

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

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

RoseMary Calamia Mahany's Oral History

Women and Leadership Archives

Loyola University Chicago

2020

## **PREFACE**

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with RoseMary Calamia Mahany conducted by Regina Hong on July 28, 2020. This interview is part of the Share Your Story: Student Life at Mundelein project, an oral history project to expand and enrich the Women and Leadership Archives' (WLA) records of Mundelein College's history through interviews with alumnae on student life.

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

### **TIME LOG AND OVERVIEW FOR SESSION 1**

[0:00 – 5:00]: Introduction, corrections made to biographical information, Mahany's background, reasons for enrolling at Mundelein, experiences of first moving to Mundelein, descriptions of Coffey Hall and Northland Hall facilities

[5:00 - 10:00]: Wall phones in dormitory, parietal hours, petitioning Sister Margaret Irene Healy [BVM] for students to teach in the inner city, participation in anti-war student strikes, Young Republicans, classmates raising funds for her to attend Nixon's inaugural ball, reflection on how she came to know about Mundelein

[10:00 - 15:00]: Reflection on seeing nuns out of habits, work as an elevator operator, students recognizing that she was from New York, memorable moments as an elevator operator, major and minor at Mundelein, reasons for choosing major and minor, Mundelein sports chant

[15:00 -20:00]: Favorite places to study at Mundelein, different drinking ages in New York and Illinois, memories of having Sister Jean Dolores Schmidt, BVM as class graduation speaker

[20:00 – 25:00]: Trimesters at Mundelein, Sister Margaret Irene Healy and her teaching program in the inner city, reflection on Sister Margaret Irene Healy’s effect on Mahany’s family, uncle’s comment on her changed pronunciation

[25:00 – 30:00]: Accent variations across the United States, experiences taking the train to Lawndale, teaching at an all-Black school in Lawndale

[30:00 – 35:00]: Memorable experiences teaching in the inner city program, experience doing education field work with Sister Therese

[35:00 – 40:00]: Question about the Mundelein mascot, sports chant at Mahany’s high school, starting the Young Republicans group, classmates raising funds for her to attend Nixon’s inaugural ball, grades for maintaining scholarship, out-of-town students at Mundelein

[40:00 – 45:00] Parietal hours, Young Republicans’ activities, Spanish immersion program in a dorm at Mundelein

[45:00 – 46:16] Classmate’s experience with the Spanish immersion program

## **NARRATOR BIO**

RoseMary Calamia Mahany was born in 1949. Mahany was a member of the Mundelein class of 1971. She was born in Brooklyn, New York and moved to Queens, New York when she was ten.

Mahany majored in psychology and minored in elementary education at Mundelein College, where she lived on campus at Northland Hall for all four years. She was the President of the Young Republicans group and held jobs in the school library and as an elevator operator.

Mahany was also part of a group of students who convinced Sister Margaret Irene Healy, BVM, Chair of the Education Department, to let students teach in the inner city. During her time at Mundelein, Mahany also participated in the 1970 anti-war student strike.

## **INTERVIEWER BIO**

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

Transcriptionist: Regina Hong

Session: 1

Interviewee: RoseMary Calamia Mahany    Locations: Chicago, IL and Evanston, IL via Zoom

Interviewer: Regina Hong

Date: July 28, 2020

[BEGINNING OF INTERVIEW]

[0:00]

Q: Start recording. For the record, my name is Regina Hong, a graduate assistant at the Women and Leadership Archives, interviewing RoseMary Mahany, Class of 1971 on 28 July 2020 for the Share Your Story: Student Life at Mundelein Project via Zoom. I'm in Chicago and RoseMary is also in Chicago, Illinois. All right. To start us off, RoseMary, could you tell me a lit

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Mahany: (signals to interviewer)

Q: Sorry?

Mahany: Okay, first of all, I'm in Evanston.

Q: Right.

Mahany: And second of all, it's RoseMary (emphasizes) Calamia Mahany. I graduated as RoseMary Calamia.

Q: Oh! Sorry about that. Yeah, we will be sure to —

Mahany: You want to start again? Are we going to start again, or what?

Q: No, that's okay — I will just include that in the transcript.

Mahany: Okay, all right.

Q: That's perfect, thank you.

Mahany: Because when I was at Mundelein, I was RoseMary Calamia.

Q: Right. RoseMary Calamia Mahany. Got it. Yeah, that is very good to know just so we can find you in the records. Okay, so, RoseMary, to start us off, could you tell me a little about yourself and your family, like when you were born and where you were raised?

Mahany: Okay. I was born in 1949, I was born in Brooklyn, New York — it's a cool place now (laughs). And when I was ten, we moved to a neighborhood in Queens, New York called Woodside. And I went to Catholic school. I had no intentions of going out of town for college. And one of the nuns — I went to Catholic grade school and Catholic high school. And one of the nuns — a guidance counsellor — said — I wanted to, to stay out later, I wanted to make my parents think I was going to go away to college, you know? Because I thought in that case, they would make me — they would give in to me, in the things I wanted to do. So just to show them like, “Oh look, I might go away to college!” I went to the guidance counsellor and I said, “Give me the name of an away college.” Oh, no! I said an “away school” — I didn't even say “residential”, I didn't even — I just was throwing this out!

