UNCG CENTENARY PROJECT ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

INTERVIEWEE: Ione Mebane Mann

INTERVIEWER: Richard and Dorothy Bardolph

DATE: March 18, 1981

RB: We are this morning in Newton, North Carolina, [background talking] and it is March 18, 1981. And we're at the home of Mrs. Mann who, when she was a student, was Jane—Ione Mebane, one of four sisters who attended UNCG [Editor's note: when Mrs. Mann was a student, the name of the university was State Normal and Industrial College]. And she's now living in retirement here in her own little pleasant brick house on the edge of town in Newton, a town, incidentally, which contributed a surprising number of students to the college in its first few decades, something I'd like to look into.

Incidentally, this voice we're hearing now is, I'm Richard Bardolph with the university, recently retired as head of the history department and now giving substantial amounts of my time to what we are calling the Centenary Project. And this is, this morning, an example of what we're doing. We're having interviews with graduates, particularly from the first generation or two of the college's life.

And though Mrs. Mann is like nearly all of our interviews, a little nervous and may start out somewhat hesitantly, I'm sure she will quickly adapt to this somewhat unusual circumstance and be able to share with us her memories of her college days, which, incidentally, go back to the second decade of the twentieth century.

I believe she was a member of the class of 1919 and graduated that year. At the time, she was a resident of Newton though she'd been born in Raleigh. All of her three sisters, however, were born here in Newton and they think of this as their home. As a matter of fact, her father was the editor of the little semi-weekly newspaper that served Newton and the rural environs around here.

Well, this will perhaps suffice for introductory materials and in a few minutes we'll get Mrs. Wall [sic, Mrs. Mann] comfortably seated here we hope and underway. Perhaps I should interject here that may, it may have been Mrs. Wall's [sic, Mann] husband who was the newspaper editor. And that will doubtless develop in the course of our conversation.

DB: Is this a real brick floor or is that simply a—

IMM: No, it's a tile. I had a beautiful—

DB: Yes, I see what it is now, I see what it is.

IMM: —Norfolk pine in here that reached to the ceiling and I—it was in that corner. And I enjoyed it so much. My daughter gave it to me and I thought it was so lovely. I just had to take it out this week and put it out because it was, it was dying.

DB: Yes, they are hard to keep going.

IMM: Well, I didn't know anything about one; I never had had one before.

DB: How long did you have it?

IMM: I had a Delta Kappa Gamma palm that I brought from an international convention and I had—It was just a little favor at the table. And I had grown it until it reached the ceiling. And that's the reason she got this tall thing for me, because she thought I wanted that same thing again. And so she brought, she gave it to me Christmas and it was beautiful. But it lacked water during the, my hospitalization period. And she watered my plants but—

RB: We're ready to begin. Before we start talking about your remembrances of your college days, let's just put down a few biographical facts, you know, just to identify the tape so that people will know who it is we're talking with. I'm just going to explain now that we're in the home of Mrs. Ione Mebane Mann who was a student at the college, Class of 1919, if I remember.

IMM: That's right. I entered in 1915.

RB: Entered in 1915, the year I was born. [IMM and DB chuckle] And calls Newton home and has lived here nearly all of her life, though she was born in Raleigh, I think,

IMM: That's right.

RB: —though her three sisters who were also students at Woman's College [now The University of North Carolina at Greensboro] were all raised, born and raised here.

IMM: That's right.

RB: And after your graduation, did you become a teacher?

IMM: Yes, I went to Winston-Salem. I went straight from college to teach.

RB: And that was your intention when you entered?

IMM: That's right.

RB: And it is your recollection that that's what most girls had in mind, that's why they went to the college, intending to become teachers?

IMM: Yes, but I didn't know that I, for sure that I wanted to teach. As far as I was concerned personally—well, I might say to begin with that going to the college at State Normal and Industrial College was never anything in my mind except that's where I would go. I had been taught by my aunt, my mother's sister, Matt Cochrane was her name, and she had—

RB: Preceded you there?

IMM: Yes, way back in the early days of the college when Dr. [Charles Duncan] McIver was there. So I didn't know anything except to go to that college [as] far as my father was concerned and my mother too, because the whole family would just—there wasn't ever any other college to consider. Nothing else was a college.

RB: We'll come back to that in a moment. I'm just trying, first, to establish a brief biographical sketch, you see, to carry you from the time you finished college to now. You were a teacher for several years perhaps until you married? Did you teach—

IMM: Yes, and I taught one year after I was married. My husband and I both taught.

RB: After you were married. Where was it you taught?

IMM: In Winston-Salem.

RB: In Winston-Salem.

IMM: I was the head of the social, I mean social science department. And my husband was head of the science department.

RB: Oh, at the same school, I see.

IMM: Yes, Reynolds High School.

RB: He was also a high school teacher.

DB: Reynolds High.

IMM: Yes. He came straight from, from the university to Chapel—to Winston-Salem to teach. But you see, he graduated because of the war record, time out for war—he was in World War I—he was delayed, his education was delayed.

DB: How long did you teach in Winston-Salem?

IMM: In Winston-Salem? I was there six years, and then—yeah, it was six. See, I went in 1919, well, 1920—no; it was 1919, because it'd be in the fall. And I was married in '24, and we taught, I mean, I just taught—we both taught one year after I was married and continued to teach. And then my husband went into real estate, and the reason that, well, he wanted to teach, too, to tell you the truth, but it was finances that he had—

RB: It's a luxury that some people couldn't afford, to be a teacher.

IMM: That's right. And so he wanted a home and that kind of a thing. So he went into real estate business, although he loved teaching just like I did. And then, I'm trying to get—

RB: Now, if we go back a few years, before going to college, when you were growing up in Newton, your father was a newspaper editor, right? Is that correct, do I have that correct?

IMM: Yes.

RB: And was the owner, perhaps, publisher and editor of the semi-weekly newspaper that served Newton and the immediate vicinity.

IMM: Yes.

RB: And that paper remained in the family for some time after your father's death? Did the paper continue to be a family enterprise?

IMM: Yes. And my, my husband and I came to Newton for the purpose of taking care of my mother who was an invalid.

RB: Yes. After he had left teaching, you came back to Newton to live?

IMM: Yes.

RB: And resumed work on the newspaper?

IMM: No, my husband—see, I didn't, I didn't have anything to do with the newspaper business until after my husband's death. But he came to help my brother who had, was work—already working at the news office. So my brother Charles was the—was working with the paper but he needed help, and my mother needed me. So that's the reason we came to Newton. It was at her request that I came. And my husband was offered an opportunity to go to Duke [University, Durham, North Carolina] and I've often wondered about that. Of course, I didn't make the decision to come, because I left it up absolutely up to him. And he thought he would enjoy the newspaper angle of things, so he came.

RB: And I think I remember you saying that he died in 1946?

IMM: That's right.

RB: And at that time, he was with the newspaper, up through the time of his death?

IMM: Yes, yes.

RB: And for a time thereafter you and your sister looked after the paper?

DB: After your husband's death.

RB: After your husband's death.

IMM: Yes, yes.

RB: And how long did you do that?

IMM: Until, I think it was 1950—[pause] oh, about five or six years, maybe seven. I've forgotten just when we sold the paper. But then I went to Chapel Hill that summer after we sold the paper and prepared to teach in the elementary field. So I taught third grade for thirteen years.

RB: So thirteen more years of teaching after you were widowed.

IMM: That's right.

RB: I see. And that carried you to what is usually called retirement, right, until you retired?

IMM: I taught two years past retirement.

RB: Past, even past retirement.

IMM: Because—at the request of the school board. I just enjoyed my work so much.

RB: So it would be accurate now to call you a retired school teacher.

