UNCG CENTENARY PROJECT ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

INTERVIEWEE: Jane Summerell

INTERVIEWER: Richard Bardolph

DATE: October 14, 1980

RB: —Yes. And I'm just going to explain what we're doing, so that anybody taking this down from the shelf will know exactly what is underway here. This is October 14, 1980, and we're sitting very pleasantly in Jane Summerell's apartment, just outside High Point, [North Carolina] I think it's in High Point. And let me explain that as we approach the university centennial, one of the ways in which we propose to mark the occasion is to have assembled, by that time, a—as large a number of interviews with some of our senior graduates as is possible for our students to put on tape. And this will be the—this is therefore one of a series of perhaps as many as a hundred, maybe even two hundred, interviews that will comprise a special archive that will be in the possession of the Alumni Association from here on out, forever if we like to believe. And I might add too that we could hardly have made a better choice for today's interviewee than Miss Summerell, who, by the way, has been so long a friend of mine that we have been on first name terms for a very long time, and this interview will probably be rather more informal than some others we have had. And if my figures are correct, Miss Summerell came to the campus in 1905 and spent five years, and that will be explained as we go along, and after taking her degree here, my recollection is, not from having been there, but having done my homework, that she came back to the campus in 1926 as a member of the faculty to remain until 1958 when she retired, then continued to live for some time in Greensboro, as I remember, with her mother. And as the years went by, she finally moved over—well, I don't know if it's "finally," but she has moved over to High Point, where the Presbyterian home is now her residence, along, I might say, with some other UNCG [The University of North Carolina at Greensboro] personalities. And perhaps that will suffice at least for the moment for some informal introduction and we can get into our conversation for the day. I might say, too, that our principal focus will be on Miss Summerell's college years. We probably will spill over those years now and then, but we are focusing it particularly on her experiences here as a student. Let me begin by—well, asking whether you are a North Carolina native?

JS: Yes. Rowan County.

RB: From Rowan County. Was it rural? Or urban?

JS: Well, Salisbury was my father's [unclear], and he had—his father was a doctor and my father was a doctor, and my father took the rural practice from my grandfather, in his older years. And then he never left the rural practice, but our roots were partly in

Salisbury, [North Carolina]. Well, I should say, actually about half in Salisbury and half in the little village where I grew up, Millbridge.

RB: A small village.

JS: Yes, very small.

RB: And I'm going to ask you later whether that turned out to be a handicap when you were in college, to have grown up in a—but we won't take that up now. I seem to recall, too, that you went on to Columbia University and you lived in New York City, and I'll be interested to know whether, coming from a small, tiny rural community in North Carolina unsuited you for that kind of—

JS: [unclear] I came of a family that believed very highly in the educational spirit. And perhaps it might not be amiss to say that my great-grandfather was Dr. [Elisha] Mitchell who measured Mount Mitchell. In the Department of Mathematics and Geology and so on at [University of North Carolina] Chapel Hill for many years, up to the time of his death. And from him stems—came [unclear] a university man, and all of his descendants have been university people.

RB: And there was, in what we used to call a tradition of polite learning in your lineage. So that there was never any doubt that you'd go to college?

JS: Oh, no, never.

RB: And a very high priority was assigned, I'm sure, to education.

JS: Well, my mother had grown up on a farm, where the ravages of the Civil War had left their mark. She, nevertheless, was just as earnest about my going to college as my father.

RB: Did you have brothers and sisters?

JS: Yes, and they've all gone to college. All of them have college degrees except one, and she went through her junior year.

RB: And all were educated here in North Carolina?

JS: No, no. One was educated at VMI [Virginia Military Institute] in Virginia.

RB: Yes. Now, there was not as yet a well-developed public school system, was there?

JS: No.

RB: For instance, did you go to a public school for the basics?

JS: Well, I went part of the time to a private school in Salisbury, which my aunt and my cousin managed. And then I went to the public school in the little village where I lived. And that—it did not prepare for college. And so my father thought it was best, even though there was considerable objection among certain members of my family, that I should leave home so early, he thought it was best that I go to the Woman's College in Greensboro, which was then the State Normal [and Industrial School], and prepare for college work. And that college had two years preparatory. About half the class, of my class, which the next year was the freshman class, had come out of the preparatory department, about half of them from accredited high schools.

RB: And were presumably ready for college when they arrived in Greensboro, and we're talking about the Class of 1910, roughly half of those would have been prepared and ready for college when they arrived, others went through at least one, perhaps two years of preparatory work that was connected with our school, right?

JS: Yes.

RB: In terms of contemporary grading scale, I mean, the grades, would the public school education you had have carried you to what we now consider the eighth—an eighth grade education, or would it have included substantially some of what is now provided in high school?

JS: Well, I think it would have. I think I had it, so—because, when I wasn't attending school, I was still doing lessons at home, largely through the direction of my aunt, and sometimes following courses of reading that I had more or less mapped out for myself. And that was always my thought, that [unclear] to go to, because he was a graduate of Davidson [College, Davidson, North Carolina] and also of the University of Pennsylvania law school.

RB: Now, it wasn't as yet common for girls to go to college, was it? I mean, in your family there never was any question that you would go on for higher education. But weren't you more than ordinarily fortunate in that regard to have that kind of—

JS: Far more fortunate than my friends in that village, my girlfriends. Not the boys. Because practically every family in the village had a son, if he had good sense, who would be marked for Davidson, and then for the ministry, because I lived in a community where the Presbyterian Church was very distinguished for its past history. It was—when I came to college it was well over a hundred years old.

RB: Yes.

JS: Now over two hundred years old.

RB: Yes. And the denomination as a whole had a distinguished reputation—

JS: [unclear]

RB: Yes, for an educated clergy was always desideratum.

JS: I can think of no—I can think of a great many young men who didn't finally—they went to Davidson, but they did not finally become ministers, who nevertheless were sort of silently[?] marked for the ministry, and therefore the father sent them on to Davidson, which was only twenty miles from their home. And one of those men went to the University of Leipzig [in Germany]. So it was in the air that people would be educated.

RB: Yes. Now, the—[coughs] Excuse me. The Presbyterian families who sent their sons to Davidson had no equivalent to which they could send their daughters, did they?

JS: No.

RB: And didn't the creation of the State Normal answer a need that up until then was not being supplied?

JS: Oh, precisely. Precisely.

RB: Though there were, were there not, by 1905, other alternatives available to you. There were other colleges for girls in North Carolina, if you did not insist upon denominational exclusivity, weren't there Episcopal schools? Greensboro College, the Methodist school was in being since the 1830s?

JS: Well, there might not be colleges, but the Lutheran [unclear] had a school for their girls.

RB: In Concord, [North Carolina].

JS: Near Concord, yes. And the Episcopalians had a number of private schools. A person would take twenty or so students—not quite twenty, I would say ten or in that number, and such a one was in my uncle's home, my mother's uncle's home. And—

RB: And the instruction was carried on in those homes?

JS: What'd you say?

RB: Was the instruction supplied in those homes?

JS: Instruction was supplied, but—and I suppose it was very good instruction, I don't know much about it. My cousin, who had the school, was a graduate of Saint Mary's, in Raleigh.

RB: See, now, there was an alternative, to which you might have gone.

JS: I might have gone to that, yes.

RB: Was that ever considered?

JS: No. Not on Mother's part. I think on the part of some of the Episcopalian members of the family.

RB: Was your mother's objection in any degree religious?

JS: No, no, it wasn't religious. She had had a year at a home school, private school, in Mocksville, [North Carolina].

RB: An academy, perhaps.

JS: What?