And this nun said, this “Mundelin” — she even said it wrong, she said this “Mu” — this was in New York, don't forget — “This Mundelin College is making a name for itself.” And what happened is, those nuns were the first to come out of habit, I guess, this stuff — so she heard about this, but I didn't know that at that time, she just said. So I said “Yeah, yeah, yeah, okay.” And so, I just took the name — I had no intentions of going out of state at all — I did not want to, I loved my family and friends, I just wanted to stay out later, you know, threaten my parents like, “If you don't let me stay — go out — stay out later.” So, I had my scores sent there and

then Mundelein sent me a letter — and I got a New York State Scholarship, I was going to go to school — Queens College — in New York — and then Mundelein sent me a letter and said that my scores entitled me to a scholarship but I didn't apply, so they couldn't award it to me. So I thought, okay, I will, I will apply to Mundelein just to have it next to my name in the yearbook that I got another scholarship besides the New York State [Scholarship]. And then, they sent me a plan that, with a grant and everything, would have hardly cost me anything! And I was very close to my family and friends, but I just thought, let me just try this! And, you know, my parents felt terrible and everything, but I was pretty good about it. And then when I first got to Mundelein, that first day after flying out, I just cried hysterically and I called my parents and I said, "What am I doing here!" Because I feel like I didn't know anyone in this town or anything!

And they said, "Don't worry, you could come back at this semester or whatever." But by that time, I loved being there of course, you know. But I had no intentions of going out to college, I had never heard of Mundelein, you know. But the BVM [members of the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary] nuns were like the first out of habit, I guess, and it was a show on them or something like that, you know, and so Mundelein got very liberal. And then, when I first arrived there, you know — I was going to be a resident at Northland Hall, there was Coffey Hall and Northland Hall. And Northland Hall was, it was something like an, a hotel or something and it was turned into a dorm — I don't know if it was a hotel or an apartment or what. And Coffey Hall was just the traditional four bathrooms and everything — we had our own bathroom and a suite of rooms — like one or two rooms sometimes — there were suites and all that. As soon as I — like I told you — as soon as I got there and I turned on the radio, I heard "WLS in Chicago" and I just started crying and crying, think[ing], what am I doing here! Why am I here! And of

course, I'm still here, so (laughs). I got to, I got to love the place. But it was amazing, and I remember one of the things — we had a wall phone in our room that we shared. I think Coffey Hall at that time, they had floor phones — I think, I'm not sure because I didn't live in that dorm — but it was a more modern dorm. But I always was — like I said, it was converted into a dorm.

[5:00]

So we had phones in our rooms. And we had a wall phone — you know what that is? It was a phone up on a wall. Okay. So we had a wall phone and then after a while, we paid to have an extra-long cord put in and we were like (mimes holding phone to ear), “Oh look, we could walk a few feet from the phone!” (laughs) Because we had an extra-long cord put in! (laughs) So that's how backwards we were back then — that getting an extra-long cord so we could walk a few feet extra away from the phone was a — from the phone base, you know, with the receiver, you could walk — because the cord was extra-long — that was like a big thrill for us (laughs). So that's how old I am, you know. It was a nice place.

We had something called — now, I have asked my classmates about this and some of them don't remember but I'm pretty sure — when I looked it up, it was what I thought it was — it was something called “parietal hours”. Once a month, boys could come on a Sunday afternoon and visit us — they were called — for like a couple hours — I don't know what, how long it was — but it was when, when, when males could come to visit you. And they were called “parietal” — P-A-R-I-E-T-A-L, something like that — “parietal hours”. So you can't imagine now — boys and girls — many women probably lived in the same dorm and everything back then, you know — it was like, you know — one Sunday afternoon a month, that was it (laughs).

And then — I think I talked about this already or I sent you a paper on it — that we, we got the chairman of the education department to let us go to the inner city, because everybody was being sent to the white, middle-class schools and then when they would get out — get their first job, it would be in the inner city. So, a group that I was in went to the chairman of the education department, said “Please, you know, you got to change this.” And she actually started some program where she herself drove a number of us to the inner city to tutor once a week — Sister Margaret Irene Healy [BVM]. That was a change.

There was a student strike during my years there — I think it was 1970 about the war. I remember chanting, “On strike, shut it down! On strike, shut it down!”, you know. There was a — an SDS — it’s Students for Democratic Society — now I went there, my parents were Conservative — I told you, I went to the inaugural ball [for President Richard Nixon’s inauguration] but then I changed (laughs) at Mundelein because of the environment I was in. But the amazing thing is that after I — when I first, you know — when I first got there and I was from a Conservative family and I was, you know — my family, you know, was Democratic — but anyway. But I was a Conservative Republican somehow. And I started the Young Republicans — it was a small group, just a handful of people. But I was the President of the Young Republicans. So I actually — I think I told you this again — I got invited to the senior inaugural ball and I really couldn’t afford to go, you know. And I found — a guy I knew who was also Republican — I didn’t know him that well — from Loyola — went with me. But I couldn’t — I wasn’t going to — I didn’t have the money.

