

**University of Illinois Student Life and Culture Archives
World War II at Illinois Oral History Project
Millicent Sloboda Lane
Lansing, Michigan
January 27, 2008**

START OF TAPE 1, SIDE A

Chris D'Arpa: And this is Chris D'Arpa. It's Sunday January 27th, 2008. I'm in Lansing, Michigan speaking with Millicent Lane who was a student at the University of Illinois during World War II. I think that's all I need to say. So let's start with just background about you, your hometown, where you grew up, what kind of family life you had, and what kind of education you had prior to coming to the University of Illinois.

Millicent Lane: My preschool years were in California in Argo Summit, Illinois which is outside of Chicago. I came from a family of immigrants. My mother had nine siblings. I never knew who my father's siblings were because he came to this side of the world when he was only fourteen years old and called himself a chef but really was a cook.

CD: And where did he come from?

ML: Czechoslovakia.

CD: And your mother, too.

ML: No, she came from Russia.

CD: Oh.

ML: And I don't think, and she didn't, her father was during their time in Russia, her father was sent to Siberia for political reasons and they also were sent to Manchuria. But I never knew much about it.

CD: Would that have been during the tsar?

ML: Yeah. It would be during the beginning of communism.

CD: The beginning of the Revolution.

ML: Yeah. And it is kind of interesting, they came to this country during, I think right after the end of World War I. And there were nine children and I think three of them were born in this country and almost all of them are teachers.

CD: And tell me when you were born, if you don't mind.

ML: No I don't mind. I was born in 1923, now in my ninth decade. And I was born in the Chicago area.

CD: And what about high school. What was high school like for you?

ML: High school was in Argo, Illinois and it was a school during the thirties that really was progressive. We were the first school in the state to have a separate gym for the women, for the girls, the women, however you want to call them. We had an auditorium that was carpeted. We had a lot of out of town speakers at the school. My graduating class was only one hundred...about one hundred and one, I think, and only three of us went to college. And I don't know if that was fairly routine type of ratio in those days or not. I have no idea.

CD: Did you all three go to the University of Illinois?

ML: No. What is interesting though is that two of us were daughters of, our fathers were...owned grocery stores. The third one was a young man who paid his own way through and he was a scientist. And he worked on some synthetic materials, polyester and things like that during his work. But the, and he went to the University of Chicago, I think, and the girl went to Northwestern and I went to the University of Illinois. Pretty diversified huh?

CD: Very! And why did you choose the University of Illinois?

ML: Cheap. Because I could afford it.

CD: How did you learn about it?

ML: I had cousins who went there.

CD: Umm hmm.

ML: And one of them for example, he got a scholarship in high school, a football scholarship, and he was sent to Stanford. And while he was at Stanford and though one of the courses he took. This is what he told me. One of the courses he took at Stanford University in California was Snow Shoveling 101 and he didn't think that was relevant to his desire to be an engineer. So, and he said besides that he said, "almost everybody at this campus had a car." This is in the thirties. And so he decided to come back to Illinois and he went to the University of Illinois and became an engineer.

CD: He took Snow Shoveling 101?

ML: That's what he said.

CD: Do you think he was pulling your leg?

ML: No I don't think so. He wasn't that kind of a person. He really was a very straight guy.

CD: So what year did you come to Illinois? To the University of Illinois?

ML: It's either '39 or '40, I don't remember.

CD: And did you know.... What was that like to leave home, and come down, did your parents bring you down, did you...

ML: My mother was dead at that time... my father brought me and I had a friend woman friend her name was, another women friend who lived in the neighborhood and she was sort of my mentor or whatever you want to call her, companion. When I came to school there were two or three people from Argo in school there so I didn't mind it. I had a lot of changes in my life and we were taught to adapt to change.

CD: Umm hmm. Do you remember where you lived? The first...

ML: Yes, Davenport Hall. Real small hall. Two houses that were put together with a long corridor and I remember when Pearl Harbor was bombed and we all were in that area and we were crying and hugging each other... We were not making noise frankly we were all just devastated. We kept thinking of the fellows who were going to go to service. And I had an uncle who was only three grades ahead of me when I was a freshman in high school and he was senior and I'd be walking down the hall with a boy and he'd come up to the boy and say to the guy, "what are you're intentions with my niece?"

CD: That was in high school?

ML: That was in high school. It was embarrassing. But anyhow he went to school at the University of Illinois but he was drafted. There was a draft then if you remember and he was one of the first men drafted from Cook County. So he had to give up his schooling but he continued it thanks to the GI bill after the war. In fact he became a career service man.

CD: Where did he serve in the war?

ML: Oh boy. He served in Europe during World War II. He served in Korea in the Korean War. He was, I don't remember, I think he was in Vietnam briefly. He talked about Korea, about the rats running across the table when they ate.

CD: But during World War II he was in Europe?

ML: He was in Europe, yep.

CD: And he was in the Army or...

ML: He was in the Army. He was in the hospital corps... whatever that was. I don't remember exactly.

CD: Where was Davenport Hall? Do you remember?

ML: No. I don't remember. It was, it was right in an area where there are quite a few fraternity and sorority houses. I remember that but I don't remember exactly. There were two houses that were put with this long hallway between them. And it was, we had the most wonderful food there! You know during the war everything was rationed. Meat was rationed. Butter was rationed. I can't remember... gasoline was rationed.

CD: Sugar.

ML: Sugar was rationed. And there were other things that were rationed too and we had a lot of cheese soufflé. And it was absolutely delicious. The cooking there was very good. There was some kind of special roll that our cook used to make and whenever that happened someone would run upstairs and tell everybody else and the swarm would come down into the dining room.

CD: I'm surprised you didn't smell it. You could have smelled it right? The baking or?

ML: The dining room was over in one of the buildings by itself. We had food everyday except Sunday night we had to fend for ourselves on Sunday night. And there was a small kitchen at the other end of the building where we could... We were within walking distance of downtown Champaign because we used to walk down there.