RB: An academy? Secondary?

JS: One person ran it, Miss Mattie[?]. and Miss Mattie's father had taught, had had that kind of school before he died. And he—he had taught her, and she was so far along that she took over his Greek classes. And she had this school, taught everything, I suppose, with two or three assistants. And well, that was within my lifetime. I knew her and knew how she did it. I don't know how she did it, but I know she did. [chuckles] And there are two or three people on the grounds today who went to Miss Mattie.

RB: Is that so. You must have encountered, occasionally, among the skeptical, the question "Why do you want to go to college? What does a girl go to college for?"

JS: No, the question wasn't raised, in the minds of most people it had been settled. [chuckling] That girls weren't to go to college.

RB: Unless they were to become teachers, right? Was that assumed to be the only justification for such an affectation as going to college?

JS: No—I'll tell you. You see, I came along when they were just beginning to have a little recovery from the Civil War, and it was the business of the girls to stay at home and help with the housework. And I remember when a neighbor of ours had to give up her daughter to become a nurse, she was practically ill for—I know my mother used to go and see her and tell her she mustn't—she must not—keep Bess at home, Bess wanted to get out. It—"Is so-and-so going away?" "Well, she says she's going away, but I don't know how in the world I'm going to get along here, you know I have three hungry boys all working in the field and I don't see how in the world I can do the work if she leaves me."

RB: Now, when you entered college, you didn't think of it, at least not primarily, as a gateway to some kind of employment? It was for the enrichment of your mind—

JS: Oh, surely I did! I entered college thinking I was going to teach. Had no other thought.

RB: And would that have been fairly characteristic of most of your classmates and—

JS: I would think, yes.

RB: That they were going to return what they received in college, enlarge, the educational opportunities for others.

JS: Oh, yes, yes, yes. That was the dominant motive.

RB: Do you know of exceptions, of girls in your class who went out into some other kind of professional or vocational careers other than teaching?

JS: [pause] Hm.

RB: There weren't any who became, say, lawyers, that would be utterly out of the question, I suppose, as yet, then. Though they were not unknown.

JS: I don't believe I do. I know when we left college, we all had jobs. And I think they were all teaching jobs. I don't remember anyone concerned about a job. The superintendents, or chairmen of the board of education in the various cities in North Carolina, counties, many of them came to the college and looked us over.

RB: I suppose it was in your time and for some time thereafter that the college came to be the principal supply of teachers for the state, didn't it?

JS: Yes.

RB: But Chapel Hill had all men, and the common schools were undergoing a feminization, the typical school teacher was supposed to be a woman, and they couldn't be recruited from Chapel Hill.

JS: I don't remember any girl in my class who didn't take—practice teaching. There may have been one or two, but I have no recollection.

RB: And my guess would be that a very large proportion of North Carolina's teachers came from Greensboro, and that our influence therefore spread to the uttermost portions of the state, years thereafter, as a result. And it was not unusual for—well, in your own case, but also for girls you knew, in your class, and classes immediately before and after yours, to think of education as being not just a meal ticket for some profitable employment, but that it would enrich people's lives, right? I don't want to put words in your mouth.

JS: Oh yes.

RB: That was thought of as one of the benefits to be derived from a college education. And one wonders whether that isn't beginning to disappear in our time, you know. In the '40s, '50s, and '60s, that was still a major preoccupation, but it's hard to sell students on the idea of taking a course that hasn't some immediate promise of convertibility into cash. And I don't say that out of bitterness, I'm just regretting, very sadly, a fact of life. Would

you say that the college thought of its mission, in a serious way, as also preparing girls for domestic responsibilities they might have to assume? Or was that pretty largely channeled into those who took domestic science or home economics courses? I mean, would it have been part of the college's sense of its mission to prepare them as homemakers?

JS: No, I don't think they—in other words—

RB: And there were no clerks being prepared, no secretarial courses yet, were there?

JS: Mr. [Edward Jacob] Forney's class—oh yes, Mr. Forney's courses in shorthand.

RB: Now, did they supplement a larger education, or were they the principal preoccupation of—

JS: Well, he gave a one-year commercial course, shorthand and typewriting, and a little business law, I think. And I couldn't tell you how many students were enrolled in it, but we all knew about it, we all heard about it.

RB: I'm still fascinated by this fact that so large a proportion of your class first had to be prepared for college. Was this literally because that was not available to—that kind of education was not available to them in their home communities?

JS: That's right.

RB: The typical education for basic literacy didn't aspire to go much beyond that, it was—in the common schools, when you finished, you were not yet ready for college, in many of the communities, you had to—

JS: Because college was not in the reach, the financial reach, of many people.

RB: I wonder if this was true of colleges generally, throughout the South, and maybe even beyond that, that they almost invariably had to have a preparatory department to get people ready for the college curriculum.

JS: Well, I suppose it was, I wouldn't know. But I do know that we began as a freshman class with seventy students, and we graduated with thirty-five. There was that much [unclear].

RB: And by "freshman", you mean these—the people who had gone through the preparatory—but had had the preparatory work.

JS: [unclear] Right. And we just sort of accepted the fact that about half of us were preparatory students and half of us came from the best schools in North Carolina.

RB: But that aggregate then suffered another fifty percent attrition during the four years of college, because you say you began the freshman class with seventy and perhaps graduated thirty-five. Would you speculate about why the girls dropped out? Were some of them unable to measure up?

JS: I think it was for financial reasons. Occasionally, for marriage, but very rarely. There wasn't much talk about it.

RB: Nor attractive employment opportunities, that didn't siphon off people from college?

JS: No.

RB: There were no such opportunities in any considerable numbers, I suppose.

JS: Occasionally they would be lured away by denomination schools that were beginning to rise at that time.

RB: But you don't think that the rigor of the program would be a major factor in that diminishing number who persevered for four years. You don't think—they weren't being weeded out by—

JS: No, but there were some failures. I was thinking about that in preparation for this. It wasn't a disgrace to fail, and it wasn't because of the college. It was just the girl couldn't quite make it. And the only fair thing to her was to tell her where her difficulties were and to tell her that she had failed and to tell her to brace herself and try again, or she couldn't try again, go home and see what could be done and come back. I don't know of any girl that was actually dropped from the college rolls because she couldn't make it. There must have been a few, but as I say, I don't know of it.

RB: Incidentally, when a girl finished her four years, was she automatically given a teaching certificate, or did she have to qualify by some other examination that the education system—

JS: No, she didn't have to, but if she planned to teach, and as I say, so far as I can remember, we all did, we took the prescribed courses in education, and we had one semester of practice teaching. That was, we taught every day for five days a week. And we taught, not the entire semester, it wasn't a semester, it was a term, or half of a year, and of course the first part of it was given over to observation as our practice teacher taught, later had conferences with us and explained what she was doing, and we wrote our comments too. But we were actually responsible for being in the classroom with children, in any grade from the first through the seventh, five days a week.

RB: But there was no examination at the end of this whole process that was prescribed by the state that would test your suitability as a teacher.

JS: Well, not so far as I know. Unless the—I don't believe the state had prescribed it, no, I don't. I think if we were recommended by the head of the pedagogy department—

RB: And that word was used.

JS: —and the principal of the training school, by those two who taught the courses in education, also. If we were recommended by them, we had been good students. Or at least respectable students.

RB: Could you go on to teaching in high school on the basis, solely, of your preparation at Greensboro? Or did that require something beyond our program?

JS: No, we went right on into high school. I went into high school, taught in a high school.

RB: You taught in a high school? I see. Some of the students would be about three or four years younger than you—must have been very close to your age.

