

Lillian Susan Moehlman

Interviewed by Marie McCabe on December 8, 1983 at the Methodist Retirement Center.

Oral history tape number: 53

Miss Moehlman, will you give me your full name and spell your last name for me, please?

Lillian Susan Moehlman.

And you were born here in Madison?

Yes, born in Madison.

How long ago?

I was born in 1895, on March 21.

Where did your parents live at that time?

They lived on West Mifflin Street. I think it was the 300 block, and I was born there. The 300 block on West Mifflin Street, in the block where the city library now stands.

What did your father do?

My father [William Moehlman] was a carpenter contractor.

Had he been in Madison quite a while?

I think he had come to Madison from Sauk City, Wisconsin, when he was twenty-one years old.

Did he marry your mother here in Madison?

He married my mother [Dorothy Niederer Moehlman], who also came from Sauk City, Wisconsin. They were married there.

I see. Do you know what year?

1888.

Were you the first child?

No. My sister was born in 1890. She was Cora Moehlman. She never married and lived with her parents, as I did, all her life.

What was your father's name and your mother's name?

William F. Moehlman was my father. My mother was the former Dorothy Niederer. My father and mother married a brother [Louis Moehlman] and sister, so we are doubly related.

Did they also come to Madison?

Yes, they also came to Madison. Also other sisters and brothers of my father came to Madison and all lived in the same area near the Square, either on Mifflin or Johnson or Bassett streets. They were quite a clan.

Yes. So you had lots of cousins to play with?

Yes, we did.

Did you have any other brothers or sisters?

I had one more, a brother. He was born in 1897. He was William F. Moehlman, Jr.

And you all grew up in Madison?

Yes. My sister died in 1952 of cancer. My brother and I both went to the university. He was a

civil engineer and left Madison and has been in various places, finally settling in Tennessee, in Knoxville. He still lives there.

Did your father build the house that you lived in?

Yes, he built the house, our final home on West Johnson Street, 440 West Johnson.

Is that a pretty big house?

Yes. It's a one-family house with four bedrooms. He built that in 1923, I think.

Before that you had lived on Mifflin Street?

We lived on Mifflin Street and then we moved to Dayton Street, 336 West Dayton. That is the place which is now occupied by the Capitol Centre, those apartments and the community center.

That was the other side of the Square.

That was on West Dayton, yes.

And then you went to West Johnson?

West Johnson, only another block or so away.

Well, you didn't have the kind of traffic then on Johnson.

No. I remember we'd walk up Dayton Street to State Street. You come through an alley behind what is now the Yost's store. There used to be an alley going up through there to State Street, so we were quite near the Square, too. The Square was one of our favorite walking places.

I'm sure there were things going on up there. Well, when you were little, what was the first house like that you were in?

I don't remember the one on Mifflin Street. We moved to Dayton Street. This was a small house with one bedroom downstairs, two bedrooms upstairs, a front porch, and a back porch. It was quite near to the ground, the porch was. There was a good yard in the back, and a garden, a big garden.

You shared a room with your sister?

Yes, I shared a room with my sister.

That was the way of things in those days.

At one time that I can remember way back we had a horse. My father had a horse for his business, with a cart. That horse was kept in a barn across the street. Everybody had a barn or some place. They didn't have garages then. But if they had a horse or for any other reason they had a barn. We had a telephone. I remember having a telephone. I don't know just when, but I know that many of the neighbors used our phone, so it mustn't have been common to have a phone.

I suppose your father needed one for his business.

Maybe he did.

Did he work for a company?

No, he had his own business, and he had these several brothers that worked with him.

Did it have a name?

He called it "Moehlman Brothers Building Construction."

And he did homes?

He liked working in the country, working on barns and all kinds of things. But he built houses, too.

But not great big buildings?

Not commercial buildings, no.

What did your mother do?

She kept house. And she loved gardening. She did a lot of gardening, but she just kept house. That was hers.

And raised the children. Well, it wasn't as easy then. Do you remember what way she washed the clothes, for instance?

I know washing was a real problem always. The night before you did the washing you soaked the clothes and then the next day you spent the day on that and you hung them outdoors on the line to dry. I think later on we got a washing machine, but at first we had to use a washboard and wash the clothes on that. And we boiled the clothes always. After they were washed on the board, then you put them in the boiler and boiled them.

What kind of fire?

For a long time we had a stove where you burned wood, but then later we got a gas stove.

You boiled the clothes in the basement, probably, didn't you?

We didn't have that much basement on Dayton Street. Later as we went on to Johnson Street we had a basement. By that time we had a washing machine, too.

I suppose gas came in somewhere along there.

We had gas long before we had any electric utilities.

Then you could have a little gas burner.

We had an old-fashioned refrigerator, where the ice was brought in in lumps from the street. And then the water would drip. There was a pan under the refrigerator which was quite a lot of trouble to take out all the time.

It would always run over. And then you had to mop it all up. Or it would be so full that you couldn't empty it without slopping it.

Yes. We had a very nice plum tree in our yard and it brought a good crop of plums. We were always in the fall making plum jam from that. Our garden, I think, was our nicest thing on Dayton Street.

Did you get to help with it at all?

I helped a little, but not too much. It was my mother's garden.

Children aren't too anxious to pull weeds, I remember from my own experience. Well, that's nice. Do you remember what kind of heat you had in the house?

On Dayton Street we had a coal stove and then in the kitchen we had a wood stove.

But you had a furnace in the basement?

No. There was no furnace. The heat up to the bedrooms came up through... I don't know what you call it: kind of some round thing that had a hole.

A register, wasn't it?

Yes.

But a big coal stove?

Yes, a big coal stove in the living room. In fact, let's see, the living room was sort of the dining room and then the front room, the first room was called the front room. Then comes the dining room, and then the bedroom behind and the kitchen.

Where did you keep the coal?

I don't really know where that coal was kept. I guess I had nothing to do with it.

It just reminded me that we had a coal bin in one corner of the basement. The delivery man would come with a little chute that he put through a window and coal would go down into that. I bet you had one like that, too.

I can't remember about that. I had little to do with it, I guess.

But if you didn't have much basement, that might not be the case.

