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MARILYN GRAY

(Transcription of Tape 1, Side 1)

The date is November 5th, 1998. The Living History Committee is interviewing today, Marilyn Grey, renowned humorist, who was a student at Central from ’58 to ’60, ’61 to ’62, and finishing a degree in 1967. The Interviewer is Helen Smith. The Technician is Hamm Howard.

HS: Alright, Marilyn. You’re on campus today, giving some talks, I understand, and we’d like to start this interview, if you will, with a tiny thumbnail sketch of your life before you came to Central.

MG: Alright. Well, I was born in Portland, Oregon, and went to school there through about fifth grade, then Eugene, Oregon for a couple of years; and then we moved to Pasco, because my parents went to work at the Atomic Energy Commission and we moved from poverty to middle class. Uh, and I’m serious about that. And, um, so then I finished high school and two years at the then new community college, uh, in Pasco, Columbia Basin Community College; and, uh, graduated from Pasco High School. I have one brother, and that’s about it for before Central. See, my life actually starts with Central. And, uh, it was while I was going to Columbia Basin Community College that I made my choice to go to Central, which, if you go back at that time, was somewhat unusual because we tended to go to colleges near home, and most of the students from the Tri-Cities actually went to Eastern. But, during my second year at Columbia Basin, I was sitting next to – at lunch, to a girl who had done her freshman year to Central, and was now back at Columbia Basin for her sophomore year. And she had on a black sweatshirt with a red wildcat on it, and I was so attracted to the sweatshirt, I thought, “I want to have a sweatshirt like that,” and so I made my choice to come to Central based on the color of the sweatshirt and that it was a good style (chuckle). So that brought me to Central. And I had a car which was unusual, I think I was only one of three girls and very few boys, actually, that had a car and you couldn’t have one on campus. So, I lived off campus across from what at that time was the library, and is now – it’s the building right next to Barge Hall. And I lived in a white house right across the street that’s still there, with the Ambroses’, I think their name was, and, uh, lived off campus for two years. And campus was very different then. Uh . . .

HS: Indeed.

MG: Well, for one thing, uh, we didn’t wear slacks or jeans. You always had to be in a skirt, uh, if you were a girl.

HS: (laugh) Now this was 1958, right?

HS: 1958 to 1960. And, uh, actually with so few people having cars, we really did a lot on campus. Now, I’m not on campus now, so I don’t know how it is now, but I mentioned to someone today when I was unfamiliar with a lot of things downtown and they said, “Well, you must have been downtown when you lived here; and these buildings are the same ones.” And I said, “Actually, you would be shocked at how infrequently we ever left campus.” There were intramural sports that practically everybody was involved in. And then, one of my favorites, on Friday night, they used to – there was a, like an auditorium in - must be in one of the Halls, right? Well, there are only about three major buildings, then – right there - Barge Hall and the other two. And there was a theater which I guess is still there.

HS: Would this be McConnell Building?

MG: Yes.

HS: Mm-hmm.
MG: And on Friday night, you could pay, uh, either a nickel or ten cents, not that the prices were that in the regular world, but for, uh, for campus people; and you either saw, um, a movie or they had live entertainment. It might be a speaker. It might be a comedian. And one of the people that I first heard when I was here was a man who had been a Vaudevillian and he shared with us that what he loved about Vaudeville was that you not only were on the stage, but there was a lot of audience interaction. And he said that when you did well, people would yell out, you know, “Bravo!” or, you know, they didn’t just clap, there was talking; and if you did poorly, they booed you and he said that the best thing of all – he said the favorite thing of actors to do were death scenes because you could just throw yourself into it, and really die. And if you died really well, people would yell out, “Die again!” and so then you went back in the script about eight lines and you would die again. And if you got to die three or four times, you were – you knew you definitely did well.

HS: Great acclaims.

MG: So that was my first – one my best memories of one of those nickel Friday night (inaudible). But campus was very much like that. We had lots of on-campus things to do. You had tea with your professors on Saturday afternoon. They’d (inaudible) and you would be invited. Uh . . .

HS: What about dances?

