

**University of Illinois Student Life and Culture Archives
World War II at Illinois Oral History Project
Barbara Montgomery
Champaign, Illinois
November 11, 2008**

START OF TAPE 1, SIDE A (original interview is a digital file dubbed to cassette tape for transcribing purposes)

Chris D'Arpa: My illness last week.

Barbara Montgomery: Yeah, you sound much better.

CD: It's not funny. I actually forgot to tell the folks here that we had rescheduled. So Matt really stepped in this morning to help to get in here.

BM: Good.

CD: So let say again. I sent you the consent form and all the information about the project. And when you get a chance if you can send the consent form back to us.

BM: I did!

CD: Ok. I haven't been out to the Archives so...

BM: Oh, yes I sent it back, I think, ten days ago or something.

CD: It may be that long since I been out there frankly. But I go out there this week and it's fine. I'm sure it's fine. It's University mail. So you know what the project is about.

BM: Yes.

CD: And I'll just say again that we're recording this interview. It will be transcribed by a fellow in the history department, an undergraduate history major we have who is doing all the transcriptions for the project. And then we'll send you the transcript to review.

BM: All right.

CD: Ok?

BM: Yes.

CD: And ask you to send it back to us at which point the corrections will be made and we will add your interview, both the audio and the transcript, to our website for this project.

Montgomery

11/11/2008

1

BM: All right.

CD: So what else can I say? So I start an interview by saying the date, which I realize I have no idea what today is.

BM: This is Veteran's Day!

CD: It's the eleventh.

BM: It's November 11th.

CD: Ok. Today is Tuesday November 11th, 2008. This is Chris D'Arpa in Champaign, Illinois talking with Barbara Montgomery who is at her home in Texas. What town are you in?

BM: I'm in Rockwall, Texas.

CD: Rockwall, Texas. And we'll doing an oral history interview for the World War II at Illinois project here at the Student Life and Culture Archives at the University of Illinois. Miss Montgomery can you state...

BM: It's Doctor Montgomery.

CD: Dr. Montgomery. Thank you.

BM: Yes and my maiden name when I attended the University was Gilbreath. G-I-L-B-R-E-A-T-H.

CD: Ok. You're anticipating my questions. If you can state your full name and tell me a little bit about yourself. Where you were born? Where you grew up? A little about your education and family. And then we will go from there.

BM: Well, my full name and I do much of the time use doctorate because I am still speaking and still teaching. And so usually I don't but when I'm in an educational situation I do use it. So it's Dr. Barbara Venton Gilbreath Montgomery is my married name and I still use that.

CD: And Fenton? F-E-N-T-O-N?

BM: No V-E-N.

CD: Oh, V-E-N-T-O-N.

BM: V-E-N-T-O-N. And that is Rockwall not Rockwell.

Montgomery

11/11/2008

2

CD: Rockwall. Thank you. And where did you grow up?

BM: Well, I grew up in foster care. My mother, who was a graduate of the University and I think she was 1924, she contracted tuberculoses. In fact, most of the family had it including my Aunt Viola Carey who was a graduate of the University, I think, in 1898 and '96 around there.

CD: How does she spell her last name?

BM: Carey. C-A-R-E-Y.

CD: Ok.

BM: Viola.

CD: Viola.

BM: Yes and she married a cousin so her name never changed. It was Viola Carey.

CD: And what about your mom? What was her name?

BM: My mother's name was Bess Lovinia Crawford. That's L-O-V-I-N-I-A Crawford. And she grew up in what was called, and still is, Little Egypt.

CD: Oh, down in southern Illinois.

BM: Oh, yes.

CD: Cairo.

BM: Yes. The family history or legend and I don't know which it is said that my grandfather was a full blooded Shawnee and he was placed... When the Shawnee were slaughtered in Ohio on this hill they have since given back to the tribe that he was picked up and taken first into the work house and a Methodist Missionary came through and said, "Little boy who is your mother and father?" And he said, "Mary and Joseph." And so they took him and they took my Aunt Rose Darrough. She married a Darrough, an Irishman. And they took them to the area in and around Watseka and they took him to Hopston and he had an education before many people did. And he used it well. He founded the town of Belknap, which is in southern Illinois just south of Marion. And she married a farmer and lived just outside of Watseka, Illinois. And that was where Aunt Viola Carey was too. I put most of this in my book, which I think you have for the Archives.

CD: Yes we do.

Montgomery

11/11/2008

3

BM: Yes, I put most of that in.

CD: Now you are referring to he but who is he in this story?

BM: Who is he? That's my grandfather.

CD: Your grandfather, ok.

BM: And his name was Joseph Crawford.

CD: Ok, ok.

BM: And my mother, as I said, went to Illinois but the whole family had tuberculosis and so she entered the tuberculosis sanitarium. And very honestly about it my father took off with a dumpy beautician. And I was left virtually on the streets.

CD: And where was this?

BM: This was in the worst city in the whole world at the time. Ripley Believe It or Not said it was and that was Calumet City. I saw Al Capone shoot somebody in the back alley and that is still an unsolved murder. He shot a man called Bruno who had been, I guess, skimming and Arnold Zimmer, and I'm not sure if Arnold went to the University of Illinois or not but I'm not sure where his degree is from, but he was a little older than I was. I was only about four and a half and he looked at us and Al Capone said, "I don't shoot no kids. Get out of here."

CD: How old where you?

BM: About four and a half. Maybe five. And Arnold was about seven. He was kind of like my protector. Arnold Zimmer. I lived with the Zimmer family. It was the Zimmers. And I was living with them at the time. But I was moved up and down Illinois on the old Illinois Central and I had a little name tag and I knew all the conductors and they would feed me and I would get off the train at my new family and promptly was sick all over them, which went over big!

CD: Where was your new family?

BM: Well, the different one's I was sent to.

CD: Ok so you really moved around.

BM: Up and down. Oh, yes. Back then they had no social services, as such, and they just put you with anybody who would take you. And of course, my dearest friend and I prayed he would adopt me was a man called Mr. Layer who lived in Gilman. And lived in the biggest house and was a pharmacist.

Montgomery

11/11/2008

4

CD: And how did you know him?

BM: His chauffeur had gone to the University of Illinois, Bud Herron was a graduate of the University of Illinois, and he heard that my mother was in the sanitarium and I was there and at that point I had no place to go. And he picked me up and took me to Mr. Layers. And I spent some time with Mr. Layer, who probably was the one who taught me how to read. At three and a half I was the most educated child probably in the whole world because he was teaching and we read out of the Greek tragedies and comedies and I knew all about the Peloponnesian Wars. So that was at three and a half. So all my life that I can remember I've been able to read. Thank goodness!

CD: So where did you go to grammar school?

BM: I went to grammar school at a place called Lincoln School. And back then you went through Kindergarten through eight grade.

CD: And what town was that in?

BM: That was Calumet City.

CD: It was in Calumet City.

BM: Yes. And it was there that I was placed with the Zimmers and that's why I came back to the town. Where I grew up and Vic Damon sings the song called, "There was everything on the South Side of Chicago" and he goes into a litany of everything and he said, "twenty third and Wentworth was it's bleeding heart." And we lived at twenty second. And just behind the State Street was everything, you could buy everything. And it's in the Encyclopedia Britannica. Oh, this whole column about Calumet City Illinois. This terribly wicked place. No place to raise a child. And that is why the judge at different times sent me and I lived with relatives and an Auntie Mae, who I loved dearly, and I lived with the ancient aunts, Aunt Viola Carey who would come and stay with Aunt Julia. And they lived next door to a descendent of Thomas Jefferson. And she would make me cookies and lemonade. There were no children to play with. At one time I lived with a Great Grandmother and somehow or another, the boy called me the little Indian scalper and they'd tie me to trees. And this wonderful old lady with white hair piled on top of her head and her high button shoes. She'd come out with a broom and chase them away.

