

SHARE YOUR STORY: STUDENT LIFE AT MUNDELEIN

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Kathleen Riley's Oral History

Women and Leadership Archives

Loyola University Chicago

2022

PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Kathleen Riley conducted by Melissa Newman on March 10, 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]: Introductions, Kathleen's family and upbringing, how she ended up at Mundelein, and commuting and living on campus.

[5:00 - 10:00]: Campus living, roommates, and nightly prayers.

[10:00 - 15:00]: Campus activities, the Skyscraper school newspaper, trying to go on a trip to Selma for the last leg of Martin Luther King Jr.'s march.

[15:00 - 20:00]: Campus job and going to the march.

[20:00 - 25:00]: Upward Bound, picking a major, and wanting more autonomy for the school newspaper.

[25:00 - 30:00]: Upward Bound in depth.

[30:00 - 35:00]: Classes Kathleen took and professors she had. Secular Buddhism.

[35:00 - 40:00]: More classes and professors. Dating scene at Mundelein.

[40:00 - 45:00]: Dating scene continued. Off-campus places frequented. How Mundelein has changed over the years.

[45:00 - 50:00]: Mundelein changing continued. Loyola's impact on Mundelein when Kathleen went there. Favorite on campus spots. Vatican II.

[50:00 - 54:43]: Favorite memories from Mundelein and wrap up.

NARRATOR BIO

Kathleen (Kathy) Riley was born in Chicago, but moved with her family to Hammond, Indiana when she was a child. They moved back to Chicago when Kathy was fifteen. She became aware of Mundelein College through a flyer posted on a bulletin board at her high school and liked the scholarship and housing options. Kathy lived at Northland Hall five days a week with her roommates Kelly, Diane, and Janice.

Kathy majored in journalism and social science with a concentration on political science and graduated in 1968. She wrote for *The Skyscraper* newspaper, which was under the supervisor of Sister Sharon Rose, and was an Upward Bound counselor over the summers.

She moved to Denver, Colorado in her twenties and attended graduate school. Then moved to Japan and taught English there for twenty years. Kathy has since moved back to Denver and has been retired for ten years.

INTERVIEWER BIO

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

Transcriptionist: Melissa Newman

Narrator: Kathleen Riley

Locations: Denver, CO and Palatine, IL via Zoom

Interviewer: Melissa Newman

Date: March 10, 2022

[BEGINNING OF INTERVIEW]

[0:00]

Q: For the record, my name is Melissa Newman. I am a graduate assistant at the Women and Leadership Archives interviewing Kathy Riley, class of 1968, on March 10, 2022, for the Share Your Story: Student Life at Mundelein project. I am in Palatine, Illinois, and Kathy is in Denver, Colorado. So to start us off, Kathy, could you just tell me a little bit about yourself, like when you were born, where you were raised and your family?

Riley: Yes, I was born in Chicago, actually raised in Hammond, Indiana by my delightful parents—now both passed away—along with my younger sister. We moved back to Chicago when I was in high school. I was almost sixteen. And let's see, what else can I tell you about those early years? I found myself moving from a small town into a large, noisy, public Chicago high school. And that sets the stage for my great gratitude for discovering a notice on the board one day announcing Mundelein College and that applications and scholarships were available. And yes, perhaps I'm getting ahead of myself. (laughs) I now live in Denver, Colorado. I left Chicago in my twenties, fell in love with Colorado, it's beauty and the mountains. Stayed here

for a decade. I went to graduate school and then went to Japan for twenty years, where I taught English as a foreign language. And now I'm back in Denver. I've been retired for ten years, and I live in a wonderful senior independent living building near the heart of Denver.

Q: Great. That sounds so interesting. Focusing mostly on Mundelein. Okay, so. Yeah, could you tell me a little bit about that notice that you saw on the board and what inspired you to choose Mundelein as your college?

Riley: Yes, two things. One is chance. I had missed the deadline for the SAT test. That was probably not surprising given my lack of understanding of college application procedures and a minimal counseling staff at Steinmetz [High School]. I also would have needed money. My family was nice, working class family. They helped me, but knowing that a scholarship was possible made it possible. The other thing was, throughout childhood, I had a Protestant friend who was quite skeptical of certain areas of what I would call Catholic mythology, Our Lady of Lourdes, and various other supernatural events that I had been taught to believe in Catholicism. And I could not find a good answer for her on why I thought I was right and she wasn't. So I thought if after a lifetime—you know, elementary school and high school—of public education, I'd get the real deal at Mundelein. I would finally be in a Catholic school. So I applied, I was given a scholarship, and best yet, I could live on campus five days a week and be at home for quite a modest amount. I know that the scholarship amount was under a thousand dollars, and I believe room and board for a year was as well. I hesitate to tell you that, it almost sounds like gloating. And I—(laughs) you have my deepest sympathy. Your entire generation seeking higher education, (laughs) and my anger still. It shouldn't be this way. So.