CD: Oh really. So how did you get to campus? How far were you from campus?

ML: We were right across the street from campus if I recall correctly. We walked almost every place. You walked almost everywhere during World War II, Chris! Gasoline rations.

CD: Because I think of downtown Champaign as being several miles from the campus area.

ML: I don't think we went there except when we were seniors and when you got to be seniors during the war you could live, you didn't have to live in regulated housing. We could live in...rent rooms some place.

CD: And did you, so how long did you live in Davenport hall?

ML: I think two years.

CD: Two years.

ML: And the next year I think was in the Y.

CD: Oh, on Wright Street the Y?

ML: Umm hmm. Davenport was near that.

CD: Ok, and what, how did you decide what to major in when you came? Did you know what you wanted to do when you came to Illinois?

ML: My high school teachers guided me. And I really...as I told you earlier I think and I don't know how many people this happened to but we spent a number of days, might have been a whole week, it seemed like a whole week, in a gymnasium taking tests.

CD: And why do, when you first came to campus?

ML: It was during orientation. And when we were finished with that then we made out our schedules, we were placed in classes according to results of your tests. And I remember I was in one class that was a pre-med class and we had to dissect pregnant mice and I was the only woman in the class and I was the only one who didn't have a pregnant mouse. And I kept saying so and they said, "Oh, you don't know what you're doing."

CD: They never believed you? Did the instructor?

ML: No they gave me, they purposely...

CD: Gave, oh.

ML: The guys in the class purposely gave me a non pregnant mouse or rat, whatever it was, I don't remember. But I remember the time and I remember thinking, "Gee, that was funny."

CD: So how did you, you majored in communications right, or?

ML: I started out, I majored in what they called journalism in those days.

CD: In journalism?

ML: The School of Journalism and Fred Siebert was the director of journalism. And when we got to be seniors he told us that he could...he invited us to his house for a coffee or something and he told us now we can call him "Fred."

CD: And did you? Could you, you could make that transition?

ML: Because of the way he said it. I think if someone had said it to you in a different manner you couldn't have done it but he was just an unusual man.

CD: Tell me more about him what was...

ML: He was, I don't know very much about his background. But I do know he was one of three experts who testified in a trial involving *Esquire* and I think it was (dog barks)

CD: It's all right.

ML: After. Let's stop a little.

CD: You want a treat. Come here. You want to sit down. Sit. Good boy, good boy.

ML: I'll put him in the bathroom if he barks again.

CD: Let's see if this works, it kept running but that's ok.

ML: Fred was one of three experts who testified in a trial against *Esquire*. And the newspapers in those days...the insinuation was that this was because of libel but that wasn't the legal reason for the trial and I don't remember. But he was considered an expert. He wrote the first book on libel.

CD: Did you take, did he teach or was he...

ML: Yes, he taught.

CD: So you took classes with him?

ML: Oh, yes, he was a lot of fun in class.

CD: Remember what you took with him?

ML: He'd come into class and read from *Time* magazine something about somebody who was there with that color shirt and their hair tосseled. He'd stop and say, "is that the news?" or something like that. He was a great man for factual accuracy, for being objective. I think I learned more from him about objectivity in news writing than any one place else.

CD: And how many people were in a class?

ML: You know I don't remember those...

CD: Was it in a big lecture hall or in a small class?

ML: No, no this was a small class.

CD: Small class.

ML: They were small classes. You got to remember that at the beginning of the war that was before we had the influx of service men onto the campuses.

CD: For training purposes? They were on as...

ML: Yes, there were several things. First of all, before the war the ratio was like ten or eleven men to every woman. And the women used to make fun of this. They'd say, "well, we took science courses to meet a guy and homemaking to keep them." But anyhow, a lot of these guys were drafted who weren't in engineering or some of the other careers that were, you know, they were exempt from this. And so, then this was true of many, many universities in the country at that time. So, the universities, I don't think would have lived throughout the war. I think a lot of them would have closed if it hadn't been for servicemen being sent to the campus to learn things. And one of the programs, there were two programs I remember at University of Illinois that I don't think were at other schools also. One was called ASTP, Army Specialized Training Program. And these were men and this was started early in the war, never was done for Iraq. They started early in the war to learn what they would be doing in the post war government in Europe. And they were specially trained in these programs. And many of these people in these classes, none of these people in these classes had less than a bachelor's degree. Many of them had PhDs.

CD: And were they from, brought to Illinois from all over the United States?

ML: All over the United States. One of the teachers in that class had been a Political Science teacher at the University of Illinois and he was being groomed to be the head of the post war governmental unit in Germany. And I can't remember his name, I am terribly sorry.

CD: How did you know this? Did you interact with the servicemen on campus or?

ML: When we, there were four women who were actually competing for the job of managing editor of the *Daily Ilini* to be the first woman who became the managing editor of the paper. And there were four of us and we determined that we all were equally qualified and that we were going to work as a team no matter who got the job.

CD: Do you remember what year this was?

ML: Would have been '43 or '42, I can't remember. And anyhow, one of us became the managing editor and another associate editor and the other two were assistant editors. The thing that we worked on a lot was teamwork because we felt that was very important. And another thing we felt that was important was that we had to be civil and gracious to all the servicemen who were on campus. And at the time there were some sororities that banned their women from dating these men. And...

CD: Because? Do you remember what the argument was?

ML: I don't know. I don't know what the argument was. We, the four of us got together and we wrote a front page editorial. But we didn't mention this because we thought that they had a right to do this as sororities and they could do it if they wanted to. But what we did think was that there should be more civility toward these people and we should be more friendly to them and everything. And what ended up was there being a big...some kind of gathering at the Union to welcome them. And there was a punch bowl and all that somebody spiked, I think. I don't know for sure, Chris, I really don't.

CD: How were, what other evidence did you have that they weren't being treated with courtesy and respect?