CD: And what town? Was that also in Calumet City?

BM: That was in Watseka.

CD: That was in Watseka.

BM: So I lived in Gilman. I lived in Watseka. I lived in Herron. I lived in Harrisburg. And we'd go down to Shawneetown and catch catfish in the Mississippi River where the Ohio and the
Montgomery

Mississippi come together there. And people were good to me. I can't complain. People were very good to me.

CD: And where did you go to high school then?

BM: I was back at Thornton Fractional Township high school of Calumet City, Illinois. Because Thornton high school did not want any part of Calumet City and they didn't want us contaminating them. So they made a separate part. The School Board made a separate school and that was Thornton Fractional Township high school of Calumet City, Illinois. And when I went and you know when at Illinois they make pledges sing their high school songs at initiation and do all kinds of things? Try to sing Thornton Fractional Township high school of Calumet City, Illinois and our hometown cheer song was the Beer Barrel Polka. We had more taverns per person than other city in the world at that time, so Ripley's said.

CD: So the folks you lived with, what kind of work did they do? What were their jobs?

BM: Oh, my Uncle Maple worked in the mines and was probably mixed up with the Herron massacre. And of course Mr. Layer was a pharmacist and he had had all of the... He made his money on the Mexican railroads and he had all the food concessions on the Mexican railroads. And that was why he had lots of money and that's why Bud Herron was his chauffeur. And Bud graduated from the University of Illinois but, you know, this was during the Depression. Nobody had any jobs. And so that was why I ended up there. Let's see Watseka, Bellnap... I ended up in different places where there was somebody who knew my family or family itself. I only lived temporarily with my father's people because he was superintendent of schools for Iroquois County and in '29 he lost all his money and had a breakdown. So they sent me from there to the ancient Aunts. One side of the family never talked to the other side. So they send me across town to Watseka to live with the ancient Aunts for a while. And they seemed very old to me at the time. Aunt Viola died at a hundred and four and owned that whole center part of Illinois. The Carey grain elevators and land. And ultimately, I think I inherited twenty acres of soybeans several years ago. But she died at a hundred and four. And Aunt Julia at a hundred. So as a child they seemed very old to me. Although they probably weren't that old at the time.

CD: So you were in high school at Calumet City. How did you decide to attend or apply to the University of Illinois and did you apply anywhere else? And what years were you in high school?

BM: I was in high school from, let's see, I started Illinois in '43 and I was seventeen and so it would have been from '39 to '43, I was in high school. And very few people spoke English as their first language in Calumet City. And you didn't have any social life unless you really went in for sports. So I became very good at basketball. And at Illinois, well you probably don't remember, but Tor Melan had come from Norway as a refugee running from the Germans and he was in charge of the swimming program. And he saw me swimming one night and he said, "How would you like to try out for the Olympics?"

Montgomery

11/11/2008

6

CD: So he saw you swimming at Illinois?

BM: Yes at the Armory. The Armory used to have a pool. I don't know if it still does.

CD: Not that I know of.

BM: On the other side of the Armory there was this pool and I was dating a V-12. Oh, they were all cute! I liked the V-12's. And I taught surviving swimming at one time, you know, how you blow up your pants legs and tie them and use them as a floater. Anyway he liked what he saw and I started training the back stroke and free style but, of course, the Russians bombed Helsinki in 1944 so I was unable to and other people... I made friends with Marc Gonzalez and oh, I have a problem with remembering at 83. My birthday's tomorrow.

CD: Oh, congratulations.

BM: No, Thursday the thirteenth. And Buddy Young went on later in the forty eight Olympics and some of his records still hold. But I became friends with them and I had to choose because I loved track. And I would work out with them but for track but you have to have tight ankles and if you're going to swim you have to have those ankles loose, you know, because they are like your propeller through the water as you are kicking your legs. So anyway, I ran with them after we realized we weren't going to be able to go to Helsinki. So I broke an ankle high jumping with Buddy Young. And he died several years ago in an automobile accident near Terrell, Texas. And I didn't know he was down here or I would have contacted him because we were very good friends and his sister who had just started the University as I was graduating, she went on to the Olympics and she made the track team. But he broke all the records in high jump and, the one, two, three skip jump.

CD: Yes.

BM: And all those things. Yes he was... And Marc Gonzalez was the captain of the track team at that time. So, oh yes I was all over the place. But most of my time I was either at the *Daily Illini* or out at the new airport.

CD: Well, let me get back to how you decided to come to Illinois.

BM: I had no choice. I had no choice. It was always assumed since my mother and father, and I think my grandfather on the side taught there briefly and then taught Bible History at Southern Illinois University, I just knew that that was where I was going to go. I didn't apply anyplace else. I just applied and they took me in and I think because my great uncle is Thomas R. Clark and his wife, my Aunt Alice, was the charter member of the Alpha Phi group on campus. So that is why I pledged Alpha Phi really because I was kind of a legacy to Illinois and I was a legacy to the Alpha Phis. And I don't know if they liked me too much but they took me.

CD: So had you visited the campus before you came to be a student?

Montgomery

11/11/2008

7

BM: No.

CD: So what were your first impressions when you arrived and how did you arrive?

BM: My mother brought me down.

CD: So your mother eventually got well enough to leave the sanitarium?

BM: Oh my mother retrieved me when I was about eleven.

CD: And her health improved?

BM: Oh, yes. She could even get insurance. Oh yes, she not only improved she had one relapse but after that, you know, collapsed lungs back then and did all kinds of things. And later on, of course, she taught for over thirty years and she could get insurance.

CD: She taught in?

BM: She taught high, no grade school. And she wanted me to go to Hammond High because they had a very good reputation. And I thought they were very snooty so I just stayed at Thornton Fractional Township high school of Calumet City, Illinois. We had a very bad reputation and I was the only, I think, I was the third or fourth person who ever went from high school into college. And some of my contemporaries who I've maintained a life long friendship, Florence Lynn was her name at the time, and of course back then they would not accept in most sororities the Jews. Jewish girls had their own three sororities and so Florence pledged one of them and the two of us would meet in the Illini Union restrooms. It was a big restroom and we'd have lunch together and talk about what was going on in our home towns.

CD: So I'm going to trace our steps back a little bit because I would like to hear... So your mother drove you down to Champaign Urbana.

BM: Yes.

CD: And I'm wondering what your first impression of the campus and the communities were.

BM: Well, it wasn't as big as I thought it was. I thought it would be much larger and I liked the statue there that says Alma Mater and the children call her blessed. And my first night there I got unpacked and my mother and her husband left and he was kind of my guardian. He never adopted me, her second husband. And my father offered me a hundred dollars and he would give me a hundred if I never used the Gilbreath name again. And so I did at the University because that's what I was. But when I started writing books I always used my former husband's last name, Montgomery. But my first night there I unpacked everything and I didn't have much

Montgomery

to unpack, believe me, and I went right down to the basement to the Illini Union and sitting next to me was Gene Shalit and he's a year younger than I am. And I know now in his advertising it makes him a first grader when we started at the University. But we walked in there and he introduced himself and some lady came out and she said, "What are you here for?" And we said, "We're here to work on the newspaper."

CD: Oh, so this was at the *Daily Illini*.

BM: Yes.

CD: Which was in the basement of which building?

