

SHARE YOUR STORY: STUDENT LIFE AT MUNDELEIN

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Mary Pat Bertacchi's Oral History

Women and Leadership Archives

Loyola University Chicago

2022

PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Mary Pat Bertacchi conducted by Melissa Newman on January 12, 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 FOR SESSION 1

[0:00 - 5:00]: Introductions, family background, what made her choose Mundelein, finding her program, commuting to Mundelein, and home economics department.

[5:00 - 10:00]: Professors that stood out to her and classes she took.

[10:00 - 15:00]: Praising the faculty, being a Mundel Bundle, and changes on campus while she attended.

[15:00 - 20:00]: Learning Resource Center, Vietnam War protests, Kent State massacre, assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., Democratic Convention, and friendships formed at Mundelein.

[20:00 - 25:00]: Friendships continued, commuter lounge, working a job while in school, and staff members that stood out to her.

[25:00 - 30:00]: Off-campus hangouts, Mundelein friendships, and having a positive experience being a commuter student.

[30:00 - 35:00]: Elevator bandits, transfer student orientation, and inter-college interactions.

[35:00 - 40:00]: All-girl's school, dress code, classroom experiences, making a career and connections, and her internship.

[40:00 - 42:26]: Appreciating the diversity at Mundelein and wrap up.

NARRATOR BIO

Mary Pat Bertacchi (née Steele) was born and raised in Chicago. Her dad passed away when she was young, so once she finished high school, she began working full-time at a hospital to help her mom with their living expenses. Originally, Mary Pat went to Wright Junior College in Chicago with the intention to become a history teacher, but after taking a nutrition class, she knew that was the career path meant for her. Mundelein was known for its nutrition and home economics programs, so Mary Pat enrolled there as a commuter student. She graduated in 1974 with majors in Home Economics and Food and Nutrition. Mary Pat has a lot of respect for her nutrition professor Mary Abbott Hess, who taught her critical thinking skills and helped her gain confidence she didn't know she had. They are still in contact to this day! Mary Pat appreciated the knowledge and life-long friendships she gained from Mundelein and felt that because it was an all-women's school, there were no pretenses. One could be comfortable being who she was.

INTERVIEWER BIO

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

Transcriptionist: Chris Mattix

Narrator: Mary Pat Bertacchi

Locations: Annapolis, MD and Palatine, IL via

Zoom

Interviewer: Melissa Newman

Date: January 12, 2022

[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 Mary Pat Bertacchi, class of 1974 on January 12, 2022 for the Share Your Story: Student Life at Mundelein project. I am in Palatine, Illinois, and Mary Pat is in Annapolis, Maryland. So, to start us off, Mary Pat, could you please just tell me a little bit about yourself, like when you were born, where you were raised and your family?

Bertacchi: Sure. I am a Chicago native. I was born in the city of Chicago and lived there for thirty years. My family—I lost my dad when I was very young. I went to a Catholic parochial parish school in Chicago, named St. Benedict's. And then went on, got my degree from what was then Mundelein College.

Q: What made you choose Mundelein?

Bertacchi: I actually started at a community college called Wright Junior College in the city of Chicago. And I thought I was going to be a history teacher. And I went to go and register for a class, and it was closed. And the only class that was open was an eight o'clock in the morning food nutrition class. So I thought, well, I better take something. And I found out that I loved it. And so I thought, where can I go for a four-year degree? And Mundelein had a great food nutrition program.

Q: At that time, how did you discover what programs there were? Like, now we have the internet to look up all these things. But at the time that you were going to school, how did you discover that nutrition programs were available at certain colleges?

Bertacchi: Right. You had to really kind of seek it out and figure it out. So I was lucky that the teacher I had for food nutrition at community college knew of who had four-year degrees. And so she guided me. And I knew I had to live in Chicago. I knew I couldn't go away. So I was very lucky that, really, Mundelein offered what I wanted. The University of Illinois was starting—there at Chicago Circle—was also starting a program. But I decided on Mundelein.

Q: And you said that you had to stay in Chicago. And why was that?