JS: Oh yes, just about three or four years, yes. But you see, they would have examined, the principal would have examined, all of my college courses, to see if I had been far enough advanced to teach the Latin, shall we say, or to teach the mathematics.

RB: Oh, that interests me. Was there a considerable range of subjects you might be asked to teach?

JS: In the high school? Oh yes.

RB: You couldn't just teach English courses alone, or history courses.

JS: They looked at it. And then of course, the principal of the high school that you went to would also have had something to say about it in assigning your work.

RB: Wasn't Dr. [Julius Isaac] Foust [pedagogy faculty and later college president] involved in the teacher training courses?

JS: Say that again?

RB: Dr. Foust, wasn't he a professor of pedagogy? Seems to me his particular teaching was in that area of specialty—

JS: Yes, but that was before I went there. I went in 1905. Dr. Foust was then what was called the dean of the college. Dr. [Charles Duncan] McIver [founding president of the college] was abroad, and Dr. Foust had charge of opening the college and getting things in running order. I think in the second semester of that year, he was teaching the seniors pedagogy, he'd gone back into his teaching. But then Dr. McIver died.

RB: In 1906.

JS: In September of 1906, when I hadn't gone back yet to begin my freshman year, so Dr. Foust was immediately brought back into the administrative functions of the college.

RB: There to remain for many years. Didn't he stay on until the '30s, 1930s? I think so, Dr. Foust was president until the '30s.

JS: President until '32, I believe, something like that [Editor's note: Dr. Foust was president until 1934].

RB: Just about there, right. Were there any considerable number of girls who [were from] out of state, on our campus?

JS: Not at that time. A few, one or two.

RB: And that's since it was a provincial school.

JS: Yes.

RB: And even there it would not have been a cross-section of North Carolina's young women, either, I'm sure.

JS: Well, fairly so, because there was considerable pride in having every county in the state represented in the student body.

RB: Yes, but I think those that came from whatever county were drawn from a kind of elite stratum—

JS: Yes.

RB: For no other reason, the economic barrier, I should suppose, would be pretty serious, although when you look at the literature that advertises the college, I've seen in magazines, contemporary—the 1890s, 1900, full page ads offering a first class college education for two hundred and forty dollars a year. And that was everything, all the expenses.

JS: And I paid only a hundred and seven—[unclear]

RB: So it must have been possible, other things being equal, for people of modest, fairly modest economic background, still, to come to college. If they didn't, there were other considerations that were restraining them, the fact that they did not aspire to be teachers, or they came from homes where there was no tradition of intellectual interests.

JS: Well, we had a body of students from the orphanages of the state, the Masonic orphanage in Oxford.

RB: I hadn't heard that.

JS: And also from the Presbyterian orphanage at Barium Springs, [North Carolina]. And it does seem to me that some came from the Methodist orphanage. About that, I'm not quite sure. And those girls were self-helped girls, they worked in the dining room, and I think made practically all their expenses.

RB: Is that so. Well, that's a wider spectrum, sociologically speaking, that I had supposed would be true. Well, but it was still a fairly homogeneous student body, wasn't it? Weren't they, nearly all of them, Protestant church background?

JS: [pause]

RB: With the occasional exception, there might be a few of Jewish background, a few Roman Catholic.

JS: A few Roman Catholic, but a good many Jews.

RB: Oh really?

JS: Oh yes.

RB: From North Carolina?

JS: Oh yes. Dr. Foust had been the principal of a school, I think I'm right about this, in Goldsboro, [North Carolina]. And there came the first night school opened, I heard her tell about it, Miss Ellen Spear[?], who was the daughter of the Jewish rabbi in Goldsboro. And from her, there, oh, when I was in college, there were—Janet Weil was from Goldsboro. And we had one or two Jews from Savannah, [Georgia], we had some from Kinston, [North Carolina], one from Wilmington, [North Carolina] that I happened to know of, and before I graduated, certainly two, I think, from Salisbury. And I believe I knew one in Statesville, [North Carolina] who came, and I think she was a Jewish girl, and I think she was there in my year. No, it was—it was broader than just Protestants.

RB: And of course, nobody ever dreamed the day would come when the races would be combined at—on a single college. It would not have been thought of as a realizable social objective, I'm sure. And even the most well-intentioned and the most benevolent kind of people who were innocent of any kind of prejudice, would not have thought, at that early date, of mixing. But there were—there were provisions for blacks, weren't there? At the college level—Shaw University, [Raleigh, North Carolina] I believe, and Bennett College, [Greensboro, North Carolina]. I say, there were places to which black students could go to college in North Carolina.

JS: Well, A&T [North Carolina Agricultural and Technical University, Greensboro, North Carolina], actually—

RB: And A&T, yes, you catch me there, I should know that. But yeah, I shouldn't be surprised.

JS: I think so, because I think A&T was the first Negro state-supported school in the South.,

RB: Yes. It probably was stimulated by federal funds. In western states, for instance, were the source for our state universities. You know, the Morrill Land-Grant Act, for instance, produced, eventually, the University of Illinois. In the older states, the seaboard, including Southern states, where the state university systems were in being by that time, some of those funds, some of them were allocated to black technical and agricultural colleges.

JS: When was—you might know about the Lutheran school, Emmanuel [Greensboro, North Carolina]?

RB: Emmanuel Lutheran, yeah, that's—I don't know the founding date of that. I happened to be on the committee that closed it, eventually, because it outlived its usefulness and we could no longer defend it as a special black school.

JS: And down in [unclear], they have a Saint Augustine's Episcopal School [Raleigh, North Carolina], which I think, maybe it didn't [unclear] us, but it was close.

RB: Yeah, must have been pretty much that same era. Were you aware of any social distance between students who came from rural areas and those who came from cities?

JS: No.

RB: A girl wasn't under any handicap—

JS: No, prestige did not exist in family or money. Those two things were mere feathers in the [unclear]

RB: Is that so. But you surely promptly recognized a girl who came from the provinces, because her speech would be different, wouldn't it?

JS: Yes.

RB: But this was not a stigmata [sic, stigma] of any kind.

JS: No, not if she entered into the life of the college and did well as a student and took responsibility for leadership.

RB: And no obstacles—right.

JS: And showed that she had a sense of values that were respected values, then that was it.

RB: And later, when you went to New York, for instance, was there any sense that—well, you weren't on the defensive in New York City?

JS: Oh, no.

RB: Where but in America is that possible. [laughs] There are so many things that occur to me, and of course I can come and see you again if we don't cover all the ground. What about the religious climate on the campus, do you think that girls retained their religious affiliations? Because they're away from home, and no longer under the constabulary eye of their parents. Do they continue to keep up an interest in their church connections?

JS: Yes, I would say they did.

RB: But a typical Woman's College student, or student at [State] Normal [and Industrial College]—

JS: There was a very strong YWCA[Young Women's Christian Association]. The YWCA held prayer meetings, maybe once a week and maybe twice a week. But they were quite frequent. The president of the YWCA was highly thought of. The YWCA, the national board of the YWCA, had evidently done very well by its college department, I don't think it does much with it now. And the headquarters for the national organization for this area was Charlotte, [North Carolina]. And I remember very well the secretary who came to us two or three times a year. They were usually from the Northern colleges, [unclear] Smith or Wellesley, or Bryn Mawr. They were far better educated than we, and although they had—well, we just learned from them, we learned a great deal from them, and not only—I was one of the officers of the YWCA. Not only officers learned, but others learned. They usually had two or three meetings with us, they took over the prayer meetings, etc., etc.

RB: And on Sundays, the students would attend the local churches.

