

Delma Woodburn

Interviewed by Lorraine Orchard in 1987 at Mrs. Woodburn's house, 211 North Prospect, Madison, Wisconsin.

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It is appropriate that we should be interviewing Delma for Historic Madison because, on January 30, 1976, she was presented by Historic Madison with an honorary membership for "significant and outstanding contributions in researching and preserving Madison's past history and encouraging future appreciation of this valuable heritage." I'm reading from the document. Delma was in distinguished company when she received that award, for there were twelve who were honored for their work on the history of Madison and the University of Wisconsin. Among the award winners were E. B. Fred, former president of the University of Wisconsin, who was honored for his historical publications, A University Remembers and The Role of the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation in the Supportive Research at the University of Wisconsin. Another award winner, Merle Curti, for writing with Vernon Carstenson the two-volume history, The University of Wisconsin, 1848 to 1925, and for his outstanding teaching career at the university. A third award winner was William J. Scherreck, for helping establish Historic Madison and for his accomplishments as supervisor of local history for the State Historical Society. The fourth, Leigh Mollenhoff, was honored for serving as a member of the city Landmarks Commission since 1971 and as its chairman for the preceding two and one-half years. Anna and Philip Fox were awarded for preserving their family's historic home, Fox Hall, south of Madison, and for researching and collecting early city history. Frank Custer was honored for reporting on historical subjects for The Capital Times and for his work on a biography of the late publisher, William T. Evjue. Next on the list was our Delma D. Woodburn, who was president of the Dane County Historical Society and who helped establish the Dane County Records Center, which is certainly important to us these days, for that's where our records are kept. Robert B. L. Murphy, was recognized for three decades of service as curator of the State Historical Society. Bernard Schwab, who was then the director of the Madison Public Library and the first treasurer of Historic Madison, was honored for providing library space for collections of historic material. Janet S. Ella was recognized for two books, The Madison Art Association, 1901 to 1951, and Free and Public: 100 Years with the Madison Public Library. The last person on the list is Lynn Watrous Hamell, for her many contributions to Historic Madison, and for her book, A Taste of Old Madison.

Delma, I've talked with you before. We've been on committees together. You make an interesting remark that I can't help asking you about. When you talk about your childhood, you say "I was always on the fringe in Madison." Well, when I realized all of your honors and your great participation in Madison activities, I can't understand what you mean by that. Why do you tell me you were on the fringe? For example, weren't you born in Madison? Or didn't you grow up here?

The reason I was on the fringe was because I was a farm girl, born on a farm, twenty miles from Madison, not in Madison. I was born on the family farm in Springdale, Dane County, and I was a fourth generation Wisconsinite.

Well, then how did your association with Madison begin?

My father, John S. Donald, served in the state legislature from 1902 to 1912. The legislature at that time met three or four months every other winter. So until I started to country school, the family, meaning my dad, mother, and grandmother, and me, spent those winter months in Madison.

What would you do? Would you rent a house in Madison and then go back to your farm?

That's exactly what we did. We had lived on Broom Street, above a grocery store, but I don't remember that one. The first one I remember was the winter of 1904, when I was five years old. We lived in a flat on Webster Street, near the corner of East Mifflin Street. I remember the water tower on East Washington Avenue and the fire station in the block east of the Avenue. I remember watching the horse-drawn fire engines, with smoke and sparks flying out the chimney stacks as they rushed by the house. I used to get up at night and watch them.

Well, I imagine most of the neighbors did. I've heard enough about these fire engines to know there's a great deal of lore associated with them. Do you remember any particular stories or exciting events or anything about these fire engines? Can you think of anything?

Well, as a matter of fact, a little later, when I could read, I remember reading a story that was making the rounds about that time. Do you want to hear it? Pat and Mike, their first day in New York, fresh out of Ireland, were staying in a hotel. Pat woke up when he heard the bells of a fire engine out the window. "Mike, Mike, wake up. They're moving hell and two loads have gone by already."

I also remember being given five cents to spend at the bargain basement of The Fair store, which was located where the YWCA is now.

What was that? A general kind of store?

It was a general sort of a store.

But with a bargain basement.

A bargain basement, to spend my five cents.

Good. Where else did you live? I suppose you lived in various places then, because you couldn't get the same place, could you?

That's right. We lived in so many different places as a result of this every-other-year business. The next one, really, that I remember, was that we had a flat at 137 Langdon Street, next to the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity house, which faced Henry Street. From January to June, I attended fifth grade in the Washington School.

You and many other Madisonians; I've talked with quite a few during these interviews. Washington School appears and reappears. It must have been a wonderfully exciting school. People speak of it with affection.

Well, I think the most exciting experience I had was attending my first symphony orchestra concert. This was when I was in the fifth grade. You speak about the other people going to the Washington School. That winter, in the sixth grade, were the girls known as the "Henry Street Bunch:" Julia Haags, Helen Gale, Mary Parkinson, Sadie Buckmaster, Eleanor Riley. I guess there were a few others but I don't remember just which ones they were. Anyway, they went all through high school and the university together, and most of them have lived here in Madison since. They were as outstanding then as they always have been since.

It's good to have those names. They're very familiar names.

Well, when my father became secretary of state in 1912, we lived for a year and a half at 11 East Gilman Street and I went to what was then the last year of the Richmond Academy, which was operated by the Richmond sisters.

Oh. You know Monona Nafziger, don't you?

Oh, yes.

She was Monona Hamilton, and I can't tell you which relatives – did you know this? – are Richmonds.

I didn't know that.