Q: Yes, yes. It is so interesting to hear the financial differences. Most definitely.

Riley: Right.

Q: So what made you decide to live on campus for five days a week and then commute or live back at home for the weekend?

Riley: I really wanted to have a college experience—to feel like I was at college and not be commuting every day. At that point, we lived on the northwest side. It would have been an hour ride back and forth. And of course, I knew that I would be able to use the library and have time with friends in the evening. But I was still, especially both as a child and a high school student, a kind of homebody. And I think I needed that connection still with my family. And having that structure was really good for me. Also, I had a special plan then where we could buy a weekend if something was going on, like a mixer or other event. Film. And so sometimes I did that.

Q: And so when you decided to stay on campus for the weekend, were you still in your same dorm or—your same room, I mean—or would something else happen?

[05:00]

Riley: Yes, it was always my same room. I lived in the Northland.

Q: Tell me about that experience of living at Northland versus Coffey, 'cause I know they were set up quite differently.

Riley: Quite differently. I believe Coffey had groups in twos. It was a newer building, of course, and in the Northland, there were four of us. There was one small room and then a larger one and a bathroom. And I enjoyed having roommates. There was one my freshman year who I kind of clashed with, but she actually left Mundelein. And by the middle of my college career, I had really fine roommates who were my friends as well. So I enjoyed that a lot. And I also stayed there part-time during the summer because of a very life-changing job I had. I was one of the first tutor counselors in the Upward Bound program at Mundelein. I'm not sure when to digress here. Maybe I'll wait for your (laughs), your questions before I go off on tangents.

Q: Oh, yes, I definitely want to hear more about Upward Bound. But first, can we talk about your roommates a bit more? Were they in the same majors as you? How did you guys get along?

Riley: We got along just fine. Kelly was in drama, and she had a very spritely personality. She was wonderful. She still is wonderful. And Diane and Janice. Janice was a mathematics major, and Diane English major. And I was in social science, what we called social science concentration. I don't recall us talking about our fields so much at the time, more about anecdotes about teachers and our studies and so forth. But we got along just fine. And I don't ever

remember us stepping on each other's toes. I think we were all pretty disciplined about being quiet in the room. And we had a lounge at the end of each floor. So I do remember typing papers, sometimes all night, on my little red Smith Corona [typewriter] in the lounge, listening to the birds. (laughs) Yeah. So we used to have nightly prayers at ten o'clock, and there was a curfew as well. And I don't remember having a strong emotion about that. Later on, my feelings about Catholicism changed, but it was a rather nice way to end the day, with a little prayer and a thanksgiving. And so we all kind of trundled into the hall and stood there.

Q: Were those prayers a mandatory thing? And who led them?

Riley: You know, we had a floor manager, but I cannot remember the name, isn't that odd. And I'm not even sure if it continued all four years. I just have an image of being there. And sometimes, I think sometimes I skipped. I mean, there was no punitive atmosphere around it. It was just kind of an expectation. And people did participate.

Q: Could you tell me a little bit more about the community at Northland? And did people kind of stick to their floors or were there activities within the dorm? What can you tell me about that?

Riley: I didn't participate in any dorm activities. I'm not even sure I remember that there were any. We had a nice kind of old fashioned hotel lobby downstairs. A rickety old elevator, the kind with the metal grates that you pull across. And there was a lounge at the end of each floor, so we could go down there if we wanted to socialize. But usually the social activities were more

school-based. That then would take place in the Skyscraper or in the Coffey Hall building, that large reception room on the first floor [McCormick Lounge].

Q: Okay, so Coffey Hall wasn't just a dorm or people that weren't living there would also use the facilities there?

Riley: Right. And I remember going there—well, sometimes there would be mixers. We would have dances. We also had a father-daughter dance one year, which was so delightful. And there was a large patio. It was in the spring. I still remember it was such a nice event. But my favorite program there was Speak Easy. Yes. No booze sold. Speak Easy was a program years before anyone had heard of cancel culture or the fear thereof. But a wide variety of speakers were invited to talk about who they were. We had a prosecutor from Cook County. We had a Communist come. We had people from all different walks of life. And the feeling among the faculty and the administration was that we needed to be exposed to many ideas.

[10:00]

I wish I had, in fact, sometimes I wish I could look back at "The Skyscraper" [student newspaper]—which was my activity—to look at all the different programs. Some have just faded from memory, but I might remember a few things. I do remember it was a variety, and that was the fun of it. Yeah, it was after classes, usually early in the evening. Late afternoon. Yeah.

Q: How often did these Speak Easy's occur?