Bertacchi: Because my dad died. And when my dad died, it really put us from being a fairly typical middle class family to being in poverty. And I guess I just am realizing it a lot more today than I did then. But my mom and I had to move to a small apartment. And the plan was I was always going to work right after college or right after high school. I was going to be a secretary, even though I was terrible at typing and shorthand. But that was the deal. But when I went to the community college, I also was working full-time. And then when I decided maybe I needed a four-year degree, I talked to my mom and asked her if that was something I could do. And we were always roommates, so we split all the expenses. And that's why I needed to stay in Chicago.

Q: So could you tell me what it was like commuting to Mundelein? And what sort of experience you think that gave you?

Bertacchi: Yeah, well, I think that one of the things I always remember is that I was probably always late for class because the radio station would play Sweet Caroline at the top of the hour. And I was always in that parking lot when it came on. But it was a nice commute. It was—we got to park in the commuter parking lot. Yeah, it was okay. It was probably different, certainly, than living on-campus. I realized that.

Q: So did you and your mom share a car then? And you took it to her classes when you had that?

Bertacchi: She didn't drive. I drove, so I had the car.

Q: Okay. That's nice. You just have to share, and you know—

Bertacchi: Right.

Q: —and conflicting schedules or anything. Could you tell me a little bit about your classes? Like what you remember you took, any professors that you remember?

Bertacchi: Oh, sure. So I was in the home economics department, and that was pretty famous because there was a nun that started—at Sister [Mary] Pierre Flynn [BVM]. And I had her for one class before she retired. But one of my instructors is a woman named Mary Abbott Hess. And she was phenomenal.

[05:00]

She is a well recognized nutrition and food expert throughout the country. And as a result, I got to meet a lot of people, including Julia Child. But the thing that I—yeah, Mary was very close to her. The thing I remember more than anything, is that she taught me critical thinking skills. And I have remained very close to her. And I still tease her about the time I had a death in the family, and I had to miss my final. So I saw her in the hall and I said, "Can we reschedule?" She said, "Yeah, what are you doing now?" And I said, "Well, nothing, I'm done." And she said, "Come on, walk me to my car." And she gave me an oral exam. And I still give her a hard time because I said, "Wait a minute. I just wanted to know—I thought you'd ask me what the sodium content was in milk." You know, those very yes or no. And they were all these—like, what would you do then? Well, what if you had this kind of patient? How would you handle it? And I said, "What she really did is she taught me critical thinking skills." And she went on to become a President of the Academy of Nutrition Dietetics. We both have been recognized by our academy with national awards. And I credit her all the way. And she gave me confidence that I didn't know I

had. And she'll say that—she'll say I was always looking like a lost student. But she gave me the confidence I needed. She's written books. She's just amazing.

Q: How do you think she helps imbibe that confidence in you? What was it about her that gave you that confidence?

Bertacchi: I think because she made me feel like I could do it. And as a nutrition major, we had to have a dietetic internship postgraduate. So, of course, I had to figure out how I was going to work that out with my mom and everything. And she helped me get the plan. And only 40% of people that applied for internships were awarded one. And so that was the other thing where you kind of think, "Oh, I'm not going to—no, there's no way." And I got one. And she was amazing. She just was really, really nice.

Q: Do you remember what other classes you had to take at Mundelein and what those were like?

Bertacchi: Yeah, I had to take all the chemistries. And I just remember thinking, "I wonder, if I was at a big university, would it be easier?" Because we only had eight in our organic chemistry class. And we'd have to go up to the board and solve the problem. So I thought, "Man, there's no way I can hide here. If I don't know it, I don't know it." So it was good.