And my liberal, very liberal, classmates raised money for me to go. It was the most amazing thing. And then after a year or two, they won me over. So like the student strike and all that, I was demonstrating with them and there were — we were on — the national news was just doing different things for different parts of the country and my grandmother saw me on TV marching and she said, “What’s R” — they called me Rose, my family called me Rose, I’m RoseMary — and she goes (imitates grandmother’s tone of voice) “What’s Rose doing on TV marching?!” (laughs). And I didn’t even want my parents to know about that! So that was amazing. But I don’t know. We made good friendships, we were very close. The people on — at the Northland dorm were a little wilder — or so we thought, than the people at Coffey Hall, you know. I don’t know what else. I don’t know. You have any questions or anything?

Q: I have so many questions because these are all amazing stories. So, I’m just going to take you a bit back to that moment where you went to the guidance counsellor and she gave you the name of Mundelein College. Were there other college names that she gave you or was that the main one?

Mahany: They just had — they had — there was a story on the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the BVMs. There was a story on TV that she had seen about this or something — an article — or read an article or something. And I just wanted the name of one — I just wanted to scare my parents, say, “If you don’t let me stay out later, I’m going to go away!”, you know. I wasn’t even that serious about it! You think I would put a few names to scare them, yeah. And,

and so, I don't know — she just had heard about it and she referred — I told you she pronounced it wrong, she called it “Mundelin” instead of “Mundelein” — and she said this, you know.

[10:00]

So I tell my kids, “If it wasn't for Sister Mary Lorena, you wouldn't be here! And my grandkids wouldn't be here either!” Because she threw out that name, you know — it's the most amazing thing! My husband, of course, hates her, because he wouldn't have married me (laughs). No, I'm kidding (laughs). I'm kidding. I'm certain Daisy probably hates her! (laughs). (looks up) “Sister Margaret Irene [BVM], why did you have to tell her that —!” (laughs) I mean, “Sister Mary Lorena, why did you have to tell her about —!” Yeah, she was Sister Mercy, Sister Mary Lorena. And it's just amazing — somebody just throws a name out, and now we have kids and grandkids and everything from this woman just throwing this name out.

And, and the BVMs were one of the first to come out of habit and when I first got to school — I think I told you this, about talking to Sister Mary Jo and somebody? — I was talking to a woman on my floor about where my room was, and somebody said, “Hi, Sister Mary Jo” and I thought to myself (gasps and covers mouth with hands), oh my god, I shouldn't be seeing her like this! Because she was in regular clothes and I was used to nuns in habits. I didn't realize that they had come out of the habit. And I was, I was like trying to hide my head and I was going to apologize that I was seeing her in regular clothes (chuckles).

And then, one of my jobs on campus was, I was the elevator operator — I worked in the library for a little while. I was mainly the elevator operator in the big Skyscraper building? And I was

told to say, “Anything before four.” That was what I had to ask, and you had to open the gate (mimes drawing gate back and forth), you know, do the — get it to “up” and “down” by moving this wheel and all this stuff. And so, I would say — I was told to say, “Anything before four” but I was from New York, so I would say, “Anything before (imitates New York accent) four”. And they would say, “Oh, you are from New York” and I would say, “How did you know?” Because when you, when you live around everybody that talks like you, you don’t think you have an accent! So I was always amazed that people thought I had an accent! (chuckles) And that they knew I was from New York! I was like, (looks surprised) “How did you know!” (laughs). And I just said, “Any floor before (imitates New York accent) four.” (laughs). So that was amazing.

And one day, this guy — one day, I was on in the evening — and the nuns lived on the, on the top floors of the Skyscraper, that was a convent — they also lived across the street, there was a BVM place but there were some that lived on the top of the Skyscraper, the top floor. And a guy got in one night and he said — I forget what floor it was, nine, ten or whatever — and I took him up there and then I let him out and then I thought, wait a minute! That’s where the nuns sleep! So then, I went down to the office — you know, on the first floor — and I said, “Could you call the nuns and tell them that I just let a man off?” (laughs) And it was the evening too! But then, as I was waiting outside the front office downstairs for them to call the nuns to tell them, he came down the stairs and walked out. So I don’t know what he was doing there or what. But I can’t believe it — this man just gets on and goes “Ten, please” “Okay!”, you know (laughs) — and bring up him up to the canopy. But anyway, that was, yeah. I told you we had the student strikes those years and all that stuff. It was a, it was a changing time. A changing time. But anyway. And then, like I said, the inner city teaching and all that, that started then.

But I never moved into an apartment — I have friends that got apartments their junior, senior year but I was just fine with that, I just stayed in the dorms, the dorms, the Northland. I don't know. What else? Do you have any questions or anything or?