MG: Uh, there were dances, although, to tell you the truth, I don’t remember very many. I remember more of the sports activities (chuckle).

HS: But as an off-campus student, you felt included?

MG: Yes, because I was so close. I mean, I was only across the street from campus and all my friends lived on campus; and so I was on campus all of the time in the rooms. In fact, the only reason I lived off-campus was because of the car.

HS: You had the car.

MG: And you weren’t supposed to have a car.

HS: But that made you very popular on weekends, then (inaudible).

MG: Oh yes, indeed. Oh, yes. Made my first trip to Seattle and, uh, - and at the time, most of the students here that I met were, in fact, from, um, Renton and Highline, you know, kind of the south end of Seattle. And their high schools’ population was larger than our college population. If I remember correctly, our college population my first year here was sixteen hundred and a quarter, and they came from high schools that had two thousand.

HS: Sure.

MG: So this – I mean to me this was big time, and to them it was smaller than – than their high school.

HS: Did you share an apartment with another student or did you live alone?

MG: Actually, the house that I lived in had three units and then you shared a bathroom. And so there were two other students there, um, and it was just for women, which we called “girls” in those days (chuckle), and my mother still calls us all girls. And, uh, then two houses down was a, uh, boarding house for boys which, in 1962, housing was so scarce that I could not find a place to live and so I talked those people into letting me rent one of the boy’s rooms because the boy’s rooms were all upstairs except one that was in the basement.
HS: Did that cause a scandal?

MG: Well, they made sure that I never left the basement.

HS: (chuckle) What about your meals while you lived off-campus? Did you cook?

MG: Uh, actually, no. I had a ticket for the Commons, so I ate on campus. And, uh, when you mentioned that about scandals – I don’t even realize how much things have changed, but, uh, girls had to be back in the Dorm by ten o’clock and if you weren’t, you were locked out and you had to ring the House Mother and account for where you were. And so, rules were very strict and, even as an off-campus person, my landlords were, in a sense, responsible for – that I maintain the same kind of standards that were on campus. So, the thought of men and women living together in the same dorms – you know, where do they go to the bathroom, uh, and all those other things that you would think of if you were me and old.

HS: Now, when you came, did you declare a major? Of course, you came after two years of community college, so . . .

MG: Right. And, uh, while at community college, I’d decided to major in English, primarily because being a Liberal Arts student, I took lots of everything and whatever I didn’t do very well in, I didn’t take anymore of that; and whatever I did well in, I took a lot more of that and, using that formula, I eventually became an English major.

HS: And that’s sometimes how we end up in professions (chuckle).

MG: (chuckle) Right. Whatever anyone asks you to do, that’s what you become.

HS: So, you graduated then as an English major?

MG: Major. Right. There was a little time off in there, just before – I graduated at the end of summer in 1960. Just prior to that, I took a quarter off to – I had transferred to Gonzaga and entered, uh, pre-Law and – I’m sorry. Not pre-Law, Law School, uh, because you could do it with two years of college which I had completed. But my idea of who lawyers were were based on episodes of Perry Mason; and so, when I discovered that being a lawyer – forgive me, if there are any out there – but it’s a lot like being an accountant, only for words instead of numbers and I didn’t even read my old contracts, so the idea that I would read anyone else’s was far fetched. So, although I loved the idea of solving mysteries and having Paul Drake visit me in my office, I gave up my career in Law to come back . . .

HS: And you came back here?

MG: Right. And then, uh, did my student teaching at Eisenhower High School, which had just opened in Yakima, and then finished in the Fall which means that I didn’t go to a graduation ceremony.

HS: Did you miss that?

MG: Not at the time. I, for one thing, hadn’t been in school for awhile. I was poor and so I didn’t really have the money for a gown and all of that. So – and wasn’t really interested in the ceremony and I’m really sorry now because my dad was from England, my mother was born here, but family from Czechoslovakia and my grandparents from Czechoslovakia. They would have loved to have come here and see me graduate, and by, uh, not going through graduation, it was more what I deprived them of than what I deprived me of. Later, however, I get a chance to come back and go through commencement three years ago, in a very different capacity, but probably will . . .