I took some education classes. I didn't care for them as much, so that was helpful to know that I probably didn't want to be a teacher. I took some sewing classes, which I was terrible in sewing. And I started missing classes because I was so bad. And I bumped into the sewing teacher, and she said to me, "Hey, where have you been?" And I didn't know what to say. So I just simply said, "I'm so terrible at—" Because I'd be with people that could sew up a storm. They have a wedding gown that they made, and I can't even make a blanket very well. And so she said, "Okay, I'll make you a deal." She said, "If you come to class, and you study, and you do everything, I can understand, the practice part would be hard." So she said, "I'm going to use your stuff as examples." So, for example, we had to make a skirt. She would take my stuff and say, "Okay, here's how you do it. I'll show you." And she'd cut out my skirt. And then I would look. And then, sure enough—and I maintain the deal. I did do all the studying and the

homework and the papers and everything and did really well on the classes, like history of costume. So I do thank her for being patient in finding a solution.

Q: Did you find that that was typical for your professors—to work closely with the students?

Bertacchi: Yeah. They were really amazing people.

[10:00]

They got to know people. They got to really understand people. And that's probably why we're still close with them today. I got married again five years ago, and Mary was—Mary Abbott Hess was at the wedding. Yeah, it was nice. I also had a great experience with Sister Jean Dolores [Schmidt, BVM]. She was the dean then. And she was so caring and nice. But I got into a situation, even though I was working full time. As you know, in the financial situation. I knew I couldn't afford spring semester. And so I went sat down, I said, "I need to withdraw." And she said, "Why?" I told her why, and she said, "Stay there." I said, "Okay." Of course, you just listen to her. She came back and she said, "Your grades are great. You are eligible for a Mundelein scholarship. Now you get back to class, and I'll help you with the rest." That was amazing. Yeah. I liked her. She was wonderful for all of us. And I know she's got a big visibility now, nationally, with the [Loyola] basketball team, which is fun.

Q: Yeah. It's very interesting to hear the personality of her change from being a Mundelein fixture to now being a Loyola fixture.

Bertacchi: I know. We still claim her you know.

Q: Oh, rightly so.

Bertacchi: I had a fun experience. So now my last job, I worked in nutrition policy. So I worked with members of Congress and the White House and federal agencies. But I was invited to—Loyola finally got to celebrate winning. I think it was way before my time. I was still in grade school, but I think it might have been the 1961 or '62 National Championship for basketball. And

so the President Obama invited them to the White House and then there was a reception afterwards, which was great. And so I was invited. And the team was so funny because I come in and I said, "Well, I'm not really a graduate of Loyola, but Mundelein," and they all started yelling. Now, these are the basketball players that are ten years older than me that started saying, "Oh, my gosh, we got a Mundle Bundle here. Come on, guys, we've got the Mundle Bundle." I hadn't heard that term for so long, and it was so wonderful. It was great. And it was nice that they were recognized finally for winning the championship. It was just a great party.

Q: Could you clarify what a Mundle Bundle is?

Bertacchi: Yes, I think probably. I don't know if it would be something that would be termed acceptable today, but it was Loyola men would use that term. And it just simply meant you were a girl that went to Mundelein. And you were a bundle of Mundelein. It was just a term. But that would separate us from the Loyola women because we were right next door.

Q: Did you always take it as an affectionate term?

Bertacchi: Oh, yeah. It was always very nice and respectful. Never felt like it was crossing the line.

Q: Good. Could you tell me about any changes you might have noticed on campus from when you started attending Mundelein to your graduation?

Bertacchi: Not too many of things. Everything was in the Skyscraper at that time. It was a time where it was real advocacy of change. So during the Civil Rights, it was during times like that—the Vietnam War, those kinds of changes were happening. Those kind of changes were being seen. But physical changes, I don't remember too much. We did have a class in Piper Hall, I think, which was very nice. I liked that.

Q: Was—when you might have started was also around the time that the Learning Resource Center was finally opened. Do you have any memories of using that as a library or a study space?

Bertacchi: Sure. And at that time, we called it the LRC, which was great. And we kind of get crabby because sometimes the Northwestern boys would come down to study. And they didn't really study, you know. They were really looking to make new friends. And we felt that was so intrusive. Like, get out of here—this is our library. We'll meet later.