ML: We had a lot of them come down to the paper and talk to us. And they were people who worked on their college papers. And they were quite young. They were about the same age we were and everything. And they told stories about, you know, the treatment they got and that sort of thing. And so we decided...the four of us got together and decided to have column about GIs. And we did.

CD: A regular column about GIs?

ML: Yeah.

CD: And you wrote them or did they, did you have the guys?

ML: No, we had the guys write them.

CD: The guys wrote them...

ML: But because they were in the service I don't think any of them used their names. And I don't remember them very well or anything except that they were, there was a lot of talk about U of I men and where they were and what they were doing and that sort of thing. And there was some talk about the newcomers to the campus and what they were doing. But it was, we thought it was a good idea.

CD: Was there any, what kind of reaction did your front page story elicit?

ML: I was the only one called into Arthur Cutts Willard's office. He was the President of the University at the time.

CD: And what was his last name?

ML: Arthur Cutts Willard.

CD: Oh, Willard, Cutts Willard.

ML: Yeah he was a neat guy. I liked him

CD: You liked him?

ML: Oh I liked him real well. He was very fair. And he also was, before this even happened or anything he would review troops and that sort of thing. But the guy who was criticizing me was Joseph somebody, Joe somebody. He was what would now be called a public relations director or community relations director or something and everything. And he said what we did was “prejudicial to the best interests of the University.” And that was the favorite phrase in those days for anything that was not, you know, in line with University policy and that sort of thing.

CD: Did he give you an example of what he thought might...

ML: I don't remember. All I remember saying that we all thought that it was not patriotic to treat the guys this way and we thought they were all doing something for our country and for us and we should be friendly with them. That's what I remember but I don't remember anything else really.

CD: Do you feel...

ML: Never had any repercussions. I mean, I think the only thing that happened was this kind of meltdown in the office, I guess you'd call it.

CD: In the *Illini* office?

ML: No it was in Dr. Cutts Willard's office.

CD: Oh, in his office.

ML: Yeah, he didn't say a word he just sort of smiled.

CD: And how did you all leave it?

ML: I was the only one there and I don't remember. All I remember is that he said, “what should you do” and I said, I thought we should have some sort of a ... something for them in the Union building for them and the students both. So they could meet each other.

CD: A social event or?

ML: Yeah, a social event. An open house.

CD: Umm hmm.

ML: And that's what they did.

CD: And did you attend?

ML: Of course!

CD: And did you attend as the managing editor of the *Daily Illini*?

ML: No, I just attended as a student.

CD: And what do you remember about it?

ML: I remember everybody showing up and the people, maybe it was my own reflection of my own ideas or something but we four gals on the paper thought it was great that this happened.

CD: Were there speakers or music?

ML: Actually I don't remember. I think it was strictly a social event.

CD: Strictly a social event.

ML: It could be that Arthur Cutts Willard spoke and some of the other University officials. I don't know. I really don't remember and I don't trust my memory with what I think I remember.

CD: Do you think that as a member of the *Illini* staff that you had more contact and access to people in the administration at the University?

ML: No.

CD: So the President was out and about and students had an impression of him?

ML: That's one thing that I remember about him. Is that he was very much outgoing and friendly. And as I said, if you look through that booklet, book of pages of the *Illini*, there are several stories of him reviewing troops. Another thing that I remember, Chris, is there was an organization started of women that was supposed to be like the ROTC but with women. And I think it was called the Women Officer Training Corps but I am not sure. You'd have to look in the archives of the University to find out. But we got uniforms, there were only a limited number of women and our picture was on the front page of I've forgotten, one of the Chicago newspapers. I looked for that to try to show you and I can't find it. But anyhow, it's probably lost in a flood when we moved someplace or something.

CD: It's probably in the archives of the Chicago Tribune though?

ML: Well I don't think it was the *Tribune*. I think it was either the *Chicago Sun*, which was the *Sun* not the *Sun Times* in those days or the *Chicago Herald America*. I don't remember which one it was. The uncle I told you about, one of the first draftees from Cook County. His picture was in the paper too. There were eight guys I think.

CD: So what did you do in this, let's say it was the Women's Officer Training Corps?

ML: We marched!

CD: But were you actually members of the military or was it just an affiliated student group?

ML: No. It was an experimental program, I think. And there was on campus at that time a woman recruiter. All I remember about her is that she was in the service and she was from Maine. That's all I remember about her. And, but in those days, if I remember correctly, there was a difference in the age at which a woman could enlist and at which a man could enlist. And I don't remember what it was.

CD: And she was there to recruit women, solely?

ML: Umm hmm.

CD: Umm hmm. Interesting, interesting. Let's step back to sort of academic life and social life as a student. But academic life, do you remember what kinds of classes you took and what your favorite ones, perhaps, were and why?

ML: I liked the science classes. I liked them real well. And it was later in life I did become a science writer and I'm still a member of the National Association of Science Writers. But anyhow, one of the most memorable experiences in any class was I studied German and the teacher that we had was a naturalized American citizen and he was originally from Germany. And the last day of class he came in a Navy uniform and all... we women in the class started to cry. He was such a nice guy, he was so nice. We never found out what happened to him but we all cried because this happened so much on campus. Somebody would come to class in uniform and we knew they were going overseas. Many of the women on campus wrote to at least twenty men.

CD: Twenty?

ML: At least. And then the fellas they wrote to would say, "well this guy doesn't get any letters why don't you write to him." And they'd get another address. But it was, it was a time, I think, when there was a spirit that we don't see about Iraq or Afghanistan. And there was much more friendship among people. Maybe because we didn't have all those iPods and cell phones and all those other things to distract us. But it was different. Very different.

CD: Illini was a daily paper then?

ML: Yes.

CD: Just Monday through Friday or did you?

ML: Yeah, I can't remember. I don't think we had a Sunday edition.