HS: That’s all right. Tell us about that, because that should have been a real thrill for you.
MG: It was, because I – again, I came back in ’61–’62, I finished a Bachelor’s in, uh, Education, a B.Ed., in ’60. I taught then, in, uh, Lyle, Washington. I was really – I don’t know if I was bad at it. It was just way too hard of work. Uh, I’ve never intended to work that hard in my entire life, so I . . .

HS: Is that the high school – teaching high school? Let me, let me read a sentence from your Press Release, uh, that, uh, “Marilyn went on to teach high school for one remarkably unsuccessful year, the work being much harder than she had ever anticipated doing in her whole life.” Now, why do you call it unsuccessful? Just because it was so hard?

MG: Yes. And because it was so hard, I didn’t prepare as well as I think a really good teacher would have. I think maybe if I had stayed with and gotten a rhythm, but I didn’t. I gave up right away. Um, and raced right back here to school to become a school psychologist. I didn’t even know they existed, but I met one while I was teaching, . . .

HS: (chuckle)

MG: . . .and he suggested me being a school psychologist; so I thought, “Hot dang! That’s what I’ll do,” and so I raced right back here and, uh, so that’s why I was only gone from here a year. And then I’d come back that summer and start right in on a school psychology degree. But remember, I didn’t have a psychology major the first time, so I then proceeded to get a Bachelor of Arts, uh, Degree in Psychology, to lay the groundwork for getting a Master’s in School Psychology. And so, (inaudible) I was back here for five quarters, but that puts me out again with my new degree in August of ’62, so I’m still not in graduation. So, then I come back and finish a degree in August of ’67, so I’m still not in graduation (chuckle).

HS: (chuckle)

MG: However, in, uh, 1995, I was at – uh, I was honored, uh, as, uh, Alumnis of the Year; and, separate from that, I was also invited to do the Commencement speech and part of what intrigued me was Commencement, itself; and so, it was wonderful. First of all, I got a cap and gown. I just loved myself in my cap and gown. Uh, since this is taped, of course, you can edit where you need to, but I have to tell you, - you probably already know this – it was a hot day, and I come over and I’ve got - I’m from Seattle. I’ve got on my wools, you know, and somebody said, “Is that what you’re going to wear under your gown?” And I said, “Yes.” And they said, “Do you know how hot it is up there? You’ll faint!” They said – and they’re kind of stripping down. So, what I know now when I look at all these very formal ceremonies is there’s a lot of people sitting there in their underwear under that gown. And I was one. So, I got a big head - oh-oh, hand clapping. So they let all the students go in and then the faculty goes in, each wearing a different cap and then comes the President of the College and me. Stepping just so perfect; and my mother, still living, is in the audience, uh, along with a couple of friends and so I got to go to Commencement. Now, I have to tell you that there are certain things I have wanted to do my whole life, and one is – when they have the Olympics, my favorite part of the Olympics is if you win, you stand on the little stand and they play your national anthem for you and – and then you get to, just, you know, be standing there while your national anthem plays. And I thought, “I want to win an Olympic Gold Medal,” which is unlikely given my age and weight, but I often would stand next to the T.V. and pretend it was me. Well, as I get up to the stage, they had instructed us that then when we get there, that everybody will turn around and we’re to stand and as we do, the flag starts going up just like in the Olympics, (inaudible), and then they start playing the National Anthem! And I thought, “I thought I had to win a Gold Medal. All I had to do is be the Commencement Speaker!”

HS: (chuckle)

MG: And I could just stand here while the flag goes up and the band plays the National Anthem. It was like the most thrilling moment of my life! Of course, that makes you wonder what kind life I’ve had, if
that’s the most thrilling moment; but it’s one of many. So, anyway, I finally, after all those years, 1995, got to go to Commencement.

HS: And in such an honored way. Your mother must have been just thrilled.

MG: She was so thrilled. Made up for all those times that I didn’t go through Commencement and didn’t even realize that my family really missed that. If any student ever sees this, I’d say, “Do it for your parents, uh, because they enjoy it more than you do.”