[15:00]

Bertacchi: But I also remember how relaxing it was to look out and see that lake [Michigan]. It was beautiful. I haven't been in the library for years, so I don't know if it's still maintained that. But it was all glass. And you could just—you know, on a really cold day, you could just look at that lake. And it was wonderful. It was a beautiful space.

Q: I know that it's no longer the library, but it's definitely still used for classes. I haven't been in there personally, though, so I can't tell you from my experience.

Bertacchi: You should go and sometime and just see if the glass is still there. Let me know. Well, of course it's used for classes, it's different. But it was great.

Q: Yeah, I'll check it out most definitely then.

Bertacchi: Yeah.

Q: I'll let you know. So speaking of the contentious time in history at that point and the Vietnam War and everything. Were you involved in any sort of activism on campus? I know that might have been hard commuting. But what were your thoughts about the Vietnam War at the time and the student activism that was happening across the country?

Bertacchi: You're right. So for a lot of people, there are commuters at all the colleges. It was like a part-time thing. We couldn't do sit-ins because—we had to go to work and things like that. But it was a hard time. And it was a hard time to see friends come back from Vietnam. And the thing that struck me the most is that often they would talk about college kids being so into drugs at that time. But really, it was my friends from high school, that came back from Vietnam, that were so addicted to drugs. It was amazing. It was a different time. And a hard time.

Q: I can't remember exactly when the Kent State protests and shootings happened in 1970, but I know that 1970 was your freshman year. Do you remember hearing about that at all?

Bertacchi: That was just amazing. It was stunning. It was hard. I remember—well, that and then before that, of course, was the shooting of Martin Luther King [Jr.]. And that whole thing was hard. It was a hard time. You know when you think about—I don't know if you've seen the movie *The Chicago Seven*—but it's kind of interesting to think about all the protests during the Democratic Convention. And it was a tough time I would think for Chicago people. So what I mean by that is I also had friends whose dad were in the police force and were firemen. And some of the protesters would—and this happened to one of my friend's dad—they threw apples with razors in it at their faces. So the violence also was on that side, which was sad to see.

Q: And how did that make you feel about living in Chicago? And I know that students were also then seen as this very—in a negative light because of their participation in these events. So how did you feel living in Chicago with this? And were you ever concerned about your own safety commuting to and from school?

Bertacchi: I don't think so. I don't think so. Because, again, a lot of those things happened on campuses, and so it was a difference. So commuting. I worked in a hospital. If—no.

Q: Could you talk a little bit about friendships at Mundelein and whether you had very strong friendships forming with other commuters or with people in your classes? What that was like?

Bertacchi: Yeah. And that was the thing I like about Mundelein, is I had friends on both commuters and both living on-campus. And some of them I've still maintained today, which has been wonderful. And one person, we have chuckled about, she was only a year older than me, but I thought she was like a rock star (laughs). We're still friends.

[20:00]

We ended up working together at the same place at the Academy. And so it was like, "Oh my gosh, I can't believe I'm working with you. You were so good." She's like, "I was only a year older than you." But yes. They never made us feel like second citizens or secondary. They always made us feel welcome. And so I really appreciated that. So, yes, friends on both sides and still friends. So it was a great situation there. We had the commuter lounge, which I don't think they have, and it must have been in the main building. But it was where you could go, because you couldn't go back to your room, so you could study there. And that was really nice.

Q: Yeah. What was the commuter lounge like? Were there—I think I've heard someone else in another interview mentioned lockers, or—?

Bertacchi: I don't remember the lockers. I just remember that you could go there, and you could get something from the cafeteria, if you wanted. You could sit there. At the time, I was smoking, so I kind of wonder, did I smoke in that room? I wouldn't be surprised if I did. But it might have had lockers. I don't remember having a locker, though. And speaking of the physical structures, though I do remember that during my time from the home economics lab was totally remodeled. And I don't know how they paid for it, but it was wonderful. And it went at that time into very modern kitchens, which really was helpful, as opposed to maybe the older. And it was a different layout. It was great.

Q: And what did you do between classes? Or maybe, what was your class schedule like as a commuter? Were you on campus all day for certain days? And how did that work?