IMM: That's right. [laughs]

RB: I see. And you built this home as a retirement home, right?

IMM: That's right. I had to wait about a year, or quite some months, after I retired before I'd really decided to sell the home place, because it was—I didn't know what to do. And I've got a one-track mind, so when I was teaching I wanted to do that. And I just—my daughter insisted that I—the home place was just going to be too much for me, which I kept up and maintained it with my husband. And of course, we, eventually we bought the home place from the family. And—he did. And so we owned it, I owned it at his death, you see.

DB: You stayed on there until about—

IMM: I stayed and held the family together best I could, whatever, until I retired from teaching.

DB: And how long have you lived at this house?

IMM: About fifteen.

RB: You said earlier that you never thought of any other college than North Carolina College for Women [now The University of North Carolina at Greensboro] a—as your college choice.

IMM: That's right.

RB: Would you be able to reconstruct what it was that moved you to that feeling, that that was the only college that you would consider going to? Why, why was Woman's College your school of choice?

IMM: I think it was the idea that there you could get a college education and the other colleges, it would—well—

DB: It's be less than—

IMM: That's right, it'd just be less.

RB: It would not be a substantial liberal arts education.

IMM: That's right.

DB: And wasn't there a family influence on you to—

IMM: My aunt, see our, when our—I'm jumping around so.

RB: No, no!

DB: That's what we like.

IMM: But I, I was educated. I went to, to my aunt's for, to school. She built a little school house here in Newton in—

RB: Oh, not a public school?

IMM: No. You see, we didn't have a public school until 1905, I think we had--

RB: That's why these other alumnae whom we talked to went to Catawba College [Salisbury, North Carolina] for their elementary education. And now you say an aunt of yours had established a little private school and that's where you had your—

IMM: You see, my grandmother, to start with, my grandmother had taught. And a great aunt on my grandfather's side had lived in the home and she taught in the little schoolhouse that my grandfather built on his own property. It's down the street in the business section right now. But anyway, he had taught, I mean they had taught, so I came from a teaching background, really. I didn't know anything else except to teach except that, well, I didn't know. I just didn't, wasn't sure that teaching was going to be my field. And so I remember I said—you had to promise to teach, the only way I could get to college was promising to teach two years.

RB: Oh—in part, yes—Was that in part because the state assisted you with the expenses if you promised to teach?

IMM: Oh, that's right. Yes, it was purely finances, finances. And my father had six children to educate and so he, of course, as far as he was concerned, everybody had to have a college education and we didn't know anything else.

RB: Do you have the feeling that it was something of a sacrifice to him to be able to send all those children through college?

IMM: Oh it certainly was. You see, he did farming and newspaper—

RB: At the same time.

IMM: —and he was president, I mean he was county superintendent of Catawba County [Schools?] too, after he was state superintendent.

RB: He was state superintendent?

IMM: Oh yes, state superintendent of public instruction.

DB: Your father was?

IMM: My father.

DB: See we haven't—that's Mr. Mebane who the historical marker is about, is that right?

IMM: Oh yes.

DB: And we didn't get a chance to stop and read, but that was your father.

RB: And that was your father?

IMM: Yes.

RB: So you're school people all the way.

IMM: That's right. [laughs] Don't know anything else but schools.

RB: Did you have brothers?

IMM: Two brothers.

RB: And are they college graduates, were they college graduates?

IMM: My older brother, Charles, was the one that was in the news office when we came to Newton. And—this must be very confusing to you, I just jump around.

DB: No, no, it's excellent. That's great.

RB: That's what we call oral history. That's the way it should be, just as it unpacks out of your mind. You're doing exactly right.

IMM: Well, my older brother, oldest brother, older brother, because the others were sisters, was in the, started working with my father in the newspaper business. And so he continued in that field. He did attend Catawba College at times but he didn't want a college education, he just wasn't interested in that. And my father had a hard time accepting that fact that Charles didn't want to go to college.

RB: This was a disappointment to your father?

IMM: Oh very. But—

RB: Was he a Chapel Hill graduate himself, your father?

IMM: No, he was a graduate from Catawba College.

RB: I see, I see.

IMM: You see, he taught at Catawba College. That's where he met my mother. And all the Cochrane girls were going to Catawba College, because that was the college that was here and they had opportunity. Now my grandmother had graduated from the old Davenport [Female] College [Lenoir, North Carolina] and in her day, that was quite an accomplishment, to have graduated—

RB: Where was that?

IMM: In Lenoir.

RB: It's no longer in existence.

IMM: No, it was bought by the—I read something not long ago about, I have a piece in my grandmother's scrapbook, or my mother's scrapbook, about Lenoir and what happened to it, Davenport. And I've gotten—

RB: Are you the first of the sisters to go to Greensboro? Were you the oldest of the sisters?

IMM: Yes.

DB: May I ask one more question? Was your education in your aunt's private school from the very first grade right up until you got to college?

IMM: Yes. When she started, when she built—you see, you have to go back. I was talking about my grandmother's little old schoolhouse that was on my grandfather's property. And I used to crawl in and out of that schoolhouse, I remember, as a child and just playing in it. I didn't go to school there, I wasn't old enough. But my aunt, Matt Cochrane, who went

to the college but just one year, because the gas lights—she had to sit on the top of the table. She would put the chair on the top of the table and sit on it—

RB: So that she'd be closer to the light?

IMM: —so she'd be closer. She had trouble with her eyes and she couldn't read. And so her eyes defeated her in the long run so she had to give up college.

RB: And the lights were so poor that she just was not able to cope with that problem, right?

IMM: That's right.

RB: I'm sure that now people with visual deficiencies would still be able to make out because—now this is the first time we have heard this—

IMM: Oh really?

RB: —that the lights in the classrooms were so dim.

IMM: Well, I heard her tell about it lots of times. They pulled the table out in the middle of the floor and put a chair on top of the table and sat on the chair [close] to the light so she could see how to read.

RB: And on dark days, that must have been a serious handicap.

DB: Now this was in the study room, in a study room or library or where?

RB: Or the classroom?

IMM: Well, now, I don't know about that.

RB: Getting back to this small school—

IMM: I imagine it was in a classroom.

RB: How far did you go, how many grades did you go through, all the way to the time you went to college?

IMM: Oh, back to Aunt Matt's schoolhouse. [laughs] So, I've got pictures of it, yes. That was my mother's sister, you see. I've got some pictures in here and a lot of things I want to show you if you're interested.

RB: Oh, yes, we are. And in fact, I may—

IMM: I've got a picture of Aunt Matt's school.

RB: —try to borrow a picture of that schoolhouse if possible and have it reproduced to put in our archives if you'd permit us to.

IMM: Oh, I'd love for you to have it.

RB: Well, later we'll do that. Okay, now, we have you choosing—

IMM: Oh, you went, I was going back to Aunt Matt's schoolhouse to talk about that a little bit. She had so many pupils. She—they paid tuition, it was her private school. And when she built her building she built two rooms, because she had so many pupils. And my cousin Etta Curtis who went to Gardner-Webb [College, Boiling Springs, North Carolina] later—and they've got a lovely picture of her down there. Because she has died, but she had a lot to do with Gardner-Webb College. Cousin Etta Curtis taught the beginners and Aunt Matt taught the advanced students. So see, I began under Cousin Etta Curtis, was my first grade teacher. I've got letters from her from when I was in the hospital when I was nine years old. But anyway, I've got, I've got all kinds of things. I'm such a keeper of materials, just like my mother was.

RB: We wish there were more people who did that.

DB: You're a history person, that's it.