Riley: You know, I'm not totally sure. I think it was about once a month. I could well be wrong.

Q: Any notable names that we might know of today that you heard?

Riley: I'm afraid I cannot remember the names, even the two that I just mentioned. If I saw the list, I think something would come back. But at the moment, I do not have it. So, sorry.

Q: That's fair. That's okay. So what sort of activities were held in the Skyscraper that you participated in?

Riley: We had concerts in the auditorium. (clears throat) Excuse me. Which of course is—been completely renovated since then. The Simon and Garfunkel concert. We had other musicians come, a famous trio. I know there were drama performances and variety shows. Upward Bound, of course, used it as well during that program.

Q: Did you participate in these variety shows or were you a spectator?

Riley: You know, I have a memory freshman year of participating and playing the Bongo drums. (laughs) I had been a drummer earlier in life, but I could not tell you anything else. Oh, I used to watch Kelly's plays. Of course, the drama department put their plays on there, so that was nice.

Q: And you mentioned you were on the staff for "The Skyscraper" newspaper. Could you tell me a bit about that?

Riley: Sister Sharon Rose [BVM] was a delightful faculty sponsor of that project. I enjoyed journalism. I had been on the staff of my high school paper, so it was a natural for me to go. And of course, we had all of the technology or lack thereof in that era. (laughs) Typing up stories, putting them together, doing a layout. And we were on the seventh floor of the Skyscraper. There was one office for the paper and then an adjacent room with a big table where we could lay things out and smoke. A habit I unfortunately took up at Mundelein. We even had cigarette machines in the dorm. A different era. And yeah. I think writing the stories was also an impetus for me to actually do more. I remember writing reviews about art shows or things in Chicago. And then, of course, when the defining activity of my freshman year, going to Selma [civil rights march in Alabama] occurred, I was the reporter for that, and I have since reviewed my own writings on it. And I'm grateful I was on "The Skyscraper" because I did not have another diary of that quite remarkable journey.

Q: Yeah, I would love to hear about that.

Riley: Yeah. Again, the role of chance in human affairs. What a theme that is. The fact that I arrived at Mundelein first of all, at a time when I think Mundelein was opening out beyond the whole Catholic circle—to put notices in public schools that I could see. I arrived in the fall of 1964 and a group of upper-class women and sisters were planning a trip to meet Dr. King [Martin Luther King Jr.] on the last leg of his Selma to Montgomery journey. This was in March of '65. And I knew immediately I wanted to go. I'm not sure why. I think it really was my Catholic background, that sense of social justice that I grew up with, and seeing the news in the early sixties that I must have seen that blend together now because I've seen the scenes many times since of young African American girls walking bravely into a school and police using dogs and people not being able to vote. It seemed like such a shocking injustice. So I wanted to go. My parents—of course, being parents and aware of the great dangers of that era—were horrified (chuckles) would be the most accurate word. And didn't want to give me permission to go. And they most certainly wouldn't pay for it. We had to come up with twenty dollars for a round-trip bus ticket. Yes, from Chicago (laughs) to Montgomery.

[15:00]

So I remember getting a job, and I typed a religion textbook for, I think, a student nun, and she paid me for that. And I got the twenty dollars. And I think my parents just relented. I don't know whether it was because it was a school-sponsored event, and they felt safe with the sisters there or whether my continual pleading and badgering finally wore them down. In any case, they did sign the permission, and I went. So it was the very first time to be in the South, to be aware of the energy of the Civil Rights Movement of the time. And it was just exhilarating. It's the first

word that comes to mind. And set me on a course of wanting to learn more. We just were there for a day and overnight, and then rode back. But was it a very important three days in my life.

Q: And how many people went with you? How many students and Sisters?

Riley: We had one bus full, so the exact number, I don't know. And there are some pictures in, I think 2015—there was an anniversary event at Loyola slash Mundelein remembering that. And I believe in my story I had the number, but at the moment I'm not totally sure. So I remember us singing on the way down. Bus driver put up with us. We were rather shocked that he had to go and park the bus outside of town for his own safety. We were then taken care of. There were hosts in the city who took care of us and brought food to us. There was an event which—oh, I wish I could have recorded—Joan Baez [American musician] was there. Other entertainers of the era. So that was the night before. And then marching into Selma. We were, of course, far back from Dr. King and seeing just the signs of the Confederacy that that really existed, you know, flags and signs. So, right. And I was grateful. I don't think I had a real sense of danger as sometimes we don't when we're young. (chuckles) As a teenager, I was, what, eighteen still, I think. Actually I just turned nineteen.

Q: So you participated in this march. And do you remember any specifics of other people around you? What you saw, that sort of thing?