Q: I do, actually. I actually also wanted to ask you a little bit about your major at Mundelein. Could you tell me about what you studied at Mundelein and —

Mahany: Yes. What happened is, I wanted to be a teacher and at that point, you could not major in education. So I majored in psychology and I'm still crazy (chuckles). No, I majored in psychology with a minor in elementary education. And then I did, you know, student teaching and stuff like that. Somebody — I think you asked me about teams — I'm not sure, I think, I'm not sure about this — I think we had a basketball team and a volleyball team, I think, but I'm not sure. But I remember — I think it was basketball — where we would say, "Go Mundelein, beat Barat!" You know Barat College, B-A-R-A-T? Maybe it's closed now. But it was another women's college on the North Shore. And I remember chanting (in a sing-song manner), "Go Mundelein, beat Barat!" So we must have played something, you know, I remember that.

(laughs)

[15:00]

I don't know, you know, what it was for, but I think, I think it was the basketball team. But I'm not — like I said, I couldn't swear on it — but I do remember chanting so we must have been playing something. I wasn't playing but people that had sports abilities were playing.

Q: That's great to know about the chant and I will get back to the sports thing because I do have some questions about sports. But I wanted to ask you also about whether you had any favorite classes while you were at Mundelein and what your favorite places to study at Mundelein were.

Mahany: My favorite place to study at Mundelein was, was at my dorm room. Because I stayed up late — I was one of those people — I would stay up late and so that's what I would like to do. Even though there were a few people there — it was a suite of rooms — you know, I would just wait and just stay up, you know, I liked studying there. Sometimes, I would go up by the water and study like, you know, a little bit on nice nights or something like that. I would do that because it's right by the water (chuckles), you know, and sometimes in the library. But mainly in my room and mainly late at night — I would put it off to the last minute and then I would pull all-nighters (laughs). But I'm not typical, so you can't say everybody did what I did. I mean, some people did, but some didn't. I don't know. I was big on education, so I spent a lot of my time trying to get that education stuff. I wasn't particularly athletic. I mean, we had to take gym classes and stuff, but I wasn't particularly athletic.

And then, I remember also the drinking age in New York was eighteen. And so, when I got here, people would be drinking — and it wasn't a lot — but people would drink and I wouldn't think

anything of it. And then we were at a party one night — and I guess it was kind of loud — and somebody said, “The police are coming! Get, get rid of the booze!” and I’m like, “Why?”, you know, “We are nineteen” and stuff and like — “It’s twenty-one here!” — I was like, “Oh my god!” (laughs). But the drinking age was eighteen in New York, so I had already had a few. I mean, I wasn’t big on drinking anyway, but I mean, I had already been to bars and had drinks, so, you know — it was just — that was kind of funny.

There were a lot more nuns in those days, you know, there are hardly any now. And Sister Jean Dolores [Schmidt, BVM] — you know, the famous Sister Jean? — yeah, she was the academic dean there and I told you about my talking to her about wanting to go to the inner city and all that to — for student teaching and she helped. She talked to Sister Margaret Irene and she helped with that. And we even — I think I told — I have probably told you this — that we wanted her to give the graduation speech, did I tell you that? When you graduated, the class got to vote on whom they wanted to, to give the talk, you know, to give the talk. And I mean, if it wasn’t unreasonable. You couldn’t pick like an expensive movie star or something. But it was usually a politician or somebody that was well-known or somebody you could, you know. And my class voted to have Sister Jean Dolores. The class loved her so much so that’s who they wanted — Sister Jean — they didn’t want to pay for an outside speaker, a politician or anything, they wanted Sister Jean. And I think — did I tell you that she mentioned me in the, in the talk? So, she was giving a talk about — at the graduation this was, my parents flew in from New York — she was giving a talk about her memories of Mundelein and she said she rem — she was talking about different memories — and one of her memories was saying, “RoseMary, things are not as bad as they seem. Sit down and we will talk about them.” (laughs) This is one of her memories

of the class that she gave at graduation. So later, I said to my parents, “Remember the RoseMary she was talking about? That was me!” Because, remember, I went to speak to her about, about teaching in the inner city, about Sister Margaret Irene, about, you know, somebody has to talk to her and — we have to, you know, get people down to the inner city. But that was so funny, that she actually mentioned me at the graduation speech. “RoseMary, things can’t be as bad as they seem.” And I’m always a worrier, I always see what could go wrong with everything so all my friends and my family would understand that she would say that (laughs) at the graduation. But we loved her so — my class loved her so much. That’s why. We didn’t want anyone from outside, we wanted Sister Jean to give the talk. I don’t know what else to tell you. It was on tri — I told you this — it was trimesters, right?

[20:00]

Q: Oh no, you haven’t told me.

Mahany: Yeah, it was trimesters.

Q: Mhmm.

Mahany: I don’t know if that changed — I don’t think it changed before I left. I’m not sure but I think it was trimesters — I even called one of my classmates — she said she thought it was trimesters too. That was unusual — I don’t know why they did that, instead of the regular semester. Yeah. Especially since some people took courses at Loyola — you could take some

course at Loyola — and then you would be on a different schedule — kind of with different classes — so, it was, yeah. It was trimesters. But, you know, I have been calling some people that I — there are a few people I keep up with and then there are a few people that I know but I haven't kept up with but my class is going to start meeting once a month on Zoom. Yes, so, so I could get more information, more contacts for you or something but when this starts, whenever this starts. I don't know, we will see how it go —. But I was going to say that all of them have memories like I do, and not very good ones, so (laughs).