IMM: Well, I guess so. But I'm just like that. So I've got a lot of those kinds of things. Just like I keep, I've got a whole chest of scrapbooks and things of materials. That's the reason I want to show you some of these so whatever you're interested in—

RB: Let me jump around a little. I remember you're saying earlier that after, shortly after you finished at Greensboro, and I think you had already become a teacher, you went up to Columbia [University's] Teachers College [New York, New York] and you said that it was so much easier than you were accustomed to in Greensboro.

IMM: That's right.

RB: We heard you correctly on that?

IMM: That's right.

RB: That your preparation for work at that university was not only adequate here at Greensboro, but it was so good that by comparison, Teachers College seemed to be deficient to you.

IMM: That's right. I had no idea. I got some credit towards my master's degree, believe it or not, at Columbia. I never could have done it at Woman's College. [laughing]

RB: What made the difference? Do you think that we had teachers who took a greater interest in students, or who took their task more seriously than the people at Teachers College?

IMM: The faculty at the college at the time just inspired me [to] no end and it did everybody that was there, because when you take Dr. [Walter Clinton] Jackson [history faculty and chancellor] and Miss Elliott, Harriet Elliott [history and political science faculty, dean of women, and member of several national committees] and Eleanore Elliott [English faculty], too, there was an English course that I had under her, mmm. Eleanore Elliott was wonderful. But she's frightened me to death.

DB: You didn't feel that at—.

IMM: Well, she was so superior that—

RB: When teachers frightened you, you didn't avoid them, you didn't take somebody else's course, did you?

IMM: No. [laughs] Once I'd begun.

RB: I keep hearing, I keep hearing this from your schoolmates, that this teacher frightened them, this teacher frightened them. And then they go on later and say that this was one of the best teachers they ever had.

IMM: Well, they're so—perfection, and they knew so much. At least I felt like they did. I was so ignorant that I was, I think the very fact that I was striving for perfection was the thing, maybe, that was so frightening, because they just, they just demanded it.

DB: They set up standards for you.

IMM: That's right.

RB: It's a tense situation. You mentioned earlier when we were having our coffee that you remember one of the outstanding teachers and he was in science. And that was Mr. Gudger [biology and geology faculty].

IMM: Dr. Gudger, Eugene [W.] Gudger.

RB: When you were in New York along with several other classmates, or schoolmates, working on your advanced degree, that Dr. Gudger was up there in some capacity and he invited you on a—

IMM: [American] Museum of Natural History.

RB: Yes. You say he was identified with the Museum of Natural History.

IMM: That's where he was working.

RB: And he was a man of some substantial importance. Do you want to say some more about Dr. Gudger?

IMM: I don't know about his research but he was in the field of fishes, but he had done a considerable amount of work on that, so. Dr. Gudger was an important scientist.

DB: Did he come back to the college after that experience at the Natural Museum?

IMM: I don't think so.

DB: He was there, then.

IMM: Yes, he was employed, yes.

RB: He was tempted away from North Carolina by scientific community up there in New York.

IMM: I would think so.

RB: Haven't heard that before.

DB: Was he long at the college, do you know?

RB: Yeah, he was one of the original faculty for several years.

IMM: I know, I'd say, I think that he—well, when you talk about time, it gets away with me. [chuckles] But he, he landed there about the same time that we did, that my classmates, that I did, I think. It was somewhere in the region maybe of '13, '14. Anyway, it was '15 when I went there. So you see, I'm pretty sure he'd been at the college but I don't think he'd been so long as, well, when you compare with Dr. [Anna] Gove and a lot of other people that were there. And of course, Dr. Gove [faculty and campus physician] was my doctor.

RB: Was Miss [Gertrude] Mendenhall [mathematics faculty] there in your time?

IMM: Oh yes. I had a course under her. Now you talk about frightening, that—I went to, to two summer schools. You see, when I went, I just graduated from the tenth grade. That's all we had in Newton at the time in 1915, and so I was not prepared at all for college entrance. So I had to take a number of courses to prepare me for entrance at the college.

RB: At Greensboro, was there a preparatory department, right, that filled in—

IMM: You had to go to a summer school and take—there wasn't a department—

RB: But at the college.

IMM: At the college. But this was at the college but you had to go to a summer school to make up. So I took—and it was an eight-weeks affair, not six weeks. And the—I took trigonometry and algebra. I never had had any—I don't mean trigonometry, geometry,

geometry. I took geometry. I never, I didn't—I studied trigonometry under Miss [Cornelia] Strong [mathematics faculty].

RB: Cora Strong.

IMM: Cora Strong. You talk about frightening. [laughs]

DB: Yes, we've heard that about her before.

RB: And she was so little.

IMM: She, she used to stand in front of the class with rubber bands around her hands and she'd have your names on the card. And she called my name and she—

DB: Made you freeze, huh?

IMM: Absolutely, just would freeze when I knew the answer. I couldn't get it out. But you see, I had to take what they called trigonometry and solid geometry and college math, they called it, all under Miss Strong in my, I don't know what year that was, must have been my sophomore year. Anyway, I had to take, that was a required course. And now they didn't require it for a few years after that time, you didn't have to take that—

RB: Do you remember in what other fields it was frequently necessary for girls to have that preparatory experience other than mathematics? Did many of them have to take work in English or in a foreign language or anything like that before they could qualify for admission into the college? In your case it was mathematics that you needed to make up.

IMM: I know that I started out to take trigonometry under Miss Mendenhall. [pause] I'm trying to think, I think that was in the summer, so she must have been teaching it in the summer, too. Anyway, when I attempted this trigonometry, I saw that I just couldn't do it. I couldn't handle it. And so I was just taking on too much territory, I wasn't prepared for it. So I dropped the mathematics and took French—you talking about another subject—I took French at, during the summer school, because I was, that was an agonizing time for me, because I was sure I was going to fail. And fail I couldn't do. Nobody expected me to fail, so I knew that would kill my people.

RB: That was not an alternative that was offered to you.

IMM: That's right, so I couldn't fail.

RB: You mentioned standing in awe of Miss Mendenhall and Miss Strong. Did you feel that way about Dr. Gudger and Dr. Jackson?

IMM: I stood in awe of all of the faculty, as far as that's concerned. But—

RB: Okay, that leads me to ask whether you think that may have been what the faculty wanted, to may[be]—keep a respectful distance as a way of achieving a kind of authority that would enable them to direct the students' activities and so on. Was it part of the teaching strategy to have this rather commanding presence in the classroom? It's no longer with us.

IMM: I don't think so.

RB: You don't think so. I had thought at first, because you spoke of Miss Strong and Miss Mendenhall, that it was because you were uncomfortable about mathematics and that therefore you were afraid of anybody who was a mathematics professor. But you think there was a kind of awe and almost reverential fear of all the professors.

IMM: Oh definitely, yes.

DB: All teachers.

RB: That has changed.

IMM: Oh, well, I'm sure that it has.

RB: In retrospect, do you think it was good?

DB: That they were afraid?

RB: Do you think that that was a good thing that the teachers seemed to you such remote and, you know, dominating personalities?

IMM: Well, you never lost sight of the fact that they cared about you. And they were holding up the standards so that you would grow. And so I never, I felt always that they cared a great deal.

DB: That's good.

RB: And that one of the ways that they showed that was this no-nonsense attitude instead of the chummy, frivolous sort of thing that so often would characterize student-faculty relations.

IMM: Yes, yes, I knew they cared. Well, we just adored them, as far as that was concerned now. Now, you talk about faculty, I—Dr. Jackson, now he was my love. [laughs] I just loved Dr. Jackson, I adored him. I remember one time when we had a[n] epidemic of some kind in the—anyway, I fainted on class. And I came to and Dr. Jackson—In his classroom, I just fainted right there in the classroom. No, I was in the hall, I believe. But anyway, when I came to, Dr. Jackson's face was in front of me, was over me. And I thought, oh ye gods, I'll just go back—

RB: You're in heaven already

IMM: —and faint some more [laughs] Dr. Jackson, if it brings Dr. Jackson. I just adored him.