They operated this school. And Richmond Hill in South Madison, I think, is their old home site.

I think you're right. That I know.

And I know that school is somehow connected with her family.

They decided that they would turn their school over to the university as sort of an experimental school, and it became the Wisconsin High School. Now this I go back to places we've lived in Madison. In the fall of 1914, we moved into a stone house at 14 West Johnson Street, which was just opposite the Madison High School. On one side of us lived Dr. [Albert] Bents and his family. The two girls were friends, Jessie and Carol.

He was a dentist, wasn't he?

He was a dentist. He was a friend of my father's, too. On the other side of us in a stone house almost matching the one we rented lived the two MacArthur sisters. Their brother became World War I General Douglas MacArthur.

And World War II, in the Philippines.

Well, then it was World War II instead of World War I.

Right. In the Philippines, when he said "I shall return."

That's the one.

That's Douglas. In Madison! I didn't know that.

Anyway, this is my memory of the MacArthur sisters – on summer afternoons, they would sit on their porch, all dressed up, always wearing hats and gloves.

Oh, no. Do you have any other particular memories of that period in your life?

Well, somewhere in there, I think probably in 1910 or 1911, I remember going to Professor Kehl's dancing school. Now, Professor Kehl was the father of Leo Kehl.

And he started it then. I suppose Professor Kehl started it?

Oh, yes. Of course, he was so well known. These parties that they had, like in the Capitol or the university parties or whatever, he was usually master of ceremonies, and he always saw to it that people were dancing in the proper form. People had a great deal of respect for him. He was just a master of ceremonies, really, at these parties.

I think the Kehl school of dancing still continues. I'm not positive, but I think that I see that every once in a while in the paper.

I haven't kept up with it, really.

Well, any other recollections from high school? Have you told us who some of your classmates were in high school? You mentioned the others, but they were Washington School, I think.

I think what I mentioned was that the Wisconsin High School moved from where it was on the

corner of Gilman Street and State Street when the Richmonds had it. They moved from that building to its University Avenue building, which is right in there where what is or used to be the nurses' dormitory. That was in the fall of 1913, I believe, and so I went with the high school.

Then there we had our little girlfriends, which included my closest friend, "Polly," Rachel Commons, whose father was Professor John R. Commons, well known, and Agnes Syrels, and her father was the student pastor of the Congregational Church, and "Kitty," Catherine Apple, whose father's family for two generations before him, I guess, had a grocery store on the near east side. And Charlotte Peabody. Her father [Arthur Peabody] was the state architect. Alice Monroe was one of the girls, and her father, I think, was a professor. And there were others, and we were all campfire girls together. Our social activities really centered around Ho Chee Ra.

Never heard of it, sorry to say. Where and what was that?

Well, that was a bungalow that was built by Professor and Mrs. [Ella Brown Downey] Commons on a hill which they called Dale Heights.

Any connection with this Dale Heights Presbyterian Church near Middleton?

The church is located on the [Dale] Heights. In those days, those early days, Mrs. Commons had a horse and buggy and drove out there to a cottage which they lived in in summers before they built their house. But Polly and our young friends used to enjoy so many social activities out there, so that was called the "Heights Group." Well, no. That was Polly's group. Let me see.

You were telling me about your Wisconsin High friends.

Oh, yes.

And your social activities around Ho Chee Ra.

The high school years were always very enjoyable. Then there was a group from the [University] Heights called the "Heights Group," and there, again, I was always on the fringe, because I didn't live out here. Some of the young people in that group were Martha Buell, Gertrude Knowlton, and the Winchell girls. And the boys were Harold Lyde, Stewart Turneure, Eugene Maurer, Frank Ross, and they were joined at the Commons' house parties by Carl Hofeldt, Whitney Seymour, who became a distinguished attorney in New York, by the way.

I'm recognizing a lot of these last names.

Another one of the boys was Art Kinnan. His sister was Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, who wrote *The Yearling*. Maurice Togstad was another one of the boys. Maurice enlisted very early in World War I and he was killed in action.

Delma, do you have any other recollections from this era of your life when you were still living on Johnson Street? Is there anything particular in addition to your high school recollections?

That fall, of course, I was a freshman at the university and I had classes in Bascom Hall. What I would like to report was that I was in Bascom Hall at the time that the dome burned. That was October 10, 1916.

There's a story that goes with this. You see, my father was secretary of state, and his office was in the west wing of the Capitol, facing down State Street. He was sitting at his desk in his office when he saw fire in the dome at Bascom Hall. It was then called Main Hall, I think. Dad called Charlie Heyl, who was a friend of his and the fire chief of Madison, and he said "Charlie, did you know that Main Hall is on fire?" Well, Charlie didn't know it, so it turned out my father

turned in the fire alarm.

Anyway, I was in a history class on the main floor of Bascom Hall, Main Hall, room 165, and we were the last class to evacuate from the building. I watched the fire from Lincoln terrace, as a freshman.

I didn't know much about this fire. I guess I knew that Bascom Hall had had a fire about then, but I didn't know much. Did it just burn the dome?

It just burned the dome.

Well, that was fortunate.

It was very fortunate.

Delma, before the fire engine arrived, did the students do anything to try to put out that fire? Or did they just exit or what went on? What do you remember?

Well, at that point I didn't remember anything. Since I have heard that the students in their zeal to extinguish the fire hooked every available hose to hydrants near the Hall, dangerously lowering the water pressure and almost losing the building before the firemen arrived in time to save the building.

Oh, my goodness. Did they take out any furniture, or records, or anything? What went on?