Bertacchi: I was on campus five days a week. I don't think I ever really had a day off. It wasn't a bad schedule. I do remember that I did start at ten o'clock, so I do remember it wasn't eight o'clock, which was nice. And at that time, even though I was still splitting all the expenses with

my mom, I was working down at thirty-first and King Drive at Michael Reese Hospital. Which I know is no longer there. So I would drive up Lake Shore Drive every day, and I loved it. Lake Shore Drive was great. It's a beautiful place. There's something about the lake that's nice.

Q: I definitely agree with you there.

Bertacchi: Yeah. And maybe I would be in the cafeteria. I was telling my husband that I remember a funny story that turned out to be true. There was some nicest cook at Mundelein. And I just got to know him, and he was so wonderful. And he told me that he had written a song with Chuck Berry called "Johnny B. Goode." And I thought—and I always kind of put that in the back of my mind. So when I started talking to you, I thought, I wonder... And sure enough, he was right. He never got credit for it. And it made it sound like Chuck Berry might have gone back and given him some money. So he would sing in the cafeteria. And it was great. And it was nice. It was a very nice place.

Q: That is very cool. That's a great story—

Bertacchi: It was. But I wonder. I don't know—many people knew him, so I don't know how many people knew that story. But I just remember. Yeah, he was fun. He was a nice man.

Q: Did you get to know other staff members at Mundelein that weren't professors?

Bertacchi: No, other than Sister Jean and Sister Ann Ida [Gannon, BVM] also was very friendly. She was a little more formal than Sister Jean. So you didn't quite have the same conversations. But she was very nice. And she was so recognized in the city of Chicago as a woman leader that there was a lot of pride to say, "Oh, yeah we know her." So it was great.

Q: So what faculty or staff members at Mundelein would you say had the largest impact on you?

Bertacchi: Well, certainly Mary Abbott Hess. And then I would say there's another teacher named Avis Moeller that was very good.

[25:00]

I wish I remembered the name of my chemistry teacher. I know she was a nun, and she was very wonderful.

Q: Why do you think that the relationships that you made at Mundelein have lasted as long as they have? You say you're still in contact with some people, and I wanted to just get your insight as to why you think that is.

Bertacchi: I do think it had something to do with being all-female at the time. Because there wasn't the pressure or competitiveness of dating. Although we did have one male in our class at that time, if you can imagine that. I was thinking, wow. But yeah, I think that was part of it. So there was no pretense. You were who you were, and so it really was helpful that way. And I think the sincerity was there. There are certainly some people that perhaps you knew weren't going to be friends for life, but others just were.

Q: Sorry, I forgot to ask this. I didn't want to back and forth a little bit. But when you weren't in class, where did you go? On campus or off campus? What did you do with your time?

Bertacchi: So perhaps at that time for fun things—because I started living down at Michael Reese [Hospital], I would hang around with all the interns and residents there. And we were a very small enclosed group, so that's where I would do it. Sometimes we'd go to Rush Street. Not too often. I didn't go to many of the bars by Loyola because often I wasn't around there at night. But I know that there were a lot of fun places and music places. Chicago had a lot of nice music places, too. It wasn't unlikely that you could see someone like John Prime or Steve Goodman just at the neighborhood place. And it was nice.

Q: So did you spend most of your off time with people that you worked with rather than people at Mundelein?

Bertacchi: Yes.

Q: Okay. Would you say that your friendships at Mundelein were kind of stuck close or? How am I trying to say this? That your friendships were kind of rooted in your commonality of being "Mundle Bundles." And when you were off campus, you didn't really converse much with them?

Bertacchi: Probably so. And as you pointed out earlier, we didn't have the technology to send a quick text or check in that way. So, yeah, I would say that probably was the case. We didn't socialize that much. And again, it was only because I wasn't there when it was social times. But I feel like if I was, it would have been, some fun places to go and hang out.

Q: So about what time in the day would you go back home then after your classes?

Bertacchi: I bet it was about four. Yeah, that sounds about right.

