

SHARE YOUR STORY: STUDENT LIFE AT MUNDELEIN

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

JoBeth Halpin Oral History

Women and Leadership Archives

Loyola University Chicago

2022

PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with JoBeth Halpin conducted by Melissa Newman on January 13, 2022. 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]

Halpin's childhood, family background, education background, reason for choice of Mundelein and major.

[5:00 – 10:00]

Living on campus, making friends at Mundelein, Halpin's time as a resident assistant.

[10:00 – 15:00]

Candlelighting ceremony at Mundelein, Halpin's time as an elevator operator.

[15:00 – 20:00]

Halpin's student jobs, recreation on campus, Mundelein dress code, residential rules, changes in Mundelein rules, the first Earth Day.

[20:00 – 25:00]

CON-CUR conference, curriculum changes, student activism on campus, the war in Vietnam, Mundelein's reaction to the Kent State Massacre, Mundelein Student Strike.

[25:00 – 30:00]

Mundelein Student Strike, Faculty support for student activism, Halpin's visit to Rome with the John Felice Rome Center.

[30:00 – 35:00]

Halpin's semester in Rome, Mundelein before computers, dating at Mundelein.

[35:00 – 40:00]

Socializing at Mundelein, Rogers Park restaurants and bars, Greek Life at Mundelein, Loyola-Mundelein mixers, the Learning Resource Center.

[40:00 – 45:00]

Halpin's reflection on meaningful experiences at Mundelein, life at an all-women's college, Sister Jean Dolores Schmidt, music appreciation with Sister Judith Dewell.

[45:00 – 50:00]

Taking classes at Loyola, interaction with Loyola students, resident hall room checks, curfew, visiting home, commuter students.

[50:00 – 55:00]

Mundelein College Degree Completion Program, commuter students, Halpin's time in the social chairman in student government, socialization in Coffey Hall.

[55:00 – 60:00]

Halpin's reflection on important national issues during her time at Mundelein.

[40:00 – 67:18]

Staff/ Faculty activism, student-teacher dynamics at Mundelein, Halpin's Mundelein class ring, reflections on Mundelein College.

NARRATOR BIO

JoBeth Halpin was born in Evanston, Illinois in 1949 and grew up in Elmhurst. She attended the Immaculata Catholic schools growing up, and while her parents wanted her to choose a Catholic college, JoBeth chose Mundelein because of its location in Chicago and not for its religious affiliations. As a freshman, JoBeth was very excited to make friends and be on campus. She wanted to get to know everyone and her job as an elevator operator in the Skyscraper helped her achieve that: she was always friendly and chatty with those coming and going to classes. She was a psychology and education major, lived in Coffey Hall, and was the Social Chairman for the Mundelein Student Council.

Mundelein meant so much to JoBeth from how it shaped her as a person, to the relationships she formed with students and faculty. She still has a group of 8-10 friends from Mundelein that she still keeps in touch with. Mundelein was such a happy place for JoBeth. She frequently went to Hamilton's and Yackney's, planned and attended parties and mixers, and got into hi-jinks with her fellow Coffey Hall residents.

INTERVIEWER BIO

Melissa Newman was a graduate student at Loyola University Chicago and a graduate assistant at the Women and Leadership Archives in 2020-2022.

Transcriptionist: Chris Mattix

Locations: Oak Park, IL and Palatine, IL via Zoom

Narrator: JoBeth Halpin

Date: January 13, 2022

Interviewer: Melissa Newman

[BEGINNING OF INTERVIEW]

[0:00]

Q: For the record, my name is Melissa Newman. I'm a graduate assistant at the Women and Leadership Archives, interviewing JoBeth Halpin, class of 1972, on January 13, 2022, for the Share Your Story: Student Life at Mundelein Project. I am in Palatine, Illinois, and JoBeth is in Oak Park, Illinois. So to start us off, could you please just tell me a little bit about yourself, like when and where you were born and your family and that sort of thing?

Halpin: Yeah. I was born in Evanston, Illinois, in 1949, and then my family moved. We lived in Chicago when I was one, and then we moved to Elmhurst, Illinois. And I went to Immaculate Conception grade school and high school and then on to Mundelein College. In 1968, I went to Mundelein and lived at Coffey Hall. And then I graduated in 1972 as an elementary school teacher, and I taught first and second grade for about seven years and-- in Palatine, actually. And then I moved. Then I changed-- I decided I wanted to do something different, 'cause when I was in college-- well when I was growing up, there were only a few choices for a girl. One was a nurse, a secretary or a teacher, an airline stewardess or nun. And my mother said I needed to get a college degree for when my husband died. Not if my husband died, but when my husband died. You had to be prepared, even though my father was alive. Okay. Anyway, so I decided I was gonna leave teaching and not sure what I was going to do. I was going to try something different, and I decided to become an architect. So I went to graduate school at the University of Illinois, Chicago, and became an architect. Graduated from there in 1982. And then as the years went on, I ended up combining my teaching and my architectural career, and I taught at Triton College. I ran the architecture program there, so that was very cool. So I'm married, I have two children, and I live in Oak Park now.

Q: Thank you. Could you tell me why you chose Mundelein in the first place?

Halpin: Well, I looked at just really three schools. One was the University of Dayton, Mundelein and Illinois State University. And my family wanted me to go to Catholic school. But it was just interesting, I really wanted to go to Dayton. That was my dream school. And I actually took the ACT test twice, so I can get into Dayton. And then one day it came down to decision time, and I just kept thinking I wanted to be in the city. I wanted to be in the city, and Mundelein was such a great choice for that. And my sister-in-law had gone there, and so that was something familiar, and she had liked it. So I chose Mundelein based on that.