CD: Umm hmm. And what was a typical day like there, when did you publish? When did you? Did you write at night?

ML: It was a morning paper.

CD: It's a morning paper.

ML: And, you know, it's strange because I remember my work well, so much better than I do then, that shouldn't be. But what I do remember was that we worked long hours. We really did. We had no faculty advisor. We did everything on our own. And as a matter of fact, there was one story the four of us, we never wrote anything alone except editorials, and there was one that we wrote about the sanitary conditions in some restaurants near the campus. And an old guy from the shop came out and he says, "This is libelous. You can't print this!" So we of course listened to him. And we did do some more investigating and went to the Health Department and things like that. And there was a story eventually but it was much more objective and had some authoritative source like the Health Department behind it.

CD: Did you have to be invited to join the staff or was there competition or was it purely voluntary?

ML: It was purely voluntary.

CD: What made you go over there and volunteer?

ML: I don't know.

CD: You don't remember?

ML: I wanted to be a reporter. I can't tell you why but it was something I wanted to do.

CD: And to write?

ML: Yes, I wanted to write.

CD: And, when did you start taking journalism classes?

ML: In those days you didn't take them until you were a junior. The first two years were preparatory and you didn't start your major until the last two years.

CD: So you took science courses, did you take any other...

ML: Mathematics...

CD: Mathematics. So in those last two years...

ML: It was almost all journalism.

CD: It was almost all journalism.

ML: Well I did take a philosophy course but when they started talking about Angels on the head of the pin I sort of dropped out. I am sorry, I do like philosophy, I've read a lot of philosophy books in my life. But not, well, that's enough said.

CD: We would kind of like to get a sense of what campus life was like. I in particular, the quad is such a central place where people pass through it all day long, people gather there when the weather is nice. I imagine it was a gathering place during the war for various events.

ML: You know when I was in college and the houses I lived in the first three years you had to be in by nine o'clock at night or ten o'clock, I can't remember, but you had hours. You couldn't stay out to midnight or one o'clock or something. And so, if you wanted to go to the library then you didn't have time to do a lot of things. And I grew up in an atmosphere where when I was in high school when you got home you from school you did work.

CD: You did school work or you did work in the store?

ML: I worked in my dad's store and I did school work. Both. And that was an ethic. The work ethic was so much stronger in those days among almost all people than it is nowadays, I think. So much stronger. And it was, I don't remember many social events except a few dances and so on.

CD: And did the dances have to end at nine as well?

ML: No they went later. But the one thing I do remember is we had big bands like Glenn Miller and Tommy Dorsey and what was his name? Played the piano, black guy? Anyhow we had these famous big bands on campus. And you could go with or without a date and a lot of people went without dates but just stood there listening to the music. (Duke Ellington)

CD: Where would they play? You don't remember?

ML: No, I think it was in a gym or someplace. I don't remember. Where would it be there? I don't remember.

CD: I there's, oh that was convenient, ok.

ML: But I remember Glenn Miller coming to campus. I remember oh I wish I could remember his name, Tommy Dorsey. Who were some of the other big band names? Jimmy Dorsey came. I should have looked some of this stuff up. But anyhow they were really good bands and the music was superb. Absolutely superb.

CD: Sounds fun.

ML: It was fun, a lot of fun. That was the kind of thing, most things were done in great big groups at least in the crowd I ran around with. And you asked about the newspaper and everything. When we did, during the first two years you were on the newspaper, the first time you spent at the newspaper you were given specific assignments by your superiors and you did that and that was it. When you got to be older and had to make up pages and make assignments and do other things like that you got permission to stay out later. You did more. In fact took so much time that I really took a real light class my last semester, real light class load I meant to say. But anyhow that's the way it was.

CD: And who else did you work with on the paper?

ML: The associate editor was Carol Olsen, she I am sorry to say is now deceased. The two assistant editors were Betty Nance Terry and the other one was June Boe Rogers. And Betty Nance Terry is living in California and she's a widow. And she's really a neat person. We have a very prolific correspondence. June Boe Rogers last I heard was in Hawaii but she and Betty still keep touch with each other because they are closer. And June gets to California so they get to see each other. And the other people I remember are Fritz Elki who I don't think he's alive anymore. Gene Shalit, I told you about who worked for NBC's Today Show and I saw him just the other day on TV reviewing Mad Money movie.

CD: Now there's a controversy because we looked up Gene Shalit, you know his birthdate and according to everything we found his birthdate is listed as 1932. Which if that's the case he would have been very young as a student. I guess some students then entered the university very young.

ML: If he was born in '32 in '43...

CD: He would have been even younger than we thought, eleven.

ML: Yeah, so I don't know. But he was on the campus when I was there.

CD: And he seemed like a peer in terms of age?

ML: No, he was younger than I was. No question about that he was much younger than I was. He was a freshman when I was a senior.

CD: So he was four years younger, three or four years younger.

ML: Well, I was, I started, I was three or four years younger than the average person in my class. So he would have been quite a bit younger than I was. Because when I went to work I was only eighteen or nineteen. I can't remember.

CD: So how old were you when you started?

ML: I don't remember, fifteen or sixteen? But you got to remember we accelerated. I put in three and a half years for what was like four years.

CD: What do you remember about the campus student body in terms of class, race, religion, and gender. Was it a diverse community on campus or was higher education...

ML: You know I never thought of it in those terms when I was younger. Never. I just thought, "here we are, we are all University of Illinois students" period. I didn't think in ethnicity or however you pronounce it, or race, or religion, or anything else like that. And I just don't think it was common in those days to do that.

CD: But there was, clearly there must have been discrimination in town I would think.

ML: While there is always discrimination against students who make false or something. Here at MSU they had kids who when they lost something, some basketball trophy or something, they burned cars downtown. It was, they don't know how often this happens but I just didn't pay attention to things like that. I moved in a group of people who played bridge for fun, who talked a lot about the classes they took, who got together in study groups, who went to these big band affairs, and who moaned about having to stay on campus during Christmas.