Q: Do you recall any sort of communication on campus for getting news? Was there a bulletin board? I know the newspaper had recently stopped publishing, but were there any sort of newsletters or something to get information?

Bertacchi: No, not really. That's something, yeah. I don't recall anything like that. Which would be interesting because it probably would have opened up more people to know and more understanding of the different majors that were being offered and people that were there. So, no.

Q: Do you remember at the time if you had any issues at Mundelein, any negative experiences for being a commuter student? Or would you say your experience was wholly positive?

Bertacchi: Yeah, I would say it was very positive. No, it was fine.

[30:00]

Probably the only negative experience I had was—I don't know if you ever heard about the elevator bandits—but. That Skyscraper was pretty tall. And if there wasn't an elevator operator, it wasn't unlikely that someone would commandeer it and just take it up to their class. Which could be the ninth floor. And if you're going to the seventh floor, there's no elevator. You would have to try—and I remember people, we would walk up like, "No, it's not here. It's not on this floor. No, it's not—keep going." That was probably the only negative thing. And it was funny. And then sometimes we would say, "You're one of the elevator bandits, aren't you?" So I'm sure they have automated elevators now in that place.

Q: That's funny, though. Would you have—if given the opportunity, do you think you ever would have become an elevator bandit to get where you need to go?

Bertacchi: I don't know. That's a tough one, because I did have some classes all the way on that top floor. So I'd have to honestly say perhaps, yes.

Q: So how many elevators were there? And therefore were they always—obviously they weren't always operated. So—

Bertacchi: I think there were two. I don't remember exactly, but it seems like—I mean there wasn't a bank of them or anything.

Q: So, yeah, that's interesting. You would kind of need someone there all the time if you ever wanted to do anything.

Bertacchi: Right.

Q: Or climb all those stairs.

Bertacchi: That's right. Before the Fitbit, so you wouldn't get any credit either.

Q: I know that's so funny to me. If someone says, "Oh, I wasn't wearing my Fitbit," or, "Oh, it's dead. It's not counting these steps." You still took them, I mean.

Bertacchi: (laughs)

Q: Did you have a first year orientation coming into Mundelein that helped you acclimate to things or tell you important things you need to know?

Bertacchi: No, because, see, I came in as a transfer student. I had done that one year at the community college. So that I didn't have. I kind of had to learn things on my own of where things were and how it worked. I think I—there was an older—"older"—person working in the student area. And she went to my high school, so I could ask her if I had questions. I remember she was in the student office. She was pretty nice that way.

Q: Yeah, that's good. To have a point of connection. Otherwise, you're just kind of aimlessly figuring things out yourself, right?

Bertacchi: Yeah. But I think that was also something that the instructors understood. They understood that perhaps the commuters needed a little bit more grounding, a little more orientation, a little bit more connecting. Because I do remember them kind of going out their way to—introducing you to people or just putting you in groups that you'd have to talk and make friends. So I think that was helpful.

Q: How did the teachers know who was a commuter and who wasn't?

Bertacchi: That's a good question. I don't know. I don't remember them ever saying, "Okay, well, the commuters, please raise their hands." And perhaps it was because we had our coats with us? I don't know because even the ones that lived in the dorms would wear coats it seems like. When it was pretty nippy out there. So I don't know.

Q: I know you mentioned that some people from Northwestern would come down sometimes. Was there any interaction with Loyola people at all? Men or women?

Bertacchi: Not really, which is kind of interesting to think about. Although, there might have been at night at the bars, I bet there was. So that probably was very common that way. And they had that beautiful chapel. And I think that some of the non-commuters, the residents, people would go to church there and mass there on Sundays. So there was some interaction that way, too.

[35:00]

Q: And so you said that you had kind of liked the fact that it was an all-female college. And that helped you kind of gain—or it helped take some pressure off you. Was that a factor coming in that you also knew that you would like about Mundelein? Or was it something that you didn't really think about and just realize after the fact?

Bertacchi: I didn't realize it. Because I had gone to a Catholic high school in Chicago, but it was one of the few co-ed Catholic high schools. So, I guess I didn't even think about it. It was more that they had the degree I wanted and that was the draw. But it was just interesting to have that.