Well, the story goes that they decided they ought to get all the office furniture and files and papers and everything out of President Van Hise's office. They started dumping them on the grounds. I understand that President Van Hise was hopping around, mad as a hatter. This, I understand, was recalled by the late Albert Gall Still, former director of physical plant planning.

Well, he probably knew. Do you have any idea about how many students were in the university at that time?

Well, there were around five thousand.

Well, it was a good-sized school then. And Bascom was about how old?

Bascom Hall was about fifty-seven years old; it was built in August of 1859. By the way, that was the year our farmhouse was built.

That's a good college recollection. I assume that you finished college here in Madison, then, at the University of Wisconsin? Did you graduate? Or did you not graduate?

I guess I should make one comment in here. See, I was a freshman in 1916. The World War I was in progress at that point, and along came 1918, and the university was in a turmoil. Most of the men from the campus were in service and the result was that students were really in an upset situation, including me. My father was tapped to go over to France with the YMCA. I elected to drop out of school and go to business college, in the hope that I might contribute to the war effort.

In 1918 and 1919, I started in Miss Brown's Business College in Milwaukee. That only lasted for six weeks, because the flu was so prevalent that they closed the business college. My mother was ill with pneumonia and so it ended up that the year that I took off was taking care of Mother.

We came back to Madison from California in the spring of 1919. You see, the armistice had been signed in 1918 and my father was expecting to come home in August of that year. He told

Mother if she happened to find a house that she wanted, maybe she should get it so that he'd have a place to come back to, in Madison. The result was that my mother saw this house at 211 North Prospect Avenue which she liked the looks of and found that it was on the market.

This is a lovely home. It looks so adaptable for family living. I'm sure you have many happy memories here. There's beautiful woodwork, rooms of comfortable dimension, and I see family treasures around here, furniture and everything. I'm sure that you had many ties. Do you happen to know who built it or from whom your family bought the home?

Yes, as a matter of fact, this was built by a university professor. I think he was in the economics department, T. K. Yurdahl. He occupied the house only a very short time because he went later to, I think it was Ohio, and that was why the house came on the market. It had been rented to a music teacher. When mother and I looked at the house in May or June of 1919, there were five pianos in the house.

You moved into the house then. Did you go to the university when you lived here?

Well, yes. The family took over the house as soon as my father got back from France in August of 1918. It just happened that one of the friends that I had been having a picnic with wanted to see the house, so I said "Okay, we'll go look at the house." He was intrigued by the music room that the Yurdahls had built in the lower part of the house. He said "You know, this would be a great place for students to live." Mother and Dad said "We were wondering what we were going to do about it." So Harvey C. Steehome was the first one that got interested in it and he gathered together five boys. Mother and Dad adapted the area to these five boys, one of them being Ralph Nafzinger.

Oh, Monona Hamilton's husband, not at that time.

They started dating later. He was a long-time head of the journalism department here. They were very fine young people, really. Upstairs with me lived a girl who had graduated and was a secretary in one of the departments. We became the "attic bats" and the boys downstairs became "cavemen." They also called themselves "travedites." They carried out a very lively social activities downstairs, with Mr. Donald and Mother D as official chaperons.

Oh, wonderful. Well, it was like having brothers, wasn't it? You were their sister and good friends.

I had never had brothers, and they all took me over and worked me over. They were a marvelous set of brothers to have.

Well, then, you did graduate?

I was a sophomore that year, so I had two years in the house and graduated in 1921.

What did you major in?

Economics, under Professor Commons, as a matter of fact.

Good, good. Well, I obviously know you married James Woodburn. When did that occur?

Okay, now, maybe you should have a little story about that. Facing on Kendall Avenue was a house; its back yard adjoined this house, and Professor [Frederick] and Mrs. [Emma P.] Ogg lived there. Well, in the summers when they went on vacation, they often invited friends to occupy the house, take care of their cat. They invited – this would be the summer of 1920, I

guess, 1919 maybe or 1920 – Professor Woodburn from Indiana University, who had been a colleague of Professor Ogg's, so they became our next-door neighbors.

It was through Mrs. Ogg that I met Mrs. Woodburn, and Mrs. Woodburn introduced me to her son James and so James Woodburn became my Jim Woodburn. That would have been, I guess, in 1920. In 1921, then came 1922, and eventually we were married here in this house in September of 1923.

And you have two sons.

Well, from here we went to Pullman, Washington, and one of our sons was born in the state of Washington. Then we went to Ann Arbor, where Jim got his Ph.D. degree, and our other son was born in Ann Arbor.

And Jim ultimately came back here.

Eventually, after several some years at Washington State College, we came back here, and Jim has been on the engineering faculty ever since 1937.

In conclusion, I would like to say that we did not in earlier tapes mention the facts that Mrs. Woodburn served as president of both the Wisconsin Friends of Our Native Landscape and the Wisconsin Roadside Council. Those are two groups that we did mention earlier. And, of course, she was chairman of the Dane County Historical Society for sixteen years. During that same period, she was chairman of the Madison Civics Club, as we did mention earlier. On October 3, 1976, in the Wisconsin State Journal's "Know Your Madisonian" feature, Delma Woodburn was the person written up. Thus, having been chairman of the Madison Civics Club and then being featured in "Know Your Madisonian," Mrs. Woodburn was pleased that she had finally become a full-fledged Madisonian, a real Madisonian. Delma, as a University of Wisconsin student, I'm sure you had many exciting times. But let's be serious for a moment. What did you major in?

I majored in political economy and Professor John R. Commons was my major professor. I wrote my thesis on the history of employers welfare work.