Q: Your stories have been incredible. Actually, the more you talk, the more questions I have. I just wanted to ask you a bit about that quote that you mentioned Sister Jean saying — “Things are not as bad as they seem.” Why, why was she saying that? Like, what were you saying about the inner-city program that made her say that quote to you, if you recall?

Mahany: Well, I mean, I was just kind of upset, I was like, all of us are going to be sent into the inner city and here, you know, we are not going to have any experience — and Sister Margaret Irene is so hard to talk to and duh-duh-duh-duh-duh-duh — and that was just her way to calm me. I mean, a crazy Italian from New York — that was — Italian American. But that was, that was her way, I think, just to calm me down. “RoseMary, things can't be as bad as they seem. Come on in.” And she's — she really is the one that talked to Margaret Irene and got her to meet with us. And the amazing thing is — later — and Sister Margaret Irene started a tutoring thing in Lawndale for just a handful of people — I was one of them. And once a week, she would drive us to Lawndale — the West Side ghetto — to, to tutor kids at a school, to work with kids at a

school, you know. And that's the most amazing thing because here's this woman that I thought was so awful and not letting us teach in the inner city and then she starts this program and then I'm riding in the car with her to that (laughs), you know. She drove up with a group of us, you know, to, to go help, to tutor these kids in all-Black schools, you know.

And then the most amazing thing is that she and I got to be — not really close friends — but we got — Sister Margaret Irene and I — and my husband graduated from college and he decided he wanted to teach and she got him student teaching credit — he already got a job in a Catholic school because Catholic schools — I don't think they do it now but then — would hire people with college degrees, even if they weren't teaching degrees. When they interview them, if they got — my husband's still teaching, he's an excellent teacher — he teaches at Francis Parker, do you hear of that? Lincoln Park? It's a very expensive school in Lincoln Park — private school. Anyway, so, she's the one that okay-ed him to get credit for student teaching while he was working because Catholic schools would sometimes hire people that didn't have a teaching degree at — and this is years ago, they wouldn't do it [now] — but if they were working on it. So, you know, he got hired but then he was going to have to quit to do student teaching and Sister Margaret Irene okay-ed him getting, you know, the credit for student teaching while he was being paid for teaching — so somebody came and observed him while he was teaching. So he, he loved her because, you know, she helped him become a teacher — he's still teaching — he's a great — he's an English teacher at Francis Parker. So, you know, she had a big effect on our family. Who would have thought that when I was arguing with her about letting us go to the inner city? (laughs) Life has some weird changes in it, you know. And I say my "r" s now — what are the chances? (laughs)

My [father's] brother said — and I was on scholarship, so my parents really didn't pay — but I guess he must have been thinking about how expensive college educations are. And so, when I was back in New York for my graduation party — and my parents had refreshments for people — and I held up a beer and I said, “Does anyone want another beer?”, you know, with the “r” like I usually. And in New York, that would be (imitates New York accent) “beer”. But I didn't even think of it, you know, I just said, “Anyone want another beer?” And my uncle says, “Oh, all that money so she could say her (emphasizes) “r”s.” (laughs)

[25:00]

It didn't cost me anything to say my “r”s. But anyway, except for when back — before this — because I was on full scholarship. But he didn't know that — it was just, you know, just — I was the first one in the family, out of all my cousins and everybody — never really thought about going out of town but — “All that money so she could say her (emphasizes) “r”s.” And that's exactly the way he said it, because that's how they say it in New York, you know (laughs). Like I said, it was so funny to find out I had an accent, because when everybody talks like you, you don't think — I'm like, “Accent? What you are talking about?” (imitates New York accent) “What are you talking about?” (laughs). So, anyway, I don't know — because I'm old now — I don't know what else to tell you that I remember but it was, you know.

Q: Yeah, so, actually — Thank you for that story about the accent. And it's so true, like, you don't really hear it a lot in English accents, but I noticed that it's — in the Midwest, accents are easier to understand versus when I listen to other — people from other areas —

Mahany: Right, right. Like down south or to the East Coast, right. Yes, yes.

Q: It's so fascinating. It's all English.

Mahany: The Midwestern accent is probably the, the easiest to understand and the most, you know, the most general. Except they sometimes say, like, like "Merry" — they say (imitates Midwest accent) "Merry, Merry, Merry", "Merry Christmas", and "I'm going to marry him" and then "Mary Ann". It's all (imitates Midwest accent) "I'm going to marry him", "Merry Christmas", they sometimes do that. But you know what? People are moving around so much now. Like even in Brooklyn. People don't get the Brooklyn accent that much anymore if they moved there because there are people from so many places now living in Brooklyn. So it's not like it used to be when, when communities just stayed in enclaves, you know, and they didn't move from the neighborhood forever, you know. Now people are moving around for jobs and everything, they move — like I'm in Chicago but people move for jobs cross-country and everything — so the accents are not as, you know, strong sometimes as they were, whatever. But I have a friend whose son moved to New York and I said, "Has he gotten a New York accent?" She said, "No". And that's because where he is, there are a lot of people from all over the country, you know, so. Anyway, is there anything else I could help you with? Are there any other questions?