We had a basement, but you had to go down the stairs from the kitchen. I know we kept big jars of sauerkraut down there. Every month the whole area there had to make sauerkraut. We had a family down on the corner, the Newmans, that had a cutter. We'd all borrow the cutter from them and then we would cut that sauerkraut and put it in big jars down in the basement. Then you had to go down in the basement once in a while to watch those jars and keep the top clean.

And you ate a lot of sauerkraut?

Yes. We were Germans, of course. I remember that was mostly German Catholics, so we were a little bit out of place because we were Presbyterian. We had remained in that same church all these years, Christ Presbyterian Church. We had a few Irish Catholics in our neighborhood, but mostly German. Our next door neighbors were a big family with a big house. They had eight children. Their name was Bolz.

Oh. Do you know his first name?

John, I think.

I've heard of an Adolph Bolz, but that's another connection I'm sure.

Their cousins were the Newmans down on the corner. Families seemed to stay near each other. Their family was near each other and another brother was on State Street.

Your family was not speaking German at home though, was it?

Well, there was some German. My father liked to speak German. When my mother's brother came to visit us we spoke German.

You children knew some, too?

Yes, I knew quite a little German. When I got to school I was pretty good in German.

I guess it stays with you when you learn it young.

Even since I've lived here we've had a German class and it was lots of fun. Many of us here knew German somewhat, so we enjoyed the class a lot.

Did your group mix the with the German group that was on the other side of the Square, on the east side?

No.

I know there was quite a settlement there.

No, we didn't.

Many of them spoke German at home. But that was quite a nucleus you had there.

That was the Turner Hall over there too, but we didn't go to that.

You didn't go there? That is a little different.

The only church that had a German service was the Lutheran Church over there on East Washington Avenue, right off the Square.

But a good many of the Germans were Catholic, as you said.

Yes, they were Catholic. That Holy Redeemer Church had a German service always.

Do you remember the jars that your mother used to put up from the garden? The canned goods? Was that kept in the basement, do you remember?

Yes, I think that was kept in the basement.

We had a room we called "the cooler" that was just for that sort of thing. It was walled off so it wasn't heated. I've heard that little room called other things. You probably don't remember what you called it.

I was kind of protected from going to the basement very much. I know that my mother and my sister had to go down to the basement a lot and they kept the carrots and the potatoes and things like that down there.

Well, it sounds like you were well supplied. Do you remember where you got your meat and other groceries?

What I remember was there was this store up on Johnson Street, near the Square. Neswick's Store was there. Also we'd go to State Street. There were a lot of stores on State Street. There were grocery stores on the Square, too.

I heard of a big one that was over near what was the Belmont Hotel.

Yes. And there were other stores. They'd put their goods... some of them would put barrels of things out, like apples or nuts or something. Kids would walk around the Square and take an apple all the time. We were lucky we were very near the school, the Washington School, on Dayton Street, only a block away. We were near Broom Street. Our first cross street was Broom Street. The school was on the corner of Broom and Washington. We were living behind. You see, we were only about a block away from our next location on Johnson Street, but on Dayton Street we were only a block or so off the Square.

Do you remember playing games with the children in the area, your cousins?

Yes, we'd play out on the street some, yes.

And you probably remember having dolls when you were little? Maybe one doll?

I wasn't very much... I had dolls, but I wasn't much interested in regular dolls. I liked paper dolls because I liked ladies. I wanted ladies and I was interested. I was always trying to get my sister to play lady with me, with my paper dolls.

You'd get a book of paper dolls and cut them out?

I think we'd cut them out of that, or ads, or anywhere we could find them – newspapers or anywhere. Sometimes we'd get some for Christmas, the purchased ones.

They used to have magazines, too. I recall seeing some old magazines where you could cut them out. Yes, you could play much more imaginative games with ladies than with babies, I'm sure. I was going to ask you about your house too, if you remembered what sort of cleaning tools your mother had.

I don't know. I guess just a broom and a mop, I think. Not the vacuum cleaner or anything like that.

Then did she do spring cleaning?

Oh, yes. All the rugs would have to be taken out and hung on the line. But since we had these many uncles and men in the family, they'd take out all the big rugs and shake them out for us and do a lot of that sort of thing – re-paint the place and do a lot of work of that kind.

And the walls would be washed down?

Yes. I think in a way the women in the family had a little easier time because there were men available that worked for my father. He could have them come and do the heavy things for us.

Did your mother do any sewing?

Yes, she sewed quite a little. She made dresses for me, I remember, when I was little. We also had a dressmaker next door. One of these eight children next door would grow up to be a dressmaker, so we could get her to do things for us.

Yes. She was a Bolz, you said?

By the way, one of those children, two of those children are still living. One is in the nursing home in Middleton and the other lives near the Madison General Hospital. I just talked to her a few days ago.

What are their names?

One is Mrs. Stoddard in Middleton. She's been there in the nursing home for a long time. The other one is Mrs. Esser, Mrs. Christ Esser.

What are their first names?

Catherine Bolz Esser and Florence Bolz Stoddard.

That's nice that you still keep up with your former neighbors, after all these years.

Yes.

Would you get together occasionally over the years?

Not in recent years. They went different directions. I kept up mostly with Catherine, the youngest one.

Then you started off to school and you went to Washington?

I went right through Washington School, and so did my sister and brother. We all went to Washington School.

Do you remember any of your teachers there?

Mary Edgar was the principal. Mary Edgar was a very strong character and a very good teacher, a very good person.

Did this go from first through eighth in those days?

Yes. One to eight.

Did you have kindergarten?

No, there wasn't any kindergarten. No.

You started in first grade at about six years old?

Yes. I remember in the first grade that the teacher seemed to me to be a very old lady. I can't even remember her name now, just this minute. She was very good, too. But she was like my grandmother, I thought.

Yes, she may have been.

Maybe she was old. I don't know.

What about some of the other ones? Do you remember any names?

There was a Miss Jones I had, and Miss Edgar had a niece that taught there. I can't even remember her name. She was pretty and the boys all liked her.

Did you play games at school?

No, no. I think maybe we would run around a little bit outdoors at recess, but I don't think we ever experienced playing any games or doing anything much outdoors.

Any jumping rope?

No.

I suppose you lived so close you got there just in time for school?

We didn't spend much time on the school grounds, except just the recess.