RB: Well, you were not alone [unclear, both talking at once].

IMM: No, I know everybody, everybody loved, everybody loved Dr. Jackson.

RB: Can we analyze that?

IMM: Dr. Bardolph, from your writings, from your accounts that I read in the alumnae paper, you're following—you have that same whatever Dr. Jackson had. And this is one of the highest tributes that I can pay to you.

RB: Thank you. Thank you. Was any part of this feeling for Dr. Jackson an attractive personality rather than his skill as a teacher, or was that an integral part of it?

IMM: Oh no, he was—

RB: Did you learn a great deal from Dr. Jackson?

IMM: Oh, a tremendous amount. Dr. Jackson was just a master when it came to teaching.

RB: All right. To me this is important, because he's illustrating you don't need to be forbidding and awe-inspiring to be a successful teacher, because everybody agrees that they liked Dr. Jackson—

IMM: Oh, everybody loved Dr. Jackson.

RB: But there was no nonsense in his classes either, was there?

IMM: Oh no.

RB: You worked hard and you had something substantial to show for it at the end of the year.

IMM: Oh my, yes. I just took everything I could take under Dr. Jackson. And don't let me leave out Miss Harriet Elliott.

RB: Tell us about her. She was still very young, not much older than you were when you were a student, was she?

IMM: Well, she had just come to the college the year before I did.

RB: From Illinois.

IMM: Yes. And I've got a lot of material in here in this scrapbook about Miss Elliott, Miss Harriet Elliott, because I took English history my freshman year as preparatory. Now that, I had forgotten about that. That was a course that the college offered me. So it wasn't, I didn't get any credit, college credit for it, but it was preparatory credit.

RB: It was a preparatory college, I mean a preparatory course.

IMM: That's right. It was a preparatory course, because I didn't have enough units to enter until my junior year, because it took two summer schools for me to go to, eight-weeks summer schools to get off—to get enough credits to, and be entered, classed as a junior. I wasn't even classed until, well, I thought I was just going to have to graduate a year later.

RB: Did they use that term, to be classed?

IMM: Yes.

RB: When you say you weren't classed, that meant that you were not yet firmly list—on their list of a particular class?

IMM: That's right, you weren't a freshman or a sophomore or a junior until you had enough units to enter that class.

RB: Was there a very considerable proportion of a class that had to go through that preliminary kind of preparation first?

IMM: I really don't know about that. I just know my classmates—I had never been, I didn't know what a chemistry laboratory, laboratory looked like. I had never seen one. And so here people came from Wilmington—

RB: There probably isn't one here in Newton yet. [laughs]

IMM: Oh yes, yes we have them, or high school. [laughs]

RB: We talked about Miss Elliott, now, and what was peculiar or what was special about Miss Elliott?

DB: Okay, well, we've got to get back on that other track.

IMM: When I get on Miss Elliott I can't ever get off. Miss Elliott was, inspired me so with this course in English as a teacher, she just made me want to eat up everything in the world of—

RB: Literature.

IMM: —of everything. She was just wonderful when it came to teaching. And she made you think. This was the thing about Miss Elliott, that—

DB: This is Harriet Elliott?

IMM: That's right.

RB: Do you remember any of the ways in which she made people think? What are the tricks? It's a little late for me [laughs] to use them but do you remember particular strategies she would use to get people to think? Would she, for instance, take the other side of arguments in order to stimulate people's thoughts?

IMM: Well, seems to me like, as I remember, if you made a statement that so-and-so was whatever, she wanted to know why you thought that way. She wanted to know why. And she used her hands very effectively, Miss Elliott. I can just see her right now using her hands to talk with. But of course, that had nothing to do with making you think. But—

RB: But it does suggest that she was very fully engaged. I'm sure she threw herself into this business of teaching.

DB: She wanted you to support what you said, too. That's important.

RB: Yeah. Didn't she teach economics? I think she came as an economics teacher, social studies—

IMM: I did not have any economics under her. I just had the English history and then after that I took everything I could get under Miss Elliott, under Harriet Elliott.

DB: Now, she taught English and other things, then.

IMM: No, that was Eleanore Elliott.

DB: Oh, who taught English?

IMM: That was a different person that taught the English course that I had.

RB: Do you remember ways in which Miss Elliott had a strong educational influence on people outside the class? Did she shape people's minds and characters in ways other than in her courses?

IMM: I'm sure she did. Everyone who came in contact with Miss Elliott would be obliged to be influenced by—

RB: Improved by it.

IMM: That's right.

RB: Could you ever—remembering, now, what high respect was paid to teachers--did you ever have opportunity to visit with them in their homes? Or would that have been thought

of as just not quite proper to call on, the students dropping in on their teachers at their residences?

IMM: I did not know my teachers personally and intimately that way.

RB: And they may have lost some of their influence over you if you had, you think? If the relationship had been—

IMM: I don't know, I just don't know.

RB: —more common.

IMM: I doubt it. [DB chuckles]

RB: Do you think of other teachers that just stand out in your memory? We've mentioned the giants, of course. Did you know Mr. [Edward Jacob] Forney [commercial department faculty and college treasurer]?

IMM: Oh yes. Mr. Forney was, he's a Catawba County man.

RB: Oh, I didn't know that.

DB: Oh really?

IMM: Yeah, his people are from right here in Newton.

RB: Is that so. Dr. [Julius Isaac] Foust [pedagogy faculty, practice school principal, and college president]?

IMM: Oh yes, Dr. Foust was my—

RB: You have recollections of Dr. Foust?

IMM: Oh, very definitely. Dr. Foust was, he came to my father's funeral.

RB: Oh really?

IMM: Yes and a delegation from the college came. And he was—

RB: Did he teach after he became the head of the school?

IMM: If he did, I don't know. I didn't, I never—

RB: I'm sure he had his hands full with administration.

DB: Now what is it he taught?

RB: Well, pedagogy. He taught how to teach, didn't he?

IMM: I don't know what he did, I really don't.

RB: In fact, one of our people, I think it was May Williams [Class of 1905], said that he taught what we would now call educational psychology, and that one of the reasons that she was able to pass a certain examination that she needed to take in order to get a teaching job, she passed it because she remembers Dr. Foust had talked about that very subject.

IMM: Oh, so May was a student under Dr. Foust?

RB: Yes.

IMM: I didn't know Dr. Foust had taught at the college. I just knew him as president.

RB: Well, she graduated in 1905. Remember he had not yet be—no, she graduated, May Williams graduated in 1905, and at that time Dr. Foust was not yet the president, you see. He—

IMM: But I didn't know he was teaching.

RB: —he was suddenly thrown into that job because of the sudden death of Dr. McIver in 1906. And there had been no expectation—It looked as if Dr. McIver would be good for another twenty years. He was only in his forties when he died, you know. So Mr. Foust was moved up and Mr. [Robert] Merritt became the director of the model school because he had to fill in for, I think, Dr. Foust because Foust was pushed up to—you know, all those sudden rearrangements had to be made.

IMM: Oh, I see.

RB: He had been a teacher, but by your time he was, I think, a full-time college president. Did he continue Dr. McIver's older custom of speaking to the students in chapel talks?

[End CD 1—Begin CD 2]

Of course, you were not there in Dr. McIver's time, but one of the things that those students who were there then remember best is twice a week he would give—

IMM: I've heard Aunt Matt talk about the chapel talks and Dr. McIver and that kind of a thing. So I knew he had a great deal of powerful influence there. But no, I didn't—

RB: You don't recall Dr. Foust continuing that tradition.