Q: Yes, actually! A lot. So. Yeah, okay, we still have time. Awesome. So I wanted to ask you a bit about what your experiences teaching in the inner city were like. Like, did you have any memorable moments while you were doing that?

Mahany: Well, my first job, my first regular job, was in a Cat — an all-Black Catholic school in Lawndale. That's the West Side ghetto. And this is in 1971, this is a long time ago. And, I actually had people who would — I would take — and this didn't happen in New York so much, there are Black neighborhoods in New York but not all-Black and now hardly at all. But, even when I was a kid, there were Black neighbors, but not all Black. And I would take the train and I would eventually be the only white person on the train and that would like be a shock to me because that never happened to me in New York but I still did — I pursued it, it didn't scare me — but I would be like, wow, this is really amazing, you know.

But, anyway, so I had kids and they, they had, you know, these creative first names like Tagern-Knickleray and all this stuff, and I said, “My name is Miss Calamia” — that was my maiden name — and they said, “Calamia! What kind of name is that!”. I'm like, okay, “Tagern-Knickleray”, you okay. “Calamia”, we are the same, never heard of anyway. But anyway, [I] said, “Call me Miss RoseMary” so they, they called me “Miss RoseMary”. And then I was in an all-Black school with a Black — an ex-nun who was the principal. And like I said, there weren't many Catholics there — on the West Side — because they were mainly Black, they were mainly Baptist — but it was a Catholic school and it didn't last long, but anyway. And our principal was Black and everything — and very nice. Half of the — it was one of each grade, more than half

the faculty were Black and all that — and I didn't care because I had student-taught in all-Black — I had student-taught in Lawndale so I didn't care, you know, that didn't bother me. But anyway, we were talking about Martin Luther King's — oh! We said – we sang the Black National Anthem every day when we said our prayers. After the prayers, we sang the Black National Anthem. So I know it, by heart, because I sang it every day.

But anyway, we were talking about Martin Luther King, you know, and Rosa Parks, and stuff like that — on the bus and all that. And all of a sudden — we were talking about one of these things, I forget which — and I hear kids whispering and then so I would stop talking and they would stop talking, and then I would start again and then I would hear kids whispering.

[30:00]

And then, this boy — Aaron Sanders — this is an all-Black class, third grade — this boy Aaron Sanders got up — and I told you that they called me “Miss RoseMary” because they couldn't say “Calamia”. So, he got up and he threw his book on the floor and he said, “You stupid boy, Miss RoseMary is not white, she's just light!” Honest to God, I think because I — they, they thought white people were mean to them or something and because — so another kid said to me, “Miss RoseMary, what is you anyway?” And I couldn't tell them because Aaron had just, you know, like defended me by saying I wasn't white, so I didn't want him to feel bad. So I said, “We are not talking about me, we are talking about Martin Luther King.” So we finished that.

And then I went to the principal, Edith Beck — who is Black — and I told her what happened, I said, “I don't know what to do about this.” She said, “RoseMary, you have to tell them you are

white.” And I said, “I feel bad”, you know. She said, “Because they think white people are mean to them and you are nice to them, they think you are Black.” And so, the next day, it was so hard for me — I almost was in tears. And I said, “Remember what we were talking about yesterday? Rosa Parks and all that and oh yeah.” And I said, “Well, I’m white.” And as I said that, I actually choked up.

And these kids in third grade started telling me stories about nice white people that they knew — that one’s mother worked for this white lady who gave her her clothes and this other one, this white lady helped somebody with some — I mean, they were trying to make me feel good about being white, it was the most amazing experience. That doesn’t have anything to do with Mundelein, but it was, it was totally amazing that the —. It was amazing that the kids thought I was Black because I was on their side, I guess — or because, I don’t know, what they thought of white people. And then it’s amazing that when they found out I was white, you know, that they were just so nice and trying to make me feel better about being white by telling me stories about nice white people. This was third grade at Our Lady of Perpetual Hope — which closed then, of course, because it was a small school — there weren’t any Catholics there neither, no support, it’s a poor neighborhood, you know. But anyway, that was, that was amazing.

Q: Wow. Thank you so much for sharing that. That’s, that’s such a powerful and wonderful story.

Mahany: Oh, thank you.

Q: Thank you so much. Yeah, I think it's great. How long were you involved in this inner city teaching program? Throughout your college career?