HS: When you were a student here the first time, in the English Department, do you – are there particular professors that you would like to remember as being particularly significant in helping you get through?

MG: Keith Reinhardt. Do you remember Keith Reinhardt?

HS: Yes, I do.

MG: Yes. I really – he would read parts of Shakespearian plays. Just his reading of them made me want to read them. Plus, while I was here, um, my Freshman year, I accidentally smashed my hand in a car door. It was icy. Well, you know how it is here in the winter. And I had gotten out of someone’s car and I was holding on to the car to not slip as I pushed the door; and when I pushed the door, I smashed my hand and took off the end of my little finger. So, I had to – the infirmary wasn’t that far away, you know, it was maybe a block; so, running over with my hand that is really bleeding, and they gave me some really nice relaxation pills, and so I can remember sitting in Dr. Reinhardt’s class while he read Shakespeare and I would just be sitting in the front row, grinning and grinning and he wasn’t (inaudible) enraptured student, actually, I was high on some kind of pain pill, but in the process of relaxing and listening to him read I became quite a Shakespearian fan; and so I remember him. Uh, I remember, uh, Katherine Bullard, uh, who was, uh, very stern and very strict and very high standards, but just such a person. I even wonder if professors are still like that or do you just view them with all this majesty, but she kind of brung her own majesty. She was that kind of person. So those two, in particular . . .

HS: And then later . . .

MG: Bonnie Wylie.

HS: Mmm, Bonnie Wylie, the Journalism professor?

MG: Right. Yeah.

HS: Did you work on the school paper?

MG: No. Just happened to know her. She lived in the house behind me and so – and walking around campus, of course walking was the thing. You never drove - I mean, I was never driving my car around during the day. As I remember, even if you were off campus, you weren’t supposed to be racing around with your car. It was just leave on the weekends, not drive around. So, nobody was driving anywhere, including most of the people who worked here. So . . .

HS: True. Well then, when you came back to get your degree in – as a school psychologist, what about professors in that area?

MG: Um, Eldon Jacobsen. It’s so funny to say these people’s first names. I’m not even sure I knew them all. Uh, Dr. Robinson, uh . . .
HS: Howard Robinson?

MG: Howard Robinson. Yes, he used to come to school in this convertible, right off the farm, with a goat sitting in the – one of the other seats. I mean, he was really kind of a – in the ’60’s, he was the perfect person because he was strange enough, but so intellectual and he so challenged you. Every class I took from him, I was really challenged.

HS: He was a free spirit.

MG: Oh, yes. I, even today, can remember discussions we had in class because of the, you know, the challenging thoughts. Uh, Dr. Jacobsen was warm and supportive and Head of the Department and you feel – you felt then like these people really cared about you. In fact, when I came back in ’95, Dr. Jacobsen called me and said that he was ill with the flu and couldn’t come to hear me do Commencement, and that he’d even remembered me – I was thrilled. Uh, Jack Crawford was the head of my Thesis Committee, and very - very smart man, very different, very smart. Persus Sturgis, um, also in the Psych Department, and later went on to, uh, Fresno State, but good speaker. They had just graduated with their doctorates from the UW. So, um, Dr. Robinson and Dr. Jacobsen had been here for some time. These were two new people. So lots of different thinking.

HS: You obviously felt challenged.

MG: Oh, um, and that, uh – it’s interesting, when I met, uh, Hamm, who you can’t see because he’s on the other side of the camera here, but when I look at the camera, I see him. Uh, Dr. Howard was one of my education professors, but it can’t – each person that you took classes from, you really felt like they knew who you were, especially if did badly. Um, and, uh, but these people really cared about you. I don’t know if that’s still the feeling or not, but it was such a good – I felt it more than in high school, which was smaller for me because I went to a small high school. But when I think of Central, and I still encourage young people I know to consider Central as being a choice they make for getting into school. One of the things I think was the camaraderie and the caring, uh, between faculty and students. It was (inaudible) at how close they were.

HS: What about administrators or staff members? Did you get to know any of those on a personal basis?