BM: It was in the basement of the old building, I think they've torn it down. It was next door to the YMCA. And it was down in the basement and there was old flatbed perfecting press down there that made a racket. And we rolled that press at four in the morning so if you were night editor, why, you stayed up all night. But my first impression... They handed proof sheets to us.

CD: That day when you and Gene went down there?

BM: Oh, yes. We went and remember because this was a war and they didn't have that many people that wanted to work on a newspaper. And so Gene Shalit and I sat there, the first night and the first day I was on campus, that afternoon we read proof together. And the next week, of course, we kept going down there and the next week they made us junior editors. And we were entering freshmen. I hadn't even taken, you know, they used to give, and I don't know if they still do, placement tests. And I guess we both did every well in the English. They gave us... I don't know what they gave him but they gave me six hours English credit because I proficiencied the first one and the second one. So they decided to make us junior editors when, as I said, I was still seventeen. I was always kind of protected in foster care so this whole thing was brand new to me and then, you know, there's rush week. And I was down at the *Daily Illini* reading proof much of that time.

CD: So where did you live your first year? Were you able to be in a sorority?

BM: Yes I pledged right away. A friend of my mothers had a place where I stayed and where young girls stayed when they had first came down. And she had gone to the University and I can not remember her name for the life of me.

CD: Do you remember where it was? Where the house was?

BM: Yes. It was right at the end of one of the main streets because I could walk everywhere. It was so easy to walk to. And she had a son who was up for the, what was it, oh I know the Oxford, he was up for Rhodes Scholarship. He was a genius. He really was. He didn't get it because all he did was study and read and write and you know for the Rhodes you have to have participated in some kind of athletic and he didn't get it because of that. But she had a son and

Montgomery

my mother had gone to school with her and that's why I had a room with her during rush week. So then I pledged during rush week and moved into the Alpha Phi house and at that time I didn't know that my Aunt Alice Clark and I have her founding pin here. And my mother was an Alpha Xi Delta and I have her pin and I'd love to give to them. And I've written them a couple of times and never heard from them.

CD: Well, you know the University Archives and the Student Life and Culture Archives would certainly be interested in talking with you about any of that stuff. And it would be then made available to anyone who is doing research.

BM: Well, it should probably go to the Alpha Xi Delta house. I really should because I haven't heard from them and I've even called the chapter here. There's a chapter over at Commerce and I've called them and I still haven't heard from anybody. So I've got it put away, you know. But at 83 I've got to find something pretty soon because my health is a little iffy on occasions. So yeah. So anyway I graduated from Thornton Fractional Township of Calumet City, Illinois and I was a runaway. I mean my years in foster care were happy but when I got to Calumet City and I was put in Kindergarten in Calumet City I could read and write because of Mr. Layer. And I didn't want to make funny pictures and I didn't want to string beads. So I took the beads and threw them out the window.

CD: Well, did that kind of rebelliousness carry over at the University of Illinois? Do you remember how you chose your classes the first year?

BM: No. I studied a lot in high school and I could not be valedictorian because, as I said, I had some not good grades in department. I had run away a few times and did not show up. And I could not be salutatorian because valedictorian was girl then the salutatorian had to be a man. So I came in, I think, like third or fourth. So it wasn't a question of grades or anything, yeah. And of course I worked nights on the *Daily Illini*. I did have honors one semester. I scooted along with about a four point.

CD: And what kinds of classes did you take here?

BM: I took everything from airline management to bee keeping. I took the bee keeping until I was stung and discovered I was allergic to bees. And so I ended the bee keeping. But I took Chinese history. I took anything that sounded interesting. And I didn't know why I thought bee keeping would be interesting but airline management and I did that because I was the youngest person in that first class that they taught for the aeronautical engineers. That was a class that they wanted for teachers who were teaching engineering in high school or at another University who were actually teaching. And I convinced them to let me take that class because they were given a flight time. Oh, they'd put us in a decompression chamber. They experimented with that first class and did all kinds of things to us. But I told them since I was on the *Daily Illini*, at time I was news editor, and I said, "I will give you space and I will write all about this if you will let me join the class." And they said I had to keep up. I had to take the tests. I had to turn in the papers. And I said no problem. I still got my term paper I turned in for them. It was on a stunt

Montgomery

11/11/2008

10

pilot named Lincoln Beeche who was one of the first test pilots. I was fascinated with that. Yeah, I took all the tests. The four tests for your private pilot's license. The only one I was a little worried about was the care and maintenance of the aircraft because I got the highest in meteorology and the rules and regulations and the FAA rules and regulations and what is the... Geometry. And we had to plot our courses. In all that I did fine. But oh, that care and maintenance of the aircraft. So there was an FAA inspector at the time out at the Champaign airport and I taught his wife to swim. I got a job. I had half a dozen jobs to get myself through school and I had a job at the pool. And I was a life guard because the men were all gone so they were looking and of course I could swim. Lord I could swim. I taught his wife to swim and he took me up in an old Navy Steerman and had the captain's scarf and it was an old bi plane. The old Navy steerman and we flew over the V-12. They were in the old women's dormitory and dive bombed the place. And they came running. They thought the Japanese had attacked us. And oh, we had a ball!

CD: And where was the old women's dorm?

BM: The old women's, what was that called? Oh, Busey Hall. I think that was Busey Hall and they housed the V-12's there and I told you they were cute. I liked them. I liked all of them. And we dived bombed there and since there was a FAA inspector... People called in that the Japanese have come and there's a plane flying low and diving down at the different residents halls. And of course he was the one they reported to. So we never got caught and it was a larky morning. Oh, it was a beautiful day and oh, I remember that.

CD: So what was your social life like as a student here at Illinois?

BM: Well, first of all there were very few men and they would have dances.

CD: It sounds like you found the ones who were here though.

BM: Oh, I sure did. On Sunday afternoon and Saturday night and sometimes, well not during the week, but on a Saturday night and a Sunday afternoon they'd have gatherings for the ASTP and the V-12's at the Union building. And we would dance. And yes they did that when a lot of veterans returned to kind of integrate them back into school. And many of them had a bad time, the returning veterans.

CD: Well, let's not get there yet. Let's stay during the war for a little while and get some of that down because you were a freshman in '43?

BM: I was a freshman in '43.

CD: So you were working at the *Daily Illini* presumably when Hiroshima, the bombing of Hiroshima.

BM: Oh, yes.

Montgomery

11/11/2008

11

CD: Do you remember how you heard about it?

BM: Well we had the ticker. You know we had the ticker there so as soon as something happened the Associated Press, we had a close link with the AP, and several of the other big firms we had access to instant news as soon as one of them knew it. So that was how we found out. Yes when the Japanese let go with the bomb so we knew it right away. But the thing I remember most important was when Roosevelt died. And of course my roommate, well I had two roommates, and we were all named Barbara. And the phone would ring and we'd all get caught in the door trying to get the telephone. But Barbara Nicholas and she worked on the advertising side and we decided we need to put out a special edition of the paper and so we got down to the basement of the *Daily Illini* and I'm sure they have moved us and we went down to the basement and nobody was there. And back then we had the linotype operators and, you know, they had to stoke and fire up those machines and melt the lead and we would write. And so nobody was there.

CD: Because they made the type face out of lead.

BM: Yes. And so nobody was there so we couldn't put it out. We were going to put out, the two of us, a special edition of the paper and we couldn't because no linotype operators were there. Everybody was someplace else or they were home or they were considering what they had heard. I can't remember if that was on a Saturday or a Sunday because we were at the house when Roosevelt died.

CD: How did you hear about it?

BM: Radio. We had a radio.

CD: So would you regularly listen to the radio at the house?