Riley: First of all, it was the—just the feeling of being in an African American and multiracial atmosphere was just very powerful. It was the first time, and I'm not sure how I conceptualized it, but obviously, as I look back, I was raised in a completely white environment. As you know, Chicago was—and still is—a very segregated city. And had never had an African American classmate until I came to Mundelein. And there were very few, of course, at that time as well. So that was one of it. And I just remember the powerful energy. There was one woman who I'd forgotten about, but I wrote about it at the time saying—leaning out her window, saying, "This is the best day of my life." (chuckles) And just hearing that kind of energy, that something important was happening that I still didn't understand yet. And it led to actually two very important changes. And one was my decision to major in political science, and the other one was the decision to—the opportunity to work with Upward Bound when the Sisters decided to invite that program in. I believe it started—was it the summer of '65? I really do need to go back and look at those "Skyscrapers." Sorry I didn't do it earlier, but (laughs) it was the middle part of my college experience.

Riley: So again, then I had obviously a more in-depth opportunity to meet African American students who are a bit younger than myself and also working-class white students who came from families that did not have a college graduate. And the purpose of the program was to help prepare them for college. They lived on campus for a summer. There were also follow-up events during the school year. And I was a tutor-counselor, meaning I had kids in my room, and then I would also be available to help them with their studies that they took.

[20:00]

There was a film that was made of it that I think was posted on our class page recently. Yeah, from that time. I'm sure you probably have it in the archives.

Q: So it was really your experience at Selma that you then went back and decided, "I want to participate in Upward Bound," or had you known of its existence before?

Riley: No, it just started. The program was just beginning. LBJ [President Lyndon B. Johnson] had announced it, I think, following the Selma-Montgomery march. So I was able, because of my experience in Selma, I think, to be considered for the job. I'm not even sure how many people applied, but I was ushered right in. (laughs) Given the job. And I remember debating about taking it because the pay was quite modest, and I could have done better getting a job elsewhere. But I didn't debate long. I thought this would be a great opportunity. And I'm glad I did because, as we all know, I think anti-racist education comes in layers and different levels of understanding as we go along. So I'm grateful for that. It's the beginning of my—although we specifically didn't call it that—it was just exposure to each other as human beings and different experiences that started teaching me more about that.

And then I was very vague about my major. I was always good in writing and English, so I vaguely thought I would be an English major. And then I met—in a required first year course—the dynamic Dr. Anne Matasar. And she was my political science teacher, and she talked about political science as a way to bring about the social change that was happening all around me.

And I was just riveted by that. She was married to a lawyer. She said political science, that gets the movement going, and lawyers help bring it into actuality. So Mundelein had just created the social science concentration, which included sociology as well as economics, and you could choose an area of focus within that. And I chose poli-sci—primarily because of Dr. Matasar—which condemned me in some ways to some challenging courses where I had to learn the structure of the Russian National Committee and how that related to the government. All of which has changed since then, now that it's only [Vladimir] Putin, Putin, and Putin. But in any case, that was her education since she had come of age in the 1950s. She was fairly young professor. I liked that about Mundelein. And that impressed me as a very dynamic combination.

So I minored in journalism and continued working on "The Skyscraper," learning how to write until I had one big fallout. And I think during my senior year where there were other distractions, I basically left the newspaper, actually, after a dispute with Sister Sharon Rose [BVM], which I regret. She was so wonderful. Sorry I gave her any grief, but we had wanted to run an ad that said "Girls say yes to the boys who say no." And it was right in the middle of the Vietnam War, which, of course, was happening during that era, and she felt that was inappropriate and refused to let us run it. Yeah. So I was quite angry at that limitation on our autonomy—what I thought was our autonomy—and stopped participating, effectively I think, at that point.

Q: Wow. Yeah. That's very difficult, I mean.

Riley: Yeah.

Q: Especially since it had been that constant in your college career thus far, too.

Riley: Right, right.

Q: Did you ever have any—

Riley: It's—

Q: Sorry. Go ahead.

Riley: No, I'm trying to remember if I—I don't recall ever apologizing to her, and I'm sorry for it. As I get older, I realize how important it is to keep human relationships front and center. Those are the ones that count, ultimately, rather than our quarrels and disagreements. So I didn't. But I also think senior year, I mean, I was starting to look outwards at that point and thinking about what I wanted to do. And I don't know, being a senior. (laughs)

Q: Do you know of any other writers on "The Skyscraper" also left because of this?

[25:00]

Riley: I don't remember that was the case. I just don't. I don't remember talking about it other than perhaps with my roommates. And I think this is before—I have to credit the feminist movement later with learning how to process things and to really discuss. I think a lot of times, I just process things on my own and talked maybe with one close friend.

Q: Going back to your talk of the Upward Bound program, what sort of—could you expand upon that a little bit more and tell me what your interactions were with the students and how you communicated with them, got along with them, encouraged them?