Mahany: I was, I was there for one year and then it closed. One or two — to be honest with you, I forget — one or two, and then it closed. And then, I went to the far South Side and then — it was too — I was living up here, and it was just ridiculous — I was like at 99<sup>th</sup> and something and I lived in Rogers Park and it was just too far. And that was an all-Black school too, but it was more middle-class. And then I also — a school that I did my student teach — some of my — not student teaching, some of my field work at — St. Pious in Pilsen — was just a great place, I just loved it there. It was creative and informal and just diff, different from any other school I had been at. And they had an opening and so I went and taught there, and it was amazing. And I taught with — when, when I was a student, you would have to go do field work in different classes and one of them, I worked with this Sister Therese at this school in the Pilsen area and then she became the principal there and she needed somebody and I went to work there and I loved it. Then my husband eventually worked there too — working un — she passed away, Sister Therese — but working under her was amazing. And that was an amazingly creative, good, wonderful place to work. It's interesting (laughs).

Q: Yeah, those are wonderful stories. I'm still actually thinking about that third grader that defended you, in a way.

Mahany: Yeah. That said I'm not white, I'm just light.

Q: Yeah. It's, it's such a powerful story —

Mahany: Isn't it?

Q: — you don't really think about third graders reacting in that way, but it was so —

Mahany: I know.

Q: — it was so sweet —

Mahany: And he actually got mad at this other kid. Because he said to him, "You stupid boy", like that! He said, "Miss RoseMary is not white, she's just light", you know. I mean, you know, that was his way of defending me. And then, when I had to say — when my principal told me that I had to say that I was white — I said, you know, "We were talking about — I'm white." I was like embarrassed to say it and then I told you they would tell me all stories about nice white people, you know, and nice things white people did for different ones of them, you know. It was amazing, that was to make me feel good, you know. And they are only third graders! So, and it did make me feel good. It was a different world — it was amazing.

[35:00]

Q: Yeah, amazing kids. So, to kind of like just bring us back to Mundelein College — but thank you again for sharing those wonderful stories — I wanted to ask you a bit about the sports cheers that you were talking about. Do you recall whether there was a Mundelein mascot by any chance? Like someone dressed as something?

Mahany: That I don't remember. It could be but I don't remember much so.

Q: That's ok.

Mahany: I don't know — I could give you, you know — I don't know if you want me to ask other people if there was a Mundelein mascot. You mean a mascot, right? A Mundelein mascot?

Q: Yeah.

Mahany: I don't remember exact — because, because I wasn't athletic so I wasn't — I didn't play any sports, I just went to them sometime, you know.

Q: Yeah.

Mahany: There was one — and I think it might have been my high school — but there was — I don't remember — I don't think it was Mundelein, it was my high school — and one of the cheers was “Harass them! Harass them! Make them relinquish the ball!” And the nuns wanted us to say “Hare-rass them! Hare-rass them!” (laughs) She didn't want us to say — (laughs) So I don't think it was Mundelein, I think it might have been my high school — I don't — I just remember that cheer “Harass them! Harass them! Make them relinquish the ball!” And the nuns were like, “Can you say “Hare-rass”, please?” (laughs) So probably was not the BVMs, because the BVMs were so liberal (chuckles). They really were, the nuns at Mundelein were very, very liberal. Like I said, one of the first ones out of habit and all that stuff. But I mean, nice people, good people.

Q: I also wanted to ask you about your starting the Young Republicans club, group. So I actually read that a group was started in Mundelein in 1957, so I was wondering — is this a different group that you started?

Mahany: Yes, it's a different group. When I was there — there was a Young Republican in 1957?

Q: Mhmm.

Mahany: Because I was there in 1967 and there was no Young Republican group as far as I knew. And it was just a small group because everybody was already getting very liberalized — I didn't yet but I did eventually — and so — because Nixon was such an embarrassment — but anyway, it was just a small group of us and like I said, it might have been eight, ten, something like that — it wasn't big at all. And that's why I was the president of it because (laughs) there weren't hardly any people there! It wasn't hard to be the president, you know. And somehow, they got my name — perhaps you had to sign an official thing or something, and they got my name, that's why I got invited [to the inaugural ball]. But like I said, the fact that all these liberals that hated Nixon helped pay for me to go — it tells you how nice these young women were, you know. Because I wasn't going to go. And they, they hated him. And I said, "I can't go, I don't have the money." Because I was already getting money to fly out here — paying money to fly out here from New York and all that. My parents weren't exceptionally financially comfortable or anything. That's why I got a scholarship and I got a full grant, you know.

Oh, I had to maintain a 'B' average so I did think I — every time I got one 'C', I was like (gasps), you know (laughs). Had to make sure to get an 'A' to counter that. It's a strange world, I don't know. I guess at Mundelein — it was trying to reach out to out of state and stuff, to get more people, more variety — there were people from Iowa there and stuff like that but there weren't many out-of-towners at Mundelein at that point, you know. And not many that (imitates New York accent) talked like I did (laughs). I was the only one (laughs). Would say (imitates New York accent), "I'm going to the store." (laughs)

Q: Were you the only New Yorker in your batch?

Mahany: I can't swear by it because I don't remember anything. I think, I think that there might have been another one or two, I forget — but not, not from the city, I think maybe from the suburbs or something, but — I really, I really don't remember, I can't say, I can't say. But it was probably true, there were probably other Easterners there, you know. It was a small school. And I told you we had parietal hours when the guys could come and visit, yeah.