CD: Oh you had to because of the train tracks, you couldn't get back home.

ML: Either that or no one could come get you in a car because of the gasoline rationing and maybe you couldn't afford the bus.

CD: So what did you do during Christmas on campus? Were buildings open, were facilities available?

ML: There wasn't that much vacation time. You got to remember that this was an accelerated program. So usually you studied.

CD: And was it between semesters or was this a break within a semester at Christmas. Do you remember?

ML: No, I don't remember to tell you the truth. I really don't. Isn't that awful?

CD: Was the library open during the holidays?

ML: Yes because I used to go when I didn't have anything to do I would go to the library and read mythology.

CD: Mythology?

ML: Yeah. I don't know why I just became addicted to it.

CD: You went to the main reading room?

ML: The big library, yeah.

CD: Did you go into the stacks or?

ML: I don't remember.

CD: You don't remember?

ML: No I really don't. All I remember is I went and read mythology a lot. I don't know why. It just seemed there was so much in that that was applicable to the modern world.

CD: Specifically to a world at war do you think?

ML: No, I think just to people. I just, to me when you read almost anything you realize-- my word, people haven't changed that much. You feel that way?

CD: Often, often. So I'm just having a hard time conceptualizing this world in which difference isn't noted. Especially I would say...

ML: I grew up that way. That's probably why.

CD: I did too but I think that because I was so aware of racial discrimination.

ML: Well, you saw it more than I did.

CD: Do you think that's what it was?

ML: Yes. I don't think racial discrimination, well, you know, in the town I grew up in, I told you in school a lot of the classes were half black and there were Chinese, Indian, Muslims, there was everything and nobody paid any attention to it like they do nowadays.

Well, even during, well, even when John Kennedy ran for president, do you remember his famous speech about Catholicism? Has anybody said anything like that nowadays? No, that was the flavor of the times.

CD: Although we are hearing it with Mitt Romney. We are hearing it about Mormonism this time around. And frankly we are hearing it, it is not quite as a *propos*, we are hearing it with Obama with...in terms of Islam.

ML: Well, he's not Islamic.

CD: No he isn't that's why it doesn't make as much sense...

ML: Although somebody printed that he was.

CD: Right.

ML: But anyhow, I don't, I was with some people not so long ago, been reporters for fifty years, something like that, and they were talking about the difference in news nowadays and when they first started in the business. News is more opinion now than facts. And when I started with AP in Chicago for example, and if there was a racial disturbance on the South Side of Chicago which there was once in a while. The newspapers had a silent ... had a code, unwritten code, they would not go in there until the police were through. Because the theory was if they were there it would change the complexion of the dispute completely. And that was good. When I wrote a story for the AP and you had to get another point of view, an opposite point of view, you had to try for twenty four hours minimum to get that before the story was sent out. That doesn't happen nowadays now they just say, "so and so could not be reached for an opinion." Or whatever they say. It's just different, Chris.

CD: Was this the sort of ethics of journalism that you learned at Illinois?

ML: Yes, this is the ethics of journalism I learned at Illinois but more importantly at the Associated Press.

CD: Applied it. And how...

ML: You know it wasn't, the rules about you know the not going in until the police have finished their work in a racial disturbance. That I never heard about at Illinois that was strictly Chicago. The other thing about getting an opinion, the time consideration was AP kind of an unwritten rule and it wasn't true in all offices, it depended on who your boss was.

CD: And since you had no faculty advisors at the *Daily Illini*, when there were controversies and ethical controversies how did you...

ML: We could go to a faculty person but we would go to the one we wanted to see or else if we knew a reporter on *Champaign News Gazette* or someplace else we'd go to them.

CD: Did you have editorial meetings? Regular editorial meetings? No?

ML: Didn't have time. Didn't have time. Really, I don't think people realize how much time we spent in class.

CD: Well, what was a typical week like. Let's say your junior year. You've finished the required courses pretty much and now you are able to take the courses you, the course of study you're interested in.

ML: You take certain, you had certain courses that were set out for you. Then you had electives like you have now, I guess. Don't you?

CD: Yes, but would you go, would you have classes everyday of the week?

ML: Oh yes. Oh yes. And if you didn't have classes you'd have something related to the class.

CD: A lab or...?

ML: Or a lecture or something like that. And you, maybe it's just me I don't know. But there were a lot of people like me who were... And then there were a lot of people who liked to play and school was just big fun.

CD: So was there a lot of partying and drinking?

ML: No, not that I remember.

CD: Not that much. Were there special restrictions on things like smoking, drinking, and dress?

ML: We couldn't smoke, as I recall we couldn't smoke in the residential halls that we lived in.

CD: Could you smoke on campus?

ML: I don't remember because I didn't smoke then. So I didn't pay attention to that, I really didn't. And very few young people did Chris.

CD: Well, and cigarettes were probably...

ML: Very expensive.

CD: Right umm hmm. What about dress? Were there University requirements for how women in particular dressed?

ML: No. I had one suit, one long dress, two skirts, and several tops when I went to college. That's all I had.

CD: How many pairs of shoes?

ML: One. And boots.

CD: And boots for winter.

ML: Yeah and house slippers.

CD: And what about summer, what would you do about summer?

ML: We went to school over the summer. There was no vacation. It was an accelerated, I told you, three and a half years for four.

CD: So it must have been...

ML: It really was accelerated. You really had, I haven't seen young people nowadays do as much studying except one granddaughter who's in a baccalaureate high school program in Virginia. And she studies all the time but I haven't seen kids around here, you know? I just think, as I said a little while ago, I think the work ethic in those days was a lot different than it is today. I think the, the feeling about the war was different. The realization of what Hitler did was in the newsreels a lot. And this had a tremendous effect on people.

CD: The realization of what Hitler did in terms of...