JS: On Sundays, we went to our respective churches. And that was pretty nearly—well, probably not everybody went to church, we didn't have to go. But we liked to go.

RB: Did—were there ever any religious services in—officially sponsored by the college itself? I mean, you didn't have chapel services—

JS: Oh yes.

RB: Were they really religious services?

JS: Oh yes.

RB: Hymns and scripture reading and homilies? Is that so.

JS: We had chapel, I think we began every day at eight o' clock with chapel. And the members of the faculty sat on the platform.

RB: That was in Students' Building, wasn't it?

JS: Well, the first year I went there, the chapel was in the Administration Building.

RB: What is now Foust Building.

JS: Those four classrooms that are in the middle of the upstairs.

RB: Ah, yes.

JS: The student body numbered about five hundred, we could all get into chapel. We all had to—attendance was taken at chapel.

RB: It still was in my time.

JS: Because—not only because they wanted us to engage in a religious service, partly, but because important announcements were being made.

RB: Yes. That was the one time of day when you were all together.

JS: One time of day we were all together, you had to go. At a particular signal, the monitors in the chapel checked the chapel and reported any absences. There was a—let's see, I guess it was for one year, two years I think. Because Students' Building was finished on the outside, was not finished on the inside—We would write home. And this would be the refrain in practically everybody's letter. We had—the walks of the campus were lined with violets. Not all the walks, but—not the main walk down College Avenue, but practically all the others. And we would gather violets, you see, there was no restriction, you could gather as many violets as you chose. In the chapel, or—the chapel was the study hall, too. You went there to study when you weren't in class. And there were books in the desks, each person's desk in the chapel, that you sang from.

RB: Protestant hymnals, right?

JS: What?

RB: They were Protestant hymnals, I dare say?

JS: Yes, I guess they were Protestant hymnals.

RB: Because only the Protestants were much given to singing hymns anyway.

JS: We were. And then [unclear] there were the blue books, that were not hymnals. And the blue books had one very nice song that we always sang in the spring, maybe more than once, "Come and Search for Violets".

RB: Oh, yes.

JS: And when that season of the year was reached, Dr. [W.C.] Smith read the *Book of Job*. About three, I guess he spent about three weeks on it, summarizing and reading some of it. So the letters that would go home would be something like this "Spring is here, there are blue books in the chapel, and we sing 'Come and Search for Violets' and Dr. Smith is reading the *Book of Job*."

RB: [chuckles] Before I leave the subject of religious observance, was grace said at meals in the dormitory?

JS: Oh, by all means.

RB: Lead by—

JS: The lady principal, Miss [Sue May] Kirkland. "Bless us all, Lord, and make us ever thankful for these and all thy blessings."

RB: Oh, very nice.

JS: And if she wasn't there, there were two or three other women, you see, a good many members of the faculty took their meals in the dining room. And if she wasn't there—those were rare occasions when she wasn't, someone else said the blessing.

RB: Speaking of the lady members of the faculty taking their meals there, I think I've heard that there was a more or less systematic plan for having these women sitting at tables with the students, so that it worked out so that nearly every table had one faculty member who would, I guess, raise the level of the conversation?

JS: Oh, that was very true. There must be a head of the table, if it wasn't one of the faculty it would be a senior. And no girl left the dining room, or was supposed to leave the dining room, without saying "May I be excused."

RB: And I believe they ate family style, you didn't go through a line, but the dishes were brought to the tables.

JS: Right. Or if the dishes had to be served hot, which was occasionally, the head of the table designated someone. "Jane, you go back and get the steak today." [unclear] something else.

RB: And your recollection is that a substantial number of girls provided a kind of work force in the dormitories, and earned their keep, earned their way through college that way.

JS: They worked in the kitchen, is my memory. They did all the dishwashing, they served all the food on the table. And I suppose they cleaned the dining room. Now, we cleaned our own rooms in the dormitory.

RB: No maid service?

JS: No.

RB: No, you were responsible for keeping the rooms clean yourselves.

JS: Now, there was a little maid service, I must hasten to say that, in some of the dormitories, because the bathrooms were rather limited. And we had a bowl and pitcher in many of the rooms.

RB: For ablutions? To wash? A bowl and pitcher. Yeah, to wash.

JS: Yes, for washing.

RB: Instead of the shower?

JS: We didn't have a shower.

RB: You didn't have showers. Or tubs! No tubs?

JS: Yes, we had tubs. But there were only—there was just about one bathroom to a floor. That wouldn't be enough, you see, to take care of the morning, to get ready.

RB: Now, about these pitchers and the bowl, is that cold water?

JS: Well, now, we chose to have—we'd bring it. We'd get it.

RB: Oh, you could get it from the taps.

JS: Yes.

RB: In the bathroom, and bring it back to your room. I see.

JS: And then the emptying of that water, and the emptying of the chambers, sometimes, the maid would take care of.

RB: I see. Did you think that the girls thought of themselves as living comfortably? The lifestyle was up to the standards that they would expect, right?

JS: Well, no, not quite, but we'd have a [unclear], but not seriously, we weren't worried about it.

RB: You don't remember any—and was, could that be said also of the quality of the meals?

JS: Well, sometimes we complained about the meals. But I don't think we ever felt underfed.

RB: If the truth were known, probably not a few of those girls ate better while they were on campus than they ate when they were at home.

JS: That's true.

RB: There was probably more attention paid to balance in the diet and things like that, more knowledge.

JS: And [unclear] on the dining room I'll mention is this. When you were sent a list of the things that you must bring for the year, one was six table napkins.

RB: Oh, your own napkins.

JS: And you were supposed to keep your own napkin clean. And there were rings just under the tablecloth, we had tablecloths, there were rings up there where you put your napkin. And you carried home a soiled napkin, brought a fresh one.

RB: Was there any deliberate instruction in table manners? Little amenities?

JS: Well, not as a group, but if people had—if a girl had very crude table manners, somebody would be tactful enough to talk to her about it.

RB: And the example that was set, I suppose, by whatever faculty member sat with them.

JS: Yes.

RB: Important influence.

JS: And the lady principal had her tea brought to her for breakfast, and I guess for dinner too, maybe all three meals, I don't remember.

RB: Now, she lived in one of the dormitories.

JS: She had a suite at the [recording error] extreme south end of Spencer [Dormitory], you know that little entry that we used to have?

RB: Yes.

JS: Well, that was her entrance. We never went in there.

RB: Did Spencer house all the girls in your time?

JS: No.

RB: No. So there was more than one dormitory at that time.

JS: Only Spencer.

RB: Oh?

JS: And where the Alumni House is, there was—

RB: Guilford, Guilford, a wooden structure, I've seen pictures of it.

JS: With a porch all the way across the front.

RB: Yes. But Miss Kirkland—

JS: But Miss Kirkland—just a minute[?]. She had her little teapot, if I remember correctly, it was a silver teapot, it was a pretty teapot, anyway, just for her. She had everything else as we had, but she had the teapot, and a cup, and about midway of the meal, because I sat at the table next to her at one time, she would pour that cup full of tea, and sip. And she'd sit there and sip. I seldom raise my teacup to my mouth that I don't think of how Miss Kirkland did it. And she would sit there until everybody left the dining room. And then she would go. And if we passed her table, we always said "Good morning, Miss Kirkland," and she [unclear].

RB: She must have had an enormous influence on generations of students. Everywhere I go and whenever I talk to our more senior alumnae, they always bring up Miss Kirkland.

JS: Have you ever seen a picture?

RB: Yes. She looked the part, too, very regal person, yes, queenly, right.

JS: And her silks always rustled.