BM: Absolutely. In our bedroom we had the radio and we would have that on and we would hear Edward R. Morrow, "This is London calling." And you could hear the bombs dropping over the radio and we would sit around every night when he was on and Eric Severride, the two of them, and there were times when reporters in the war in Europe when they would come home they would come down to the basement of the *Daily Illini* because we billed ourselves and we were, at that time, the world's greatest college newspaper. And they would come down and one of them, and I've been trying to remember his name and I can't, he worked rim for me one night. You know how the desk is set up with the night editor in the center and you are in a semi circle. And then you hand out the stories for heads or rewritings to the people who sit in the rim and that is what is called working the rim. And some of these very famous reporters would come down and sit in for a while to find out what we were doing. And we also had a direct line to the Chicago papers, especially the *Tribune*. We were known really all over the country at that time. We had no faculty adviser and the night editor had to read all of the paper before it went to bed,

Montgomery

11/11/2008

12

that old flatbed perfecting web machine that shook the whole building when it ran. I imagine... Don't they have that in the museum? They should.

CD: Well, there's still a printing operations here and there's been an effort by the Rare Books and Manuscripts Library to revive the old linotype machines and some of the older printing presses. So they are gathering them over at Printing Services and they now have the soybean press. So they are training people to use the linotypes.

BM: Oh, my goodness!

CD: And they actually had a children's book festival about three weeks ago on the Quad where...

BM: Oh, how wonderful!

CD: It's very much alive here.

BM: Well, you could get and I have a Bachelor's of Science degree in journalism because back then you had to be able to hand set type at, I don't know, so many lines a minute or something. So, you know, I could set the headlines and there were times when I handset a story. You had to do that for the Bachelor of Science degree. Otherwise, you know, it was a BA. So, oh yes I loved that machine. I loved the basement and the smell of the newsprint. I loved the *Daily Illini*. I just and I worked on it all four years and I was news editor so I had to read every story that came through because, as I said, there was no faculty adviser. I imagine they have one now. We had the Board but the Board never came down to the basement and they were the one's who paid our salaries. When we'd get twenty-one dollars a month.

CD: So were you successful in getting a special edition out for?

BM: No we did not.

CD: Do you remember the next regular edition? How you presented the story and what kind of reaction you got?

BM: No I don't. I have no idea.

CD: Ok.

BM: You know we were a daily and as far as I know we had gone to bed the night before and printed the paper. But then when we found out the dropping of the bomb, why no. It was not the dropping of the bomb it was Roosevelt's death. I think that was a Sunday and we did not put out a Sunday edition. I can't remember if we put out a Saturday. But we printed five days a week and every single day.

Montgomery

11/11/2008

13

CD: Was there act... Do you remember gatherings on campus after Roosevelt died or after the...

BM: No. I can't...

CD: People didn't talk about it?

BM: Only in the journalism classes. And in the journalism classes, yes. Not even in the history classes. I took enough history to minor in history but that is not what I did then and I've gone on in history and did not become the world famous novelist I hoped I was going to. Instead I'm on my fifth book and they are non fiction. Yes I've written about other things.

CD: Well, what about V-E Day or V-J Day. You were a student here for both of those. Do you remember what the reaction on campus was like?

BM: I think we got out and celebrated in the streets when we heard that the war was over. And we had, as I recall, we had big headline "A War Ends" that was half a page headline on the *Illini*. And of course we always talked about everything down in the basement because we did carry some world news, not a lot, but when something like that happened and we would use the great big print and we'd get half a page. So I think on Roosevelt's death, why, we had the next day half page print and just said "Roosevelt" across the top. And then for V-E Day, why, we had a big paper and it had huge headlines. And we always listed people if we heard from their families if they were fighting or young men who had died. We tried to list them and a lot of times we didn't hear from the families but when we did or if we got anything from the *Tribune* or the Associated Press, why, we would put them... As I recall Ernie Pile was a great favorite and we didn't have permission to run his stories but we'd always make a note of where is Ernie Pile. On which island in the Pacific? Of course he died on one of them and we sat around, and I recall, we all drank beer in memory of Ernie Pile.

CD: In memory of Ernie Pile.

BM: Because we liked him.

CD: Now did you cover stories on campus activities, special lectures?

BM: We covered every single campus activity.

CD: Do any stand out for you? Can you tell me about...?

BM: Oh, we carried pictures of the proms and had a big story about who was playing and was available because again there were not that many men until they started coming back in really '46 and especially in '47. And we covered extensively the interracial council when it was formed. Why several of us belonged to the interracial council and we sat in on, there was a restaurant right there across from Wright and Green, you know where the streets meet, and there
Montgomery

was a Follett's on the corner. And, you know, I later became a senior editor at Follett's publishing company. But there was a Follett's on the corner and next to that was a restaurant and we sat in there, as I recall, and the police came and they were very polite but they escorted us out. There was no violent confrontation. But we did march. We had meetings. We talked about things we might be able to do and I remember that sit in because, as I said, we all sat down and I was one of the charter members of the interracial council.

CD: Do you remember who else served on the council with you?

BM: My former husband was a member. His name was Jim Montgomery. He was a returning veteran and...

CD: So you met him here.

BM: Oh, yes. My misfortune. But anyway that's where I met him at a meeting of the interracial council. So there were several veterans who joined that group. But remembering names, no. At eighty three I'm sorry.

CD: Ha no that's...

BM: I remember... And his roommate was Pat. Irish with red hair and green eyes. His roommate also joined and he ended up working for an oil company and sent me mukluks from the arctic circle.

CD: So was this one of the few places then on campus where there were interracial gatherings?

BM: No. It was about the only place where there was any and also there was still great Anti-Semitism. That's why I ended up in foster care because my grandmother is Jewish from Alsace Lorraine and, of course, with a Native American grandfather. It was great discrimination against minorities. I can remember that as far back as '38 because of my friend Florence Lynn. They had a small department store and somebody put swastikas on there. So the first thing I read was *Mein Kampf* and I tried to tell teachers and faculty how important this book was because Hitler spelled out in *Mein Kampf* exactly what he was going to do. And for a long time Florence and I were kind of like the outcasts. So we made all the good grades and we did all kinds of things together before we went to Illinois and then she transferred to Northwestern after our first year. I think she pledged Sigma something, the Jewish sorority, and she transferred to Northwestern because they were much more active and she was more comfortable there. And I cried. I cried because she was, you know, all my relatives now are dead and because I was in foster care I didn't know anybody really well because I'd be moved and then I went to a private school for students. You had to have an IQ of a 120 and Mrs. Humphrey would take students and I was a runaway and she would take those. So I met one of the top lawyers... Well Edgar Theddens who, of course, became one of the ten richest men in the world and had this mad love affair with the Duchess of Kent. And I met him at this little private school and Edgar Gibbons and he is still

Montgomery

11/11/2008

15

alive. His father was the foreign correspondent for the *Chicago Tribune*. So, you know, we all were a little dysfunctional. But if you had an IQ... You had to have an IQ of at least 120 or she wouldn't take you and she introduced us to the museums. And I ran away to the museums before that at the age of seven. I knew how to get on a train with a family because they didn't charge children. So I'd wait until a big family came and then I would get on the old, what was that? The South Shore...

CD: South Shore Line.

BM: Yeah and ride into Chicago and get off where I could go to the Field Museum and at several times I hide after they closed the museum down where the mummies were.

START OF TAPE 1, SIDE B

BM: That's why... Oh, I love Egypt. And I've done a story on Hatshepsut because I got down where the mummies were and I hide under the door so they couldn't see me when they shut off the lights. The top was glass and the bottom was wooden and they'd find me there at four in the morning and they got used to seeing me. And so when Miss Humphrey would take us to the Field Museum I'd hide my face, you know. I'd get in the crowd because I thought the guards would surely...