IMM: —don't recall that about Dr. Foust, no.

RB: He was a different sort of man, very different from, than Dr. McIver.

DB: Did you know ever at all Mrs. [Lula Martin] McIver [wife of President Charles D. McIver?

IMM: She was on the campus, lived on the campus in that little house on—

RB: Right near Spring Garden [Street], on the corner of Spring Garden and College [Avenue]. That house was still there when we came to Greensboro in 1944, but has since been, of course—

DB: Gone. I liked that old house.

IMM: Yes, I know. [chuckles]

DB: Now, she apparently didn't have much more to do with the college or the [unclear]

IMM: No, I just knew her, when I saw her, as Mrs. McIver, and I recognized her pictures and that kind of thing.

DB: [unclear] fifteen years and he had died in about 1905, hadn't he, [190]6?

RB: [190]6, right. Did you have the feeling while you were in college that you were enjoying it? Was it any fun?

DB: Was it just an awesome experience?

RB: Or did it improve in retrospect, after you graduated? Did you, at the time you were in college, feel that it was an enjoyable experience?

IMM: Oh yes. The—we had the literary societies then and I was a Cornelian, and I enjoyed everything about the literary society.

DB: What sort of other recreational or—

IMM: Well, for recreation we walked. We had walking period.

RB: Yeah, tell us about that. That came in right about your time there.

IMM: Oh yes, you had to walk every afternoon, so you made a date with somebody to walk with you. [laughs]

RB: Now was the bell rung, was that time specifically designated?

IMM: Yes, it was a specific time. Everybody had to get out of the building and walk. It must have been Dr. [Anna] Gove's idea.

DB: That's a good idea.

RB: Did it serve some additional purpose? Did that—

IMM: Yes, there was a bell. I'd forgotten about the bell, but it was a bell—

RB: There was a bell—

IMM: —that would ring—

RB: —and then you'd—did you strike out in whatever direction you chose?

IMM: That's right, anywhere on the campus, you just had to walk. And so you made a date with somebody to walk with you, and so that was fun.

RB: How long? How did you know when this obligation was discharged? Did they ring the bell when you could come back in?

IMM: There was a definite period but I don't remember—

RB: You distinctly remember that it was a systematic—

IMM: It was pleasant, enjoyable, we all enjoyed it, because you'd see everybody on the campus, you see, as you walked. You'd see the upperclassmen.

RB: The reasoning behind this is that it was important to your health—

IMM: That's right.

RB: —It was a health measure. Do you suppose it might also have been a way in which the rooms could be aired out, raise the windows and let perhaps the cool air wash through?

IMM: I expect so. I don't remember that we had any rules and regulations—

RB: You couldn't do that if people were, if the students were in the residence halls just sitting there, but if they were out walking you could air them out. But you distinctly remember that walking period.

IMM: Oh yes. That was a very important part of the day, that walking period, because it gave you the opportunity—

RB: Late in the afternoon?

IMM: It was always late in the afternoon—

DB: Was the campus—

IMM: —just before supper.

DB: Was this, did you walk just on particular sidewalks [unclear].

IMM: Oh, you walked on the campus, you couldn't leave the campus.

RB: Then you had Miss [Sue May] Kirkland [lady principal] to deal with.

IMM: No, you see Miss Kirkland was before—I had Miss King, Miss [Emma] King [director of dormitories].

RB: Could you walk [in the] woods—into the woods there, Peabody, what we now call Peabody Park?

DB: That may not have been part of the college then.

RB: There's a wooded area, there was a wooded area—

IMM: But we didn't go down there.

RB: You didn't go there.

IMM: At least I didn't. I don't know whether, I don't remember—I do remember the park, especially after we built the [Young Women's Christian Association] Hut down there, you know. That Hut—

RB: You wouldn't say that any considerable number of students disliked that walking period, did they?

IMM: No, I think everybody enjoyed it.

RB: —being told that they, they entered into with a spirit of—

IMM: That's right, just enjoyed it.

RB: Pleasant enjoyment.

DB: Incidentally along those lines, what about physical education, was that a part of your—

RB: Did you have physical education?

IMM: Oh yes, I had [it] in the gym.

DB: Gymnastics?

RB: Where was the gym?

IMM: The gym was in Spencer [Dormitory].

RB: In the basement?

IMM: In the basement.

RB: What—there's no kind of equipment, is there? Was there equipment of any kind?

IMM: I think—I know we had to wear these—

RB: Bloomers.

IMM: —bloomers and these enormous wool suits.

RB: Yes. [laughs] Scratchy and warm.

IMM: Wool suits, and under a blouse that you could just put on and the shirttail would fly. It had to be tucked in and so forth and you had—

RB: Like a midi blouse?

IMM: Oh no, not as free as a midi blouse. It was a shirtwaisted business. Oh, yes, it was all—

DB: And then a skirt?

IMM: No, no skirt.

RB: Bloomers.

DB: Bloomers, bloomers.

IMM: Bloomers.

DB: Bloomers with the shirtwaist.

IMM: And they were miles and miles, yards and yards wide.

RB: So what would you do in that basement, was it calisthenics or playing bean ball or something?

IMM: Calisthenics.

RB: Yes, oh, I see, and you have somebody giving you the orders and then—

IMM: That's right. And they were very definite orders and you performed.

DB: You bent and stretched.

IMM: That's right. And there was no chance for you to—the time between bells would ring for the gym and you had to be down there at a certain time and so—

DB: All dressed.

IMM: All dressed. Then you had to be out whenever the gym was over with and you had no time for showers and that kind of a thing.

RB: No shower, right from there to [unclear]—

IMM: Oh that's right. And so you just had to make it to McIver Building, was the science building then. That was a job to get from gym class to McIver on time. But you made—

RB: Now the gym class was required? It wasn't just a—

IMM: It was required.

RB: Everybody had to have [unclear, both talking at once]—

IMM: I imagine that was Dr. Gove again.

DB: Dr. Gove again. [laughs] Let's not forget Hut for Fun. Somehow. [unclear]

RB: Yes. Do you remember what uses that Hut was put to?

IMM: Oh, we had some mighty good times in—

RB: Was it weatherproof so it could be used in winter?

DB: A full building with heat?

RB: The Hut? Did it have a fireplace in it?

IMM: Seems to me it was a fireplace. I don't remember about that, really, that part of it.

RB: Was that still there when we—

DB: Yeah, yeah, it was still there when we were first there in the forties. And you had—

IMM: I know the Class of 1919 had its final class meeting in that building, our final class meeting when we said goodbye to the college and elected our national—

DB: So there were planned activities down there?

IMM: —our everlasting president, Adelaide van Noppen.

DB: There wasn't any kind of regular recreational activity or entertainment?

RB: You didn't have dances or anything like that?

IMM: Oh dancing, oh no. Nobody was allowed to dance. I wanted, I wanted so much to learn to dance. I thought it would just be wonderful. I just thought it would be heavenly to dance. But now my younger sister, Evelyn, when they went—

RB: They loosened up.

IMM: They loosened up when Elizabeth and Evelyn were there.

DB: How much later was that?

RB: Only four or five years, right?

IMM: Oh she graduated, Evelyn graduated in 1930.

RB: [Nineteen] thirty?

DB: Oh, eleven years later.

IMM: But even the next year, I don't remember what class they—well, I think I read in the *Alumnae News* something, but I don't remember the details.

RB: I talked to a group of girls from the Class of 1926—that's seven years after your class—and they were dancing then. They'd only danced with other girls.