RB: And she also exercised a kind of constabulary authority, too, didn't she, when you were to leave campus, didn't you have to have her permission?

JS: Oh yes. Well—

RB: Yes. Formally applied for in a written note, as I recall.

JS: That was it, but it was very simple.

RB: Yes. And usually granted.

JS: Well, yes. And she had office hours. Now, we could go downtown Friday afternoon, and anytime on Saturday. And we wrote a little note on a little slip of paper, we did not fold it, it was easier for her to handle, and we'd just say "Miss Kirkland, may I go shopping this afternoon?" and dated it, signed our names. And we just went down the line and she stood there and said "Yes. Yes. Yes." But, now, if we weren't properly dressed, she would say "You'd better tuck up your petticoat" and it was just like that. It was all over in fifteen, twenty minutes.

RB: Now, she didn't teach, did she?

JS: Oh, no.

RB: She gave her full time to being lady principal.

JS: Yes. Now, across the hall from her bedroom, and living room, and bathroom, and office, was the parlor, the one parlor, and any callers who came, came in that door and asked for whatever girl they wanted to see. Now, that was a very stiff place, and I kept house—it was a great honor to be asked to keep house for Miss Kirkland on Satur—Sunday afternoon, because the maid wasn't there, she had her own maid who graced that door. And everything was very proper. And I kept house for her, and any boys that—scared to death, said that he'd like to speak to Miss Kirkland. So I came in, I said "Miss Kirkland, there's a boy in there who would like to speak to you." [She said] "Who is it?" I said "I don't know." She said "Well, I never go speak to people unless I know their name. Can you please go back and ask him his name?" [RB chuckles] So I went back and I said "Miss Kirkland said that she would like to have your name," that she didn't speak to people unless she—if she was sent for, unless she knew the name. He said "Well, look, tell her this is So-and-so." So I trotted back and said "Miss Kirkland, his name is So-and-so," And she said "Well, would you go ask him what he wants?" [both chuckle] He said he wanted to see, well, I'll say Miss McQuirk[?]. I came back, I said "He wants to see Miss McQuirk, Miss Kirkland." She said "Oh, well, in that event, I shall go speak to him first." Well, she swept across the hall and he asked for the girl and I stood in the hall and waited. She said "This boy wants to see so-and-so McQuirk, you go tell her please that she has a very nice gentleman caller."

RB: [chuckles] Was she a native North Carolinian?

JS: Oh yes. Hillsborough. And—

RB: Would have made such a nice story if she was some prim New Englander who was infusing those—

JS: Oh, no, no, she was from Hillsborough. Hillsborough, you mean, talk about aristocrat. Hillsborough was the aristocratic town in North Carolina.

RB: Of which there was no whicher[?]. Yes.

JS: [unclear]. And one of the signers was of the Declaration of Independence from there and is buried there, you know.

RB: Yes, yes, William Hooper. [Editor's Note: William Hooper's remains were later moved from Hillsborough's Presbyterian Church cemetery to the Guilford Court House Military Battlefield in Greensboro, but his original gravestone remains in Hillsborough]

JS: And we were supposed to know all that, too.

RB: What about provisions for your health? Was systematic exercise required of you?

JS: Say that again?

RB: Did you have to take exercises regularly? That was the era when fresh air and exercise was believed to be the railroad to good health.

JS: Well, we were given—Dr. [Anna] Gove was the doctor there, and also the head of the health department, and she got [unclear, rustling papers] about the health department, about health. And we had, when we first went there as freshmen, we had to go to hygiene lectures in the afternoon at five o' clock for, I don't know, two months, three months, until we were taught all matters of personal hygiene. And then some things that had to do with corporal hygiene. And then we had to walk every day unless we had an excuse from her, you see.

RB: With the windows open in your rooms so the air would be changed.

JS: The windows open, and the chairs—and the doors held back by chairs. And all your papers were weighted down with books. The windows were up.

RB: So that the wind wouldn't carry them off.

JS: And the wind would blow through, really, I never hoped to go through dormitories again that smelled as fresh as those dormitories.

RB: That's a good idea.

JS: And we came in from the walk ravenously hungry and hardly able to wait until the rolls were on the table and the bell sounded.

RB: I think somebody told me that she also gave instruction on how to make up a bed. That in the freshman year, it was done on a stage or something, in the Students' Building, in full view of everybody.

JS: Well, she gave—you see, the freshmen all had to go to this chapel. And—oh yes, yes, the bed was up there and you were taught how to make it.

RB: Smacks of the army. Well, I can see that they had a real concern for keeping living quarters tidy.

JS: Yes.

RB: A thought that suddenly occurs to me. We still had the Daisy Chains in those days. In fact, they persisted until my time. Do you remember the Daisy Chain? And at commencement, the procession would march between two lines, and they were heavy ropes of daisies. Where did they get them, do you know?

JS: Oh yes.

RB: Did they send the girls out into the countryside?

JS: Well, you see, we had wagons and horses, and we'd go along these, and there were certain places, waste-places, you know.

RB: Yes, yes. Prairieland, we would call.

JS: [unclear] places, I suppose maybe they—the drivers had advice as to where to go. And some fifteen or twenty of us—it was the juniors [who] made the daisy chains for the seniors. And we'd go out in the morning when all the daisies were still fresh and get the daisies and bring them in and make the chain.

RB: Somewhere that dropped out of our routine. And then we read[?] it.

JS: I guess it got too—

RB: Sentimental?

JS: Sentimental. It got too boarding school.

RB: Was the dormitory a good place to study? Quiet, orderly?

JS: Oh, it had to be. You see—

RB: They aren't anymore. [laughs] You know.

JS: Well, the day was like this. Chapel in the morning.

RB: Yes. Let's go through a typical day. Yes, let's do that.

JS: [unclear] Chapel in the morning. At eight, I think, and classes began at eight-thirty.

RB: And breakfast had its finite time, if you got there too late—

JS: I've forgotten, I think that's the time.

RB: But you couldn't just drift in any time of the morning for breakfast, you had to go—[laughs]

JS: Oh, no! You had to be there on time. And we were on time if the bell hadn't stopped ringing. Now the bell was at the bridge, you've heard of the bridge, haven't you?

RB: Yes, oh, it was there in my time. Over Walker Avenue.

JS: Over Walker Avenue. [unclear] The bell was at the bridge. And one way to be on time was to make friends with the man who rang the bell. And if you were late, you went past

him and you said “Don’t stop ringing the bell until I get in the dining room.” And he would sort of estimate. [laughter]

RB: He was a good friend to have.

JS: Now, that didn’t affect the girls who lived in Spencer, but it did affect those who lived [unclear]

RB: Now, was that the sole purpose of the bell?

JS: No, it was—

RB: For what—what did it call you for?

JS: For breakfast!

RB: For breakfast.

JS: And it was supposed to ring five minutes.

RB: Yes. But in the course of the day, was it used for—

JS: No. Electric bells. Electric bells.

RB: But that bell, which still exists—

JS: Yes, and for dinner, too.

RB: It was to call people to meals, not—to worship, or to bed.

JS: No, not to bed, either.

RB: But there was a curfew, though, wasn’t there? At least—

JS: Yes, that’s what I’m going to tell you next. And we went to class, the classes were forty-five minutes in length, and we had five classes a day, five days a week.

RB: But the elective system was in force, was it not? I mean, you wouldn’t be with the same group of girls more than once in those five, it would be mixed up?

JS: Well, there’d be different sections. And there was some degree of election, but not as much [unclear]

RB: Not much.