CD: Recognize you.

BM: Recognize me as that problem kid.

CD: Well, let's get back to the University of Illinois for a minute. So this interracial council, did you have regular meetings?

BM: Oh, yes! It seems like it was Thursday nights.

CD: Do you remember how many people were involved?

BM: I think we had about twenty.

CD: Twenty.

BM: We had twenty. As I recall that would be a round number.

CD: And do you have a sense or memory of what sort of the racial, ethnic breakdown was?

BM: In the interracial council we had, I'm trying to think now, we had two Jewish members. Gene Shalit wouldn't join. In fact I signed up for one of the refugees and I said I would be responsible. And I was at that time I signed off for her and I was not twenty one, I was twenty but I just signed my name. We had several of them. We may have had one Asian because, you

Montgomery

11/11/2008

16

know, Uncle TA brought Asian students to the campus. So we've always had somebody from the Philippines or whatever. So we probably had a couple Pilipino refugees. There may have been six or seven Afro Americans and the rest of us were, well I am Native American. I call I call myself Native American. The rest were white.

CD: Now during this period that you were here was it still the case that Idel Stith was Chief Illiniwek?

BM: Oh, yes!

CD: Did you have any contact with her?

BM: No I did not. I did not. Just went to all the football games and cheered and hollered and I wrote letters about the Chief but nobody ever printed my letters. I wrote everybody I could think of when they were going to take away Illiniwek because that's my heritage. I said, you know, I am a Shawnee from the Ohio country and southern Illinois. In fact, we are called the lost Shawnee of southern Illinois and Kentucky. We are official. That is our designation. And I felt they were taking away my heritage and I howled and I yelled and I wrote the Alumni Association a couple of times. I wrote the President of the University and I'm sure he never read my letter and probably somebody tossed it out. I wrote, I think, four letters. I was just really upset because I truly believed that they took away part of my heritage. And the people they were listening to these were Navajos. This are people... and Sioux. And they are not Illinois Indians. There was never a Navajo at Illinois or Sioux or these western tribes or northern tribes. There was never any of them and as far as I know they were only, and like myself there was some others. But here was my mother who would have been called a half breed. And I still feel very strongly about that. I really feel strongly about that. They listen to and it was signed by some Navajos? You know they are west! They were never in Illinois. How could they take away my heritage and listen to people who are not even of my tribe? Oh, I still get violent! When somebody asks me about that I get very upset. I thought they made a terrible mistake. I don't know what in the world they were thinking. How could that be a bad thing for Native Americans? I whooped and I hollered and I gave my wolf calls. And at the games it was exciting. It was wonderful to have Chief Illiniwek come out.

CD: Was the band still pretty active during that period?

BM: Was the what?

CD: The band. The Marching Illini.

BM: Oh, yes! On, yes! We won, during that period, they still won national awards.

CD: And were they... And was the band affected by the war in the sense of the majority of the members were women?

Montgomery

11/11/2008

17

BM: Well, there were as I recall, you know, we had many full houses of fraternity members. There were men on campus. There were not as many men in forty three when I came and forty four but forty five, forty six, and we had men. And oh yes we had full contingents on the band. There were a lot of women but there were a lot of men. I think there were more men than women. I was not a part of the band. You know when they made a national honor, why, we would print that in the Illini. So, you know, everything that went on on campus we covered. We really covered.

CD: Do you remember speakers coming into town and covering them? I spoke with someone who remembered Norman Thomas coming through town and A. Phillip Randolph. Do you?

BM: No but I can remember, oh, the man that wrote about Walt Whitman and he is long dead now. He was a Lincoln expert. And what is his name? (Carl Sandburg). He wrote about Walt Whitman and he was Whitman's biographer. He was as well known and I can not for the life of me... I'm sorry I can not remember names. We had him come and oh, he had a couple hundred people in the Illini Union and he talked to us. We covered everything. No I think those were after my time.

CD: Oh, ok.

BM: I can't remember.

CD: That could be.

BM: Because we would have covered anybody.

CD: Sure.

BM: Like A. Phillip Randolph because I am associated, here in Rockwall with Southside. And Southside is our Afro American neighborhood. And I have done stories on Southside so, you know, I'm very much aware and would have been aware then if he had come. I don't remember Norman Thomas or I'll tell you I sure would have been there because I covered from the time, well after I was a Freshman and a junior editor and we did all the proof reading, and then oh, Shalit became the advertising manager. But I covered everything under the sun. And we all did, you know, and we pitched in each others stories because we didn't have tape recorders. So we'd help each other. I didn't recall him at all. In fact, I looked through my *Illio* and I can't remember seeing any speakers at all but I do remember seeing, who is that, very famous historian and biographer of Walt Whitman. If you said his name I would say that is it but right now it just slips me entirely. But we had two hundred people out for him and especially all the historians and everybody came out.

CD: Now were you involved in either town of Champaign or Urbana? Did you do much in town? Did people... Do you remember people going from the University going to, for instance, church services in the Champaign or Urbana communities?

BM: Well, I can remember one of my jobs was I worked part time selling dresses for somebody in Champaign. He was an elderly gentleman who had a dress shop and I modeled his dresses and sold his dresses. I sat in on a portrait painting class too. That paid twenty five cents an hour so that was cool. But we had reporters, in fact, that lived at the *Courier*, which one...

CD: The Urbana Courier.

BM: They had a reporter and in fact I dated him a couple of times but I thought he was too old for me.

CD: Do you remember his name?

BM: I saw it when he died in my alumni news because he had gone to the University and then had gone to work for the *Courier*. He kept a close contact with us. In fact I would use his apartment when I really needed to study and get away from the sorority house and the *Daily Illini*. But so much of my time was spent there or as I said when they organized this class. This first class for these people and let us fly airplanes. And so in the morning, on Saturday mornings, we had really close contact with Chanute field. You are talking to Ms. Chanute field of, I think, it's 1944. But when we had the airport and I would go out there and all we had was a wind sock initially.

CD: At Willard? At the University airport.

BM: At the University airport. Saturday mornings I would get up in a pair of real short short white shorts and a little skimpy red top and I would stand out there on the edge of the runway.

CD: How'd you get out there?

BM: Oh, I would hitch a ride. Somebody would always give me a ride.

CD: Ok.

BM: Or on the back of their bicycle. Oh there was no cars on campus because there was no gasoline. There were no cars. Two of the editors bought an old Model T and we all chewed gum because we could get no tires and that would line the tires with our chewing gum. And rattled around there but the managing editor after Jean Hurt, and I can not remember her name, that was why I said your not the Swain. Ellen Swain and I said do you happen to be the daughter of Martha and I told her about the car. And one of them took that home with them at night because that was a precious commodity. But we had bicycles and if anybody was going out that way I would and sometimes I just walked. You know you just walked everywhere. We were in great condition because there was no gas. There was no cars. Oh, except Bado Albeldo. He was an
Montgomery

international student from Syria and I dated him. He had a car and he always gave his dates Orchids. And he had a convertible and so when ever I could hitch a ride I rode with Bado. I liked him very much.

CD: What was his last name?

BM: I think it was Albado. He called him Bado.

CD: Bato.

BM: And I think his last name was... Well, maybe he was from Turkey. No I take that back he was from Turkey. And also there was a man who became the foreign minister for Nasser who was in the Cosmopolitan Club. And I was a great favorite of the international club. They invited me over for dinner. Oh, I loved the Cosmopolitan club. That's why I've been to everyplace in the world because I liked them all so much. And the pilots from Chanute...