MG: Um, I accidentally, in the ’60’s, drove across the President’s lawn with a motorcycle. I had rented one of the little Honda fifties that were just new at the time. I mean, no one had ever seen it before. I rented one downtown and a friend of mine asked for a ride, but I had never ridden one before myself, and I let him on the back and he was very heavy and so when he would tilt, no matter which way I steered, we would go the way he leaned. And we were coming up the street, right, uh, - oh, this one right here; and as we came up the street, the President’s house used to be on the corner and he leaned, thinking I was going to hit a car, and we went up over the sidewalk and through the hedge of the President’s lawn. Uh, but other – and I’m just trying to think of the President’s name. I would know if I heard it right now . . .

HS: Brooks?

MG: Yes. James Brooks.

HS: James Brooks.

MG: And he was new because we had a different President when I was here the first time. Uh, but so I never did meet him then. I remember driving across the lawn in terror. Uh, and I remember renting the little Honda fifty for five dollars an hour.
HS: And a wonderful thrill it was.

MG: Oh, yes.

HS: Uh, did you, uh, involve yourself in student government while you were on campus either of those times?

MG: I didn’t. In fact, the only time that I was ever involved politically was in the ’60’s. Gus, the Communist. Gus. I want to say Gus Smith.

HS: Uh, oh, Gus, um.

MG: Gus Hall.

HS: Gus Hall.

MG: Gus Hall was going to come here and speak and then they decided because he was a Communist that he couldn’t come here, and so I was one of the students that marched around and signed petitions. And that was about as political as I ever got. Uh, and then, uh, that was when in the – the Civil Rights Movement, too; and some of my friends from here went back to march in Civil Rights demonstrations and we’d gather up money and food to sent with them on the bus to get down there; and I didn’t do that, being fearful of my very own parents. Uh, they didn’t believe in civil rights for college students, uh, in their home. So, uh, but that was really an active time – see, when I think of civil rights, I mentioned going to Law School at Gonzaga, which is a great school, but to show you how different things were then, there – in Law School, I was the only – I was a female freshman, there was one female who was a senior. Those were the only women. And there was one black student fellow and he was a freshman; and on breaks, uh, we were not allowed to use the lounge because it was for men and not black men, so he and I would sit on the steps of the school. Now, what was interesting is that it never occurred to us to be angry about that. I mean it was so automatic that things were only for certain people. And when I first moved to Seattle after getting my degree in psychology, originally I was planning to work in personnel psychology; and I remember going to Boeing and – to see about a job and in response, they said, “Well, we only hire men for white collar jobs, but there are other jobs.” Now, that they said it was one thing, but the fact that again, it doesn’t even occur to me to be angry or upset or even to question. I went to General Electric because – where my parents worked and they – and again I was told that they would love to hire me because they needed workers, but not in a white collar job, because only men were hired. And, again, that was so common a thought early in the ’60’s, that, if you know how political I am now, that the fact that that wouldn’t even occur to me to be angry – it was just, “Oh, yeah, I’m glad to know that.” Or that I’m asked to sit on the steps because women aren’t allowed. “Oh, yeah, that’s fine.” Uh, so different than it was by the end of the ’60’s, when it at least occurred to us to be angry about some of these things and think maybe that wasn’t the way it should be (chuckle).

HS: And now you can’t believe you were so docile? Is that it?

MG: Oh, I am shocked. And, and people who know me now would be shocked. I was an anti-Viet Nam War marcher. I’m very political now, um, and active in the women’s movement and active in the environmental movement. And so the fact that there was a time in my life when somebody could say, “No, women can’t come in here,” or “Black men can’t have this job,” and then I would think, “Oh, okay.” You know? It just startles me.

HS: What was the result of your student march in the Gus Hall incident? How did that end up?

MG: Gus Hall didn’t come here and nothing happened. It was kind of a wash (laugh).
HS: (chuckle) What about the college library at the time you were here? Did you frequent it? Did you think it was good enough? Big enough?