I suppose you did some of these "ring around the rosy" types of things, "farmer in the dell."

I can't remember doing much of anything.

Do you remember playing with jacks?

I did play with them around home, I remember, with the neighborhood children.

This is a minute thing, but I was just wondering about how long the school day was compared to now.

Well, I think it was quite long. Being so close, you know, we got home in a hurry. I don't know just how long we were there. It seems to me we got home quite early.

It's probably not too different, except now it seems to me that they're out by a quarter to three or something.

No, I don't think so.

So you enjoyed school, I presume?

Yes, I did.

And you had your sister to go first and so you weren't frightened. And you walked together, I suppose?

I learned from her about the library and how to use the library. I liked having her read books to me. I was told that as soon as I could learn to write my own name I could have a library card. That gave me an incentive to learn to write.

And the library was right there?

The first time I went to the library it was still in the city hall, on the first floor of the city hall. That's when I learned to write. But that was real early. Then the new library was built in 1909, I think. Yes, 1909. The Carnegie Library. Oh, I remember that new building. I thought it was just beautiful. Like a castle!

The whole downstairs was a children's library, wasn't it?

Yes. Children's library on the first floor.

There were lots of places for you to explore. You liked to read, then?

Yes, I did. I liked to read. And, you know, they got that building because... they could have such a big building because they had the library school upstairs. The state organized a library school. I finally landed in that myself.

Did you? Well, we'll have to get you there, through a series of steps here. Do you remember what you wore to school when you were little?

I had only a recollection...

You must have had little dresses, I presume, and long black stockings, maybe.

I know the long black stockings. And warm clothes in the winter. We didn't have so many sweaters as we have now. I think we wore wool dresses.

Probably they kept the buildings a little warmer. Do you remember playing in the snow? Did you wear leggings or something like that to keep your legs warm?

I suppose we did. I know we were always trying to keep warm, wear warm clothes.

You could wear long underwear, I guess.

Yes, we did wear long underwear, I think. And caps, the knitted caps.

It can be pretty cold in Madison in the winter. I think it's easier for little girls now when they can wear slacks and warmer things without worrying about it. So you went to the grocery store nearby. What about other supplies? Do you remember other stores on the Square or nearby

where you'd get hardware or food, dry goods?

I think there was the New York Store on the Square.

What did that carry? I haven't heard of that one.

Way over on Main Street. They sold mostly rugs, but they also had general merchandise. I don't remember very much when I was real little. When I was young I don't think I went along much for shopping. My sister was the one that went shopping. She was five years older than I, so she was way ahead of me and protected me from a lot of things.

I imagine so. You two got along pretty well together?

Oh, yes.

What about your brother?

Oh, yes. He was more masculine, more boyish. He liked to do things with his boy cousins. He was out doing different things. We didn't play together very much.

Were those vacant lots around where they could play ball and kick the can?

Yes, there were plenty of places where they could play. Our chief trip in the summer was to the cemetery [Forest Hill]. We could go with the streetcar. Father would take us to the cemetery and then on the way back sometimes we'd stop to visit some of his relatives that lived out farther.

I guess the streets had some sort of topping on them, around the Square anyway. They weren't still dirt streets like the early days?

No. They were blacktopped or something.

There were a lot of horses and carriages going around.

I remember one time on the Square, there must have been horses going around. A car came along and there was a runaway. This horse got scared and ran away. A car was kind of rare. I did observe that, see that, and I ran into a building because I thought the horse was going to run over me.

Yes. I presume that happened every once in a while. Do you remember their having to clean the streets? That's what I associate with horses.

No, I don't remember cleaning the streets. I do remember that a [unclear] man came around and also a [unclear] cart along the street and we could go out and buy things from him.

I suppose your mother did most of the cooking. There was no frozen foods in those days. So you went through all eight grades at one school, and then when you finished there, where did you go?

The Madison High School. It was then Madison High School and it was the only high school. We, all three of us children, went to Madison High School. I graduated in 1913.

Did you enjoy your high school days?

Yes, I did.

Were there clubs that you could belong to?

Yes. I think it was the Nautilus Club I belonged to. But I was mostly interested in my

schoolwork. I don't seem to have had very much extra fun there.

You don't remember parties and dances and things like that?

No, no. I didn't go to any dances or anything like that. I went to school things, strictly school things.

Do you remember your parents entertaining, having parties or family affairs?

We had family parties for holidays, for Christmas and New Year's and Thanksgiving, but it's from one family to the other. We stuck together as a family pretty much. The whole family would go to one place.

Oh. That would have to be a pretty big place.

It got to be pretty big. But [unclear] began to split a little bit when some of the children married.

Did everybody take food, then?

Oh, yes. Many times everybody brought something. The hostess would provide the main thing, the turkey or something like that.

You have an impression of being well-fed and well-clothed?

Yes.

Your father was doing pretty well in his business then?

Yes.

There must have been lots of building going on at that time.

Yes. He missed many opportunities. He had a chance to take a piece of land for his work, and sometimes he spoke of places where he could have had a good piece of land if he had taken it. But, you know, he didn't have the...

And you had no idea what was going to happen.

Nobody knew how much Madison would grow.

Yes. Were you around when the Capitol burned?

Yes. I can remember one thing faintly about it. We were on Dayton Street. I remember my mother having us stand in the front window because we could see something, smoke or flames. She was telling us about the fire in the Capitol.

And you could smell it, I imagine, too?

Yes. We weren't very far from it, really.

You didn't get to go up and look?

I don't remember going up near it.

Probably considered wise. There must have been crowds around then. Your father didn't have anything to do with the rebuilding, did he?

No, no. No, he didn't.

I know that went on for a long time, the process. It must have been quite a shock to people. You were young, you were little then. Do you remember any of your teachers from high school?

Oh, yes. I just can't say their names right now.

Yes. Did you take Latin and German?

I took Latin. I just can't say their names right now.

If you think of them later, you can tell me. It really isn't important. Do you remember the principal or any of the people who were there?

There have been so many principals since then at that high school. I think maybe the high school... I worked hard to get through and go on to the next thing. It didn't stick in my mind.

Did you know all the time that you'd be going on to the university?

Yes. I knew when I was in grade school.

Had your sister gone?

No, she hadn't. She went to business college here in Madison. She worked. It was really through her influence that my brother and I went to school.