Q: Was there any sort of dress code at the time or—not uniform—but did you have to dress..?

Bertacchi: No.

Q: Okay.

Bertacchi: No. You could wear those bell-bottom jeans and hippie outfits and look really cool. Although I think when I had a class with Sister Pierre Flynn, we were a little bit more aware of what we wore (laughs).

Q: You knew she expected a certain—.

Bertacchi: Yeah.

Q: Are there any experiences that you had at Mundelein that you found to be meaningful to you? Whether at the time you're aware of it or now, looking back?

Bertacchi: I think the experiences were in the classes and being able to talk. I think the experiences of some of the senior classes, where there were more discussion groups, were very interesting to me. So Mary Hess would often invite people that were already in the profession to talk. And we'd have these discussions, and that was really, really helpful because it helped get into the real world, and it helped you figure out what to expect. And it also helped you make connections in your profession when you were still a student, which was really nice. And like I said, Mary had a lot of connections. So, (laughs) it was really helpful to meet, like dietitians that were head of hospitals or dieticians that were doing this or that were already working in industry at Kraft Foods or something. It was very helpful.

Q: Was there any formal sort of help with career searching when you were a senior, and know that you are going to be entering the job force, and wanting to find a career in your chosen field?

Bertacchi: Well, we had to do the internship first. And you could only apply to two internships throughout the country. So you were limited. And so I would say that our advisors, who were the department of home economics, were very good at counseling us of what might be a good fit. Where all these different locations are and internships are. And they knew some of the internship directors, so. Yeah, I think that was really helpful. They could hand you off to someone that would understand how you were and how you operated.

Q: Do you remember the internship that you got? What your responsibilities were for that?

Bertacchi: Oh, yeah. So I moved to Minnesota. That was a big thing. Yeah. So I applied to two internships. One was Cook County Hospital and one was in St. Paul, Minnesota. At that time, I was living with a great friend, and she said, "Oh, yeah, I want to move to Minnesota." And I thought, "Okay, well, then I'll fly there." Well, she ended up falling in love and decided not to move to Minnesota. So there I was, going to Minnesota by myself for a year, but it worked out just fine. I'm glad I did it. I ended up moving back to Minnesota and lived there for thirty years. So, it was a great experience. But again, it was, Mundelein helped me figure out where would be a good fit for me. Because I only had two places to apply to, so not to waste the applications. So it was good.

Q: And what was the internship in St. Paul?

Bertacchi: It was for dietitians. It was a dietetic internship, and it was a year long. And it was clinical and food service and community-based. And it was a very good experience. It was at the county hospital, similar to Cook County Hospital. So there was a lot of interesting patients and cases and things. And it was good. And I was prepared for it. That was the other thing that, you realized, like, "Wow, I got a pretty good college background here. I know what to do." That was nice. Yeah.

[40:00]

Q: I always love to hear that. I'm sure the professors were proud to hear that from you as well.

Bertacchi: I bet they were, but yes, it's nice.

Q: Well, I have sort of reached the end of my question list. Is there anything that you've thought of, since we had our pre-interview, that I haven't asked you about that you'd like to share?

Bertacchi: Let me see. I took a couple of notes, and no. I think I pretty much covered it. The one thing—maybe just to add—is that I appreciated having the diversity—which now is a term that is used a lot—but it wasn't so much in those days. And Mundelein had diversity. One of my best

friends was an East Indian. My chemistry partner was a Black woman. And you also learn a lot about life that way too, so I appreciated that.

Q: Yeah, that's wonderful. And talking with you, and several other Mundelein alums, I can really just see how special a place Mundelein was. And how long-lasting of an impact it's had on everyone, and it's just great to learn about and hear.

Bertacchi: Yeah.

Q: Well, thank you so much for sharing all of this with me. I've really enjoyed hearing about it. I'm going to stop the recording now. But I'd like to have you stay on for a couple of minutes just so we can talk about next steps.

[END OF INTERVIEW]