JS: Because there were three or four degrees, AB, BA, BS, and Bachelor of Music. Well, that was it, I believe there were just those. But there was a good deal of interchange of courses in those three. And so your schedule depended a good deal on what you chose to take. If you could take in, say in AB you could take science instead of, what shall I say, instead of manual arts, you see, you would [unclear] in that sort of. Then there—lunch was at twelve-thirty, I think, and the bell rang for lunch. Then at two, you went back to class. And you stayed, depending on what laboratory work you had, there were some regular classes, but most of the laboratory work was done in the afternoon, until five, or maybe it was four-thirty, I've forgotten. Anyway, at five o' clock, you went to walk.

RB: And that was required.

JS: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely.

RB: And you believe it helped. You're convinced that it was good for the students.

JS: Oh, absolutely. Yes.

RB: I'm sure it was.

JS: And it became a sort of social gathering, too. You made dates to go to walk with people.

RB: Ah.

JS: And there were many more trails in the park then.

RB: Oh, this was through Peabody Park?

JS: Oh yes, all through Peabody Park, all through the trails there. And all—

RB: And did you march en masse?

JS: Oh, no, no.

RB: Oh, you were free to go wherever—I see.

JS: You were free to go anywhere you chose. And you would go through the park and wind around, and sometimes you would go as far as Aycock Street, because paralleling Aycock was a drive, and you called that the observation walk.

RB: And Aycock was the end, there was—there were no houses west of there.

JS: But there was a fence.

RB: In fact, you were practically in the country anyway, weren't you, on the campus?

JS: We were. And you would just get back about time for supper. Sometimes you got back in time to go in, but the bell rang to tell you you could come in. The bell rang to tell you to go to walk, I believe that's right, then the bell rang to tell you you could come in. That was the day. Then you had supper, and at seven o' clock, an electric bell rang which told you study hour began, and you went to your room and you could not leave your room without permission. There was a member of the faculty on every hall. And you studied until nine forty-five, and then you had forty—fifteen minutes to get a drink of water.

RB: Wind down the day.

JS: [unclear] And then you could run up and down the hall if you felt like it. Sometimes, during that, you could take a bath. You could study, but then if you chose to take a bath, you could, in part of that time. And you went to bed at ten, and I remember the faculty came through and told you good night, and noticed whether or not everybody was in bed. And you slept until six-thirty the next morning.

RB: Did you feel at the time that the recreation program was adequate?

JS: No, I thought we had plenty of exercise.

RB: Plenty of recreation.

JS: Because we walked to class, now, and many seniors, we had to walk to the Curry Building. You know where the Curry Building is.

RB: Yes.

JS: You see, that was quite a walk from the Administration Building, and then we'd walk to the library, and if we had home economics, we'd walk to Students' [Building] basement, where the home economics laboratory was.

RB: What about entertainment? Social functions and so on?

JS: Well, there was very little of it as such. You can see there wasn't much time.

RB: Time, no, you accounted for all the time there. [chuckles]

JS: Now, there were no weekends. I never heard the word.

RB: It had not been invented. I think Edward VII inv—he coined it in Britain and it took a while for us to pick up the idea.

JS: Must have, because certainly, we had no weekends. You see, we went to town, downtown on Saturday afternoon or Sunday.

RB: Classes on Saturday until noon, right?

JS: Oh, no, no. When I was there, no classes at all on Saturday.

RB: We had, in the ’40s, you remember, you and I were teaching classes on Saturday mornings in the ’40s and ’50s.

JS: Oh, I remember that. Yes, but you see—

RB: So no classes then?

JS: No classes at all. You had a good deal of library work to do, and you did it, sustained library work on Saturday mornings. Then you—Saturday afternoon, you would maybe give your room a special cleaning, wash your hair. Go walking again if you wanted to. And you could get permission to visit in town, go almost anywhere. But you got permission for it, so they would know where you were. And, what was that—

RB: No movies, we’re talking about Saturdays.

JS: No movies, no movies. They were just beginning, and we didn’t take much hand in them. The dates, of course, you could have any time. It wasn’t only just weekends. A boy could come any time to see you, if Miss Kirkland let him, and she generally did. We had no Thanksgiving holiday, just the one day when we all had a wonderful dinner together.

RB: Any religious service? Did you do any thanking?

JS: I believe we had it at night, or we could go downtown to service.

RB: To church, that’s right.

JS: You see, and on Sundays we went downtown to church. Thought nothing of walking, I walked all the way to First Presbyterian Church in Greensboro, just thought it was a nice walk.

RB: It’s more than a mile.

JS: Yes.

RB: Each way.

JS: And we stayed from the opening of school until the Christmas holidays, and you’ve already heard, I’m sure, that the coming and going was by train. And that men of the faculty met the train.

RB: No, I didn’t know that.

JS: Oh yes, oh yes. The men of the faculty met the trains, and put us on the streetcar, and then when we were leaving for the Christmas holiday, they went down there to put us on

the train to leave. And there were very few men and they were worked pretty heavily. Now, the entertainments at night there, I guess they were rather above the average. We had lectures, we had a good deal of music, we had concerts, and the city was dependent on us to furnish a certain number of people for important people who were brought, I mean for a certain number of seats. Take up a certain number of seats for people who were brought there playing or something, music and lectures. There was a good deal of that, because we had a very fine person, the head of the elocution department. She didn't call it elocution, I've forgotten what they called it. But she was good. And we, ourselves, got up a lot of plays, and the city came down to the plays and paid for them. And then every spring—I think that every spring I was there, we'd have some traveling company to come late in the spring, like the Ben Greet or the Coleman Players[?], and stay there for about, all Friday afternoon, all day Saturday and Saturday night, giving Shakespeare plays. I daresay that my generation knew more Shakespeare than the students today know.

RB: I have no doubt of it.

JS: Because those same people came back year after year and we came to know them, know their names even. I remember Mr. and Mrs. Mackentie[?], they were sort of the head of the Ben Greet Players and we came to know them, you know. They ate in the dining room with us. They were always—and the park had any number of nice places, out of door plays, you see, all they had to do was to build a platform and put up seats and these seats—well, I don't know, I guess they were nailed down. They didn't have any backs.

RB: Like bleachers at a baseball park.

JS: So, that was a—

RB: There were no spectator sports, were they? You didn't go and watch basketball games and football games, did you?

JS: Well, our class—all classes had—what would—

RB: Intramural sports, right? Contests between the classes and within the classes?

JS: [unclear]

RB: But not—you never played a game against Greensboro College, did you?

JS: No.

RB: There was no—

JS: Though it was just as heated when the freshmen played against the juniors.

RB: Yes, that's where you worked off the—

JS: And we had lots of yells, lots of decorations for all these things.

RB: What about Sunday, you were talking about a little while ago, was there any conscientious objection to doing your schoolwork on Sundays? You know—

JS: No, except among ourselves.

RB: Some Evangelicals wouldn't approve of—

JS: Except if somebody—you know, some of us had been taught to keep Sunday more strictly than others. And if a roommate, for example, insisted on writing to her boyfriend on Sunday, that was all right, but if she got up her laundry on Sunday—

RB: That wouldn't—

JS: If her laundry had to go out Monday morning and she spent the time rustling around in the closet and got up her laundry, why, you sometimes objected. One of the priggish things that we—[unclear]

RB: Well, no, that's not priggish. Six days shall thou labor and do all thy work. [laughs]

JS: Now, two or three really remarkable music events, I remember one, a woman, Marcella Sambercane[?], gave a beautiful concert downtown. But the head of the music department persuaded her, finally, to come out and sing for the girls. Or they just asked her to come and let the girls see it. And we were all assembled in chapel, every one of us, the bell rang, we knew it might ring any moment, and so we would be excused from class to stream to the chapel to see Marcella Sambercane.