Q: Could you tell me a little bit about the classes that you took there and what they were like?

Halpin: I was a psychology major with an elementary ed [education] minor. I went to college and my goal was to be a special ed teacher. And Mundelein, I thought, had a special ed program, and then after I made my decision, I realized they didn't. But psychology and elementary ed worked together. And it turned out, I think, everybody that was my friend was a psychology major with an el ed minor, and we all wanted to be special ed teachers. And so that was mainly what I studied at Mundelein was the psychology major and the el ed minor.

Q: Why was that a popular grouping, you think, to have a psychology major and an education minor? For special ed?

Halpin: I think it was if you wanted to be a special ed teacher. Somehow I think the head of the el ed department said, "Well, you should do this," and we all did it. You know, yeah. (laughs)

Q: Could you talk to me about the friends that you made at Mundelein? Were they more in your program or were they kind of spread out all over?

[5:00]

Halpin: I think it started they were in my dorm. When I came to Mundelein as a freshman, I was looking forward to meeting my roommate, and I assumed it'd be another freshman, and it was a senior. And I was rather disappointed because I sent her this letter, this very perky letter about, "Oh, we're going to have so much fun." And she kind of made it clear that, no, (laughs) she was a senior. It was gonna be different. So as soon as I got to Mundelein and I got into Coffey Hall on the second floor, I was determin-- I realized I had to just start making friends right away. So I was like a motorcycle running through that hall going, "Hi, I'm JoBeth. Let's be friends! Isn't college fun? Oh, wow, this is so great, isn't it? Oh! What are we gonna do?" And so I basically, I made, most of my friends at Mundelein were on my floor. They were Mary Jo and Mary--and they were all named Mary--and they were Marita and they were Chris and they were-- all my friends that I made that first week, I still am friends with. There's, like ten of us, and we still get together once a year and go somewhere, which is pretty amazing. I did make-- because I needed so desperately to make friends, I just made friends everywhere. I was just attacking people everywhere to be my friend. It was interesting. (laughs)

Q: I know you said that you also became a resident assistant, adviser. Was that also at Coffey Hall, and how did that come about?

Halpin: Well, I had-- the resident assistants--like our freshman year one--we all adored Mimi Millen. And we just would follow her around like little chicks behind her. I think she got tired of us at some point. And it was something that I kind of aspired to. And so when I was a junior, I applied to become an RA [resident assistant] for my senior year. And you have to go through an interview process and send out, I don't know, probably letters of recommendations and things. Most of my friends were moving off campus, but I wanted to stay and be an RA. It was financially advantageous, but also it was a really good experience. I met new people, new friends. I got new friends that way.

Q: Do you remember your interactions with the girls on your floor when you were the RA and how that might have been different from when you were a student or you were a freshman yourself?

Halpin: Well, it was similar in that it was mainly freshmen. There were some sophomores and juniors on the floor, but the people that you really are shepherding are really the freshmen. And so we would have floor meetings. And we would have celebrations and birthdays. And [when] someone got engaged, we'd have a candlelighting or something. And it was wonderful getting to know this whole new group of people and also being able to support them and lead them in a way. And it was very interesting because I think also-- I learned a lot about myself that year. Because there was a director of RAs, and she was wonderful and was very supportive about how to handle small crises [sic] that happened on the floor and how to support the students and also how to support yourself, which was really useful. There was one instance where I walked into the lounge and there were a group of freshmen sitting around drinking, and that was totally not allowed. And I was like, "What are you doing?" And I reported all of them. (laughs) I took-- "No, I said I was gonna do this, so I have to--" and they were pretty shocked. I guess they thought I was much more fun than I was. But we all survived.

Q: Yeah, were there any other big, dramatic issues that came up or was it difficult at times to be an RA, or was it mostly just a positive experience?

Halpin: I think it was mostly just a positive experience.

[10:00]

Halpin: There were things that went on that you just like, why is this happening, and why do I have to deal with this? But I thought it was a very good experience for me personally, I think. Yeah.

Q: And could we back up for a second? You mentioned the candlelighting ceremony. Could you elaborate on that a bit?

Halpin: Oh, yes, the candlelighting ceremony. And if someone got engaged because it was-- especially when we arrived at college-- that was still a thing that whoever you were dating when you were a senior, you married. Everyone got married when they were a senior. So when

someone got engaged, there would be called a candlelighting in the-- no, there'd be a meeting, okay, a floor meeting. And you'd all gather, and then the RA would pull out the candle. And you didn't know who it was. And I can't remember if they played music. They probably did. Music was everything, right? And so then they passed the lit candle around, and I can't remember if it went around all the way around once. But when it got to the new engagee, then she got to blow out the candle, and everybody went nuts! I reached out to some friends of mine and I said, "I don't know, what do you remember? I'm gonna talk to Melissa." And they said, "Oh, the candlelighting! I remember Carol's candlelighting. It was the most beautiful thing (laughs) in the world." And I'm going, okay, it was just a bunch of girls standing around the dark, passing around a candle, but it was lovely.

Q: Did you, as an RA, get to host any candlelighting ceremonies?

Halpin: I can't remember. I think I must have. I don't remember. What a shame. I don't have that memory. But yeah.

Q: And did you or any of your friends get engaged and have a candlelighting ceremony yourself?