MG: Oh. Oh, yes. Well, first of all, my first trip here – now remember it’s right across from where I live. I mean I just walked across the street. And I took a class in Library Science which was – just opened a world of information for me. I mean, it was like now, learning to use the computer. I mean, I had no idea the – what a library was about, really. And so, here with learning – it was one of the first classes I took – and learning about all the opportunities for reference, and the books on books that you could find – it was just remarkable. And I loved the building, I loved everything about it. Then while I’m here the second time, they build, not the library we have now, but the BU Library, which was over that way.

HS: And that was in Buillion, right?

MG: Right. And what I remember about it was that they hired two artists, which was kind of a different concept then. We were going to have artwork in there. And one of the artists, I – I don’t know, I think maybe was a painter, but the other artist, the woman, uh, because one was a man and one was a woman; the woman did little, uh, like, not porcelain, but clay figures, uh, little birds, the sweetest little birds and they would be tucked in places; and so you would look at a wall that had little holes in it and there would be these little birds. Unfortunately, people stole them all within the first couple of years, but I still remember them. They were so wonderful. And, uh, just the feeling of the art in the library. I mean, part of what was just next to you and you have – you would have to know how it was to be from a relatively poor family and from a European family. I mean, we didn’t have – I mean art in the home was probably one picture above our fireplace that you bought with the furniture. You know, it’s not that it was bad, it’s just that you didn’t think of that. The only magazine we took was the Saturday Evening Post. Now, I learned early on while I was in high school, that you should always say that your family took the Saturday Review of Literature, so every time they asked what family magazine we took, I always wrote, the Saturday Review of Literature and U.S. News and World Report, even though I had never seen either one. Um, unfortunately, I lied as a child, and so – because we actually took the Saturday Evening Post and that was it. But you always aspired to do better than you were. Like my mother would – I had become a bowler while I was in high school, and a good bowler, but my mother wanted to play golf because people of stature played golf. And so I got one club and I would go out before the, uh, country club because that’s all we had was a country club – before they opened. Anyway, I would take my one club out there and I would club around the course. I can actually play golf now, but, um, so, playing golf was like reading the Saturday Review. You aspired to be – to show yourself as a little bit better and then work your way up into what you already said you were (chuckle). And, so, having the library with the art there; and it was a beautiful building, it was a fun building. I am surprised that – I mean, that it had changed, since to me it was still a new building, but that has been a few years ago.

HS: And yet, now we have another library.

MG: Right. I haven’t been to that one.

HS: Well, I hope you have time. When you were on campus, now, all these various times – and you’ve already commented how different life was – what about, uh, smoking, drinking, narcotics? Was there – did you see a problem about that when you were here?

MG: Oh. (chuckle) In high school, we saw a movie how if you smoked one, uh, marijuana cigarette you turned into a heroin addict and the next moment you were in convulsions on a cot in a bad room.

HS: I think it was called, “Reefer Madness,” wasn’t it?

MG: Yes, something like that, but you were shivering and, you know, with the help of, uh, your friends and God, somehow you might recover, you might not. Uh, so I don’t know that drugs were ever mentioned when I was here first. By the time I was here in ’67, uh, the big thing was like peyote buttons that you sent
to Arizona for, ‘cause they were still legal; or some, uh, mushrooms, you know, but nothing very exciting. Uh, marijuana was just, uh, wasn’t a big thing. I mean a lot of people were doing it, but of course, the idea was you had two cigarettes, two marijuana cigarettes and then you told everybody. Uh, I mean telling everybody was a bigger part of it than doing it. Uh, when Bill Clinton says, “Yes, I puffed, but I didn’t inhale,” I think, “Well, unless he was a smoker, he probably was telling the truth.” I mean you about die if you inhaled. Uh, but everybody puffed around a little bit, at least pretended to. But in terms of people actually being like, drug involved, or doing anything other than marijuana, I would say – and I was pretty active on campus – I’d say that almost never happened. I mean, if it happened, it happened in a circle I wasn’t in.

HS: What about the students that you knew – their attitude toward sexual promiscuity?

MG: Uh, let me hold that one and go back, ‘cause you asked about smoking and drinking.

HS: Mm-hmm.