And what was your minor? Or didn't you have a minor?

Oh, I had a minor in speech, under Gertrude Johnson.

Oh, my. You had eminent professors. Their names certainly are known in Wisconsin history. Well, what do you particularly remember about recreation when you were in college?

I have one story that I used to enjoy. Now, as part of our speech program, we really put on programs in the Fuller Opera House. But before that, you might be interested in a story about the Fuller Opera House.

During the early years, high school years and college years, there was a third-floor balcony in the Opera House. Anyone could line up hours ahead of a program and for twenty-five cents get a seat in the third-floor balcony. That way you could hear such people as Maude Adams and Otis Skinner, and so we all swarmed up to the balcony. Of course, they didn't provide programs for us. The people down below paid twenty-five cents for a program. We went equipped with strings with pins or something on the end of them and people that were real generous would pin a program on to our string and we would share the programs with the group in the balcony.

The year I was a freshman, that was fine. I went rush. That was called "going rush." I went rush. My supervisor, mother of Chi Omega, was there and she was terrifically embarrassed by this pledge fishing for programs from the balcony. Afterwards she took me to task for it. Then I

explained what we had been doing and that this was considered really the thing to do.

Where was this Fuller Opera House?

That was up on the Square. It was right in there next to where the Woolworth store is now. It was facing the Capitol, on the Square. It was between that and the building I think they call "Thirty on the Square." It was right next door to the city hall, where the city hall was at that point.

Mifflin Street. Well, what other recreation do you remember from college days?

There was one that I thought would be interesting for this report. In those days, the Madison young people used to do tobogganing on the Pinckney Street hill. That was a really terrific toboggan slide. But, you see, by that time, we were living up here in the Heights and we had a very congenial group that centered around my roommate, Harriet Goodwin and the boys that lived in the cave. You might be interested to know that there was a report in the *Capital Times* about a toboggan party which we had.

I will tell you about our Heights toboggan slide. We started at the top on Prospect Avenue in front of Dean [Frederick] Turneure's house at the top of the hill. We came down to Princeton Avenue and turned left. Then we came down to University Avenue. Well, we had guards parked out there to stop the horses and the autos while we went across University Avenue. Down there at that corner of Princeton and University, there also was a metal water tank for watering the horses back in those days. Well, anyway, we continued our toboggan slide over the railroad and we made a sharp turn to the right and ended up down by the Stock Pavilion.

That was a long slide.

That was a long slide! We continued that until somebody ran into that fence down there and we decided it was a little too hazardous.

Do you have some of those names in that Capital Times article?

Yes. My roommate was Harriet Goodwin and she was a co-hostess to the party. Included was Brad Field, Emily DeJeune. Now, she was from France. Ethel Vinge, Frances Ellen Tucker, Grace Bitterman, Emily Gower from Belgium. And the boys: William T. Hayes, Ralph Nafzinger, J. Arlington Anderson, Edward Anderson, and Hardy Steeholm. All lived at the cave at that point. And, of course, we'd come back to the house and have hot chocolate.

Oh, good. When did you meet your husband then? I don't see his name on that list.

Okay. This was in 1919. That came in the summer of 1919. Now, I should explain that our house at 211 was part of the Dr. [Theodore] Ely estate and so that when they set this aside for a house... actually the north side of the house was bordered by the Knowlton's house, by Professor Frederick Ogg's house on Kendall Avenue, and on Lathrop Street the back door of the E. B. Skinner's house and Professor Harrington's house bordered on our back yard.

Well, okay, Professor Ogg, as a matter of fact, was a friend of Professor Woodburn from Indiana University. The Woodburns came up to Madison to spend a vacation with their son, James Woodburn, who was here at the Forest Products Laboratory. Mrs. Ogg invited Mother and me over to the house to meet Mrs. Woodburn and their daughter. That was real good. But I decided that I should return their courtesy by asking the daughter to go swimming with me. So I appeared at the Ogg's front door and rang the doorbell. Mrs. Woodburn came to the door. In back of her was this tall, dark-haired, brown-eyed son, and she introduced me to Jim. From there on we became part of Professor Commons and Mrs. Commons and Polly Commons' group that

used to meet at the Irving Cafeteria.

That was when? Which year?

That was these years from 1919 through 1920 and 1921. Of course, it was at this Irving Cafeteria... this group that met there used to be called the "hoboes." We did a great many things together: canoeing and picnicking and partying. Catherine Ingraham, Catherine Ely, who married Mark Ingraham, was a niece of Belle Crowe, who operated the Irving Cafeteria.

Where was that?

That was down... well, you'll have to tell me. It was the cross street there. As a matter of fact, the Gamma Phi house was on one corner and the Theta house was on the other corner.

Right in the campus area.

Right there on the campus area.

Is that Sterling Court?

Sterling Court, that was it. We used to meet for lunch there. Catherine Ely was part of our group. Mark Ingraham was part of it, too. Of course, as a student in the economics department, I used to go out to the Commons, to their Friday nighters, which were a big evening for the students in the economics department. I'm off my story here.

Well, then you graduated in?

1921.

Did you work at all? Or were you married immediately? Or what did you do?

See, I really hadn't been dating Jim at that point. He had other interests and I did, too. But anyway, that first year after graduating, I spent a year of training in Marshall Field's in Chicago and then finally the next year I came back to Madison on the Industrial Commission, as a woman deputy.

My goodness! What were your particular responsibilities then?

As a woman deputy, the department was in charge of the women and children's affairs.

That sounds quite modern.