And, of course, you liked books so much she knew you'd be good at it.

I had made up my mind before I was in eighth grade. I remember telling people I was going. Instead of saying that I was going to high school, I'd say "I'm going to the university." High school was just on the way. So I did.

You worked hard and enjoyed it. I suppose you took the usual classes?

Yes. I consulted the high school librarian about the subjects I should take that would prepare me for going to library school eventually, and she helped me. She was Ruth Rice at that time.

And you knew you wanted to be a librarian?

I knew that way back. The minute I saw that new library building I guess I made that decision. But earlier, even when I tried to get to the library in the city hall to get a book.

That intrigued you. That's nice to know so early what you want to work for. You don't remember aside from the Nautilus Club... what kind of club was that?

That was the Latin Club.

You weren't in any glee clubs or orchestra or anything?

No. I didn't have any talents in music, although I liked music and I enjoyed listening to it.

Somebody told me about the study hall. Do you remember a big study hall in high school?

I suppose we had study halls, but I don't have any memory about them, really.

Well, Emma Glenz was telling me about this big, big study hall. I don't know if they went to the auditorium or where. She said how the boys used to throw spitballs and caused one teacher to break down because everybody was acting up.

I even lost my *Tychoberahn*, the book we used to have, the yearbook. When I moved up here, I guess, I discarded a lot of things and that disappeared. I'm so sorry that that's gone.

What year?

1913. I tried to get a copy of that.

You know, I think I might be able to get one for you. I saw one just the other night at the meeting we had of this oral history group. Somebody brought two copies of this Tychoberahn and one of them was a 1913.

Oh, I'd give anything to find one!

I'll call Grace Shaw. I think she works at the library or some place sometimes as a volunteer. I'm pretty sure that that was one of the years that she had.

The only person that I know has a copy of it which she might be glad to give up, but it's her own class, too, and that's Stella Macaulay. I don't know if you ever heard of her. She's at one of those low-cost homes out on the south side.

She was the class of 1913? I'm going to write a note to call Grace Shaw about the Tychoberahn, and that 1913 is the one you want.

One time Paul's Book Shop told me he thought he had some old copies of yearbooks. He never got down to searching for them in his basement and he died then. I've never asked his wife to go down and look some more.

Do you know if the library has a set of those?

I don't know. I would think somewhere in the library there might be some.

That's what we were saying at this meeting, that they probably had a set.

There must be some there. I've always intended to look it up somewhere.

Yes. It is nice to go back and look at those, isn't it? Did you do any writing or anything besides just your class work?

No, I don't think I did.

You were a reader. I wonder if you ever took part in any of the programs in the auditorium?

No. I don't even remember that there were any very outstanding programs that I remember.

Do you have any real recollection of what sort of clothes you wore to high school?

Not in general. I do remember that when we had one function that I had to have a new dress and my mother had this neighbor make me a dress of a yellow silk. It was very pretty. You know, we didn't wear evening dresses then, but it was to be worn to an evening dinner.

Yes. Well, you probably wore long skirts.

No, it wasn't a long skirt. It was probably ankle length.

Everyone was still wearing sort of long dresses in those days, until the 1920s, weren't they? In the winter I suppose you just had to bundle up.

Yes.

For Easter did you always get new outfits?

Oh, yes. We usually had at least a new hat. There was Coyne's Millinery Shop on the Square. It was the Coyne sisters. That was right near the Park Motor Inn, in that block. We'd get a new hat there and a new spring suit of some kind.

Yes. There were several ladies' wear stores around the Square, weren't there?

Yes, yes. There were. Kornheuser's was the main store, on Mifflin Street.

There was Burdick & Murray.

Yes, it was around there. Those are the two main ones for women's wear, I think.

The city hall was up on the corner there, where Rivers is now, wasn't it?

Yes. Across from that was the post office.

Where Manchester's was?

Yes.

When did the post office move to the other location?

I don't remember just when, but that was difficult when it did move. We had to go way across the Square.

Yes. And wasn't there a theater up there on the Square?

The Fuller Opera House, yes.

Did you go to the theater?

Once in a while, but we couldn't afford it very often. We did go once in a while.

Were they movies or were they plays?

They were plays and musical things.

Oh. And your family would go once in a while?

Yes. The first movies were in just a little bicycle store on State Street. That was the very first one that I went to.

It was a big screen or just a small one?

No. A small screen. It was kind of an amateur place, I guess. But very soon, then, we got a real movie house.

Do you remember where?

There was one up on Monona Avenue, where we had a visiting group of actors that put on plays. We had movies, too, up there. Things changed so much around Madison.

Yes. That's one reason why we want to get people's recollections, because these things just disappear and you never hear of them again. Did you go on trips in the summer at all?

When we were young we'd only go to visit relatives, maybe in Sauk City or in Baraboo.

How would you go there?

We went by train. And we also went to Lake Kegonsa and Lake Waubesa, and we went by train there at first. Then later, when we began to have cars, we went... and we went on the boat, too, to Esther Beach on Monona. That we'd go by boat, really. That was our transportation.

Do you remember the Chautauqua?

No. I knew it was going on there at some time, but I never went to it.

So you recall having a good time and enjoying yourself pretty much?

Yes.

What about the summers? What did you do when you were in high school?

Sometimes I worked. I worked at the university one time, along with some other girls, at Lathrop Hall, waiting on tables. They had a restaurant, or they served food in there, so I worked there. But I never even thought of getting a job helping in the library. I didn't know that I could get a job there. That's the only work I did. Otherwise I just stayed at home, I guess.

Did you use the lakes at all? Did you go to the beaches?

Yes, we did go to the lake a lot and to the other lakes, Monona and Wingra, to the parks.

Wingra Park was there, then?

Yes.

How would you get there?

By the streetcar. We used the streetcar a lot.

What did it cost to ride the streetcar?

I think it cost a nickel. There was an open streetcar for summer, so you could just step on and step off right from where you were sitting.

It was nice and breezy too, I suppose. That sounds good. When you were in high school, I wanted to ask you who your friends were.

I can only remember one, Blanche McCarthy.

Was she a neighbor?

No, no. I guess I met her in school. I can't even remember. She didn't live near us.

But you went around with her in school?

Went around with her, yes.