CD: So wait. So you're in your short shorts and red top.

BM: And I'm out on the edge of the runway and they would land and they would practice, the one's who were just learning, they'd come in with their eighty sixes and yeah it was a training feat. So I would fly with them. I flew eighty sixes and one day somebody landed with a P38. The twin booms. The gorgeous silver monster and I was standing there and he said, "Do you want a ride?" And I said, "Oh, I can't wait!" And I actually flew a P38 and then when Gentile came, you know Captain who was a real war hero and he had all the planes he shot down along the fuselage. The German planes. And after he came to the airport and flew and after the crowds all left he said, "I know you want to fly with me." And I said, "You bet your life I do." So, I mean, I got to go flying with air heroes and everybody who would stop. And of course when I started the course with them, why, and they gave us flying time. Then I was really excited. That part was the most wonderful thing in my life besides the *Daily Illini*. Although I will say one of the V-12s and I won the jitterbug contest and our prize was the use of the Chancellors car for the weekend. We could take it anyplace we wanted to within, you know, fifty mile area but the problem was neither of us had a drivers license so we couldn't use it. And we even got the gas so we got somebody to drive us a couple of places because we couldn't drive it ourselves, although we got the use of it. I liked the V-12s they were...

CD: Now the V-12s were?

BM : Navy.

CD: The navy.

BM: Oh, they were navy and the ASTP were the army. They weren't as cute as the navy I'll tell you. Girls all liked the V-12s best. The ASTP some of them had a hard time finding girls

Montgomery

11/11/2008

20

because their uniforms were pretty drab. I'll tell you they were kind of brown. And but the V-12s of course were those bellbottom trousers and little white hats. Oh, we liked them.

CD: Do you remember them marching on the Quad or? Do you remember them around campus in formation at all?

BM: No.

CD: No.

BM: No. Now the ASTP would march to class.

CD: They would. So you remember that.

BM: Oh, yes they would march down the road in formation to the different classes. And they had their own classes and so did the V-12s, although every now and then if, you know, there was something they really wanted to they would sit in on a class. But most of the time, why, they had these dances on the weekends and because as pledges and even we had so much study time that we had to get in. They guard us. And yeah, although I had a lot more liberty in my last two years. I had a key to the house because the paper rolled, as I said, sometimes two, three, or four in the morning. And so I had one of the only keys and I imagine Jean Hurt had a key to her house and she was Kappa Kappa Gamma I think. She had a key to her house and I had a key to mine. And I don't know how the others did it but I know we had one house key extra and it went to somebody who was on the paper.

CD: Well, that is good so you wouldn't be locked out.

BM: Yes. And you know I have a thing about dogs and I picked up early when I would walk home alone there was an Illinois dog pack and they would always walk me home. They would meet me outside of the *Illini* because there was no traffic. No nothing. No cars.

CD: Right.

BM: And they would walk me down from the basement and around the corner back to the Alpha Phi house and one morning, it must have been three, I was being stalked and they growled and formed a perimeter.

CD: Who was stalking you?

BM: Some man. I got into the house and I called our house mother and she called the police and they caught the guy right outside our patio. Some character and they put him in jail.

CD: Was he a student?

Montgomery

11/11/2008

21

BM: I don't know. I never... We never talked about it. You know we didn't want to scare people and they put him in jail so we didn't worry about that. So I don't know who it was. Some man. He was... I guess he was in his twenties. I mean he was a little older and yeah he was not in the army. Maybe he went into the army after that.

CD: Do you remember... How were your classes at the University? Do you remember using the library at all or any of the other?

BM: Oh, yes! My classes in advanced rhetoric I used the library to write them. It was nice and quite and I'd sit under Uncle TA's picture.

CD: And this is Thomas A. Clark.

BM: Clark. I still didn't, you know, I never made the connection really. He was not a part of my life. Every now and then I would look at a picture and somebody told me one of the trustees made it a point of contacting me and I think at the *Daily Illini*. And I think he asked me and said, "oh, we are so glad to have you here." And I thought, well, I don't know why, you know. And he was the one who told me about his picture at the Y. He had one picture at the Y. He said, "You ought to go next door to the YMCA and there you'll see a picture of him." And there is somebody writing a book in Florida and he sent me his picture on the box, the cereal box. And he has pictures above that of, oh, the one from Notre Dame, the famous one. (Knut Rockney). He was even more famous than that one. But I didn't know any of these things at the time. Not until the Japanese honorary council because I was the vice president of the Dallas Council on world affairs. And he and General Latham talked one time about and I heard Thomas A. Clark. And I said, "Oh that's my great uncle." And they looked at me and they wanted anything that the University had of his time in Japan when he set up the University of Okido and his sayings are in all of the government buildings today. Today right now in Japan. And people that I've meet from Japan say, "oh, oh!" and my Japanese friends kind of give me a little bow. And not because of me but because of Uncle TA. He is more famous right now in Japan than certainly he ever was here because you can't miss his sayings, I guess, on the government buildings. And he is the only westerner who has ever had a statute to him in front of the University of Okido and I've been trying to get a picture of that for the honorary council. And of course you all just got his bowl that was given to him by the Emperor and I didn't want it to sit around here. I moved twenty seven times. So you all have that at Krannert Art Museum. They sent me a receipt that they received it.

CD: That's great...

BM: So yes. What else?

CD: Well, the library. You were talking about the library and working at the library.

BM: Oh, yes. I used the library and it was very friendly. You had a wonderful librarian there. I think he ended up writing some books on Native Americans, I don't know.

Montgomery

11/11/2008

22

CD: Was that Dee Brown?

BM: Was he a librarian?

CD: He was in... Yes he was a librarian there.

BM: Yes. He got me all the books I needed for research, at the time, and I became good friends with him. And of course, I bought the books about the books he wrote later. And I said, "I think I know him." And then when I saw his picture I said, "Yes." Yes he was the one that I would always go to when I had to do research papers for honors in Journalism and he was the one who got me all kinds of things. And sat down and we talked. I think I told him about my grandfather, I don't know. I liked him very much but I used the library extensively. I've always used libraries extensively because I wrote the first college history for credit and PBS bought it from the Dallas County Community College system. And I had, I got a researcher at that time and so I could get books, at that time, from all over the world. And she stayed with me so I could write my second book, *Wonderful Wicked Women of the World*, and got me, oh, books from everywhere like Germany and France. So oh, yes, I used and have always used the library.

CD: But do you remember the library here being filled with students working?

BM: There weren't that many students. That is why I think he had time, you know, to sit and talk to me and get exactly what I wanted. There were times in the big reference room that I would be the only one. I would be the only and I there was usually one other fellow and I don't know what he did but he was always around. And he liked me and he said, "I'd like to paint you some day." And so that was when I decided I could make some money. And I told you I worked all kinds of jobs and I became a model for the portrait painting class and that was the year that somebody who painted me as a sea captain's daughter won the prix de Paris. So I am sitting somewhere in the Louvre and I am sitting somewhere in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. And I went to check. I got to New York finally after 9/11 about three years ago and I went to the Metropolitan and I said, "I understand I'm in here and the name of the painting is the sea captain's daughter." Because they made me braid my hair across the top and it's hard to paint plaid and I had to wear plaid over a bright red tee shirt. Oh, I remember exactly what I wore. And you know you sit there for so long and then you get ten minutes off to stretch. I can sit for hours and not move.

CD: That's funny. That's a great story.

BM: But I loved the library.

CD: Yeah.