IMM: That's right. I don't remember when they allowed, really allowed you to dance with a boy. Oh my.

RB: They had a piano down there and a Victrola [phonograph or record player made by The Victor Talking Machine Company from 1901 through 1929] and it was in the basement of Spencer, I guess in the gym, where they would have the dance.

IMM: I remember getting ready for the Shakespearean pageant business.

DB: Oh, that we've heard about.

IMM: And I was a milkmaid. And we practiced in the gym for the little folkdance or whatever we had in the [unclear].

DB: And was it put on the, in the theatre, outdoor theatre?

IMM: Yes.

DB: That's right, some of the others mentioned it.

IMM: Well, it wasn't the outdoor—yes, there was a theatre. They, that theatre was developed for the purpose of the Shakespearean, I think, for the purpose of the Shakespearean pageant.

DB: And did the Shakespearean festival occur every year? Do you remember it as a yearly event?

IMM: No, it didn't, it didn't—It just was that one time as far as I'm concerned, that I remember anything about. I really don't recall whether it was yearly or not. But I think maybe there'd been one year preceding the year that I'm talking about, must have been my freshman year that—It was my freshman year that I was the milkmaid in the milkmaid dance. And different members of my class, I remember talking to them at our sixtieth class reunion about some of the things that they did in connection with the—I remember Annie Lee Stafford [Class of 1919] over at Kernersville. You never did know Annie Lee, did you?

RB: No.

IMM: She was a wonderful person. But she was a, I think she was Puck in one of the plays.

RB: *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

DB: But it was definitely an outdoor production, is that right?

IMM: Yes.

DB: Because, would there not have been—

IMM: Oh yes, it was all outdoors. And we had to dance, we practiced in the gym but we, when we performed for the audience it was all outdoors.

DB: Where was the outside—?

RB: Did you have May Queens in those days?

IMM: Oh yes. And the wonderful—I've got a picture of the, of the, a Kodak picture of the—well, it was in my annual. I guess I left it at the college, because at the sixtieth reunion I

turned over my annual. I didn't know I was going to live this long or I'd've kept it, [laughs] because I love to look back at the pictures of my faculty, because I had some excellent—

RB: You are welcome, you know, to come to the library any—we have a—

IMM: Yeah, but getting there's a problem. I don't drive anymore, you see. That's the reason I can't go to Elderhostel [a not-for-profit organization established in 1975, which offers senior citizens travel and educational programs in the United States and around the world].

RB: Well, if I had of known this I would have managed to pick up that copy so you could look at it today.

IMM: Oh, I'd've love to have looked at it one more time.

RB: Well, next time, we'll come, we'll do this again I'll take along—It's the 1919 yearbook.

IMM: Well, if I can find somebody to go with me to Elderhostel, well, I'll be there. And I might get down to Girls State [summer leadership and citizenship programs sponsored by the American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary for high school students]. There might be—there was one I was fortunate enough to attend in '79.

RB: Weren't you involved in the Girls State development?

IMM: Oh yeah, that's how—oh yes.

RB: Tell us about that. When did that begin?

IMM: Girls State?

RB: Yes.

IMM: That was 1939 and '40 that I—

RB: You were one of the initiators of that, weren't you?

IMM: I was the president of the, of North Carolina Department, they called it the Department of North Carolina, the American Legion Auxiliary. And as such, I went to a national convention, I think it was in Kansas City. Anyway—no, I don't know where the convention was now. I don't remember, because I've been to a number of national conventions.

But this was a—I heard from the state of Kansas a little girl make a speech, from, that was the governor of Girls State in Kansas. And I just came back to North Carolina with the determination that we ought to have just such a Girls State organization in North Carolina. And so it was quite an effort to—I had to first get the approval of the executive

committee, which had to be done, didn't meet until after I was initiated. And that didn't take place until, I don't remember what time.

Anyway, it was some time afterwards that—because there was very little time between the time that I had permission to actually start Girls State and that I started with the idea. I asked the executive committee to give me permission, if they'd just give me permission to start, I would assure them that it would never be an expense to the Department of North Carolina. And so that's the way we started out. And I had no idea what it was going to be like or what, how many people we could have or how well I could sell it or anything. So—

RB: Was it established on the college campus?

[extraneous comments about closing a curtain redacted]

RB: Was the Girls State established on the Woman's College campus from the beginning? Because when I came there in '44 it was on our campus year after year. I think it still is, isn't it?

IMM: It started; the first time was '39, '40, was '40.

RB: First meeting was at that campus?

IMM: Oh yes.

RB: And it has been ever since.

IMM: You see, when I got the idea I didn't know where to go, because there was nobody to tell me anything because nobody had had any experience in the organization, as far as I knew. And so I just knew there was such a thing as a Boys State [summer leadership and citizenship programs sponsored by the American Legion and the American Legion Auxiliary for high school students]. And so I just went, of course, to Harriet Elliott.

DB: Yes, I was going to say, didn't you go to Miss Elliott.

IMM: Well, I first went to—I knew that the Institute of Government was at Chapel Hill. But I also knew that it was a program for girls, it belonged at Woman's College.

DB: Yes, good.

IMM: And so I, while I went down to Chapel Hill to talk to—who was the head of the Institute, he started it—

RB: Albert Coates.

IMM: Albert Coates. I found out they wanted it, they'd be glad to have it. But I just went on to Greensboro anyway and talked to Miss Harriet Elliott. And see, I didn't know, I just knew the college—that the program belonged at the college, and the quality kind of a program it was, that the college would do for me and for the program and for the girls what it should do.

So I went to the college and talked to Miss Elliott about it. And she said that she would be glad to help with it and if, if she had permission to kind of outline the program. And I was delighted that she wanted to do such a thing. And she said provided, also, that she could write the foreword to the thing. And I was so thrilled to get her to do it, you know. And so we've reprinted that every year in the yearbook, her foreword, and we've continued to use her outline. We just never—

RB: Mr. Charlie Phillips [public relations office head] came in on the project very soon afterward, too, didn't he. I think he was quarterly organizer.

IMM: I think it was, maybe that very year, that summer. He did, I believe, that very first summer.

[telephone rings, recording paused]

DB: You're doing fine, wonderful. Talk away.

IMM: I know it's going to sound terrible when you—

DB: No, it won't.

RB: We'll show you how it sounds when we're finished.

DB: You sound good.

IMM: Don't forget I'm going to show you these things that I've got in the scrapbook.

RB: And if you're tired, just let us know and we can stop.

IMM: No, no. I don't get tired talking about the college.

RB: Let's look over a list of things that I thought of asking you that we might touch on. Do you remember whether you kept up church attendance when you were in college?

IMM: I did go to church but there were some Sundays that I didn't.

RB: You're excused. [laughs]

IMM: But I went to Presbyterian—

RB: First Presbyterian?

IMM: Yes, because of Dr. [Charles F.] Meyers [minister]. We all just adored him. So I went to Dr.—

RB: Did you walk?

IMM: But I did go to West Market, I mean there's one called what—yes, West Market. I get Winston-Salem and Greensboro mixed up.

RB: Would you walk all the way out there? How did you get there?

IMM: Oh, we all walked.

RB: Walked?

IMM: Yes.

DB: That's quite a ways.

RB: In a body? Would there be several girls at once?

IMM: Yes, you usually walked. You made arrangements with somebody to go with you, but we didn't go as a body, no. The YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] was very important in the religious life of the campus. You were welcomed by the YM—YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association]. And I kept in my scrapbook—In the back of my annual I've got various and sundry things that I just couldn't throw away. So the, some of the, one of the things that I couldn't throw away was a welcome from the YMCA.