Did you go to youth activities at the church?

Yes. We went to them very much. Christian Endeavor, and earlier to classes, Sunday School classes. Then as we got older it was Christian Endeavor. Much of our social life did center around the church.

Did you have some parties there?

Yes, we often had, but not as many as they have now. I think now they have more and more. We had many parties. And the teachers in Sunday School meant more to me than in school, I guess. School was business. I never was very intimate with my teachers at school, it seems to me, as I can remember it.

Did your family go to church regularly?

Yes, my mother did especially. My father didn't always go, but once in a while he'd go with us.

And you'd walk to church?

Walk to church, yes.

All dressed up in your best?

Yes. And my sister was very active in church, too.

Did you ever go to a summer camp?

No, I didn't.

There was one near where I lived and my brothers and sister went to a church camp. We were Presbyterian, too, so I thought perhaps you had. What do you remember about your graduation ceremonies?

At high school?

Yes.

All I remember... I don't remember the ceremony in itself.

Where was it?

I can't seem to remember at all. I do remember that I had a white dress with a lot of lace on it and I had some red roses, or a red rose, pinned on me.

You don't remember it being at the Capitol?

I don't think it was at the Capitol. I don't know where it was. I suppose it was in the high school building. Some way I got graduated without [unclear].

You've had too many other graduations since, I'm sure. Then you were, I suppose, eighteen? Was it about 1913 when you graduated?

1913. I was eighteen.

Do you remember any of the prominent people in the class? Any boys you were interested in?

In our class? We had quite some prominent ones. Some of the big boys in the back of the one room I remember was Arnold Jackson of the Jackson Clinic, and Byron Nelson became a Lutheran minister, and the Marshall boys, William Marshall and Richard Marshall, of the bank. They were also at church, too. The McCargill boys.

Were any Frautschis there?

I don't think there were any Frautschis in my class.

What about Kubly?

No, they weren't there. Some of the people that I've kept up with are Myra Emery. She's now Myra Burke. She just moved in here recently. She was a medical doctor and she married a medical doctor.

And she was there at that time?

She was in school at the same time I was.

Oh. That was quite unusual to get to be a lady doctor then, wasn't it?

Yes. She was active in the university in athletics, but she got interested in physical training and then went into the medical field. She was a doctor of allergies.

So you knew you were going on to the university. And you just started that fall and lived at home?

Yes. I don't know if that fall I did anything special. I don't know. I went out to the university then that fall.

And you signed up for a library course right away?

No, I took a general letters and science course. Then later during those years or maybe before that even, you could take the library course as a joint course in your senior year and get credit toward your letters and science degree, so I did that. I had three years of straight letters and science and then library school, which took me to library school for much of my work above the library, the city library, the old library building.

I see. They already had that library building.

It had been established there for about ten years by the time I got there. I always regretted that I didn't take the fourth year in letters and science and take library school later. I might have changed my mind, even, if I had done that. But anyway, that's what I did: I took the joint course and got both the letters and science degree and the library degree. Now in the library school you get a master's degree in library science.

What was the campus like when you went there, in 1913?

I know that the medical section was way... you'd go to the medical school down where the [Memorial] Union is now. There was a building way down there, a little, low building. My health wasn't very good. I had to go to the medical section quite often. Another thing I was excused from... most of the students had to pass the swimming test, but I was excused from swimming entirely. And when I went to my work for gymnasium or that physical training I was given rest gym for some time. I'd go to the gymnasium and then I'd just rest. Well, then gradually they had me take a walk for fifteen minutes and a walk back and gradually I got more active.

What was your problem?

I had had trouble with a thyroid. I had two thyroid operations and that affected my heart. It has always affected my heart. It still does. That explains also why I was less active in many things: I was always a little below par as far as the heart was concerned.

Did you have the other childhood diseases?

No. I think I had not very many of them. I think I had chicken pox some time or something like that.

Yes, and probably measles. But it was this thyroid condition that you had.

The thyroid was the main thing.

Where you had to go, was this Lathrop Hall?

Lathrop Hall.

Where you did your rest gym.

Yes, I went to Lathrop Hall.

And you didn't have to run around in those black bloomers then?

No. I didn't have to do any of that. Later on I could take... what is that, where you instead of a game or tennis or anything like that... it was archery.

Yes, that was the thing on campus for a while, I know. Did you have trouble walking up and down the hill at Bascom?

It was rather troublesome, yes. Often my father took the car and took me up to school in the car.

Where were your classes primarily?

Well, they were on the hill, up in Bascom Hall. It was Bascom mostly.

Was it called "Main Hall" then, or had they changed it?

It was called "Main Hall," yes.

And the education buildings, South and North halls?

Some of those other buildings, yes.

There was a girls' dorm there at that time, wasn't there? Wasn't Chadbourne there?

Chadbourne was there, yes.

Some girls stayed there. Did you join a sorority?

No, I didn't.

What sort of social life did you have?

My life was at home because I was living at home.

And through the church, I suppose, too.

Yes. I didn't do very much socially around the university.

Did you have dates?

No, I didn't.

You were a good home girl, weren't you?

I was a home girl and I wasn't strong enough to do very much outside.

Do you remember the sports that were going on at the university?

Well, I know they were going on, but I didn't pay much attention to them. I still don't watch any sports.

You were pretty much businesslike. And in the summers, did you have a job? Or did you stay at home?

I think I stayed home. One summer I had to go up to the Mayo Clinic and then I had to rest all that summer, so I couldn't do very much extra.

Your sister was living at home, too?

Yes, she was living at home.

She had a job by this time. Where did she work?

First she worked on the Square and then she worked at the university most of her life. In the administration building.

Where was that at that time?

That last little building – it's now torn down – on the end of State Street, at State and Park.

Yes, I remember that.

She worked there for many years in the accounting department.

Well, that was a good steady job. When you finished you graduated, then what did you do?

I took a job at the city library immediately.

Oh! You got a job! They were just waiting for you there?

Right immediately.

Was Alma Runge your teacher at all?

No, she wasn't. She was up there at the library school. She was teaching typing and that sort of thing. I had learned typing before so I didn't need it. She taught more of how to get things in order and type them and make reports and that sort of thing.