Riley: Right. We each had roommates, actually, and it was the same room that I lived in otherwise. At the Northland. Their days were mostly study skills and certain courses. I remember working with some in the language lab. We had the old—it was during the audio-lingual era, you know, lots of headphones and listening to tapes. They had study skills. We were there to just chat with them. And I'm trying to remember, I think they were—it's strange sometimes how the good times just sort of blur into one. I remember it as being a very fun summer and harmonious. It was exciting for them. They were living away from their families for the first time, in most cases, and getting to know each other. And sometimes the more difficult times stand out. I remember there were a group of kids who were all dressing alike in the sense that they kind of wore their belts the same way and shirts. And they were doing something for the variety show, which I recall being very proud of, like a proud mom. And some of the nuns were complaining. Was it just nuns? Was it others? Again, my memory fails on this point, and then it was pointed out that,

"Well, you dress all alike" to the nuns. (laughs) So maybe that wasn't such a terrible thing after all.

The second summer, I realized I was taken aback by my expectations. I was looking forward again to working with African American kids, and I was assigned to a young woman named Gloria, a young white woman who was blind. And that was the first time I had been connected with someone who was differently-abled that way. And I was a little taken aback at first and not sure that I was going to be able to do this or what this meant for me. But everything turned out to be okay, and she was surprisingly resourceful. I learned a lot about myself and some of the assumptions that I make and language like, "Here, the light switch is over here. Oh." (laughs) So that was a good thing. I do wish I kept in touch over the years. I sometimes wonder. I did make friends with one young woman, a young African American woman who I saw later outside of the program, and she did very well after she went through college. She went to Mundelein, actually, and got a job in the early years of government programs for achieving equality, but she's since passed away.

Q: So were you assigned, like, one student or a couple particular students, or did you have a class of students?

Riley: I didn't actually have my own class. We were more like assistants in class. There were regular teachers who taught the—not necessarily Mundelein teachers—but teachers who were brought in for the summer program. And then my special students would be my roommates, who I could relate to.

Q: So the students lives on the same floor with you—

Riley: Yes, they did.

Q: For the summer?

Riley: So we were like big sisters. (laughs) Yeah.

Q: Were there any difficulties in relating to the students or getting them to apply themselves or learn the materials? I guess, really, were there any difficulties in your experience there?

Riley: I don't remember that. There must have been, but I was not part of any meetings talking about problems getting the students to study.

[30:00]

I think it was more like summer school. There was a flexibility and a more relaxed nature than there might have been in an academic AP [Advanced Placement] program, for example. So it was more an orientation, "This is what college life is about. This is what it means to come to

class at a scheduled time. This is what dorm life is like." So it had qualities, I think, of summer camp as well as academic preparedness.

Q: Turning back to your own studies, could you tell me a bit more about the classes that you took outside of the sociology department?

Riley: Oh, I remember taking art appreciation. I was always interested in that. And then we had, of course, the required classes—theology, which I'll digress because that was another important thing. As I mentioned before, I had come to Mundelein in hopes of getting the real answers to everything so I could finally have a discussion with my Protestant friend. But I remember having a really good theology class my first year. I mean, we listened to philosophers, and I remember the teacher—whose name has slipped my mind—talking about the Bible as a community's attempt to reach the divine. And that phrase just stuck with me. It was outside of my orientation toward religion as catechism, where there were certain dogmas that we learned. And it freed me in a way because also—remember, this was the sixties—and I had a boyfriend outside of college. I was thinking about the rules of the Church regarding sexuality and other things, and it all came together: the theology class, my life as a sixties person, and actually looking at I will still call the mythology of Catholicism and just realizing I no longer believed it. And I just came to me. I remember praying once in the Loyola Cathed—church [Madonna della Strada] for that feeling to come back that I once had in Catholicism. But it didn't. And I went on, and I've since thought that my interest in politics—which has been lifelong—in a way, was a substitute for that. Some container to put my earlier beliefs from Catholicism into practice. I now consider myself a secular Buddhist and belong to a sangha. (chuckles)

Q: I'm unfamiliar with what a secular Buddhist is. Could you explain that for me?

Riley: Oh, okay. There are many different kinds of Buddhism, but one I am attracted to is called Engaged Buddhism. It was started by Thích Nhất Hạnh, who was the forest monk in the Vietnam War, and he talked about the basic premises of Buddhism, which is mindfulness of reflecting on your actions, right action, right thought, and developing a peace in yourself that allows you to work in the world. It does not connect—nor does it judge—any supernatural beliefs. So in my case, it's non-theistic. I don't have belief in an afterlife or pantheon of saints or deities, but in our sangha—which just means community—we usually meditate together and share resources for an engaged life.