It was, it really was. But anyway, it was during that year that I really don't think I earned my money, because Jim and I began dating that winter and we became engaged in the spring and were married in September of 1923, here in our house.

How wonderful!

Oh, yes. Mother and Dad put on a wonderful wedding for us here. In fact, they included the people from the farm. The people from the farm got a great kick at these people that were wearing their tuxedos and with their white vests and everything.

Where did you go after you were married then?

Professor and Mrs. Commons were going to spend the year in Washington, D. C. They asked us if we would take care of their house and dog for them, and so they gave us their old Ford to drive. Jim and I started our married life out of Professor Commons' house out at Ho Chee Ra. Where is that, the Presbyterian Church on University Avenue, on Dale Heights. That Dale

Heights was named Dale Heights because Mrs. Commons' maiden name was Dale. They had had a cottage out there before they built their house at the top of the hill.

That's south of Middleton, and on the west side of University Avenue.

Right. Well, we were married in September. Jim by that time was working for the Northwestern Railroad as an engineer. In one of the early Depressions, the company got pretty pushed. He was the youngest man on the road, so he was the one that was laid off, like on the first of December. Well, it was one of the lucky things that happened, because that next semester he was invited to teach mathematics at Indiana University. He had grown up in Bloomington. His father had been chairman of the history department at Indiana University. We had a wonderful half-year in Bloomington. In the fall, Jim had a position offered to him at Washington State College in Pullman, Washington.

Was that mathematics or engineering?

No. That was in the department of civil engineering. While we were at Pullman, our son Jim was born, in 1925. Well, then Jim decided that he needed to get more background for his hydraulics engineering, so we went to Ann Arbor for him to get his Ph.D. degree. It was there that our son Bob was born.

What year is that?

That was in 1928. He got his Ph.D. in 1929, and then he was given a traveling fellowship to visit hydraulic laboratories in Germany and other places in Europe. So there we went for a perfectly wonderful year with our two little boys.

Oh, you were fortunate!

It was a wonderful experience.

What do you remember particularly that you enjoyed?

We especially enjoyed attending opera in Munich, enjoying the marvelous concerts that we attended.

Did you dangle programs or fish for programs? Or didn't you do that in Germany?

No, no. In Germany we didn't do that. But I'll tell you, we were still on a budget and so we used to sit in the balcony and we would even take Standplatz. That means "standing place." After the year we returned to Pullman, Washington, in the fall of 1930.

When did you come back to Madison then?

In the spring of 1937, Dean Turneure came out to Pullman and invited Jim to come to the university as chairman of the hydraulics and sanitary department. They needed a professor that had a Ph.D. degree.

Wasn't he glad he had one!

We debated quite a while. We loved it out in the Northwest and we never intended to come back to the Middle West. But anyway, we came back for the fall semester of 1937. We came back in September.

And where did you live then when you came back?

During our Pullman years, in 1934 my father died. Mother had been in the house here at 211, but

she had decided to make her home in Florida with her two sisters. So when we came back to Madison, she was delighted to rent 211 to us. At that point our son Bob was in fifth grade and Jim was in sixth grade in Randall School.

Right down the street.

Right down the street, very conveniently. And because we were connected with the university, it was logical for them to attend the University High School.

You picked up ties, I suppose, in Madison. Or were your friends around? Or how was that to move back?

Well, that's a good question. We got back here and once again I was on the fringe of the university and on the fringe of Madison. I'll explain. The new young faculty people were much younger than I was, for one thing. And then people figured that, of course, since I had lived in Madison I knew a lot of people and had a lot of friends. Well, as a matter of fact, my university friends and my Madison friends had, most of them, moved elsewhere, so I felt sort of out of place.

What I should say is that one of my special friends here was Catherine Ely and one of Jim's special friends... as a matter of fact, he had roomed with Mark Ingraham, who later became dean of the Letters and Sciences school. Mark and Catherine, of course, were married. I can't remember just which year that was that they were married.

I know you had many busy, happy days as a faculty wife. But I'd like to ask you about farms. I realize that you have managed farms. When did all this start? It's about this time, isn't it? Or do I have the wrong time?

No. This is a very good question, a good time to ask that question. Jim was very busy with his university work, our boys were very much absorbed with their high school work, and I was just not a part of anything. Well, that winter of 1937, my grandmother died and left the family Sweet farm to me. Mother, of course, had inherited her life estate in the Donald farm and the Rockview Farm from my father. She was having problems operating those farms, because she was living most of the time in Florida.

Now, where are these farms? Are they all near each other?

Oh, yes. They're in the town of Springdale and they are all adjoining. Together there were about 630 acres. Should I explain a little bit more about those farms?

I think that's interesting.

You see, what I should say is, the three farms were operated as dairy farms, supporting three families. Should I back up and say that when I began looking after these farms, I realized that I just simply didn't know enough about farming. I was advised to take the University farm short course, which I did. I find it very, very helpful to me. Now, back up to the farms.

What I should say is that these farms were just never a hobby. They were a business and have been all these years for the family. You see, we came through all of the changes in farming that were typical of the period: from horses to tractors, from kerosene lamps to electricity, from windmills and outdoor privies to running water and indoor plumbing in the houses and drinking cups in the barns. My responsibilities for the farms could be patterned for my free daytime hours so that they didn't interfere with either our faculty or family activities.

Wonderful! What sort of family activities, then, did your family enjoy?

Well, since this is for this Historic Madison, I should comment here that, for instance, one of the things that we did was to dance with the Cosmos Club. And while we were dancing with the Cosmos Club, our boys danced with the University High School Cotillion Club. We could go to their high school football, basketball games, and we could go to the university games. We enjoyed very much going to them.