[telephone rings, recording paused]

RB: You were talking before the phone rang about church attendance, and I was wondering whether, as you remember it, most of the girls would go to church every Sunday—

IMM: Yes.

RB: —or was it unusual?

IMM: No.

RB: I suppose most of the freshmen would and fewer of the sophomores and still fewer—and seniors here and there. That was our experience of college. Did you think of the social rules as being strict, the college regulations, what you might and might not do, where you

could and could not go, and so on? Did that seem to you to be somewhat confining? Do you think the rules were too strict?

IMM: Well, we just accepted it.

RB: You didn't think at the time—

IMM: No, I didn't feel constricted at the time. I didn't feel rebellious or whatever, that I wanted to do anything any different.

RB: You didn't see anything unreasonable--

IMM: No. Of course, we were confined to the campus, you couldn't leave the campus.

DB: And did you have some kind of judicial board?

IMM: Of course, student government was started.

RB: That had begun, had it?

IMM: It was, I think it was in 1915 that it started.

RB: Yes, I was going to say, I think I now remember 1915 that it officially got underway. But I talked to Miss Carraway [Class of 1915] who was identified as that class.

IMM: Yes, Gertrude Carraway.

RB: Yes. And she said that—of course, like everything else there was an earlier history. There were things beginning to look toward—and that would be in your time.

IMM: That's right.

RB: Do you recall any degree of student participation in discipline? Did students have anything to do with enforcing the rules, punishment of infractions? Had not yet come to that, perhaps, right?

IMM: No, I don't remember any particular, any rules and regulations particularly. But I know we had a, I remember I was house president in "Rockingham," we used to call it, that dorm—It must be the north wing of Spencer. [Editor's note: Spencer Dormitory was nicknamed "Rockingham" by the students since it seemed to stretch all the way up to Rockingham County due to its length of almost 500 feet].

RB: So you called it Rockingham? [laughs]

IMM: We called it Rockingham. [laughs]

RB: For Rockingham County. That's the second time I've heard that.

DB: I hadn't heard that before.

IMM: Well, I don't know. I was student representative or something or other, whatever they called it.

RB: You were the delegate from Rockingham. [laughs]

IMM: That's right.

RB: Did you feel that you missed something being on an all-girl campus? Was there any resentment about that?

IMM: No, not at all.

RB: It seemed like the natural and the—

IMM: That's right.

RB: Sure. It still feels that way to some people. There are a few left who still believe in, you know, either an all-male or an all-female campus.

IMM: Yes, it was hard, difficult for me to, to accept the fact that there were males on campus. [laughs]

DB: Yes, I'm sure.

RB: Alumnae want schools to remain the way they were in their time.

IMM: Well, I don't think that. But I got a shock the first time I realized at Girls State, talking about Girls State, that the Negros were welcomed at Girls State and that then they were—

RB: Things have changed.

IMM: That's right. And they were elected—we elected the governor that year.

RB: Yes, very soon. People want to show that they're, you know, the white students want to show that they're sincere about this, immediately pass over their own [unclear] blacks.

IMM: That's right.

RB: Since you came from what was a small rural community, for all practical purposes, did you feel a handicap when you were in the presence of girls from the big cities like Wilmington and Charlotte and so on? Did you feel somewhat shy?

IMM: Yes, I would say shy.

RB: A social distance and it took a while to overcome? Did you overcome it? Was it still with you in your senior year?

IMM: No, I would think not. It was a very democratic place. I was always impressed with the fact that if you could deliver the goods, if you had the ability to be the person that you ought to be, it was all right.

RB: You're saying that it didn't mean a whole lot if you were wealthy, that didn't get you any particular advantages.

IMM: No.

RB: Did you feel self-conscious about—I'm sure you're going to say no—about having more modest clothes than people of more affluent means? That's another form that this democracy you speak of exhibited itself, right? There were no distinctions drawn by wealth and family.

IMM: It was very much of an absence of it on the campus.

DB: People were very much alike. And maybe that's true, too, because of the particular kind of state this was, you know, that there weren't great disparities.

IMM: That's right.

RB: You know, everywhere you go there are some people who think they are better than everybody else.

IMM: Yes. You know, I've thought about that a lot. In my mother's—when I was a child—I was thinking about it the other day in church, whether you were any better than somebody else or not. I never thought about the fact that—I knew there were certain children that we just didn't associate with, we didn't play with, we didn't live with, because mother just said she'd rather we didn't be with them, and that there was another group. And yet I personally have always felt like I was very democratic. I mean, I—

RB: Do you suppose the college deliberately, consciously fostered that as part of the educational philosophy of the place that they're trying to send out people who are sincere believers in the equality of humankind? Would that have been part of the attitudes that were developed as a result of your experience here at the college? Perhaps some of the experience of the leadership as such people as Miss Elliott? I guess what I'm saying is, do you think that the fact that the college was itself such a democratic community influenced the state, because the women went out from the college and wherever they lived, there was another person who believed in democracy?

IMM: I think definitely, it's bound to have, because it became so much a part of you that it was so natural for you to act that way, that naturally it just would in anything, outlook you'd have.

RB: Did you go home very often during the school year?

IMM: Oh no. You went on the train. [chuckles]

RB: You weren't all that far.

IMM: But then there was no, you just, you went home for Christmas.

DB: That's the old way.

IMM: And then you—

RB: And not between semesters, in January?

IMM: Beg pardon?

RB: Did you go home between the semesters? After the winter term was over, was there some—

IMM: No, no. You didn't go home anymore, no.

RB: You think you went home only once?

IMM: When you packed your trunk, which we used to do, you packed your trunk and it had to be unpacked at the college in the basement. And then you had to climb all the steps to carry your clothes up. Oh, they couldn't spoil the floors by bringing the luggage up.

DB: Oh really?

IMM: Oh yes. You always had to unpack the trunks in the basement.

RB: Did you not even go home at Thanksgiving?

IMM: Oh no.

RB: No? Not even then. Would you have a Thanksgiving dinner at the college?

IMM: Oh yes.

RB: One big happy family.

IMM: That's right.

DB: Only Christmas you went home. No spring vacation?

IMM: Oh no.

RB: Did most of the girls who came into your freshman class when you did stay on to graduate or was there a considerable drop-out rate? You wouldn't happen to remember how many there were in your freshman class and how many—

IMM: Well, you see, I was not a member of a class until—I was just a preparatory student until my junior year. And you see, I didn't associate with the classes, I mean as a class, and so I didn't, I just don't know about how many freshmen there were, because I couldn't participate in any class activities or anything until I—

RB: Until you became classed.

IMM: That's right, until you were classed.

RB: Your last two years. You were unclassed, you were declassed until—that's something we haven't heard before.

IMM: Of course, you could drop back to another, to 1920 class if you wanted to.

RB: But it was literally true that you did not participate in class activities until you were classed?

IMM: That's right.

RB: But you could be a Cornelian, could you not, when you were in prep school, preparatory programs?

IMM: Yes, I was taken into the Cornelian Literary Society.

RB: You did not go to class meetings, you did not participate in class decisions or anything like that?

IMM: You know, at one time I remember I was thinking that it was so hard that I had to, I hadn't thought about that—but I did not, I'm sure, because I was so delighted when I got to be a junior and could go to class meetings.

RB: But you were never homesick?

IMM: Oh, I was terribly homesick.

RB: Oh, were you?

IMM: Oh yes. But not until, it was after Christmas, I remember so well about being, that it hit me. I was so fascinated with everything about the college when I entered—

RB: You didn't have time to get homesick.

IMM: I didn't have time to, I was so interested in—well, I had quite an experience of getting down to the college, to tell you the truth. I was just fortunate to be able to get there, because my mother was in the hospital in Statesville [North Carolina] and I stopped to see her and visit with her, and fainted and fell under the bed and was pulled out from under the bed. [laughs] And got back on the train and went on to Greensboro. And I remember that experience.