Halpin:

I think- I guess- Well, no, Mary Joe was out of the dorm. Everybody was out of the dorm when they got engaged, except for this one friend, Carol Kelly. I remember her candlelighting. But yeah. Most of them had got engaged senior year, the ones that got engaged. And then the rest of us didn't get engaged. (laughs)

Q: I know in your form that you sent in, you also mentioned one of your jobs was an elevator operator.

Halpin: Oh, that was so cool. Yeah. They had the best jobs. You'd go to the employment office, and Mrs. Kelly worked there, and she'd always have the best jobs. And one of my jobs was to be an elevator-- was the elevator operator. And still when I get in an elevator, I tell all the poor people, "I used to work one of those old ones that had the thing." They go, "Yeah, that's really

interesting." (laughs) So I would-- you get trained on the elevator. And literally it was you had to stop-- you have a handle that you'd move right and left to make it go up and down. And then when you got to the floor, you wanted you had to stop. And you had to get somewhat close, and it would adjust. Okay. And there was one day, though, that I was running the elevator--and the thing that was so great is then I knew everybody in the college, right. Because they all had to get on my elevator. And between classes it was very busy. But one day I was in the elevator, and it just stopped. And the elevator is between classes, the elevator is absolutely packed. And I kept saying myself, "Just stay calm. Just stay calm. Just stay calm." But what I did was, I turned around, and I went, "Panic!" And everybody just looked at me. They go, "It's okay, JoBeth, it'll be fine. Calm down." (laughs) So I don't know why I did that, (laughs) but just to remember those looks on their faces as I'm screaming. And they're going, "Oh, my God, just calm down." And then the elevator was fine after that. But it was really kind of a landmark moment for me as an elevator operator to see I did not handle stress well. But it was very cool. I loved that job.

Q: Yeah. Do you remember was there a panic button that you could hit to alert someone?

Halpin: I didn't-- There must have been, wouldn't you think? I don't re-- I didn't hit it. I just turned around and screamed "panic." (laughs)

[15:00]

Halpin: And no reason why. I don't know why. (laughs)

Q: But yeah that sounds like the perfect job for you to be able to talk to everyone in between classes or something like that.

Halpin: Yeah, yeah. I, also, I had other jobs, which were quite remarkable. I was an RA, I ran the elevator. But I got this job. They would post things on the employment board, and one of them, they were looking for an English tutor for Japanese businessmen. And I knew no Japanese, but it said you didn't have to. And so I said, "Okay." So I called them. And once a week I'd go to one of their family homes, and we'd all sit around and talk, so they could practice their English. And

then their wives would bring a wonderful dessert out. It was quite a remarkable job. You know? And I did that for about three years. It was great. Oh! And then I had another-- (laughs) well that's okay, I had a lot of strange jobs when I was in college. One of them was a friend of my aunt's, she taught school in Chicago, and she was paralyzed from the waist down. And so she needed someone--circumstances changed--and so she needed someone to drive her to school every day in her Lincoln Continental. So my aunt called me, and there were four of us that would rotate through driving Pat to school every day and picking her up. And then she said, "You can use the car anytime you want." And we went, "I don't think so. It doesn't sound safe at all (laughs) for us to be driving around in your Lincoln Continental." She was a great woman. Gosh.

Q: So yeah, all these part-time jobs helped pay for Mundelein?

Halpin: Yeah, yeah. It did. It did.

Q: Were there any-- At least the elevator operator one, was that part of a work study program or?

Halpin: It was. It was. I must have made a dollar fifty an hour, I think. I think that was probably it. So when the Japanese businessman wanted to pay me twenty dollars an hour, it was like, "Oh, my gosh!" (laughs) It was just awesome! It was only an hour. But twenty dollars was a lot of money.

Q: Yeah, you cannot turn that down!

Halpin: Really, you can't! No.

Q: And what sort of things did you do when you weren't in class?

Halpin: I was thinking about that, and I hung out. I really hung out with friends. It was a really interesting time because--I think I talked to you the other day and I mentioned that when we got to college, when we got to Mundelein--there was a dress code in effect. And so during the day

you could wear whatever you wanted. But after six or after five, you had to-- to go to the Skyscraper building--to the cafeteria--to the tea room. You had to wear a dress. So you had to almost dress for dinner. And I think this also applied to Sunday afternoon. This lasted the first semester and then also the first semester, we had room checks every week in the dorm where the RA would come by and inspect our rooms. And we'd have to stand in the hallway, we'd all have to line up in the hallway, and she would just go from room to room. Now it's so bizarre. But that was only all the first semester. In the second semester, everything changed in that we didn't have to dress for dinner. We just dressed however we wanted and everything went downhill. And we gave up room check, we didn't have room check anymore. And just our wardrobes changed from skirts and sweaters to blue jeans. We all bought our first pair of blue jeans that semester, and it was just kind of amazing how everything changed. And then the next year was the first Earth Day. We had a conference at Mundelein and I don't know if it was-- I think that was in 1969-70 semester. And they had a conference where they--I think it was called "Con-Con" [CON-CUR] -- where we got together, and they redid the whole curriculum. And it was a very Democratic process.

[20:00]

Halpin: We would gather and faculty would talk, the students would talk, and they got rid of a lot of the required classes. And it was just totally different. You could invent your own degree, literally. I didn't really-- I really still wanted to get my psychology degree, but you could do it if you wanted to. So that was pretty amazing. And then that was the first Earth Day that year and also the protests against the war in Vietnam. And then we went on strike. So we went from these little ladies to these people in blue jeans, and it was really interesting. The Women's Movement started at the same time. It was like everything was changing while we're in college.

Q: Yeah, what was it like to be at school with such an active--not social life--but social movement happening? How did that affect your time at school, do you think?