ML: Throwing people in open graves. And killing them in gas burners. You know a lot of people forget or maybe don't even know is that (and there were people on campus a lot of times) that Jewish people weren't the only people who were killed. A lot of Catholics were killed, a lot of black people were killed although there weren't a lot of black people in Europe at the time, and there were a lot of other minorities who were killed. And the Jews were the bulk of the people who were slain. But there were a lot of Catholics who were killed, a real lot.

CD: How did you all talk about it on campus? Were you reading, regularly reading newspapers, did you see newsreels?

ML: We saw newsreels primarily.

CD: In movie theatres or on campus?

ML: In movie theatres.

CD: In movie theatres.

ML: In movie theatres, primarily.

CD: Umm hmm.

ML: Going to the movies was a big treat in those days.

CD: How many movie theatres did you have?

ML: Oh I don't know.

CD: But more than one?

ML: Oh yeah. More than one. That was a big treat in those days. I imagine like a rock concert would be nowadays.

CD: And probably, probably did, had access to newspapers like the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*?

ML: Oh yes. Oh yes. In the library of the school we could read almost anything you wanted to, just like today. And we could buy them.

CD: Could you?

ML: Yes.

CD: What I remember about the *New York Times* living, and this was probably in the 1970s, on the West Coast, we couldn't get, we'd get the edition published for the City of New York but we wouldn't get it until the next day. Was there any delay?

ML: That's happened all during those years. I can remember back during the beginning of Afghanistan when you'd get a paper here and it wouldn't be up to date. It would be printed Friday night or something.

CD: Umm hmm.

ML: And I think that's true. You can't even buy the *Washington Post* in Lansing anymore. And I think that's the design of the *Washington Post* and it's in part because of the cost of transportation and other things. It's just not delivered beyond their borders. But it's available on the Internet. So many things are available on the Internet that weren't available to us.

CD: But did you have that kind of up-to-the minute, did you feel... I don't know how to ask this question.

ML: We listened to the radio a lot.

CD: You listened to the radio a lot?

ML: Yes.

CD: And that was the most up-to-date information you got?

ML: Correct.

CD: And the paper some how supplemented that information with photographs, I would think, and more analysis?

ML: Well, I suppose that's the way you would look at it but I think most people thought, the most information came from the radio.

CD: And how many stations were there?

ML: I don't remember. I don't remember but there were quite a few. You know there were, in Chicago, in those days there was let's see the *Sun*, *Tribune*, *Sun Times*, and *Herald American*.

CD: The radio stations?

ML: There were five newspapers. I don't remember how many stations but there was quite a few. There were more there than now.

CD: Hum. So it wasn't just...

ML: Because TV has taken over a lot.

CD: Right.

ML: I don't know if you listen to the radio very much anymore. Outside of Public Radio if you turn on, well, let's not go there.

CD: All right. How did students talk about the war? Was it part of your everyday conversation? Did people say, "oh I just heard from my brother or my cousin who's in..."

ML: You'd talk about it in class.

CD: Would you really?

ML: Oh yeah. Especially in political science classes. And there was often mention of some outstanding events. And, it depended upon the students, you know. Some of them didn't want to discuss it. Others were more interested in it. Then, you know, there was censorship during the War a lot more than there is now. And it was military censorship. So sometimes you didn't hear about something until way after it happened. And people accepted that.

CD: Did you hear about, for instance, the Battle of the Bulge or Midway?

ML: Oh my word, yes.

CD: Was it as it...

ML: It was a front page story.

CD: Were you on campus then?

ML: No

CD: You were working already.

ML: No, I was working at that time. But I think one of the big events was when the men started coming home, when the service people started coming home. That was one of the big events. And then there was a lot of talk about the GI Bill. There was a lot of talk about, they didn't call it post-traumatic stress syndrome then, but the ... about the wounded people and how they were taken care of. And there were hospitals particularly built to take care of veterans.

CD: Well, in particular as you'll see in that paper, the University of Illinois campus at Galesburg was established at a hospital for returning vets that ended up not, wound up not being used. But it became a place where students, veterans who wanted to take part in the GI Bill but were disabled in some way. It kind of started this program that Illinois is known for, in terms of making higher education assessable for people with disabilities, physical disabilities in particular. Um...

ML: Does the University of Illinois still have five campuses?

CD: Five?

ML: Yeah they had...

CD: We have three, Springfield, Urbana-Champaign, and Chicago.

ML: Well, wasn't there one public health campus in Rockford or someplace else?

CD: No.

ML: In Carbondale? Wasn't there an Illinois campus at one time?

CD: Carbondale has Southern Illinois University. It's part of a different system.

ML: I think there was a U of I campus there at one time.

CD: Really? I'll have to look it up.

ML: Ok.

CD: And you said your father paid for college for you.

ML: He said, "you get paid for four years, period. If you're not through then you have to do the rest yourself."

CD: But you were through, right?

ML: No, I had six hours that I had to finish. So when I got a job in Chicago I enrolled in the University of Chicago. And I didn't do it right away because I didn't have enough money put aside to do it right away. The University of Chicago is very expensive. But anyhow, I was in the class and midway through the class I was transferred to Springfield, Illinois to aid the Associated Press. Which didn't make me sad because it was at a very, very historic time.

CD: And this was when, what years would this have been?

ML: This was the years when Adlai Stevenson ran against Eisenhower for president. And it was the years when there was a tremendous scandal before Adlai became governor. Tremendous scandal in the state institutions with spoiled meat and moldy bread being served, and things like that. It was a big, a big disgrace. And the sad thing about it was... the governor at the time did not know about it and he was furious when he heard about it. I have a lot of respect for men who, for anyone who runs for public office. It's a thankless job. It really is. Whether you agree with them or not I still respect them.

CD: And that came from covering politics, do you think?

ML: Yeah.

CD: Yeah. What was it like being a women reporter for a major wire service? In Springfield in particular, very much a male bastion.