BM: I love libraries. Everywhere I go in the world... I got in to the Biblioteca Nacional. I got into the Archivo General de las Indias because my doctoral dissertation was in Mexican law.

Montgomery

11/11/2008

23

And so I just, oh, I just made the rounds in Spain and when I was there I went to the British Museum, which is really a library. And, oh, yes I got permission. You know, the president of wherever you are teaching gives you a letter and they let you in. So anyway, in Israel I've been to every library I think there is in Israel because I've had two Fullbrights so they give me all kinds of letters to get me in places that nobody gets into.

CD: Sure. What about the time... At what point do you remember men coming back to campus? GI's coming back and how did that affect life on campus? Do you remember any special accommodations for them?

BM: Well, they usually stayed in private homes and the Catholic Church was right down and the Catholic Church had a large place for veterans. And I can remember both my former husband and his roommate... What was that called? The Church was right there on the corner and they had a regular hall and that was for returning veterans and, of course, they were all Catholic. But yes that is where a number of the veterans stayed because of the Catholic Church. And they took over several of the women's residence halls where the V-12 had been out there. And then they put up Quonset huts and so a lot of friends, when my former husband came back, why, he had friends that he been with in the Persian Gulf Command and they had Quonset houses if they were married, why they got a Quonset house. And they had children. They had a playground out there. And I don't know that would have been... I'm trying to think it would have been south where I am sure they have buildings today. They must have put up at least fifty Quonset huts out there. And so returning veterans who had families they got those Quonset huts. And I can remember there was no grass, you know, they were just out there. And going out there for dinner several times and wading through the mud. It would rain. And you know they got them up in a hurry and so they had to make a playground somewhere for the children. And yeah but that was where returning veterans stayed and that would have been until graduation in 1947. A lot of them were still going to school and as long as they were going to school they got the Quonset huts.

CD: Do you remember in any of your classes do you remember any returning GI's in any of your returning classes?

BM: No not until, I'm trying to think, we had two editors of the *Daily Illini* who had worked on the *Daily Illini* before they went in service and they came back they became the last of the editors. And we had... When did I meet Al Gertler? I still keep in touch with him and he was an editor and he came out of the war, the infantry, but that was in the end of '46 and '47. We had veterans returning and they took, on the *Daily Illini*, they took the jobs they had before. And then, of course, they were in classes and we were in classes together.

CD: Did they talk about their war experiences at all?

BM: No.

CD: Or did you ask them?

Montgomery

11/11/2008

24

BM: No.

CD: No.

BM: No that was a subject that if people wanted to talk about them, why, they did. I can not remember and I became good friends with what was his name? And he died now. I am so sorry I can't remember names!

CD: Oh, that's ok. That's all right.

BM: But I was invited to his home a number of times. He and his wife... She was so lovely and so gracious and that was something. And she'd make fudge. Oh, I remember the fudge!

CD: Hard to forget that.

BM: But they never discussed it. And it was just something if somebody wanted to talk about it, I cannot remember anybody and I knew most of the people returning home because working on the *Daily Illini* you got to know pretty much everybody. But when they returned home they just didn't talk about it. They just never talked about it.

CD: Did campus life... Did the campus community feel different with them back?

BM: No.

CD: No.

BM: No. It just seems that they were not there one day and they were there the next.

CD: Wow.

BM: And they started going to classes and as I said on the *Daily Illini* a former, I think he was editor and chief, it began with H... Halsten, Hap... Can't remember and he just, I mean, as far as there was never any discussion or any problem with it they just and then they built the Quonset huts. And they had, kind of, a council who ran the.... I don't know how many houses. I know they had twenty-five, fifty. I don't know. But they had a little internal council that kind of took care of things that needed to be fixed or if somebody had a problem. And yeah, I truly did not see any difference and I was there during the transition period.

CD: Yes.

BM: And working on the paper constantly. So I don't know, yeah. Probably a lot of them and we didn't have a lot of contact with the engineering but some many of them went into engineering. So, you know, we didn't see them and I was in Liberal Arts while I was in

Montgomery

11/11/2008

25

journalism and didn't see that many of them. But there was so many who took chemistry and physics, which I avoided, like the plague. And yeah, so I just didn't see any difference. They just kind of were not there one and then the next minute they were there and there was never any problem. Never any problem.

CD: Now if we step back into the period of the war, you know, as you mention there was rationing of gasoline, rationing of food.

BM: Sugar.

CD: Sugar.

BM: Shoes. Oh, shoes!

CD: Shoes, yes. Do you remember... One of the things we read about during the war are victory gardens. Do you remember victory gardens associated with the University or?

BM: I cannot remember victory gardens. Now they had at Illinois... What is it the Allerton Fields or something? They had, you know, the University started out really for farmers who wanted to go and so they always had... Are they still there? They had experimental fields.

CD: Oh, yes.

BM: Ok. Well, they had those and they expanded those a little but as far as victory gardens I can't remember anybody ever having a victory garden in town, which is where I was. I suppose people around there and I had some relatives around there and oh, I got all kinds of people who are all gone who went to the University. I had cousins who went and who lived in town. I am trying to think of their name... What were they Synders? I don't know. But no I can't think of anybody who had a victory garden. I know they used the fields out there.

CD: Sure.

BM: And I imagine the people who were tending the fields got groceries. But no I don't remember that.

CD: Well, this has been a great conversation. Is there anything I missed that you'd like to?

BM: Let's see I talked about the V-12s. I liked the V-12s. And there was limited space everywhere. And so when people used to have a single room in a place, why no, they had double or three's, you know, because space. They wasn't any building. Everything was going into the war effort. And so everybody doubled up. I remember you doubled up in terms of housing. Housing was very scarce. That is why many people went down, why, you joined a sorority or a fraternity because there you had space.

Montgomery

11/11/2008

26

CD: Oh, yes.

BM: And when the veterans came back, of course, the fraternities wanted to get larger so they would take in veterans and provide them with room. So the fraternities really grew when the veterans started coming back because housing was very scarce. And so you got a room wherever you could. People, townspeople too, in the vicinity of the heart of the campus they would rent a room inexpensively because they couldn't charge a lot. But they... Homes would rent a room to a student going there. And if they said I had some relatives... See with my problem with the two parts of the family that didn't speak to each other I didn't know that here my grandfather's sister was there and she had two grown daughters who were teaching and they had gone to the University. And afterwards she said, "Well Barbara you could have come stayed with us." But I didn't know about them.

CD: Interesting.

BM: Because as I said I lost contact completely. My father never called me. The last time, I told you, I ever heard from him I said, "I'm starting at the University where you went and I really need some money for books and for tuition" and he said, "I will send you a hundred dollars if you never use the family name again." So at that point I didn't know about my grandfather, his father's sister, and I didn't know about all these relatives that I had who lived in Champaign Urbana. I think they lived in the Champaign side. And quite close to the University. And when I found out about them they would invite me over for Sunday dinner and I liked them all very much. And we have always had somebody and of course, Uncle TA gave the land for the Union Building. I understand and I'm not sure but somebody mentioned that he gave the land for the new chemistry building. And one of his aunts, one of his sisters, that is why they called the house that was there, which has since been torn down, the Aunt House because Uncle TA he grew up in foster care like me. His parents had died and an aunt took him in and so he had some relatives and he bought land. And he put and I guess he had sisters he had lost touch with and he put them in the Aunt House. And so I have his stick pins that came out of the Aunt House. And then when he and Aunt Alice died, Aunt Alice is buried somewhere in Champaign because in 1948 she died. And the ATO campus they came and my mother and I were the only two living relatives. And so I don't know what happened because they had no children. Aunt Alice and Uncle TA had no children. But he evidently had sisters and when he went to the University, and right away he taught at the University, and he started acquiring land and he built this Aunt House. And one of them, quite famous, did her work in water color and I have, I think, four or five of her paintings here. And she travelled all over the world because she went to Marshall Field and Company in Chicago when they first put in the escalator and it wasn't working properly and she fell. She sued Marshall Fields and got a fortune and went all around the world painting. So I gave away to one of my distant cousins a picture she did of the Matterhorn. She didn't climb it but she went everywhere. She was out west and I have one of her paintings of Indians. And she went south and I have a painting from New Orleans, somebody slouching on a cotton bail or something. And she, her name was Farr, F-A-R-R.

