of sorts, I guess.

Q: So we have reached the end of the prepared questions. Is there anything else you wanted to say on the record?

Carlson: Well, I would like to make mention of one of the administrators there. He was the vice president for development—which sounds like fundraising, but that was not his function. His name was Norbert Hruby, H-R-U-B-Y, and I read his chapter in *Mundelein Voices* [Voices of Mundelein]—the book that was done by a couple of the faculty members twenty years ago. And Dr. Hruby, what I remember most about him, was he arranged for us to—during that freshman orientation week—to get on a bus—a chartered bus—and take a tour of Chicago. And I'm not sure if he was originally from Chicago himself, but that's when I first learned of the existence of Second City. And there's certain things from that tour that I still remember to this day. And I think he was involved with the revamping of the curriculum that led to the core curriculum—the humanities classes that I described earlier. And he also—I somehow associate with the ad campaign that Mundelein was using as I entered Mundelein, which they had a catalog. Which I'd love to come to the archives because I bet you have a real one there.

[55:00]

It was black, and it said "Chicago is our campus." And it underscores for me, that it was a good thing for me to go to college in a big city. That part of my learning was not just the academic learning. It was being exposed to people and cultures that I had not learned about in Des Moines. Actually, even the—I think Dr. Hruby was also involved with the program that led women who had not finished their college degrees at the traditional age, came back. This was before the weekend college. When I was at Mundelein, we had women who, of course, seemed old to us—who were probably in their forties or fifties—who had returned to college to get their degrees. And so being exposed to those women—many of whom were Jews—just gave me an education that I would not have obtained had I gone to Clarke College in Dubuque. So I always think of Dr. Hruby when I think of "Chicago is our campus." Although it was actually a Mundelein grad named Jane Trahey, who finished in 1943, who had her own advertising agency in New York, who came up with that tagline. But in many ways that describes for me my Mundelein experience. Indeed, Chicago was our campus. I'm glad that I was able to attend a college where there was care for the individual. People like [Sister] Jean Dolores, they knew us by name, the faculty knew you by name. It was a small enough school that you did not get lost. And yet Chicago was our campus.

Q: Great. So we have reached the end of the questions for today. I want to thank you again for agreeing to share your stories with me. I appreciate your time as well. I'm going to stop recording now, and we will stay on just to talk about next steps.

Carlson: Sure. Thanks, Chris.

[57:30]

[END OF INTERVIEW]