RB: That was in Students' Building.

JS: Hmm? No, this was in the Main Building.

RB: Still in Foust, in the—oh.

JS: And she said "Oh, I will sing for the little girls." And so she got up herself and played her own accompaniment and sang. And then she even pipe-sang[?].

RB: Oh, my goodness.

JS: So we really had—we were exposed to a good deal of entertainment of a high order.

RB: Now, this was the day before student government, right?

JS: Yes, we had no student government. But if—if Dr. McIver was disturbed about any noise, he would call his seniors together. And tell them about his disturbance. And then

the seniors would call the two respective societies together, the seniors in each society would make various speeches.

RB: And the societies embraced the total student body, right?

JS: The what?

RB: The total student body were accounted for by the two societies. Later, it was four of them, but every student was in one or another of those societies, that's why it—

JS: You didn't have to be, but I never heard of anyone refusing it.

RB: Oh.

JS: And they were divided, there were committees from each society. And they would put on one list, a prominent girl, and another who seemed to be her equal in every respect on the second list, and they made up the two lists that way. And then they took them to Miss Kirkland's maid, who could read, maybe.

RB: But just.

JS: But just. And she would draw them for us.

RB: Draw them? You mean like lots?

JS: I mean, she'd just pick up one sheet and hand it to one, or another sheet and hand it to the other.

RB: I see. Well, you're taking the initiative here and I don't want to interrupt you, but only as I think of additional things. So if you have further notes you want to talk about, proceed with that, okay?

JS: Well, I was going to talk a little bit more about the society.

RB: All right.

JS: They were very strict.

RB: They were called literary societies.

JS: Literary, yes. Ours was named—I was a Cornelian, I still have my pin, I don't think I could find it easily. We—ours was—we were named for Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi.

RB: Yes.

JS: And you were informed as to her life. And we knew who her jewels were. [Editor's note: refers to legend/history of Cornelia Africana] And the society—we had a business meeting, and we were instructed in all the procedures of strict business.

RB: You mean like *Robert's Rules [of Order]?*

JS: Oh, we knew *Robert's Rules [of Order]* by heart, practically. We were given a certain number of them that we must know. And if we rose and failed to address the chair, the critic at the end of the meeting would say "You will please see the treasurer." We paid ten cents for failure to address the chair.

RB: You had a critic whose function it was to note and to rebuke those failings.

JS: Absolutely.

RB: I see.

JS: If anything was said in the society meeting that was considered out of character, why, that was criticized. If we failed to—if a motion was put—well, it was terrible if the chairman would put a motion without a second. I daresay nobody went out from that college unable to conduct, in a very orderly fashion, a meeting in which *Robert's Rules of Order* were observed. We just were—that was just bored into us. We had programs, we had lectures, and we had some very rousing debates. We gave little plays. And, well, that was about it. Every two weeks. Oh and if we were absent from the society, without a good excuse—now, if you had company, you were excused. Or a boy came to see you, you were excused from going to the society. But—and we had a password, no one got in past the [unclear]—

RB: And wild horses couldn't drag that word from you. [chuckles]

JS: No. Oh, I pretended that[?]. We all know what that is. Yes, I'll tell you. "Mehr Licht."

RB: More light, right.

JS: Now, the secrets, I can't tell you.

RB: No. Did—speaking of these high standards of honor, was there a de facto, if not an explicit, honor system in examinations when—were you trusted by your instructor, or you were proctored?

JS: We had—

RB: So that you would not be tempted. Was it ever suggested that the—it might be a part of a girl's experience and education to be put on her own honor and not to have any proctors?

JS: Yes, that was brewing from our junior year on. And the president of our senior class, Laura Cone [Class of 1910], wrote her graduating essay on self-government in college.

RB: Did you all write graduating essays?

JS: Oh yes. We all, every girl in the graduating class, had to write an essay. And they chose from those essays, the six best, and they were one program of commencement. One feature of commencement, Monday night, I think it was, because—

RB: When you heard six little orations in a row.

JS: Well, they weren't orations, exactly. They used [unclear]. I will tell you about mine if you'd like to hear.

RB: Oh, yes! [chuckling]

JS: Well, it was very high-flying, I won the—but I got the prize, the world's debt to Poland.

RB: To Poland, yet! My goodness. Poland. Of whom it is said the Polish have no history, they have only had neighbors. You know, they keep carving them up.

JS: Oh, I didn't—I said Poland had been the great defender of civilization.

RB: Yeah?

JS: Against the inroads of the Huns. And she's been not the mere defender of civilization, but one of its most constant and liberal contributors.

RB: Hear, hear! [clapping, laughing] They also had a very curious parliament, you know, where any single member could—well, the term they used "explode" the parliament.

JS: No, I didn't know that.

RB: Yes, he could just—

JS: I didn't know much of anything—

RB: That was not obviously going to make a good speech!

JS: But there's my Shakespeare, [unclear] you see, those worn books? I got that from [unclear]

RB: Is that so? And I see you've made good use of them. [chuckles]

JS: [unclear] There are one or two other things that I had down here. There's one about the program for commencement.

RB: All right.

JS: Commencement was three days in length. [chuckles]

RB: Like a Polish wedding.

JS: Friday night, what did we have Friday night? [pause] I've forgotten. Saturday was Alumnae Day. Sunday was a sermon, and Sunday afternoon was the program by the YWCA, their program.

[End CD 1—Begin CD 2]

RB: Was the sermon by a local pastor?

JS: Oh, no.

RB: Or did they go far afield to bring in a distinguished platform orator?

JS: Oh yes. [unclear] I've forgotten. I remember—I used to know the name of the man who gave the commencement address, but I've forgotten. And maybe it was Saturday, I guess it was Saturday night, we read the essays. That's it, Saturday night the essays. Sunday the sermon, Sunday night the YWCA, and Monday, graduation. We didn't leave until Monday afternoon. Everybody stayed. Now, I told you the college was better than a junior college. I think it was. Wasn't equal to a senior college. Standard degrees did not confer—conferred degrees on my class, and on the class immediately preceding mine. Prior to that, they'd had only certificate diplomas, when they had finished the four years. But the standard degrees, I think, came around 1920 or '21, have you looked that up? [Editor's note: the college awarded the first bachelor's degree in 1903]

RB: No, no, this interests me. You say that in that—in the decade and more before 1921, there were no bona fide standard—

JS: That were approved by the Southern Association of Colleges.

RB: I see.

JS: If that means anything to you.

RB: You have revealed something that has been kept from me until now! [chuckles]

JS: Well, I ought to know, because in the meantime, I had been to Columbia [University] for one summer school, and I had taken a number of extension courses, the college had begun to give extension courses. I don't know how many. And I remember going to Ms. Strong, who was chairman—

RB: Of mathematics.

JS: Of [unclear], to evaluate, the girls courses that they were offering, to bring the degrees up to standard. And I think she told me I needed only six hours, and yet it does seem to me I needed nine hours. So you see, the college really had pretty stiff standards even then.

RB: And I understand you to say that there was a period where degrees were offered, then they were not for perhaps ten or more years, and then they went again, recovered their accreditation. Is that analysis correct?

JS: No, I didn't mean to say that.

RB: Oh, but didn't you say your class and the preceding class had been given degrees?

JS: Yes, but not standard.

RB: But not standard degrees, I see.

JS: Not standard degrees. And then the other classes were given, I think, each year they probably would add a little more and a little more, until they reached a level that so-and-so [unclear] approval.