Halpin: Oh, I think it changed us. I think-- you started to feel very independent in your thinking from where you came from. And so much of it was the faculty was so much further ahead of us. We were just kind of like, "Oh, okay. Yeah." I mean, the faculty were going on strike before the students were going on strike. So then the students went on strike, but the faculty had already

gone on strike against the war in Vietnam. And so it was a great change. It was a great time to be in college and experience those different-- have those different experiences where it's-- you're this? No. Then you grow. I think it was a tremendous amount of growth, because you were forced at all of these things to make decisions about what you thought. Where I think-- when I came to college, everyone--all of my friends--we all thought exactly the same way in high school. We had the same rules for dating, the same rules for everything. And when you got to college, when we got to Mundelein and everything kept changing, it was like you were constantly evaluating and thinking about things, which was really good. I think it was a good experience. That we're lucky that way.

Q: And what do you mean that the students and faculty went on strike?

Halpin: Oh, this was in April of 1970, and Kent State had happened, and there had been anti-war protests against the Vietnam War all over college campuses for about a year. And after Kent State, when students were killed--three students were killed by the National Guard--then there was kind of a uprising across college campuses throughout the country. And Mundelein joined in with Loyola. And we-- there were rallies. I just saw there was something on the news about Mundelein- Loyola students, protesting along Sheridan road. I don't know if you saw that in the news. And it was like, "Oh, yeah. That's what we did." We stood right at that curve on Sheridan road with our signs asking everyone to honk for peace. And there were marches. We had a march to Northwestern. There was a protest march to Northwestern, and there was one down to Grant Park and one to the National Guard station on the North Side. And so we made our signs. We went out there and we marched around. Towards the end of that, then colleges--this probably happened the beginning of April--and then after about two weeks, colleges started to close down. The students declared they were on strike, and they weren't going to go to class anymore. And so Mundelein, they took-- the faculty, as I said, had taken a vote to strike. And then all the students took a vote, and the majority wanted to strike. And so we didn't have finals. We just packed up and went home, and we had to call our parents. We had to call our parents and telling them that we're going on strike and, "What?" (laughs) They were a little surprised, as well they should have been. But there were no finals. We just got a grade for where we're at that moment in time.

[25:00]

Halpin: And so that happened just about everywhere, all the colleges at that time. So it was quite remarkable, actually, when you think about it.

Q: And this was kind of the last couple weeks of the semester, everyone decided to do this?

Halpin: Yeah, so we would have finished up--let me see--I don't think we finished, I think at that time we were on trimesters, and so we didn't really finish until closer to Memorial Day [May 30, 1970]. Many colleges were probably just about done. So it was the end of April, as I recall, was when this happened. Yeah.

Q: Yeah, that's a pretty big statement to make.

Halpin: Yeah, yeah. It was interesting.

Q: Yeah, especially with the faculty also being fully supportive of that as well. That's shocking to me.

Halpin: Yeah, yeah they were. All the nuns and the faculty were all going to go out on strike. It had a big impact in many ways. But it was-- people lining up at the pay phones to call their parents to tell them they were going on strike. That image is just-- and all of our parents are like, "What, you're coming home, why?" "Cause I'm on strike." "Oh, okay." (laughs)

Q: So how was that conversation with your parents then?

Halpin: Oh, I remember it being rather short, and it was with my mother, and I think she was probably thinking, what am I going to tell your father? But it was very much like, "Mom, I'm calling you 'cause I have to let you know I'm going on strike." "Strike with who?" "The college. We're all going on strike. We're closing the college." And I'm sure my mother's thinking, but we're paying a thousand dollars for this semester at school, and so you're what? But once they were sure that we got full credit and everything was fine. And they just amazingly tolerated it.

You know they weren't-- it was just awkward. I remember it just being a very awkward conversation, but they were fine with it. I'm sure they weren't fine with it, but they didn't come and beat me up or anything. (laughs)

Q: So then what was the following semester like coming back after abruptly ending?

Halpin: Well, I actually-- that September, I went to Rome. To Loyola Rome. And so I remember at Loyola Rome, everybody talking about what was happening at their different schools and how we all went on strike and feeling very clever as we're traveling around Rome. There was a disconnect there to a certain extent, but I think it was fine. I think everyone came back, and I don't-- I got back in January, and I don't remember things being that different. It was like a moment in time--what happened--and I guess there was always the feeling we could do it again, we could go out again. And I think people were just politically more aware and thought of themselves as very radical. (laughs) You're muted.

Q: Oh, sorry. Thank you. (laughs)

Halpin: If you're muted, I don't have to shake my head, do I? Can just tell you you're muted 'cause I'm still on. Okay.

Q: Right. Tell me about your semester in Rome.

Halpin: Oh, it was wonderful. It was just amazing. A friend of mine who was a year ahead of me had gone to Rome from Mundelein, and so that opened up to me the idea this is a possibility. Actually, right now we're celebrating our 50th reunion from that. And it was-- suddenly you were with all these people you didn't know, which is a great experience, and you're eight hours away on a plane from home, and we couldn't call. We could send a postcard to tell them we got there. And so you were really on your own. And I think that was such a great experience to be so on our own that all we could do is rely on each other. I mean, there was obviously the Dean of Students, and there were people at the [John Felice] Rome Center that were there to support us, but it was wonderful.

[30:00]

Halpin: It was such a great experience. The whole world opened up to me, and I think it changed my life in so many ways. Because now whenever I-- I'm getting home from one trip, I'm thinking of the next. I'm always planning, if someone wants to go somewhere, I'll go. I'll do anything. And so I think in that way it just opened it up to all sorts of things, but it was a great experience.