ML: Well, ok it is. I'll tell you one thing, this is really...Saturday mornings we had to take turns writing a prep sports roundup. I was the only one who didn't get a byline on it.

CD: Because they didn't want a woman...

ML: Because I was a woman. They didn't want anyone to know that a woman wrote that. And, there were no woman, there weren't many women that did anything outside the women's pages in those days.

CD: So how did you break through that, what happened?

ML: Well, it was during the war. It was during the war and they needed the people. But, we had to, when we, anybody that went to work for the AP, any woman had to sign a paper saying she was replacing a man in the service and she would gladly give up the position when he returned. And I made he mistake of saying, "Well, whom am I replacing?"... "never mind just sign it." But, I will say in a lot of respects, at least from my personal experience, women were treated better than they are now in a lot of places, really.

CD: Why do you think that is, or was?

ML: Because they were needed first of all. Second of all, they did it willingly. Third of all, they accepted the standards. They signed the papers and they didn't take the vile end and things like that. So it was different you know. So they got respect I think. I really do.

CD: And...

ML: And it wasn't, you see when I went to work for the AP in Chicago there were two women in the office. One covered the grain markets which are big in Chicago and she never got out of that job. The other one was sent on things like when Frank Sinatra came to Gary, Indiana and everybody went crazy pulling his clothes and everything else. She was sent to cover that. She came back all disheveled and everything. But that was the kind of assignments they got except during the war. And then you were sent to all kinds of things, you really were.

CD: And you got the job at AP while you were still a student at Illinois? Or did you leave Illinois six credits and go home and then start looking for a job?

ML: I left Illinois six credits short because I had had some interviews. You had pre-graduation interviews. And I had interviews and I was offered jobs at the *Chicago Sun* and the AP. And the guy at the *Chicago Sun* at the time, he told me, "hey I would advise you to take the AP job." About a month later the *Chicago Sun* and the *Chicago Times* merged. And that's why he said it. And at the time of the merging there were a number of people who were fired.

CD: And what role did the journalism faculty, your instructors play? Did they play any role in helping you get a job? Did you go to them to help you make a decision about...no?

ML: No. There was a fellow I knew, that I went to school with and his brother worked for, I can't remember what paper it was, and he knew a lot of the reporters in Chicago and he arranged a couple of interviews for me. And that's what...

CD: And was it a tough decision to leave school?

ML: No. It was a good job.

CD: It was a good job.

ML: Yeah, and if I would have waited for another two years I might never have gotten it, you know.

CD: And tell me again what year it was that you went up to Chicago for the AP?

ML: Must have been '43 or '44. I can't remember.

CD: Well, it must have been '44 because you're still in the *Illio* for '44.

ML: Yeah, it was in '44 then. I told you that I don't remember these years as well as I do the others. I'm sorry.

CD: That's ok.

ML: And I can't find my papers I guess I didn't save that much, so.

CD: Huh. But you finally did finish your undergraduate degree?

ML: Right. I went to Hofstra University when we lived in New York. And it was an amazing school. They don't have a single teacher who doesn't have at least one PhD. They don't have any graduate assistants. At least they didn't then. And I finished there. I studied Russian and I studied a journalism course with vice president with **BBDO** which was the biggest advertising agency at the time. She was fun, it really was good.

CD: And tell...just so we can get some chronology here. So, you left Illinois you went. Oh what just happened there? You left Illinois, you went to Chicago, then did you meet your husband in Chicago?

ML: Yes, well actually we met, we really met in Springfield, Illinois and we were married there.

CD: And was he also a reporter?

ML: Yeah, he worked for the AP.

CD: Ah.

ML: He had been, he had been in the Army for five years and he came back. Before he went into the service he had worked for, I forgotten what Chicago newspaper it was, he worked at one of the Chicago newspapers while he was going to Northwestern. And he was a perennial student.

CD: But you didn't know each other until you were in Springfield?

ML: We didn't know each other until we were in Chicago.

CD: In Chicago, ok.

ML: Then we both ended up in Springfield. I think he went there first and then I went there second when they transferred me there.

CD: And so where else did you live?

ML: Well, let's see, after Springfield we lived in Minneapolis.

CD: And you worked for the AP also?

ML: I had a babies then, he worked for the... I had one. When we moved to Minneapolis I had one baby who was a little over one year old and I was six months pregnant. They wouldn't let me travel until I was six months pregnant. I had to stay there. That was the time, I think I told you, that when we left...no that was someplace else. Anyhow, went there then we came here.

CD: To Lansing.

ML: Yeah. And he got a job with the AP. And I did some writing jobs then but not very many. And I worked for the, I don't remember I had this image. But anyway then we went from Lansing to New York. And he worked for the AP there and I worked for Globe Wire Service. And also did some single stories for the AP. They sent me out once.

CD: Oh that was a good. "They sent me out once" and everyone bated breath, they sent her out once, where, what? All it's all being recorded there.

ML: My husband worked on the business staff. And so the guy I knew there was the business editor.

CD: This is in New York right?

ML: Yeah.

CD: Ok.

ML: And he was desperate for somebody to cover some big, huge convention. And I went and he liked what I wrote. So then he said, "I want you to go out and buy one single share of stock." Have you ever bought one single share?

CD: Can you do it?

ML: You can do it if you are willing to pay a fee that's worth more sometimes than the single share of stock to the borker to buy it, you know. Well, I wrote the story, ended up saying that "I'm not going to buy a single share of stock, I'm going to buy a hat." And he liked it. And I wrote several other things for him on assignment. So, and I worked for *Globe* too. And then my husband got a job with the Detroit *Free Press* and we came back to Lansing. And I didn't work right away, but when I worked for East Lansing *Town Courier*, and then *The Journal* asked me to come and work. I have never applied for a job.

CD: I was just...you must have been reading my mind. I was going to ask you how this all fell into place.