RB: Yes. Right. And I expect that it was right about that time that the Southern Association [of Colleges] had begun to make fairly explicit what the specifications for—and you were in the process for several years of bringing yourself into compliance. That would include such things as the library must have two hundred thousand books, twenty thousand books, and that sort of thing, and there must not be larger classes than so-and-so, they must be people with university backgrounds. I expect that—it isn't a—I don't think it was that there was any serious deficiency in the quality of the college and its program, rather, it was not in compliance with what were coming to be defined as standards for colleges by these accrediting agencies. Yeah.

JS: Well, I know when I was in college, Dr. Smith was the head of the English department.

RB: Yes. Was that Alphonso Smith?

JS: Yes.

RB: Yes.

JS: No, not Alphonso, Dr. W.C. Smith.

RB: W.C. Smith, oh, yes.

JS: And—what did I start to say?

RB: We were talking about accreditation.

JS: Yes. Well, it'll come back to me in a minute. He was good. And he taught not only, he was not only head of the English department, but he taught one course in history, and I've forgotten why he had to do it, but he had to do it. But the history department, if I may say so, was very poor.

RB: Was it really?

JS: Until Dr. [Walter Clinton] Jackson [history faculty and later chancellor] came, and I always felt aggrieved that he didn't come until my junior year.

RB: You missed out.

JS: Now, the science courses were—T. Gilbert Pearson was the science teacher, founder of the Audubon Society of America.

RB: Yes. There's a marker somewhere in town.

JS: And, but he taught mostly about birds. Whereas, in my freshman year, Dr. [Eugene] Gudger came, and Dr. Gudger had his Ph.D. from [Johns] Hopkins [University, Baltimore, Maryland].

RB: Oh!

JS: And his course in—

RB: First Ph.D. granting institution in the United States, I believe. Hopkins, yes. And it was a standard to which all graduate schools repaired[?].

JS: That's right, it was the only—

RB: Yes, right.

JS: I've certainly heard enough about it. But Dr. Gudger was a corking good teacher, no doubt about that. And I had science—I didn't have biology with him, I'm sorry I didn't have a laboratory course, but I did have physical geography, which was equal to any geography they have there now, I [unclear]. And then I had geology, for which I am eternally glad, really one of the richest courses I ever had. I thought I'd tell you about the class that, in Latin, and how the very strict teacher taught Latin prose. Do you want to hear?

RB: Yes. In fact, and go on from there to how teachers taught, if I may ask a few questions. Okay, go ahead, you tell about the Latin class.

JS: Well, I'll tell you about this. This teacher was Miss [Viola] Boddie.

RB: Two "Ds."

JS: Two "Ds." I think now she missed a golden opportunity not to illuminate what we were doing. We knew everything we ever translated, and we could give a reason for the grammar of every—I mean, a grammar reason for every word in that passage. And we were required to have a fluent translation. But beyond that, all of the background, the history of the people who spoke those great words—

RB: Yeah, the culture that—

JS: She did not elaborate, she illuminated a little bit, but not very much. Now, the Latin prose, she was just in her element there. And I want, this, I think, shows you the kind of teacher she was. And we got an awful lot learned in that, but I wish she had gone beyond that. I hold it against her now that she didn't. [clears throat, pause] Once a week, we had to translate from English into Latin. We came into the room, took our places at our desk. The minute the bell rang "Miss A will take the first sentence, Miss B the second, Miss C the third, and Miss D the fourth," and so on. We rushed to the board as fast as we could go. First of all, after she said that, we looked at the sentence, and memorized it. It might be twenty words in length, it might be forty words in length. We memorized it. We'd already memorized it before we left, before we left home, we knew pretty well what it was. We put up one, but we didn't even take time to put up our names. We wrote that English so fast, so we wouldn't forget it. Then we translated it into Latin, and then down below, we put our names. Why, we could get through a page of Latin prose in about twenty minutes. See? Then, we'd go over all those sentences when she would call out. That's the way we did it. And we trained to do that, I don't know anyone who ever missed getting every single English word, you might get some trouble miss—getting the Latin, but you never missed getting the English word of the English sentence on the board.

RB: Were classes generally conducted with a minimum of participation by the students?

JS: Yes.

RB: And maximum instruction by the—

JS: Well, no, the students participated.

RB: Yeah? Obviously in this Latin class they were drilled.

JS: Learn what's in your book. Now, this is what Miss Boddie did, she could have given us—oh, she could have illuminated Roman life so much and she didn't. She assigned, at the beginning of the semester, certain subjects in Roman life that we were to write a paper on, but we didn't give that paper to her, she didn't take any trouble about leaving it. Instead, the day—we memorized our paper. And the day we were to give it, we put an outline on the board, and according to that outline, we recited our paper, which might take twenty minutes. I had slavery among the Romans, and that wasn't a very short subject to [unclear]. And then the next day, next time the class met, I made questions on

my talk. And then Miss Boddie would call on a particular girl, who would answer the question, and I would state whether it was correct or not.

RB: Well, the instructional strategies, the mode of teaching, I suppose varied considerably with the individual instructor, that some would be drillmasters and others might be far less given to rote learning than others are. I would suppose. And of course, we had not progressed very far yet in building up a body of theory about how learning proceeds. They know a lot more about that sort of thing now than we did, you know, fifty or sixty years ago. I don't know that it's—know how to use it, but—

JS: Well, it's [unclear] education, how to [unclear], how learning proceeds. We had [John] Dewey.

RB: Yes. Was he at Columbia in your time, when you went?

JS: Oh yes. But we also had his book, down at UNC—at Woman's College.

RB: Oh, here, I see.

JS: We had MacMurray[?], I'm just thinking the people. But those two I recall in particular.

RB: Good.

JS: James, in psychology, and I'm sure there are many better now, but I think James was very valuable.

RB: Still, you've got it as a classic. This is a slight shift of years, we hear a great deal from, when we have Founders' Day and things of that sort, about the tradition of teaching—the obligation to service that the college atmosphere here was permeated with, that principle, that you owed society service, that we're not just here for self-gratification.

JS: Oh yes, that was the—

RB: That was more than just a motto, wasn't it?

JS: Oh, I should say it was. Our classes [unclear] service.

RB: Yes, and it's still the school song motto, too, you know.

JS: Well, and this was [chuckling] just like a bunch of unrepressed college seniors who think they know it all, when we read our will—last will and testament [as a graduating class], we willed our motto of service to the college.

RB: To the college. [chuckles] We are forever grateful to you. So that's where it came from! Well, but that is true, it was more than just a motto.

JS: Oh, it was—we were supposed to go out into North Carolina and make it the greatest state, and it was, and we couldn't imagine how much greater it had to be, because we sang that "Carolina, Carolina, Heaven's Blessings Attend Thee." [North Carolina's state song]

RB: And about how "Whitlings defame her." [chuckles] Well, do you suppose, this will be a very difficult thing to measure, and it may not be possible to give a clear answer to this, but would you think that the average graduate of the college, when she went out into the world, had a more advanced position on social questions than other girls of her age? Would the college have made that difference?

JS: Oh yes.

RB: And maybe sensitized people to social questions?

JS: Yes, that was decidedly so.

RB: And I have a very strong feeling that that is the case, because I hadn't been here any time at all when I began to sense that wherever I'd go in North Carolina, it—nearly every community was—had—was benefitted from having one of our graduates there. They were the conscience, they were the sparkplugs, they were—you know, the organizers.

JS: That's right.

RB: Yeah.

JS: That's right.

RB: And I believe we have lost that, I don't think it is anything like, you know, as much true as it was in those days.

JS: Well, frankly [recording error, end of recording]

[End of Interview]