RB: This was the beginning of your experience at college, when you were away for the first time?

IMM: Yes, that's right.

RB: That's a shaky foundation.

IMM: Yes, that's right. And mother knew that she had to go to the hospital but she wouldn't go until she had packed my trunk and I was ready to go to college. And she made all these petticoats for me, I'll never forget that, tucked and laced and everything.

RB: You say the homesickness began coming in after the Christmas trip back home, right?

IMM: Yes. It was after Christmas before I really suffered from homesickness. But I really had a dose of it then, and I didn't, it just hit me all at once. And I saw a cousin of mine from Lenoir—Goforth, Carolyn Goforth, I think it was—and somehow or other it just hit me. And I remember going back to my room in old Spencer, and I was on the south wing then, and going in that closet and sitting down. I was ashamed to let anybody know I was homesick. And so I just cried my eyes out, but it was under the shelf back under the clothes. And I cried and I cried and I cried. I got through it.

DB: Oh, no!

RB: Was this a fairly common experience that students would, in the earlier part of their college year, have at least one good solid bout of homesickness?

IMM: I don't know.

RB: You don't tell each other about that—

IMM: No.

RB: —so you have no way of knowing. You suffer all by yourself.

IMM: That's right, you just suffered. And I was ashamed of it and didn't want anybody to know I was homesick.

RB: What did you do in the summers between—

DB: She went to summer school.

RB: You went to summer school the first year—

IMM: Two years.

RB: Two years.

IMM: Eight weeks.

RB: And that leaves only one summer in between the junior and senior year to be accounted for. Do you remember how you spent that?

IMM: Oh, there was always so much to do at home that I was—and my mother was not well, so I always was taking care of the children in the family and working at home, whatever.

RB: So you looked forward to going back to Greensboro?

IMM: That's right.

RB: Now when you had those summer sessions after your first and second years, were there very many weeks between the time you got back home from the summer term to the time you resumed in the fall? I think you said they were eight-week summer terms.

IMM: Yes, they were eight weeks, I remember. But I don't remember about the time that was left.

RB: But there were about sixteen weeks between the end of the spring term and the beginning of the fall term, so you'd still have some substantial vacation left.

IMM: Well, the summer was always consumed with activities at home I participated in. See I was the oldest girl so it was always something for me to do, children to take care of. See, my—there's six of us in the family and about three years between all of our births. So I always had—the children called me "little mother."

DB: Was your mother unwell for a long, for some time after that?

IMM: Yes. She was confined to the bed definitely.

DB: From that day on, from that time that you were—

IMM: No, she was, she recovered from that, but she had a malignancy and, of course, they didn't know how to treat it very much back then.

RB: She died of it?

IMM: Yes, finally—no, she didn't die from that. Well, it was perhaps a heart condition that finally took her, because she had heart failure too.

DB: But that was after you had graduated from college?

IMM: Yes.

DB: Was she not—not well so that when you were home you worked, a lot of the work was on your—

IMM: I always had a lot of responsibility with the children.

RB: I think you mentioned being back for your sixtieth reunion.

IMM: Yes.

RB: That was when?

IMM: Well, I remember seeing, I think it was Judge [Wilson] Warlick.

RB: That was '79. That's only two years ago.

IMM: We're going back to the university for his sixtieth or something. It was in the local paper and I thought, sixtieth! Surely you couldn't mean the sixtieth anniversary from graduation from college. And then I was there.

DB: See? Wasn't it marvelous?

RB: You're one of the younger girls. This lady we visited a couple of weeks ago, their seventy-sixth reunion is coming up, seventy-six. You know, she graduated in 1905. Nineteen-oh-five is now seventy-six years ago.

DB: She's ninety-five years old.

IMM: And who is that?

RB: That's Mrs. Wall, down in Lilesville [North Carolina]. And Annie—I mean May Williams Hicks is also, was also a graduate seventy-six years ago.

IMM: Yes, I know the Williams family. They grew up right here in Newton. Sarah was—

RB: Was it near here? Was their place near here, the farm?

IMM: No, it was down the south end of Newton.

RB: But was it in the city?

IMM: I don't think—I think it was outside the city, I think their home was.

DB: And the Wall lady, too, let's see, what was her name?

RB: Shuford, Annie Lee Shuford.

IMM: Well, now, the Shufords, I ought to know about Adrian Shuford. I did know Adrian.

DB: They were farmers.

RB: Yes, they were farmers. And her father was a farmer-congressman for two terms.

IMM: Yes, I remember you said that.

RB: That was in the 1890s, however. That's a while ago.

DB: She's ninety-five years old, as old as May Williams.

IMM: Well, Miss [Lucy Hamilton] Little graduated in 19—I had called the Alumni Office about this. Miss Little, she lives in Morganton and she graduated in 1912. And she's living and you ought to see Miss Little.

RB: Do you recommend her? I always get, seek suggestions from those of you whose—

IMM: Well, I can show you some of Miss Little's books that she's written.

RB: Oh, I think I do know about her, yes.

IMM: Miss Clee Little. She came here from the college in 19—

RB: What's her first name? Clee?

IMM: Lucy, she was Lucy Hamilton.

RB: And she's in Morganton [North Carolina]?

IMM: Yes, and she's ninety-something, two or three or four or five. I don't remember, but I've got the last book that she wrote. It's written in, well, I'll show it to you—script.

RB: Have you been at other reunions besides the sixtieth?

IMM: Yes, and I've got some material I'll show you.

RB: You've been to several reunions?

IMM: [unclear] [laughs] I can talk.

RB: But the last, the latest one is the sixtieth. That's only two years ago, right?

IMM: Well—

RB: So the next one you're going to go to is the sixty-fifth. That's only three years off.

DB: You look so good. I couldn't believe that you'd feel—

RB: What surprised you most about the campus when you were back in '70?

IMM: Well, you see, I was acquainted with the campus because I'd been going for Girls State. And so I have been chairman, I've chaired the commission responsibility part of the times through the years and have served on the commission. And now I'm a permanent member of the commission although I don't get to all the meetings. But I've stayed in touch with the organization the whole time.

RB: Did you know Mrs. Scarborough in Greensboro? She was, for a while—

IMM: Yes, Ruth Scarborough.

RB: Yeah. Did she replace you—

IMM: She was chairman about three years, I think, or no, it was five years, I believe. She worked with Mr. Phillips on it. I think she was chairman about five years. And Juanita Kesler [Class of 1920], Juanita Henry, she married Fred Henry, Frederick or whatever his name was. Anyway, she's from Salisbury. She was, she's been chairman of the—Juanita and I roomed together in some of the summer schools.

And that summer school, that last summer school I went to must have been 1916, well, anyway, '15 or '16, there was a flood of the Catawba River, because I remember I got caught down there that summer. And when I came home, I had to transfer from the train to a boat of some kind to get across the river to get to the train on the other side, because the trestle was washed out.

DB: [gasps] Oh my! Where is the Catawba River here? Where is it—does it go through Newton or past Newton or something?

IMM: No, it's in Catawba County, I mean it—

DB: Oh, but that's where, then that's where it happened, that the flood occurred.

RB: We're in Catawba County now, aren't we?

IMM: You're in Catawba County now, yes. But that flood—they call it "the flood," as far as Catawba County's concerned—washed away a lot of farm land and was quite an event around here.

DB: Now what year was that?

IMM: I think it was '15, '16. '16.

RB: And there's not, there's never been another like it since then.

IMM: No.

RB: Well, maybe we should—

[End of Interview]