[40:00]

Some people — I talked to a couple of my friends from there and I said, “Do you remember that?” and two of them didn't but there are parietal. Because I told you when I, when I went and looked online what parietal means, that's what it said, when guys visit from, you know— when the opposite sex comes to visit. And I would not have known that — I remember parietal hours, I remember the school having it. Now, maybe not when I first got there but by the time we left. And it was like on a Sunday afternoon for a few hours. And the floors had RAs — resident assistants — they could check that the guys were out or whatever, I guess, you know what I mean? You know, they were usually — I think, I could be wrong about this — I think that they were usually upperclassmen, they were called RAs, resident assistants. Perhaps you could check or something. I think that they were in school but I'm not sure — I could have been — I don't know. But I think in my head that they were students but like seniors or something. But anyway. But I could be making that up totally — ask my husband, I make up — because I don't remember anything, I just make stuff up (laughs).

Q: That's okay. I guess when we talk to more alumnae, we can always figure more of that out, so that's completely fine. I also wanted to ask you — do you remember what you were doing as part of the Young Republicans? Like, what were the group's activities like?

Mahany: We were just meeting to support each other, you know what I mean? And to just — you know, we, we couldn't, we couldn't like give out literature or anything like that be — We would be scorned, you know what I mean? It was, it was kind of hard to, to do anything of that. It was just a place for people who, at that time, and I — like I said, I changed a couple of years in — but people who at that time felt out of it. It was just a change for us to just come together and talk to each other, you know what I mean? I don't know if we ever gave out flyers or anything, I forget really. But it was more just a support group at that point, you know?

But somehow, like I said, I don't know, somebody must have filled out a form, I don't know — I don't remember doing that, I don't know how they knew or whatever. But somehow, I got, you know — perhaps we did fill something out to become official Young Republicans or some — because I was — how could I get invited to the inaugural ball, you know? They wouldn't know my name otherwise. So I must have signed something or said something or whatever. It was an invitation for two so I got this guy that was in the Young Republicans — it was just like a hand — everybody was against the war and everything and eventually, like I said, I was too and then my grandmother sees me marching two years after I go to the inaugural ball for Richard [Nixon] (laughs). See what Mundelein did to me! (laughs) My father said, "They prey on your mind day

and night!”. Because I lived there, so they were always preying on my mind. But anyway. Any other questions?

Q: Yeah, so I’m quite conscious that you don’t — you have to go around 5 pm so before we have to end the interview, I just wanted to ask if there was anything else you wanted to share about Mundelein? That we haven’t covered?

Mahany: No. They had — there was a program — I didn’t — I wasn’t part of this — there was a program that we take — the girls who wanted to, to, wanted to learn Spanish to go to Cuernavaca for a term or something, you know, they went down there and learnt Spanish — very quickly, it was like an intensive Spanish thing — I think it was in Cuernavaca, Mexico, I think. But anyway, there was something like that. And then — but they had to pay extra of course because it was in Mexico, they had to go to Mexico and all that. So, they decided that for somebody — and, and it was all immers — they were immersed in Spanish, you know, so they learnt it very quickly. So I don’t know what teacher thought of this or whatever, but they decided that maybe they could do that with a dorm and make a certain section of a floor in the dorm this, and where the people there could only speak Spanish and that that would help their thing. So I forget what classmate of mine it was — if it was somebody a year before, after — but it was somebody I knew — joined this group, you know where they can only speak in Spanish. So you [are] looking up words and stuff to, you know — I mean, outside of there they could speak English but when they were in this one area where they were living together, yeah. So, she just couldn’t take it, it was driving her crazy. So, she said, you know, “I have to do something about this.” So she goes

to talk to the teacher or the teacher assistant — whoever was in charge — and she, she said,  
“Listen” —

[45:00]

And, and the teacher goes, “No, no, no, *solo en ti español, solo en ti español.*” Only in Spanish.  
And, and she said, “But I got —” “No, no, no, *solo en ti español!*” So she says, “*Como se dice,*  
“How do you say” “I quit’ *en español?*” (laughs) And I thought that was s— that’s a true story!  
That’s, that’s what this young woman told me! So I just said “*Como se dice* ‘I quit’.” (laughs)  
Because she wouldn’t let her say anything in English! She was going to say I can’t do this, blah,  
blah, blah, blah, blah. (waving hand) “No, no, no, *solo en ti, solo en ti español!*” (laughs) That’s  
a true story. But I don’t remember which one it was — I wasn’t part of it — but I remember her  
telling me the story (laughs).

Q: That’s a great story.

Mahany: Yeah, it was, yeah.

Q: Yeah, so on that note, I don’t want to cut into your time because you have to go at 5 pm so if  
it’s okay, I will end the interview here and then I will just talk us through some administrative  
details.

Mahany: Yeah, yeah, whatever you want.

Q: Okay. So I will just stop the recording here first. Thank you so much for your time.

[END OF RECORDING]