ML: I have never applied for a job. I was, when I went to the AP in Chicago during the War, I was brought in by this guy and introduced to the guy and.... When I got to the *State Journal* of Lansing I was brought in. When Gannett bought the paper he asked me to fill out an application, well, we won't go into that, but anyhow I didn't. Anyhow, I just never had, actually except at the stockyards when, I told you my brother said when I came home, "Mille's going to write manure ads." Oh, God.

CD: And this was working for the stockyards, the publication of the...

ML: Some kind of public relations firm there. I don't know what it was, I don't remember at the time. It was kind of interesting. The stockyards you know are an interesting place. I don't know if you ever went to the stockyards in there or anything which no longer exist. I don't know if they even exist anymore does it?

CD: I've read a great deal about the stockyards. And, as I told you, I interviewed the woman who was a organizer in the packinghouses in the Back of the Yards so...

ML: It was a fascinating place and you could smell it.

CD: And there were a lot of Czechs in that part of town weren't there, in the Back of the Yards or Lithuanians?

ML: There were a lot of different; there were a lot of immigrant groups. Because it was dirty work and they didn't mind it, they took it.

CD: And just to conclude, what would you say, I mean, what's been... as you look back and now you've had a chance to think and sort of had the University of Illinois

back in front of you, what would you say the role of the University in your time at Illinois, how did that influence what you did and where you wound up?

ML: Well, the first thing I would say about the University of Illinois when I first went there for orientation, I was treated like a person. A real person. Somebody who was there for a purpose. Somebody who deserved an education. And also I felt I was in a supreme place, I really did. And I just thought it was a wonderful place to be. And I was just so grateful to be able to have, as I told you there were only three people in my class who went beyond high school. And there weren't any later in life who did it, that I know of.

CD: So this was a unique thing in the place where you grew up.

ML: It was a magnificent opportunity and it was a gift. It was a great gift. I don't think a lot of people nowadays realize what a great gift education is. No matter what you study. It is a great gift. It matures you. It brings you into the real world. It teaches you about life and makes you feel that you have a purpose.

CD: Do you think the fact that you've been to public universities and private universities; do you have a sense of a difference between them, no?

ML: No. I think the difference is in your teachers. I think that's what the difference is really. I thought the University of Illinois was just great. For years I didn't wear anything but orange and blue.

CD: And were most of your classes taught by faculty or did you have a lot of graduate assistants?

ML: No. There were faculty in those days. I think, I think that, at Hofstra was all faculty, too; no graduate assistants. I think that graduate assistant programs have come into being in recent years. I don't think they're bad, I think they're good. But I do think that in advanced programs, masters programs and beyond they should be people with degrees.

CD: Did you socialize with faculty at all, do you remember?

ML: Just with Fred Siebert.

CD: Just with...

ML: He was great.

CD: Did you have friends who were majoring, who had other majors and had a sense of someone in the engineering department might be doing?

ML: Well, yeah because my cousin was in engineering.

CD: But was your crowd pretty much journalism folks?

ML: They were pretty much journalism and literature. But, you know, one of the things I remember about school was the turnover. I think there were a lot of students, male students for example who went into service. There were other students who didn't like not being able to go home so went to home and went to school closer where they could live at home. Money became a factor with a lot of people. And that determined where people would go to school sometimes and everything a lot of times

CD: Did you...so you didn't get back to see your family that often while you were at Illinois.

ML: No, oh, no, we couldn't.

CD: Presumably your father was running a business so he didn't come down...

ML: Well, he worked seven days a week, he couldn't, he wouldn't take the time.

CD: So did you write?

ML: Oh yeah. We wrote and talked on the telephone. (I keep getting into your cord there better be careful.)

CD: Let's see if this is still, yes. So you wrote letters, you corresponded.

ML: Oh yes. Yes.

CD: So you talked on the telephone.

ML: Yes.

CD: You did. Would you do anything differently if you could for that period of your life?

ML: I think I would be a librarian instead of a journalist.

CD: Would you?

ML: Oh yes.

CD: Why do you say that?

ML: I love books. I think that I have become disenchanted with journalism because of what has happened to newspapers. I read an article, for example, and there's a paper here, a free newspaper called *City Pulse*. And there was an article in there about two radio

stations, commercial radio stations not public radio stations, and the top people they have. Did you know that these people who are talk show hosts, their pay is a certain percentage of the advertising revenue they bring in? Did you know that? Does that happen else where?

CD: Probably, don't you think?

ML: And I was absolutely astounded. How does this influence what they are doing?

CD: Um hmm.

ML: And that's the kind of thing that really...and then also you know there was this incident, I don't know if you saw it or not, where the AP reporter accosted, in effect, accosted Mitt Romney because he asked Mitt Romney if so and so was a lobbyist on his staff. And Romney said, "He's not on my staff; he's not a campaign; he doesn't manage my campaign, he is an advisor." And the guy kept confronting, did you see that, he kept confronting Romney. And I thought myself, "my word, why doesn't he stop and go ask somebody else who is a campaign person what this means?" I couldn't this happens too much.

CD: So, kind of what I think I hear you saying is that it was less adversarial between the media, the press, and the folks they were covering.

ML: You had your role, you did your role. You didn't put yourself above the story. You went for the news, period.

CD: What was the... what's the story that you remember most... that you wrote or covered at Illinois? While you were at Illinois?

ML: Oh the editorial the four of us wrote on having some more friendliness between the service people and the students.

CD: And how did you hear that Willard wanted to talk to you?

ML: Oh, this PR guy came and got me and took me there.

CD: He came and got you at the *Daily Illini* offices or at...

ML: Oh I don't know where. I just know he made me come there and I went there and I don't remember how I got there, I have no idea. But I really liked Arthur Cutts Willard, he was a great guy I thought.

CD: Well, thank you very much. This was most revealing and...

ML: Well, I hope it's helpful in some way.

CD: I think it will be, I think, I think it will be. If I can figure out how to turn these off.