Can you remember who some of the people in the Cosmos Club were?

As a matter of fact, I have here a 1941 and 1942 list. Some of the ones I particularly remember were the Henry Algens, the Benedicts, the Freeman Browns, the Oscar Christiansens, O. B. Coombs, the W. S. Cottinghams, the E. M. Douglasses, Harold and Mrs. Engel, the Connie Elvehjems, the Louis Fauerbachs. Do you want some more?

Yes. These are all familiar names.

The Osterloftgordons, Dr. and Mrs. Leonard, Nelson and Mrs. Lerdahl, the G. W. Longeneckers, the Fred Rissers and the C. B. Stumpfs. By the way, I'm still playing bridge with Mrs. Stumpf at the Kiwanis bridge club. John Scheels. You remember, you said, the Thompsons from Dartmouth Road in Shorewood Hills.

Yes. In fact, many of these names are familiar. This was really town-and-gown, wasn't it? It's a mixture. As you say those names, I can see it isn't all faculty or all town.

That's right.

And your children, then, you said were dancing with the Cotillion Club.

This was the dancing club in the Wisconsin High School. It was sponsored by the mothers of the high school students.

Who were some of those mothers?

In this particular year that I happen to have a lunch list for, which was in 1943, was Mrs. Wilbur Grant, Mrs. James Peyton, Mrs. R. L. Morris, Mrs. Robert Connor, Mrs. Laura Langlois, Mrs. Carl Moze, Mrs. Howard Nethercutt, Mrs. Howard Schneider, Mrs. Jay Newton Cyst, Bruno Stein, and Mrs. Warner Taylor were the hostesses that year.

I wish that young people these days danced as much as that generation and our generation did. Maybe they will resume it. I think they miss a lot when they don't.

They are. But, you know, it's interesting: Some students that I know at this point are taking ballroom dancing.

Good! I'm glad. Now, you have time for your family and travel. I know you've loved to travel. Did your family take trips?

We did a great deal of traveling together. We went back to Pullman several times and we used to spend summers camping up together in Canada and Lake Sygalica. We also thoroughly enjoyed the concerts that came to the university and were very much interested when Madison began organizing its Civic Music Association and the symphony orchestra group and the Opera League.

Now, this short course was terribly important to you, I realize. Did that lead you, in addition to helping you manage farms, as you still do, I understand, to any other particular contacts or activities?

Yes. Because we owned these farms in the country, we became part of a group that was

organized here in Madison really by the Dane County agent, Bill Clark. This group of Madison people who owned farms and lived in Madison were organized in what they called the City Farmers Club.

Can you tell me who some of those people were? I think it's interesting historically to know.

This group met for dinner once a month, and we enjoyed each other very much. I happen to have a 1952 *Capital Times* newspaper clipping here with pictures of the members of the City Farmers. I should explain that I was a member of City Farmers and my husband at this point was a spouse. Now, here we were.

I think I see one woman in the picture.

Oh, you see more than one woman in the picture. You see Mrs. F. L. Chapman, you see Mrs. Philip [Isabel Lyman Bacon] La Follette, and you see Delma Woodburn.

All right. And then who were some of the men?

All of them here were Professor James G. Fuller, Glaine Bullman, Richard Ela, Roth Jacobs, Herb Pfister from Mount Horeb, John Craig, who was a farm manager, Frank Cairns.

And Morrill Richardson. He's with the state department of agriculture. And O. E. Richards was a banker. Henry Reynolds. It says here he was a trucker and former farmer councilman. Also he was a former mayor later. Alvin Eggleston is a real estate man. Dr. R. W. Hegel, a dentist. And attorney Huskamp and W. L. Witte, who was chief of markets with the state department of agriculture.

Well, that's an eminent group. You said you had fun together. What sorts of things did you do and did it lead to anything?

Well, I have two comments on that. Of course, at these dinner meetings, we always had a program. Now, this is the thing that you are going to be interested in. I'm going to back up a little bit to tell you that in the late 1950s there was a group of very outstanding people who were named to the Dane County citizens planning committee. They were preparing to put out a program, which they called a "blueprint for growth" for Dane County.

Now, in putting together the material for this blueprint for growth, Bill Clark, who was the county agent, and Herb Jacobs, who was on the *Capital Times*, felt a great need for a record of Dane County's history. They got the idea that Dane County should have a historical society and they wanted to get this organized so that it could be included as part of this blueprint for growth. Well, in order to organize the society, the society needed sponsors. It was decided that the City Farmers was the logical group to sponsor the Dane County Historical Society, which they did.

That's a real contribution, and I doubt that many people know that origin.

I doubt that they do, and that's why I'm so glad to have this recorded here.

It's appropriate with Historic Madison, too, to know about our county historical society founders. Who were these founders, then? Was there a particular committee from the City Farmers?

No. From the City Farmers, there was a group that become the founders and I particularly want people to know who these were. I have here a clipping from January 1961, the *Capital Times*, which lists them. There was a meeting on February 13, 1961. The officers and the directors weren't named at that time, but the group that founded this was. I'll read them: Edward Smith,

from Mount Horeb, chairman of the Dane County board; John Craig; William Scherreck of the State Historical Society, with which the local group was to be affiliated; Henry Reynolds; Mrs. James Woodburn; J. W. Clark; Milo Swanton. He was the executive secretary of the Wisconsin Council of Agriculture. He was a former president of the State Historical Society).