For a while I know she traveled around the state for the library commission before she came back here to teach, too. I'm not sure of the dates. So you were able to just walk a few blocks and be at your work?

Yes.

You liked it, I presume?

Yes, I worked there many years. I did have one year off. I took a job in the library of Hawaii, in Honolulu, and I was there for a year. That was a good experience. Then another thing I did was I went to Columbia University for three summers, taking special work in library science.

What years were those?

Those were the 1930s. That was after I had been to Hawaii. In Hawaii it was 1926 and 1927.

You went by boat, I presume?

Yes, we went by boat both ways.

Who went with you?

I went alone, but I had a friend over there – my friend who went to school here too, at one time, and that I knew through my library. She took a job over there and it was through her that I heard about this opening.

Did you have a leave from your job here?

Yes, I had a leave for a year.

You took a train out to the West Coast?

I took the train to the West Coast, yes, and then took a boat from San Francisco.

Wasn't that quite a brave thing to do all by yourself?

It was kind of a brave thing. It was not quite my type of thing.

You were still living at home then?

Yes. My sister was still at home.

How long did you live at home?

I always lived at home. I lived with my parents until they died and then I finally... first my mother died, then my sister died of cancer, and then my father died. Then I was left with the house. My brother, meanwhile, had gone away, you see. I stayed alone about three years in the house. Then I sold it and went to an apartment on Langdon Street, and then I came here.

Do you remember the war at all? World War I?

Yes, I remember that my brother went to World War I and, yes, I do remember it.

How did he serve? Was he in the Army?

Yes, he was in the Army. He got into it quite late. He was in school at the university, too, but he went and was sent down south to Mississippi and never got sent across. Then he came back and finished his schooling. He decided he had better do that, finish it.

Well, you were mighty glad having him back and that he did not have to go overseas.

Yes. I've always been very close to my brother. At the present time he's in Arizona in the winter. He has no children, so I had no nieces or nephews.

But still lots of cousins, I presume.

Yes, cousins.

I wanted to ask you something about the changes after the war in the city. I presume by then cars were very common and I suppose the streets were paved?

I remember how hard it was to get certain foods. You had to have a book of tickets for different things. I remember we'd go to the store with our little allotment and we'd carry a lot of stuff home.

I remember my mother telling me that sugar was a real problem.

Yes.

I presume that Madison, without heavy industry here, was not as affected as some places.

I think not. People seemed to have jobs and be doing all right.

Carrying on with what they were doing. Were you pretty conscious of the legislature being just a couple of blocks from you?

Yes, I was. At one time I was on one of these groups of women, women that went representing different clubs to meet at the legislature and keep watching some of the bills. That was interesting.

Who was the president of the university when you were there?

[Edward] Birge was very active. He wasn't president, but he was the one I was closest to. Who was president when I was in the university? I don't know.

I forgot to ask you about some of your professors, too, your teachers at the university.

Manchester was my advisor in English and Fish in history, Carl Russell Fish. I took a philosophy course and I took French and German.

You didn't get out to the engineering campus at all? Or was there an engineering campus then?

No. The engineering building was right up on the hill, I think. That's developed since.

And the agricultural college was just beginning to get started, I think: King Hall and a few like that. Well, you would go up to the Square about this time, I presume. Did you remember, there was supposed to be a drugstore up there where people met quite a lot. I've forgotten what it was called. "Meet me at Menge's" or something like that.

Oh, Menge's Drug Store was there, right near 30 on the Square now.

Yes, that's where I was thinking it was, near the Fuller Opera House. By this time the university had expanded. Do you remember what the tuition was when you were going?

At the university? No, I don't, really. I wonder, was it thirty dollars?

That sounds about right. That was not really a problem for you if you were living at home. It was pretty reasonable.

Yes, that was very reasonable. I remember when my brother came back, having been in the Army, he got his tuition paid and I think that was thirty dollars.

I see, as a veteran. Did you go to May Day when it was up on the hill?

Yes. I danced in May Day in spite of my heart. You didn't have to dance very vigorously.

What did you wear for that?

I think I had a long, flowing white gown and a wreath in my hair or something. I think I have a picture of it somewhere of the whole group but I can't find myself in it.

You wound the ribbons around the May pole?

Yes, yes. On the campus.

That was a nice occasion, it seems to me. Then wasn't there a senior swing-out or something like that? I don't know just what that was.

I think that was connected with that May pole business.

What was commencement like at the university?

Oh, I can remember that. I remember especially that my sister couldn't get off from her job to come to commencement. Maybe she could have if she had had enough nerve to insist on it. But my father and mother came to commencement. I remember a very big group of people and very impressive.

Where was it?

In the Field House. I felt that I had really accomplished something.

I'm sure you did. There were plenty of girls at the university at that time, weren't there?

Yes, there were.

And there was no discrimination against them, except they didn't have as much housing, I guess.

No. My sister always thought I should have gone to one of the dormitories. She thought that would have been good for me, but we decided against it.

You would be under better influences at home. Who was the minister at the Presbyterian church

then?

George Hunt.

Oh. He was here for quite a while, wasn't he?

Yes, and he was very important in our lives, too.

Did you know any of the other ministers?

You mean the others in town?

Yes. The Baptist church was fairly close there and the Unitarian.

Yes. The Unitarian ministers... I used to go in there once in a while to hear some good speaker, but I didn't know their ministers really well. I knew some of the people that went there. One of my friends was Susan Groz of the Groz family, you know, Harold Groz, at the university.

Did you know any of the people who lived up in the area near the governor's mansion?

Yes. One of my good friends after I worked in the library was Marian Fredrickson. She lived there right next to that big insurance building. Their house was taken when all those buildings came along. She was older than I was, but she was a good friend. And her brother... they were very humorous people. They could put on an act, you know.

How do you spell his name?

Phyfe.

Oh, that sounds unusual.

I think that was his mother's maiden name. They both have died.

Did you go for walks up along the lake?

Oh, yes. We liked to walk up in that area. It's a pretty area, I thought. I knew other people there. [Unclear] Middleton was another person that I knew very well. She ended up out at one of the nursing homes here. Who are some of the others? Bertha Frautschi. I got to know her after I joined AAUW. She was an older woman, too.

Where did you do your banking?

I did it at the Commercial Bank at first and then I gave up and went to the First National of Wisconsin.