Q: What kind of program was it? Like what sort of classes did you take there?

Halpin: Well, that was one of the problems. (laughs) I only went a semester because I was a psychology major, and it was a liberal arts program. So I took Italian, which I did very poorly at. I took Art in Rome, which was amazing. I think I took a theology class, and there must have been one more. I can't remember. But I really remember the Art in Rome class and maybe a philosophy class. I had to try to find the gen eds [general education credits] that I still had left because by the time you're a junior, you've pretty much got those done. And especially with the el ed major--minor--there were a lot of education courses. So when I got back, I needed to-- I had to go to summer school and do some other things, so I could graduate on time, which was good. Yeah. But it was really a wonderful program.

Q: Did anyone else from Mundelein go or were they different colleges?

Halpin: It turns out that there was-- I think there were two other women from Mundelein that I didn't know that well, but I knew. And it was like 350 people. It was way bigger than my class at Mundelein, which I think was only-- well, maybe it's 300 was my whole class at Mundelein. There are 350 students, and they were-- a lot of the Jesuit schools were represented, like Xavier and Georgetown and all the Catholic schools were out there. There were a few people from state schools or regular public institutions, but yeah, there were kids from everywhere, which was great because I knew two people, but I didn't really know 'em. So another opportunity for JoBeth to make new friends. That was good.

Q: So you mentioned you couldn't really communicate to people back home when you were there. But what was communication like at Mundelein? Before the age of cell phones and Internet and all of that?

Halpin: We wrote letters to our friends that were at other colleges. And there was oh! There was the hall phone. There were two coin-operated pay phones in the hallway. And the thing that was so funny--oh! I forgot about this--but one thing that was really funny was that people could call in. And so the students at IIT [Illinois Institute of Technology], I don't know if our dorm phone numbers were written on a wall by the phone or something, but you'd get these calls and someone would stand in the hallway going, "There's a guy from IIT that wants to know if anybody wants to go out to dinner." And this kind of resulted in a friend of mine who-- I think she lived on the fourth floor of Coffey, but we had a contest to see who could have the most blind dates during our freshman year. And I think I won with twenty-nine. And it literally was, people would call, (laughs) this is so dangerous! This seemed like such a good idea! And we would just go, and or if somebody-- and then everybody knew we were doing this, so if somebody was dating someone from Loyola or somewhere, they would just say --they needed a date for someone, they would just check with either Ginny or I to see who was free, because we were always looking. (laughs) And none of them turned into anything. But there were so many times where, I remember once, four guys from IIT came and there were four of us that went, and they took us to a nice restaurant for dinner, and that was it. It was like (laughs) very strange. But anyway. (laughs) Yes, so communicating was-- it was really different. It was so different because you would-- you had to call each other on the payphone.

[35:00]

Halpin: And so there was a lot of-- just in the dorm, so you stayed more with the people in the dorm or in your circle 'cause you could reach them and grab them to go do something. It was hard to call someone and get them to meet you at the pizza place or something. So you just grabbed somebody that was standing near the payphone waiting for a call. (laughs) So weird. (laughs)

Q: That does sound pretty incredible. People just calling in, "Hey, I'm looking for (Halpin: laughs) any date. It doesn't even matter." (laughs)

Halpin: I know. "We're having a party. Do you want to come? Can we get eight girls to come to a party?" "Sure. We'll find 'em." (laughs) Oh, my goodness. So unsafe. (laughs)

Q: I'm thinking nowadays, "stranger danger!"

Halpin: (laughs) I know, we didn't-- I don't know, I guess the thing is, as long as you were going with another girl. You somehow felt you were safe. I don't know. Yeah.

Q: So yeah, where would you go on these dates or just to go out with your friends?

Halpin: Well, there was-- we really would stay in the Rogers Park area, especially with my friends. We would go to eat somewhere, I mean, we'd go to Hamilton's. There used to be a bar called Hamilton's on that must have been, is that Clark? Broadway. Broadway. On Broadway and we spent a lot of time there, and then there was Yackney's. And there were bars in the neighborhood. We went to a lot of Alpha Delt, Alpha Sig, or Teke parties. And I was not a very good drinker, so it was probably not a good idea, but it was a different time. (laughs) So many things I did when I was in college were just so unsafe now that I look at them now. But my friends would watch out for me, and then they'd have mixers at the college, at the dorm, and we'd have a mixer, and I don't know who these men would be that would show up, but there'd be men that would show up, and you'd dance. God, that sounds so old-fashioned, but it was. And we hung out a lot in the dorm and just played games, talked, laughed. Just a tremendous amount of laughing. And my favorite place on campus when I wanted to be alone was you know where the - I think it used to be Mundelein's library, okay? It's right on Sheridan road there. And right on the back there were the heating vents would be there. And so you could sit on there when it's really, really cold and just watch the frozen lake [Lake Michigan]. And it was so peaceful. It was wonderful. I loved being there.

Q: Was this Piper Hall?

Halpin: No, I think Piper is the old house, isn't it?

Q: Yeah.

Halpin: Okay. So right south of that is-- I thought it was a law library now, or it was some library for Loyola. But maybe it's something else now. Anyway, it was a new building for us when that was built. It was quite radical to have a new building on Mundelein's campus, but yes.

Q: Oh, the Learning Resource Center, was that it?

Halpin: Yes, the Learning Resource Center. Yeah.

Q: Okay.