MG: We all snuck – you couldn’t smoke in the dorms, of course. So we’d all sneak around and smoke and we were all nineteen and twenty; and we’d go and try to get into cocktail lounges that would let us in. None in Ellensburg would, so you’d have to go out of town a little ways and go into cocktail lounges where they never asked you for your ID, and have your one or two drinks. Now, at the same time, I have to tell you that, you never wanted to have too much because if you actually were to have gotten drunk, then it might trace back to where you had been drinking, and then it would be closed to everybody. I mean you would close down drinking for the entire college. So, not a lot of - over drinking wasn’t in, but sneaking out to have, you know, a Manhattan or something – you always ordered something that had a glamorous name and you pretended like you knew what it was and that this is how you always lived.

HS: Again, you aspirations.

MG: Right. Exactly. Uh, in terms of sexual promiscuity, um, sex was certainly happening, but everybody was denying that it did, uh, so you – I mean the idea was for girls to be pure and, uh, you didn’t – if anybody slept with guys they would never say that that happened. Meanwhile, all the guys are claiming that they slept with everybody. Uh, so we don’t know who was exaggerating and in which direction. Uh, but, it was a time when, uh, you know, kissing and petting was still a big deal, uh, and promiscuity was viewed as something, if you did do it, you kept it secret. And, uh . . .

HS: But you wouldn’t abolish a friendship because of it, or would you?

MG: It would depend on if your best friend confessed that she had sex with her boyfriend. That was, like, okay. Uh, but if she had had sex with four people on the football team, then she had to be off your list.

HS: Mm-hmm. She was banned.

MG: Right. In fact, a friend of mine - When I came back here in ’67, I ran into a friend of mine that I had known in high school. And when she was just out of high school, she got married, and then I come back here and here she is the President of the Dorm; and I think, “She can’t be President of the Dorm, she had been married,” which means, of course, sex. So, as soon as she sees me, she greets me with this giant hug, which was surprising in that we had never been that close; and she whispers in my ear, “I’ve never married!” You know? And so then later she gets me aside to tell me that she’s using her maiden name and has come back here, uh, saying, uh, she had gone to Washington State originally, but now she’s at Central, saying that she is still single and everything because she couldn’t have been President of the Dorm had she been a married – well, she wasn’t divorced, but she was separated from her husband.

HS: That’s amazing.
MG: Yeah (chuckle).

HS: I’ve never heard anybody comment on something like that. What about student attitudes toward homosexuality? Or was there an attitude?

MG: I think it was – it was so in the closet then, we never talked about it at all. I don’t’ know that it was ever mentioned in any way – not about the students or faculty. It was like an unknown subject.

HS: As if it didn’t exist.

MG: As if it didn’t exist.

HS: What about – girls now, of course, are so concerned with dieting and physical fitness. Was there much of that concern when you were here?

MG: Some, but it more clothes. You know, the late fifties were, you know, first time I’m here – I mean we’re just out of the poodle skirts and white buck era, and so everybody is concerned about clothes. And of course, this is our first chance to actually share clothes with each other. Uh, so clothes and hair were the big things and, uh – I don’t – I forgot what you asked me. Oh, no, turned sixty and now the mind is going.

HS: Dieting, physical fitness.

MG: No. And, uh, no, neither of those were an issue; not dieting, not physical fitness. Of course, we were all young girls and skinny, anyway. Even I was skinny. Uh, and we did – a lot of people were involved in things like intramural. Now, I don’t know if this would still be true, but in terms of sports, it wasn’t just, like the athletic girls. But every dorm had a girls’ basketball team. That was in the days when we had a half court because had we run the length of the thing, our hormones would have gotten active and we’d have had some kind of fit, and so we only ran half-court basketball. But, uh, dorms had basketball teams. I had an off-campus basketball team. Uh, same with other sports, people were very intramural-involved and, again, not just athletic people, it was like there was a lot of dorm pride and, uh, they had a lot of dorm parties and I’m just trying to think of all the activities. There was – dorm life was, um, it was like a little city and you had three or five little cities for the girls, uh, and dorm life and what you were doing in the dorms was everything. Of course, there were no sororities or fraternities, so maybe that’s why the dorms were really important. You know, which dorms – certain dorms had more status than other ones.