CD: F-A-R-R. Her first name?

Montgomery

11/11/2008

27

BM: I'm not sure. Jessica Farr but she, so they all must have gone to the University because they had all that land. They gave the land for the McKinley Chapel. I liked him. The head for so many years, oh I just adored him. He was just the most wonderful, wonderful man.

CD: The head of?

BM: McKinley. McKinley foundation for so many, for thirty years and I can't remember his name. And he wrote he when he retired and, in fact, he told me not to get married and I did. And I was married there at the Chapel. And he said, "Don't do it! This will not last." And he was right.

CD: Interesting.

BM: He was right and I wrote him after and I think he went to Arizona. But he was head of the McKinley foundation for thirty years.

CD: Wow.

BM: And I know that the land was given to them by the family. By Uncle TA or whatever family he had the aunts because, you know, he had invested well. I mean and he saved all his money as he said they had no children and he travelled all over the world. And I have... My children have died and I've taken in stray children and one of mine calls me Grandma Bubba. I gave her the cameo that he and Aunt Alice got in Italy as a wedding present and some of those things. But I wanted to school to have, the University to have that bowl because that is where it belongs there that the Emperor gave him. I have one other cookie jar and I really am on social security because I am going to have to sell that cookie jar from China. But anyway my mother gave me my lifetime membership in the Alumni Association.

CD: Oh, how nice.

BM: And so yeah.

CD: That's very nice.

BM: I started out and started teaching and fifty-two years I have taught college or university for fifty-two years. So it all worked out.

CD: Now where did you get your doctorate?

BM: At Loyola University in Chicago.

CD: In Chicago.

Montgomery

11/11/2008

28

BM: Class of 1973.

CD: Oh, wow!

BM: And when I've run for office and it's the first thing my opponent always checks. And one time Loyola registrar called me and they said, "What are you doing that these people are always calling?" The registrar called me. And I said, "Oh..."

LOUD BEEP

CD: Hello?

BM: Yeah, I'm still here and I have a Master's from California State University at Northridge. Now it's a regular University. I had enough for two but I've never claimed the second one.

CD: What took you out to California?

BM: When I was married I thought you ought to follow your husband whether you get along or not and so... And I loved California. He hated it and I loved it.

CD: But he had to go out there?

BM: Pardon?

CD: He had to go out there?

BM: He had a job out there. He went from job to job to job and I just followed him along until we got to Texas and then I didn't follow him anymore. I said, "No you can go back to Chicago near your mother but I'm staying right here." Because I was teaching. Twenty four years I was at El Centro right in the heart of downtown and taught everybody from the head of 7 Eleven to congressmen and all kinds of people because that was where I was needed. It was very bad when I got there. And then I taught eleven more years when they retired us all if we were over sixty five. But they gave us paid up Blue Cross Blue Shield.

CD: Good.

BM: So that was good. And then I taught out of Trinity Valley in Terrell. And I'm under contract now and, in fact, I worked last night. I go around to senior residences, not nursing homes, senior residences in Dallas that are terribly exclusive and I talk about the women in my books.

CD: Oh, terrific.

Montgomery

11/11/2008

29

BM: Because I've done complete research and they tell me I'm a comedian. And because everybody always asks me back. And they pay me for this. I'm under contract to the Dallas County Community College District.

CD: Oh, terrific. That is great.

BM: So yeah. Oh, I went back and got another degree. Just three years ago I got an Associate's in Mediation and Arbitration.

CD: Oh, my goodness!

BM: So I would get along with people better because I've lived alone since '75 and I love it. So I decided I needed to be a little more courteous or tolerant or something. And so I went back and got an Associate degree in Mediation and Arbitration.

CD: Oh, my goodness.

BM: Not that it's done me any good. But anyway I am really because I was offered a job by two judges in town and I happened to live in most Republican county in the United States. And so when I got back they said, "We can't get elected if we hire you." So that was ok. I had another degree and I think it maybe, it helped me because often I am called to mediate things, you know, by private parties. Would you listen to this and tell us what you think? And I did and I worked for Joe Simms over in Dallas because I couldn't get a job in my county. Not even teaching. That is why I taught in Dallas and I taught out in Terrell and everywhere. But I mediated for Joe Simms and juvenile decisions and arbitrations and, yes, I did all my preliminary work for a judge up in Plainview when they wanted a mediator. So I keep very busy.

CD: It sure sounds like it. It's pretty impressive. Well, I'm going to keep you busy because probably in the next, certainly before the Christmas holidays and New Year's Day, our transcriber, will be done with this Transcript and I will put it in the mail to you.

BM: Ok, do you want me to take out some things?

CD: No. It's going to be a literal transcript.

BM: Ok.

CD: What we'll ask you to do is correct any misspellings or if you between now and then remember folks names you can insert them. But it's really meant to provide access for researchers to the audio tape. So we want it to be as close a literal transcription of the audio tape as possible.

BM: Ok.

Montgomery

11/11/2008

30

CD: Ok. Now if there are things that you've said in this interview and once you read it that you don't want made available until whenever, you have that option to let us know. And I'll send the transcript with a letter that explains all of this.

BM: Ok.

CD: Ok?

BM: Yes fine.

CD: And I thank you so much. It's really been a pleasure talking with you and you have just wonderful stories and really paint a picture.

BM: Oh, I can talk forever.

CD: You had a lot going on here. It really was quite fascinating. And I appreciate you taking the time to talk to me. I really do.

BM: Your more than welcome. I understand Ellen got my book.

CD: Yes.

BM: Lovinia's Child, where I talk about Uncle TA and what I had learned from him because he had died before I got to campus.

CD: Yes.

BM: And so, yes. And I didn't even know that Aunt Alice was still alive until my mother called me and said we have to go to the funeral. And the only people there, as I said, were the ATOs, which he was one of the founding members, and my mother and myself. And it was very moving, I mean, you know because I learned more about him while I was in school. I really wasn't aware of what he had done or who he was and his name except for the trustee. And I had forgotten his name and I saw in the Alumni News when he died. If I hear a name then I can say, "Oh, yes I remember him." But remembering somebody's name is lost on me.

CD: Yes it is tough sometimes.

BM: Yes!

CD: Well, Dr. Montgomery thank you so much again and I hope maybe someday we can meet.

BM: Yes. I've never been back to campus when I left. I've never been back. When I left in 1947 I've never been back.

Montgomery

11/11/2008

31

CD: It sounds like you've been everywhere else though.

BM: I have. I have been to almost everywhere you can name in the world. I am not a tourist I am a traveler. I stay and I hit their libraries.

CD: Excellent.

BM: And research. So and their museums.

CD: That sounds wonderful.

BM: So I've been very fortunate because I've had exchanges and I said two Fullbrights. And so that's been good.

CD: And as I say, thank you again and look for a mail from us. And if you have any questions do not hesitate to contact and happy birthday on Thursday.

BM: Thank you very much.

CD: Ok, you take care.

BM: Bye.