Halpin: That was it. You could hide out behind it. I think that's where my senior picture was taken, actually. (laughs) Sitting back there.

Q: Were there any experiences at Mundelein that you felt were pretty meaningful to you either at the time or now looking back?

Halpin: I think so much of it was. I think being an RA was very much a meaningful experience for me. And I think I just, when I was there, I became my own person. I kind of became who I became. And before that, I think in your teens, you're just kind of trying to figure it out. And I became more of that person then-- while I was at Mundelein.

[40:00]

Halpin: And I think it was because of the-- and I'm not sure it was that much the academics as it was the experiences it gave me and the experiences of-- there was such a variety of them from arriving at college and just being your classic 1968 student, just like so perky, just unbelievable.

And just gonna make friends and just take on the world at Mundelein College. And then I think then the protests, curriculum changes, the whole the quest of the faculty for us to intellectually engage and to think about things. And then the protests and then going to Rome and then coming back and being an RA, it was just like there were so many different experiences that formed me. But I really think being at a women's college was really quite incredible. And I didn't choose it because it was a women's college. It fit where I needed to be at the moment, but it was not because it was a woman's college, but I think the fact that--'cause I went to co-ed high school, and this is not a-- well it is a positive in a way, but I would roll out of bed, throw on a T-shirt and a pair of jeans, and just stumble to class. And there was no concern--I'm not even sure I brushed my teeth--and there was no concern what I looked like. And that was very freeing as opposed to making sure you have the right outfit and that you look good and people are noticing you 'cause you're so cute and funny. That just went away when I was at Mundelein. You got to be more of yourself. I guess that's it.

Q: Yeah, I think that makes sense.

Halpin: Oh good.

Q: Are there any professors or supervisors or any staff members at Mundelein that made an impact on you?

Halpin: Sister Jean Dolores [Schmidt, BVM]. I mean, my gosh. Yeah, I think-- that woman, God, you gotta love her--but I came back from Rome, and she was my dean--and I came back from Rome and I really had a mishmash of a transcript at that point. It's just, you know, I failed Italian in Rome. I didn't come home with as many credits as one should. And then my student teaching, I couldn't do that when everybody else could because I was behind, and she really got me through it and got me, so I understood what I needed to do, and just do it step by step and just, "Okay, you still need another class, so you have to take this at Loyola, you have to take this over the summer, you have to-- and for it to be accepted." And she just did an amazing job of that. And then when you'd walk in, and she'd just-- always her eyes would light up when you'd walk in the room. And I think she does that for everyone, but it just meant so much 'cause you really felt like you were home when you were with her. So I think Sister Jean Dolores was probably--

the other one is Sister Judith Dewell [BVM]. And Sister Judith Dewell taught music appreciation. And every time I go to the symphony now, I think, thank you. Because that was not part of my life, but she taught me how to listen to music. Part of the class, I had to go to the symphony, and so I realized that's something people do. And so I do find that to be just a life-changing moment is what she did for me. And I think also so much of the faculty, they were constantly wanting you to think and challenge ideas and not just sit there. They wanted you to engage. I think the faculty-- there was also the staff. The staff was wonderful. Even the people that cleaned the dorms, they were just great people. They were wonderful people that I got to know and yeah, it was a great place.

Q: So you had to take a class at Loyola to kind of finish everything on time. What was that?

[45:00]

Halpin: Well, I had to take-- I took-- it was called Encounter, which was a--at that point in psychology, I had to take another psychology class. I think I failed a psychology class. I'm not sure. I don't think-- maybe I had to make up the credits from the Italian, but something got failed. (laughs) Something was failed by me. And so I needed to take another class. And I think it was a psychology class I had to take. But anyway, and so I took this Encounter class, and what it was is, at that point in time, there was a very popular school of thought that you needed to gather as a group. It was like group therapy. We would get together, and we would challenge each other's responses and thought process. It was-- I don't think they offer it anymore. (laughs) I don't think they offered it much longer than when I took it, but it was very interesting, and it was a class I had to, yeah, I got to make up my credit for. At that time, I could have taken classes at Loyola. I mean, that was open, but I didn't. Mundelein had enough classes for me to take.

Q: Do you think that a lot of other people went to Loyola for classes as well? Like, I didn't realize there was that cross-communication there.

Halpin: I don't think so. I think people could, but I don't think-- usually it was probably like me, you needed a class and so you found it at Loyola 'cause you couldn't get it at Mundelein.

Q: Okay. Did you have any other interaction with Loyola students while you were at Mundelein, since you guys are so close on campus?

Halpin: Yeah, I think it was mainly-- when we had the protests. I mean, they'd have big gatherings for people to plan what we were gonna do. And my joke was always, there'd always be the frat guy from Loyola going, "Let's have a band on the lawn! We need a band on the lawn!" And we're going, "No, that's really not-- we're not gonna have a band on the lawn. That's not happening." Yeah, so whenever there were activities like that, they would always be together.

Q: I forgot to ask this question at the time, so now I'm circling back. For the dorm room checks, was that because they were looking for cleanliness or for paraphernalia of like drugs or alcohol?

Halpin: No, not really. Like one of my friends said today, "They never looked in the closet," but I always said that's how I learned to clean a sink. The RA taught me how to clean the sink. And they just wanted to make sure you were keeping the room clean. And I think this just goes back to another time. The year before, the class that got there in 1968--'67, the year before us--they still had beanies. I mean, they wore beanies, the freshman did. And so I think they had dropped that by the time we got there. But they--you still were--you had a dress code, and you had to keep your room clean, and we had hours. Weeknights it was 10:30, on the weekend it was midnight, you had to be in. And then they locked the doors, at that time, if you weren't in. And you had to try and sneak in, it was just really a different time. 'Cause some people went home on the weekend, so I don't know how they could check the room, but whatever, I guess they could open the door. She probably had a master key and could open the door.