I'm looking at this picture. It looks to me as though Mrs. Woodburn is the president of this group. I'm proud of you. Good for you!

Well, I'll tell you. When we sat down to organize officers, Bill Clark said "You know, we just need somebody to be a figurehead for our organization. Would you be president, Mrs. Woodburn?" So I was a figurehead for the next sixteen or seventeen years.

I think you were more than a figurehead. Well, now, for this blueprint, your group then produced this map. You explain it, please.

Okay. One of the first activities that was done – and I will tell you that Bill Clark and Herb Jacobs were pretty much responsible for putting this map together – was a map of historic and scenic sites in Dane County, which they list by numbers on the map. The committee recommended that the County Board authorize its highway department to construct and maintain selected historical markers along highways. It further recommends that the board provide the funds for these markers and the funds be earmarked in the department's budget. This is just background on this.

We take these markers for granted.

Yes, we take the markers for granted. It really began an extensive marking of historic places in Dane County and in Madison.

Somewhat similar, in that it's an off-shoot, I imagine, of your interest in our state and the landscape and roads, is your interest in Friends of the Native Landscape. Did you get interested in that about this same time? Or a little before the City Farmers?

That Friends of Our Native Landscape, for the record, was organized way back in the early 1920s. Jens Jensen, who was a landscape architect in Chicago, was one of the promoters of that. Heinz Oust was another and Bill Longenecker was another. But, even before that, Ernest Warner, who was an attorney in Madison and had been in the state senate, was a friend of my father's when they were in the senate. My father got interested in the group so that this group of Friends was organized. Ernest Warner was the first president and my father[John S. Donald] became the second president. The group was very much interested in protecting our roadsides and trying to help local areas through the state set aside their scenic parks and areas. I can remember that they at one point helped establish Wyalusing State Park along the Wisconsin River and the Roche-La-Cri.

That's near Friendship and Adams, I think. I have been there.

Yes. Also Whitnall Park in Milwaukee and then Jim Broder Park in Columbia County are among some of the places that they helped the local people to establish. Well, after we came back to Madison, somewhere along the line Jim and I were interested in going to the meetings of the Friends of Our Native Landscape, and the time came when I became a member of the board of directors.

I think this is a good point where I should explain that of the Friends of Our Native Landscape, one of our active members was the chief landscape architect for the state highway

department. He was very close to the plans the state had for building state highways that connected up with our national interstate highways. They really needed authority to do some things which would be of great benefit to the beauty of these highways. So at that point, the Friends of Our Native Landscape joined with several other state groups who had interests, like the women's clubs, in doing plantings along the highways. Anyway, these other state local groups all joined in what became known as the Wisconsin Roadside Development Council. These groups were the Wisconsin Women's Club, Wisconsin's Business and Professional Women, the American Legion, and the American Legion Auxiliary.

Now that was about when?

That was in the early 1950s.

What accomplishments do you think the Roadside Council achieved?

Oh, well. We are very proud of the things that really came out of that organization. In the first place, their early objective was to help with the state highway landscaping when these new roads were being built. This group put together a bill which was introduced in the legislature to provide funding, \$200,000, to the state highway department for landscaping, for waysides up to three acres, for rest areas, for overlooks. These were engineered into the new state highways as they were built across the state. Highway 30 to Milwaukee is one of them. Highway 90 and Highway 94 are two others.

Another thing that this group did was to be very interested in controlling the proliferation of highway billboard advertising. Somewhere along the line we finally got a regulation that these should be set back at least 600 feet from a state highway. But it was rough going on this billboard control, because of the billboard lobby. But about the time that these interstates were being built, at that point Lady Bird Johnson was instrumental in writing into the control of the interstates a control of the billboards. That was the thing that really helped Wisconsin's highway department with their billboard control.

Good. Now, just one other thing about these farms: I'm thinking that they had been in your family a long time. Do they qualify as century farms in Wisconsin? I would think they would.

As a matter of fact, they all three qualify, but the only one that we actually have got listed as a century farm is the Donald Farm, which was settled by my great grandparents, Reverend and Mrs. James Donald, his wife Margaret Donald. That farm is intact. The farmhouse which they built during the years between 1855 and 1859 – and by the way, that was the year that Bascom Hall was built, in 1858 – this house is intact. And the farm buildings that were added in the late 1880s and 1890s are intact and have been put on the National Registry of Historic Places. The other two farms have now been in the family over a hundred years, but I still haven't got them registered. That's something that has to be done in the future.

They have to have been in the same family.

They have to be in the same family continuously for over a hundred years. Now, these farms do not qualify as pioneer farms. The pioneer farms are ones that were settled before 1850.

Right. Well, back now to your university-life days and your family, I'm sure that you and your husband have many fine memories of students and activities, travel.

You were asking a little bit about going back to our faculty years? I suppose that what I should maybe mention here is that while Jim was busy with his university activities, I was interested in

the University League. In fact, I was treasurer one year.

May I interrupt? I think you must like to work with people. It seems to me that you did get involved with people.

I enjoyed working with people, very much. I still do. All these activities at the university were people-related, you see. Like "Pentagon," which was the wives of the engineering faculty. And, of course, that was what led to some of these other activities which I enjoyed on the side. I suppose what I should say is that we thoroughly enjoyed our young faculty couples and our graduate students who became very successful engineers after they graduated. As a matter of fact, I have to tell you that right now I'm beginning to receive Christmas letters from a number of these former young faculty people and graduate students. Believe it or not, they are writing about their grandchildren and about retiring.