Q: How did this present itself to you as an option? How did you become involved in this?

Riley: I think it was just later. I first heard of Thích Nhất Hạnh during my Japan years, and of course, Japan being a Buddhist country—not necessarily actively Buddhist in terms of temple-goers, but it permeates the culture. But I wasn't active as a Buddhist then. And then coming back here, I realized there was a whole network of Buddhist communities that attracted people like me who were no longer theistic but still wanted an ethical and active life. And for a long time, coincidentally, during this period, I had just really rejected the Catholic hierarchy and wanted absolutely nothing to do with them. Because prior to Japan, I had become quite an active

feminist and saw the Church as actively hostile, let's say, to many of the things I felt were important for women and equality.

[35:00]

That has since changed, and I now look at the institution—like any institution—it is filled with people who are doing good work and who are often battling institutional constraints that they don't like either, and that I have a choice about how I want to relate to my life. It's no longer constraining me in a way that I perhaps allowed it to earlier in life. So that was very freeing. And yeah, I have a friend here who is very active in the Loretto [Sisters of Loretto] community. I don't know if that's well-known in Catholic circles. It's basically a group of nuns and laypeople who are actively involved in social justice, environmental justice. And that's another place I think people like me find to do good work that is not necessarily, again, connected to belief in an afterlife or prayers to a God that they believe has—offers favors.

Q: Okay, thank you for sharing that with me. I had no idea about any of that.

Riley: Okay, yeah.

Q: In terms—shifting back again to classes, were there any other influential professors that you had, any other classes that you really enjoyed?

Riley: Oh my gosh. Sometimes I think there was a certain image of what a college professor should be. And I still remember Dr. Russell Barta. He would kind of lean back and he had that long, craggy appearance that you kind of associate with stereotypical professors. And he would pose sociological questions. (laughs) Oh and what else? Also, we had a first African American professor. His name was Al Miller, and he was interesting, too. And this also coincided with the period of civil rights activity in Chicago. I'm almost embarrassed to say I don't have notes or papers I wrote during that time. It's more an aura of possibility that I think Mundelein gave me—and perhaps a framework for doing research and academic work. But I'm very grateful for. Let's see, I took art appreciation, of course, my journalism courses, which I enjoy. And hmm. (chuckles)

Q: Did Sister Sharon Rose teach the journalism classes?

Riley: Yes, she did.

Q: And what did Al Miller teach?

Riley: He was in political science as well.

Q: Okay. Well, let's see. Oh. (chuckles) You briefly mentioned having a boyfriend outside of Mundelein—obviously, a woman's college. So—

Riley: Yes.

Q: What was the dating scene like at Mundelein? Being an all women's college, how did that work?

Riley: Okay, you're going to laugh. Well, first of all, they had mixers with guy's colleges. Did we actually go to Notre Dame once or was a different one? I don't even remember. I remember taking a bus somewhere and one of the girls on the bus saying, "I feel like a mail-order bride." Again, I think we spent a weekend, maybe it was Notre Dame. And then, of course, we were expected to interact at a dance. And remember, I was sort of this socially-awkward person at the time. And so that was not an easy situation for me. However, unbelievably, I was one of the first people who took part in what was the precursor to computer dating. And I had signed up for something—yes, you filled out a little questionnaire and other people who did this, whether it was done by a computer or not, I don't know. Anyway, probably paper and pen. And so I was matched with several guys who somehow had answered the questionnaire similarly. And one of them I ended up dating for my last two years in school. His name was Phil. And then for a few years afterwards, before—in fact, we almost got married, but decided not to due to other changes in life. But this is interesting, the Mundelein reunion—I had not seen Phil for a long time. We lost contact. And he contacted the school the year of my fiftieth reunion and asked the office to contact me and ask for permission to get together. So, of course, I granted it. And we have since been just writing letters to each other.

[40:00]

It's not one of those rekindled romances by any means, but just a pleasure in meeting someone again half a century later and reconnecting, remembering a shared time. So that was nice. Yeah.

Q: And good for him for taking the plunge to look you up. (chuckles)

Riley: (Laughs) Yeah, I think that was nice. Yeah, so because I had Phil—and he would come in on weekends. He was actually he's a little bit older, but he had gone back to school. He was going to Northern Illinois [University], so we would usually spend time on weekends. Otherwise I perhaps would have had a more active social life at Mundelein (clears throat). Excuse me. (takes drink of water) And then otherwise, like I mentioned, Simon and Garfunkel concert and other performers. That was the social life, I remember. Oh, what else did we do? We went to a place called the Red Garter. My father laughed, I remember, because it's such a racy name for such an innocent place. We used to drink beer and sing old songs from the 1890s. (singing) "Heart of my heart." (laughs) We had so much fun, though. So a simpler time, what can I say?