I heard that one of them was called the German Bank.

The German-American. No, we never went to that bank.

And then they changed it during the war, to just the American [Exchange] Bank. A lot of Germans did go there, apparently, from the other side of town.

I think our whole family went to the Commercial. Then when they closed for a little, well, we thought we'd better scatter a little bit, so I went to the First Wisconsin. That's still there.

That's interesting. There seems to be a real division between the two German groups and they were really just across the Square. But that may be because partly...

I don't know.

Well, that was just their own little group there, apparently. I just talked to Emilie Wiedenbeck. She was of the group that was on the other side of the Square, and Emma Glenz also lived over in that area. It wasn't very far, but I guess you didn't mix too much. Do you remember in the 1920s that there was a big change in the clothes and the styles for women?

Yes, I guess there were quite a few changes. I didn't follow the styles very much myself. I was always conservative.

You didn't have your hair cut?

I didn't have it cut until long after, when I was working. My best friend and my life-long friend was Rosette Reese, who came from Reedsburg and from Chicago. She and I both had our hair cut at the same time. Mary Smith was our boss at the library and she said we both cut off our personalities.

How long had your hair been?

It had been quite long and I wore it in buns over my ears.

Did you braid it?

When I was in high school I braided it. My high school picture was with braids around my head.

And then when you were more of a lady...

Then that style with the buns over the ears or around here turned up and we both had that. Mary Smith didn't quite like that either. That was a little bit showy. But when we cut off our hair, then we really cut off our personality.

It was in the late 1920s when you did that?

Yes, that was probably in the late 1920s, before I went to Hawaii. When I went to Hawaii I had short hair.

Did you enjoy your year there?

I enjoyed it very much. And again, I could have stayed on. I had an offer for a job in the Bishop Museum as a librarian. They needed a librarian. But, again, my health was giving away. I knew I had to come home. I had an operation and I didn't dare take a new job. I knew I'd have to have a long convalescence.

It was good weather there, though.

Yes.

That had nothing to do with your health?

Yes, very good weather. No, that had nothing to do with it.

That was the only time you had been away from home.

It was the only time I really lived away from home.

You must have felt pretty free. But glad to get back, I guess.

Yes. Yes.

Did you enjoy that boat trip?

Yes! The whole thing was a very good experience.

Did you ever go to Europe?

Yes, I did go to Europe once, just a few years ago, about ten years ago. My brother and his wife took me along with them for a Christmas visit to England. We went for Christmas and we met... his wife has a daughter from another marriage. She and her husband were in school in England, or teaching; one of them was teaching and one was in school. We met them in England. Then we left them and we went on to France – just to Paris – and to Geneva. This was a winter vacation so we didn't travel around long.

One reason I asked was because Alma Runge told me just at the last minute practically that she and another young lady had gone to Europe when they were in their early twenties, back in 1910 or something. I was so surprised. I was really surprised, because it was sort of a daring thing to do then. She said they traveled all over Europe.

This Marian Fredrickson that I mentioned was there in the First World War and they were warned to return, to hurry up home, because war was just starting.

Well, I presume it was kind of nice to get into shorter skirts and not have to dust the streets with your skirts.

Yes.

Although as a young lady you probably wore them ankle length anyhow. But for your mother I imagine it was quite nice, especially in Wisconsin summers; it must have been pretty hot with those long clothes on. Then the city was growing, I presume. But you still stayed in the central section?

Yes, we stayed in the central area, although we had a car later. I didn't learn to drive it either. My sister drove the car.

Do you remember the stock market crash?

Yes.

You probably weren't involved.

I wasn't involved then in stocks.

Do you remember about Lindbergh's flight?

Yes.

I heard that he came to... I guess he had gone to the university.

He was here in Madison in school.

So it was a pretty big thing?

It seems to me when I returned from Hawaii there was a big parade and he was in a parade in San Francisco.

Do you remember when radios came in?

Yes. I remember a friend of ours lived out on Wilson Street. She was telling us that she had a machine that talked and that she didn't have to wind it up either. We said "Well, that's just like her. She always exaggerates things and she thinks she has such a machine."

And it turned out to be true. I wondered if your father didn't get a crystal set or something pretty soon?

No. He didn't get one awfully soon, I don't think. I can't remember when we got our first one.

You probably did have a Victrola, though, didn't you?

Yes. We did have a Victrola.

And listened to the [John Philip] Sousa records and things like that?

Yes. We had some good records. We gave them to a cousin who was teaching over at the Wisconsin Music School. She said she could take those, she would take all those old records. When I moved to an apartment she took all the old records and they gave them to the school.

Who was the cousin?

Elizabeth Statz, Betty Statz. She played the cello.

It wasn't the Kayzers? There were some Kayser girls at the Wisconsin School of Music.

No, no. This was the school that was over here on the corner of Gilman and Henry, I guess. Is that the corner where they had a music school?

Yes, I think my daughter took lessons there one time. Do you remember when the Depression started here and what effect it might have had on Madison?

I don't know very much of it. It didn't have very much effect on me, because my sister and I both had secure jobs.

Who paid the librarian? The city librarian was paid by who?

By the city. But our pension is in the state fund. The city fund is with the state fund.

I just wondered if they had to cut back on salaries or hours or anything like that.

No, no. We didn't at the library and I don't think they did at the university.

And the library kept growing, I presume?

Yes.

More and more volumes?

One of the important things that happened was when they no longer supplied the school libraries. It became just a public library and the schools took over their own school libraries.

Oh! They had handled all of that?

They had handled that before that.

I know there was a state traveling library.

There was a traveling library, yes. Our last librarian that I worked under, and she became my good friend, Helen Pfarr, she worked on that to separate the school libraries from the public libraries.

There were so many more schools then, I suppose it was a big job to handle all those extra books. And you always liked the library work?

Yes, I did, although I don't think it was quite physically the right job for me. I had very bad

colds and I don't have them since I'm not working in the library. I think there was a lot of dust and new books and printer's ink, too.

Yes, that does affect you, all those chemicals.

I do remember one of these Catholic families next to us, the priest was talking to me one day and asked me what I was going to do when I grew up. I said I was going to be a librarian. He said that was just not the good job for me. He said "I have a nephew who is a librarian and it isn't a very healthful job." I failed to ask him what he would recommend that I do.