Q: Did you ever go home on the weekends?

Halpin: Not that often. I did every once in awhile, but really not as often as, you know, when you graduate from high school you think, Oh, these are my friends. This is my life. I have to come back to my life. And then after you get away from that life, you have another life, and you go, "Well, this is pretty good too." So I went home probably only once a semester, but I could take the train or my parents could come and get me.

Q: Did you notice or was it obvious how many commuter students there were versus students that stayed on campus full-time?

Halpin: Yeah, I don't think I know how many. I mean, it makes me think there were probably half, but the commuter lounge, it was in the basement of the Skyscraper and, you know, it had lockers and things.

[50:00]

Halpin: It wasn't any place desirable to be, so I don't think that's necessary where the commuters stayed. The thing that was interesting was we had-- when we were at college, there were DCPs-- Degree Completion Program women--and there were quite a few of them. And they were amazing. And we would be in class with these women, especially in psychology or education, and you'd have to tell something about yourself in the beginning of class, and they'd say, "Well, I work at the Jewel [Chicago-based grocery store] thirty hours a week. I have four children," and they had all of these things going on, and they were getting straight A's. We're all going, "Well, they're DCPs, they have nothing to do other than go to school." Now you think, What was wrong with me? These were amazing women that had probably maybe a year or two of college, got married, and they stopped going to college. And now they were coming back to finish, and they always did-- they sat in the front of class, and they took notes, and they did all the readings, and they were (laughs) always so good. I don't know what the percentage was of commuter students.

Q: Just thought I'd ask.

Halpin: Yeah.

Q: And we also briefly talked last week in the pre-interview that you were a social chairman in the student government. Do you remember anything more about that time and what you did for that role?

Halpin: Well, we would have these mixers and there would be certain dances during this year and one was called "The Snowball" in the winter. And I remember going to meetings with the-- there were probably four, five, six of us on the committee--and we would have a meeting deciding if there was like a theme for something and what time it was going to start and what we're gonna serve. It was very 1960s. (laughs) I think they still-- if you're at a high school or college now and there's a dance, someone must plan these things. So that was mainly it, it was the dances and the-- I don't think we, I don't recall planning anything of substance, (laughs) it was not like social justice. This was like parties and dances. And I think we would do things like when new class came in, you would have a gathering for them and things like that. Or maybe when the alumni came back, we would stop by and say hi. It was funny.

Q: Just scrolling back through some of my notes to see if I missed another question that had I thought of on the way.

Halpin: Well, I was going to tell you about-- there was-- I thought of some other things--

Q: Oh, yes please.

Halpin: Mainly hijacks in the dorm. One time--I think we must have been, maybe I was a junior when I'd come back from Rome, maybe that second semester, junior year--anyway, I lived on the second floor of the dorm and I went up to the fourth floor to see a friend of mine, and I was kidnapped by the residents of the fourth floor. They must have been bored and were plotting a water fight with the second floor-- with somebody. And I happened upon it, and that started the water fight. And this was quite a water fight. (laughs) There was water standing in the hallway. There was water dripping through the ceilings. There was water everywhere. And so they were going to kick us out of the dorm, everyone (laughs) that was involved. And they changed their mind at some point. But my friends, I guess I called down to the second floor and told them I had been kidnapped. And then they marched up and it was just stupid fun. It was so stupid, but it was so funny. I mean it was-- we still laugh hysterically about how stupid it was. But man, it was fun. The water fight, yes.

[55:00]

Q: In terms of the national events that were happening at the time and your role in the protest, could you tell me a bit more about your personal feelings about the Vietnam War, the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Bobby Kennedy, the Kent State shootings?

Halpin: I think it was-- when I was a senior in high school was when Bobby Kennedy was shot and killed and Martin Luther King. And as a senior in high school, that was really disruptive. They canceled my trip to Washington, D.C. with my class and then my graduation parties were canceled because Martin Luther King had gotten killed. But I think when you think back on it, it's interesting to think that my response was "This is disrupting," and that's what it's supposed to be. And the protests were-- during that time and just the country-- the world changed at that point. It started, John Kennedy was killed and that was a big shift. And then, but this was more-- I don't know, it felt more like things were shifting. And then when we got to Mundelein, when we were in college, and it was interesting--well, it was a bit conflicting--my feelings on Vietnam. Because my brother-in-law was in Vietnam, and he was fighting in Vietnam. And then at the same time, it was people you knew, besides my brother-in-law, were going to Vietnam. And the news, constantly on the news every night, the body count of how many people died and how many Vietcong died and who was missing. And it just started to feel like things needed to shift and things needed to change. But I really think the thing that happened, which really changed and made all the students in the country go out into the streets was Kent State. Because that was us. That was me. That could be me. And so you immediately just felt like, "No, this is wrong. We all have to now go out. They can't get all of us." And so I think-- you felt like you were changing something, and you were stopping something. But it was such a conflict because-- it was also the time when the draft started. I think it was the next year they started the draft, the lottery for the draft. And I remember sitting in the dorm and watching them pull dates. And you knew your friends' dates, the date of their birth, and so you knew whether they were going or whether they weren't going. And so it was really wow. It was a different time, but it did feel empowering. I remember when we-- I mean, it seems kind of silly now when I think about it. But the first protest we went to was right after Kent State, there was a march, Loyola and Mundelein participated in it, and we marched to the National Guard station on the North Side of Chicago. And you left that night, and I thought, "I could die. I could die, but I have to do this," which is-- that's a huge step from "I can't go to Washington, D.C. This is wrong" to "No, I have to do something about it." So I think it had that impact that you felt like at this point, if you walk in this march, you have to decide, are you going or are you not? Which side are you on?