Q: Where was—

Riley: Going out for hamburgers and beer. Right. (laughs) That was great fun.

Q: Yeah. Where was the Red Garter?

Riley: You know, I don't remember. It was not a long journey. It was probably on the Near North Side somewhere. Perhaps that could be found if I Googled it, but I haven't. So, yeah. (chuckles)

Q: Did you go anywhere else around the city or off campus when you weren't dedicated to your studies?

Riley: Oh, where'd we go? Oh, there was a movie theater right around the corner on Sheridan, near Loyola Avenue, which I believe is now gone. Everything's redone. So we would go there sometimes. I don't think there was anything else other than another hamburger place in the neighborhood. But I loved going downtown because my family had just moved from Hammond, Indiana when I was fifteen, so it was still rather exciting to be in a big city. I could go downtown. See the windows at Marshall Fields [Chicago department store that has since been acquired by Macy's], go to the art museum, Art Institute, things like that. So I enjoyed that very much. Yeah, and just going also, being on the Lake [Michigan] was lovely. Sometimes I would just like to sit there, except when the alewives came in at certain seasons. (laughs) I don't know if that is still a problem.

Q: And what are those?

Riley: They're little fish that would sort of die on the beach—

Q: Oh. (laughs)

Riley: And be quite odiferous. (laughs) (typing on keyboard) So yeah, I would sit there with my friends and study. I was pretty much a studious kid, and I remember our library was still in the basement of the Yellow House. I still remember going there evenings. And of course, think about free technological libraries, digging through things. And I was talking with one of the more—her name was Gay. Perhaps you have hers—Gay Moran. And she was sort of a little bit of the bad girl. In fact, I think she might have been put on probation or something. She would go to jazz clubs on Rush Street and, of course, hear all the greats. So we're sitting next to each other at the reunion. She's saying, "I wish I had studied a little bit more." And I looked at her and I said, "Oh, I wish I had gone with you to the jazz club." (laughs) Probably most students were in between us and had a more normal life.

But I am just so grateful to Mundelein. I also started—at the reunion—to have a more in-depth idea of how Mundelein changed. I have a brother-in-law whose mother had considered going to Mundelein in the 1940s but decided not to because she didn't think she had the right clothes. And sometimes I get a sense that in an earlier era that Mundelein functioned more as a kind of finishing school for maybe ethnic Poles and Irish girls, primarily who had reached a certain income level. And then at some point in the sixties, the BVMs [Sisters for Charity of the Blessed

Virgin Mary] must have made a decision that they wanted their college to be something else and put up signs in Steinmetz High School and probably other places. And they wanted to go beyond the Catholic pool. Perhaps they also needed to build the college.

[45:00]

They needed to get students. I don't know exactly to this day what it was, but I'm sure the spirit of the times, the spirit that got those nuns to go to Montgomery, Alabama, my freshman year also affected how they looked at their mission as educators with kids from working class families, which mine was. And nontraditional students.

So what a great experience. And I think I was also so aware at the time—even though I didn't call myself a feminist—that Mundelein was a place where women had power to direct things and shape things. And I've since heard from those who went to graduate school right after that it was a bit of a shock seeing that the world did not work that way, at least in 1968 or the early seventies. I didn't go to graduate school until much later in the eighties, so I escaped that. So I'm glad that Mundelein changed. I think it was an economic necessity, but merging with Loyola, I think, has given it a stronger base. And I really do think of the Women's Leadership Program as Mundelein's incarnation. Carrying the mission forward. I can't get behind the sports team, but then again, I wasn't much of a sports person, to be honest.

Q: When you were at Mundelein was there much cross-interaction with Mundelein and Loyola students?

Riley: Not really that I know of. Perhaps if I had been in sports, there would have been more of that. But my experience is just friendships, like my first roommate had a good friend in the nursing program at Loyola, so got to know her a bit.

Q: Yeah, where were your favorite spots on campus, or did you also use some of Loyola facilities, perhaps?

Riley: No, I didn't really. I would just hang out in the Tea Room. That's what we called it. (laughs) I actually liked the food there, too. I mean, we ate in the Tea Room—it was the dining hall, of course—in the morning and for dinner. And just hanging out and talking with my friends over a cup of tea or a cup of coffee and that was just fine. What else did I do? Walking along the lake in fine weather. Going to the library. (laughs)

Q: And you said the library was in the basement of the Yellow House at that time?

Riley: Yes. And also on the upper floor. But I somehow remember the basement. Or maybe that's where the periodicals were. That the ceiling was fairly low and there weren't many other people there in the evening. What was I thinking? (laughs) Should have been in the lounge at the Northland.

Q: The Learning Resource Center, was that open when you were at Mundelein? Or was that after you?