He might have thought you should go into the church. It's a good thing you didn't ask him. Well, I suppose you get some activity, but it's certainly indoors. What did you do in the library?

I was the head of the catalog department. That meant working at a desk most of the time and classifying and creating the catalog.

Who was in charge of the library while you were there?

Mary Smith at first and then Helen Pfarr. Just those two. She came from Columbia University, too. She was an Eau Claire girl.

What did you do on your vacations?

After Helen Pfarr was there we traveled together a lot. She loved traveling by car. We went to many library conventions and we also were interested in natural history, birds and so forth, and the Audubon Society, so we went on Audubon trips. See, she was just the right companion for me. She liked the same things I did, and she had a car and was willing to use her car and she liked to go.

It's what you needed, somebody who was stimulating and willing to take some initiative. Did you and your sister do things together?

Yes, we traveled together too. We took trips West, several trips, Western trips, by train, conducted tours.

Did you just get two weeks' vacation?

No, we got a month. I think she got three weeks at least.

That gives you a lot more chance to get away.

My sister and I did a lot of things together, traveled a lot.

Let me ask you: what was your family Christmas celebration like?

Well, we'd have a Christmas tree, of course. My father was always the Santa Claus and he was very hurt when finally somebody else took over as Santa Claus one year. But anyway, we sang German songs. One of the girls had a recorder. I always remember my mother sang a German song and they recorded it. I haven't asked them about that for years. This was Christmas Eve we celebrated. We would have a supper and then we'd have our tree and our Santa Claus and our gifts. The next day we'd go to one relative's or another for dinner.

But was church involved?

Yes, yes. We'd go to church. Whatever church services were available, we went to. Speaking of church, I have some books here that are so good by Barbara Pym. Did you ever hear of her?

Yes.

Aren't they good? My sister-in-law has been sending me some of her books right along and I've even re-read some of them. They are so good!

Doesn't she have a new one out?

I think I'll be getting one for Christmas, probably.

I heard or read somewhere, I think it was in Time magazine, that she had a new one that I put on my list to get.

There was a *Time* magazine article and also I think *Saturday Review* had an article. *Saturday Review* comes so seldom now that I can't keep track of it.

Do you remember Fourth of July celebrations up around the Square or the Capitol?

Yes. And State Street, yes.

What would they do?

Shooting off firecrackers. I remember my brother going to that and we'd always worry about him going and staying too late.

Did they have parades?

No, I don't think they had a parade, just running around firing up.

I thought maybe they had a band concert or something like that.

They may have had some.

There was a big parade probably for Memorial Day. Did you march in that ever as a school child?

No, I never marched in any parade.

Didn't you! Our whole school class would go – not here but in the town we were in. I remember a great big parade. It must have been in 1948. It was the centennial of the city and there was a really huge parade then. Well, State Street is a little different now.

It really is, yes.

But you enjoy living up here?

I like living here, and I think walking around the Square is good exercise. There's always things in the Capitol that you can go to. And we're near the museums. We can go to the Elvehjem Museum and go down to the Civic Center and the library.

Were you still working there when they built this new building?

No. I quit just before that, but I still kept in close touch with the people those years while they were building the new building.

What happened to that old library building?

I suppose they tore it down. Isn't that too bad. It was a nice building.

Very solid, as I recall.

It would have been a nice women's city club. But they needed parking, I suppose, more than

anything else.

That's what happened. So you've had a very pleasant life in Madison?

Yes, I have. But I've had to be very careful in many ways.

It sounds like you've had a good time, and I'm really surprised that you're living at home so long. I knew that Alma Runge did that, too. She lived down there near the campus from the time her parents had a barn with a horse in it until they died, I guess. It must be the way of the librarian.

Yes, I guess so.

Do you have any comments about Madison and how you feel about it? I think we have just a few more minutes on here.

I think Madison is a wonderful place to live. It has been always to me and I know it was to my parents. They felt so glad that they came from the little town of Sauk City and settled here. My brother, of course, has gone off; for business reasons he could find things in other places. He went down to Tennessee when they began to build the roads in the Smoky Mountains and then [unclear] and all that development. He's retired now, too.

What do you think Madison's advantages are?

Education, for one thing, both the MATC and the university. And I think the public schools are very good, too. I think the lakes are a great advantage, the beauty of the place, and I think we've always had a pretty good city government. We had more and more suburban places so people can move out and won't have to live in the middle of town. And with the development of transportation, if everybody has a car, why, you can live at a distance. If I were young again the first thing I'd learn would be to drive a car.

What about the Capitol and the state government? Do you think that's an advantage to the city, or not?

Oh, I think that's a great advantage to the city, yes. And to everybody who lives in it. We can't help but keep an eye on the Capitol somewhat, and on the legislature, and try to keep informed if we can.

I think you're right, that we certainly are conscious of it and probably hear more about it because we're right here. And it does give a lot of employment, too.

I think for the same reasons that this is a good reason to live here, the Methodist Retirement Center. The location is good for people from out of town. There are many people here from Wisconsin towns and they enjoy being so near the government, the city and the state and the federal all centered here.

You feel like this is where things are going on, things are happening.

Of course. The only disadvantage is we don't have good shopping uptown any more. But then we can get out to the neighboring places to shop with our transportation provided.

And how do you feel about Wisconsin weather?

Well, I like to have the changes in weather. Of course, I think it would be good to be gone in maybe January and February and March.

To Hawaii. That would be nice. Well, aren't you planning to go to Arizona?

I did go one winter while my brother was there. He's still there, but he's not going to live there. He's only there for the winter. I don't really like to travel very much alone any more, but I can get one of the cousins to travel with me if I go anywhere.

It sounds like you've had a very interesting and a very competent life. I think it's nice to get into a field where you're good at it and stick with it.

Yes. I think I probably made the right choice when I was about twelve years old.

What organizations in town have you belonged to? You mentioned the AAUW.

And I still belong to the Madison Woman's Club. I belonged to that for quite a while, but I don't go very often. I belong to the Audubon Club. I've gotten all kinds of things I have to pay dues to, but I can't remember the names of all them.

I imagine the Art Association and all those things. There's no end of things to belong to in Madison. And I think the activities are endless, too. You can be as active as you want to be.