Q: That is a lot to wrestle with as an eighteen, nineteen, twenty-year-old.

Halpin: Yeah, yeah. It was a big shift.

Q: So, yeah, it sounds like Mundelein students, faculty were all very ready to take part in this--

Halpin: Yeah.

Q: And do what they felt was right.

Halpin: Yeah, yeah I think so. I think, now I think of some of my friends, they were probably swept up by the rest of us, but I think there were, yeah, it was very much a whole institution movement. So it was kind of led by the faculty and then by the students.

[01:00:00]

Halpin: It was kind of like the faculty led it and then the students stepped forward and led it. So it was interesting.

Q: Still needed a little bit of guidance from the faculty to--

Halpin: Yeah.

Q: Did the faculty come with you on that march to the National Guard?

Halpin: I think so. I don't remember them being there, but I would imagine they did. Many of them did. I don't think Sister Jean Dolores was on the march, but I'm not sure. But I can see many of the faculty really, 'cause they were really so active politically.

Q: Did that at all change the dynamic in the classroom or just your dynamic in general between your teachers and you as students?

Halpin: Yeah, I think so. I would assume it made us more engaged because your relationship with the faculty member changed. Not with all the faculty members, but with some of them, it was you had shared an experience with them, so you could talk to them in a different way. You felt like you knew them and they knew you.

Q: Yeah, I think that's a really lovely connection.

Halpin: Yeah.

Q: Well, I am at the end of my question list, has there been anything that you have thought about during this interview or within the past few weeks that I haven't asked about that you'd like to talk about or share?

Halpin: Well, I think the thing-- it's really interesting, I have on my Mundelein ring, but I've only owned this ring a year. When I graduated from college, when I was graduating from Mundelein, I said, "I don't want the ring." It's like, "I don't wear my high school ring. Why do I want this ring?" And I never really wanted it until probably-- I think my friends would say it's eight to ten years ago. I started talking about it, and I couldn't buy it anywhere. And I actually-- it was to the point where I made all my friends promise that they were gonna put a note if they had a ring, a Mundelein ring, they had to put a note in their drawer that JoBeth got it. It was JoBeth's inheritance. And (laughs) I'd say, "Do you have the note in there? Does everyone know that I'm getting the ring?" Well, no one died, but for my birthday last year, one of my friends saw it on eBay, and they bought it for me. And I thought about why I wanted it so badly. It's a fabulous-looking ring. It's just really a nice ring. But I think also it just shows how much--as I look back

on my life--how important that was to me, how important Mundelein was as something that shaped me. And it gave me these great friends, and it just so-- made me who I am. And so I'm very-- I think the ring says a lot. (laughs) Yeah. And now I don't have to wait for anybody to die to get it, so that's good. (laughs) You might leave that out. (laughs)

Q: But, yeah that's wonderful. It sounds like Mundelein has just had this lasting impact and influence on your life, and it's really wonderful to hear, especially now that Mundelein is no longer.

Halpin:

Yeah, but it's interesting. It wasn't until-- I just didn't feel that way until about ten years ago. I didn't realize it. I didn't see it until about ten years ago, how important it was to me. I think it's also, I have been fortunate enough to see Sister Jean Dolores from time to time and to realize how important she is to me. And that is-- that kind of plays into it or kind of made me more aware of what that institution meant to me. And my friends. So maybe it's when your kids go to college. I don't know. (laughs) Yeah. So that's my ring story. (laughs)

Q: Yeah, having the ring and the lasting friendships is really-- sounds like a point of connection for you and a way to remember and hold on to those times.

[01:05:00]

Halpin: Yeah, yeah. Yeah and those friendships-- they're still impacting. They're still impactful. They still are very much a part of my own personal growth and things that you continue to learn about yourself. So, very fortunate.

Q: Well, I just wanted to say thank you so much for your time today. It's been truly wonderful to hear about your experiences at Mundelein and the impact that it's made on you. So thank you very much.

Halpin: Oh, you're welc- I cannot imagine how you're gonna put this into something (laughs) but I know you're very good at it, Melissa.

Q: Yeah, I mean, we will present it just as it is. People can get the full story.

Halpin: Oh, okay so there's no editing?

Q: Unless you had asked for something specific, like in the Deed of Gift afterwards--

Halpin: Okay.

Q: Or if maybe some sensitive material was discussed, which I don't think that we have--

Halpin: No, I don't think it was.

Q: Yeah, that would be the only reason we would edit something out, but I think people deserve to hear your story in its entirety, you know, so that's how we're going to plan to upload it and everything.

Halpin: This must be a very interesting job.

Q: Oh, yeah, it has been wonderful. I've interviewed, I think, nine other women so far and just hearing the overlap in stories and some people went-- or like the overlap in years as well and different perspectives of everyone's unique experiences and how they interpreted certain events has been very, very interesting. There's just so much to learn and connect, so I really enjoyed it.

Halpin: It does sound like a good job.

Q: Yeah, definitely. I'm going to stop our recording now--

Halpin: Okay, yes.

Q: And then we can still stay on and talk about what comes next.

Halpin: Okay.

[END OF INTERVIEW]