Riley: I think it was after me.

Q: Okay. That was the new library that they—

Riley: The new library, right.

Q: Yeah, I remember. I think they were building it around 1968, but I couldn't quite remember if they had opened it at that point.

Riley: Right, right, yeah. Also the Yellow House, I remember going to one of—I thought it was rather daring mass where they had mass outside the church. It was a post-Vatican II thing that had elements of like a folk mass. And that seemed so different to me from my more traditional experiences.

Q: What exactly is Vatican II?

Riley: Oh. Pope John XXIII in the early sixties—who had a very brief tenure, unfortunately, due to his health—just started opening up the Church. And that was the era in which nuns stopped wearing their—well, some nuns—traded in their habits for street clothes and other reforms in the Church. I believe that was when the Latin mass was also abandoned as the norm. It became marginalized. Folk music could—the actual mass itself starting to broaden. Nuns, were getting more autonomy. Yeah. Okay.

Q: Okay. I have heard people mention it before, but I'm not Catholic myself, so I wasn't exactly sure. (laughs)

Riley: Oh, okay. (laughs) Actually, I'm glad you said that. I said, "Wow, how history changes quickly," because I think of that as a major Catholic milestone. Yes. (laughs)

Q: I'm sure other Catholics are very much aware of it, but I was not raised Catholics so. (laughs)

Riley: Okay. May I ask what yours is or how you were raised?

Q: I was raised Lutheran.

[50:00]

Riley: Lutheran. Okay. Wonderful. Christianity that actually had a revolution, so it's more sensible from the beginning, but sometimes I think that's the problem. All institutions need revolutions to move into another era. And unfortunately, the Catholics kept that at bay for far too long.

Q: The only thing that stays the same is that we need to change.

Riley: Exactly.

Q: Need for change. Yeah.

Riley: I know. I am rather fond of the current Pope [Francis], I have to say. I think he's doing his best with a very challenging situation. So I hear for him.

Q: Yeah. He's had a lot to deal with in these past few years, I will say.

Riley: Exactly.

Q: Well, do you have any favorite memories of Mundelein or just general meaningful thoughts that you want to share?

Riley: Oh, wonderful wrap up. Maybe just wrapping up the things I've said already. First of all, it was just the perfect place for me to be at that time in my life. To be in a smaller school with faculty who cared. They say we remember moments and not months. And that's true. I remember Dr. Barta, going back, Anne Matasar talking about change. Many cups of tea with my English major friends talking about literature. And our rather modest social life by today's standards. And then, of course, the overriding, I think, event which was the trip to Selma—the trip to Montgomery—actually. And the Upward Bound program and the social and political changes that I started to understand during that era. So thank you, Mundelein, for being who you were and everybody who worked so hard to make it so. Thank you for doing this oral history and keeping our memories alive and the history of this really great institution.

Q: Yeah, the more interviews that I do, the more I've realized just how special Mundelein was. And it makes me sad that it's no longer around and doing the same work. These same—well not the same—but with wonderful nuns, BVMS, that were the backbone of this institution.

Riley: Yes. Sad on one level, but on the other hand, I'm glad it's moved into a larger—like women's studies programs that have expanded everywhere. We didn't really have women's studies. I mean, that was still pre-feminist in many ways. Our studies were much more social action involving others and maybe not questioning so much our own situation as women. That came later, and I'm grateful for that. Just being in a generation where I had a chance to question things that I might not have had I been five or ten years older. I think. Yeah.

Q: Yeah, it sounds like you were at Mundelein at a time when great social and national changes were happening. And to hear how that has impacted you has been very cool. I really enjoyed listening to you tell me of your experiences today.

Riley: Thank you so much, Melissa. I really enjoyed remembering, too.

Q: Oh glad. Good, I'm glad.

Riley: Oh, I was going to ask is there some way to access any interviews? I know you have different privacy protocols for everyone, so not everyone will want their interview made public, but maybe some will?

Q: Yeah, yeah. So the plan is to make them all public. And so when we're finished with the transcription process, then we'll upload them onto our Voices of Mundelein Portal, which houses the current oral histories that we have from those in the past. So you will join the ranks of those, (laughs) and it can be freely shared with everyone.

Riley: Great. I should listen to some others from previous generations. I'm recalling Mundelein more strongly now, so it would be nice to revisit.

Q: Yeah.

Riley: History is such a strange thing. It's before us and after us, and we're just one little slice of it. And it's interesting to see how things connect.

Q: Most definitely. To see and hear the changes, too, is very very interesting, very cool.

Riley: Yes. (laughs)

Q: Well, I'm going to stop our recording now.

Riley: Okay.

Q: And then we can chat a little bit about next steps and all that.

Riley: Okay.

[END OF INTERVIEW]