Do you respond? What did you and your husband do? While he was living, you had all these students to stay in contact with. Do you still do that? Do you write to them?

Now, this I think might be interesting, because it's a part of the university life that maybe people don't realize. During the war years, the Second World War, the university was operating on a twelve-month basis and these young people and the faculty, none of us, could go home for Thanksgiving vacations. We had just one day off. So, we used to have Thanksgiving here, a potluck Thanksgiving, at our house for these young people. We became very close to them.

Well, anyway, you asked about traveling. Jim and I enjoyed traveling very much. We took trips. All of them had some objective in view. One year we did traveling by water through the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River, and down into New England and Nova Scotia and that sort of thing. As a matter of fact, we had had a very extensive trip in 1948, which was our twenty-fifth wedding anniversary trip. That was when we decided to send a letter to the people that we still had a list of that had attended our wedding. We wrote to them about this trip that we took. That was our Christmas letter. That was the beginning of Christmas letters that we sent out each year after that.

Particularly about your travels?

About the travels. And a little bit about the family.

Did you have any advice to these people about travel? I'd be interested, because you've traveled so widely.

Well, I'll tell you, I think the thing that Jim and I wanted to do was to encourage the faculty and these young people to travel while they could and not wait until they retired. That's what so many of them have started doing and that's what some of their letters are all about now.

In addition, then, to your faculty and your farms and the related activities, I know you were busy with Civics Club. Really, that's where I met you. I know you had a particular responsibility, but I'd rather have you tell about it.

Have I mentioned in here in this interview that my mother was one of the first fifty members of Civics Club?

I don't recall whether you have or not. I don't think so.

I don't think I did.

What was her [your mother's] first name?

Her name was Fona Donald. One of the first five members of Civics Club was Mrs. Edna Chynoweth, who was a special friend of Mother's. When these first five decided to each one invite ten women as members of Civics Club, my mother was one of these fifty.

I don't know if this is where you want the story that they told at the seventy-fifth anniversary? When Civics Club celebrated its seventy-fifth anniversary – that was the 13th of October, 1987 – they had asked me for something that they could use as background, because I had been chairman of the Civics Club during the fiftieth anniversary. I happened to mention the fact that Civics Club was celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary that fall of 1937, my first fall back in Madison, and I noticed that the members of Civics Club were given the opportunity of having special tickets and special seating. I thought, since Mother was in Florida and couldn't use her membership, I wrote in and asked for reservations. Well, they politely informed me that no way could any person use another's membership for these things and so I had to buy my own tickets to hear Eleanor Roosevelt at that twenty-fifth anniversary.

Little did you know that twenty-five years later, you would be busy.

That I would be doing the fiftieth anniversary for Civics Club.

And you have given material to Civics Club, which I'm going to attach to this interview, of records about that twenty-fifth anniversary. Do you want to tell about that?

Oh, yes, I would like to very much. Over the years, as a matter of fact, we had passed along material to the Dane County Records Center. I don't know whether I should mention here that one of the major contributions of the Dane County Historical Center was setting up the records center, with the help of the Madison Public Library and the Dane County Library Service, in the Madison Public Library. We began at that time collecting historic Dane County materials. Well, some of the material had already gone to the records center and also to the State Historical Society. But it turned out that for one reason or another, the more valuable records had come to me to take care of. These were about the Civics Club's fiftieth year and also the party that Civics Club put on for the fiftieth anniversary and the production of *Time Weaves a Tapestry*, which was really about the La Follette years and the establishment of women's vote. Have we put this information on this tape before on this?

No. Not on this tape. No.

Well, see, that was one of the reasons that Civics Club was organized, in order to help for votes for women. And so this *Time Weaves a Tapestry* gave considerable background about all of that for the fiftieth anniversary. Well, I had the script and the glass slides for that and the newspaper publicity and considerable other information about that. It was information that actually belonged to Civics Club. So the seventy-fifth board and the fiftieth board presented this accumulated material that I had been sitting on for twenty-five years to the records center.

Good. Well, it's wonderful that you did that. I know you know the appropriateness of it, because you have been so active with historical groups, including being president of the Dane County Historical Society. I think that somebody like you knows the importance of these tapes, too, so we're fortunate. What about Mr. Woodburn? He retired from the university, I realize that. When did he retire?

He retired in 1965, but he continued as chairman of the Madison Metropolitan Sewage District Commission, along with some other consulting activities.

Then did you do more traveling?

That was when we had time for traveling, like a six-week cruise around South America, which took us through the Panama Canal and down the west coast of South America, through the Straits of Magellan, and a trip to the Falkland Islands, and then up the east coast of South America, stopping in Argentina, Brazil.

You've seen a great deal of the world, then. And Professor Woodburn is not living now, I realize. When did he die?

In August of 1980.

I see. And where are your two sons now?

Son Jim is in California, in Burbank, and Bob is in Minneapolis as an engineer with Honeywell.

And they're both engineers.

Son Jim was chief engineer for the public service department of Burbank, when he retired three years ago. Son Bob is about ready. Next year he's going to retire from Honeywell. People ask me did I have children?

And you have grandchildren?

We have grandchildren, right.

Good.

This I should add, because we didn't put this in, was that after I retired from the Historical Society in 1979, really the only activities that I have been part of and enjoyed is my membership in the John Bell Chapter of DAR. My grandmother was a member on her family's side, that was my father's side, and my mother was a member of John Bell Chapter on her father's side. I decided that I was going to enjoy it, and I've enjoyed DAR very much and from that I have become a member of New England Women.

Well, again, I'll comment.