HS: So, since you were politically active, uh, was there much talk among your group about voting and voter responsibility? You were, let’s see . . .

MG: No, we weren’t old enough to vote then.

HS: You weren’t old enough to vote.

MG: Because eighteen year-olds got to vote later. Uh, what I found interesting was how we didn’t notice who wasn’t here. Uh, just to set an example, I mentioned I was in Pasco, which, at the time, had one of the largest black populations in the state, uh, because of a railroad there and there were other factors that made Pasco have a very large black population. When I was growing up there were three white elementaries and one black elementary and yet, when I graduated from high school, there was only two black students who graduated with me. And again, it never occurred to me to think, “Where did all those others go?” I mean, when I started high school, there – you know, a quarter of us were black. What happened to them? And then when I come here, there was only one colored person. I mean – I shouldn’t say “just,” but there, you know, were maybe three or four others but you almost never saw a person of color. You saw some Hawaiian students because we had a program, at the time that exchanged students with Hawaii, and a few Asian students. But I don’t remember any Native Americans, uh, I don’t – uh, I
only remember a – one or two black students. And it’s not – again, it was never a topic of conversation. Now, I don’t know that they felt at home. I don’t – see from my perspective they did, because they were included, the few that were here; and no one thought about it being that different. It’s just that I wonder what they felt like since they weren’t with, you know, people of their color or their culture. It must have been a little different for them, but we never questioned that. “What do they feel like or what ever happened to all the others?”

HS: Was there a campus police force when you went to school here? There is now, of course.

MG: Not one that I ever knew of. We felt safe. Do you know, I would walk campus in the middle of the night, like when I came over, I mentioned smashing my hand in the door. That was four in the morning, and I came over to the infirmary across campus. It never would have occurred to me to not feel safe, uh, at any time of day or night, in any part of campus. We tended to stay on campus, as opposed to downtown.

HS: As a safe haven?

MG: Yeah, but, I mean – Well, and I don’t know if this is true or just rumor, but we always had the sense that the people in town liked us to visit occasionally, but would prefer that we (chuckle) stayed in our own space, and so the sense of it was that you were to be here and although no one said you have to be here – all events, the games and everything did tend to always bring you back here.

HS: I forgot to ask you earlier if you could recall any of the costs of going to the college or the rent that you had to pay? Do you happen to remember any of that?

MG: Oh, yes! (chuckle) Let’s see, uh, my room at the, uh, at the home – a beautiful home right over there – was, uh, twenty-five dollars a month. Um, I’m wondering if it was twenty-five dollars a quarter, but I think it was twenty-five dollars a month. My meal ticket, if I remember right, was sixty-five dollars for the quarter. Uh . . .

HS: Was that for all three meals?

MG: Yep. Two on Sunday, but, uh, and, uh – In fact, when I think of the – I’ll have to remember to tell you the two on Sunday story – but, uh, yeah, good meals. I really loved meals at, at – The Commons was the only place. Everybody ate at this – I mean no matter what dorm you were in or if you paid, you all lined up in one place and, again, wearing appropriate clothes. No baseball hats, no shorts, no – you know, you wore real (chuckle) real clothes, uh, and, uh, and tuition was, I think, if I remember right, it was like a hundred and a quarter, a quarter, a hundred and twenty-five dollars a quarter and that was it for the whole (inaudible).

HS: It covered fees and everything?

MG: Everything but books. Books were like – when I think of college I think of books as actually my largest expenditure, not tuition or any of the other things.

HS: But books were . . .

MG: And even, compared to today, they were low priced, but then, a thirty-five dollar book was, I mean, that was more than (inaudible)

HS: You had to go out and work extra to pay for that (chuckle).

MG: But, when I think of the Sunday meals, by the time I was here as a graduate student, and again, I’m off campus, and – I mean I had like no money – I never even (inaudible). Uh, whatever made me think I
had money enough to come back – and I’m working three little tiny jobs: I’m a graduate assistant so working at the (inaudible), and then I have a student job which counted as separate because you weren’t supposed to have more than one job, but graduate assistant and student job counted as two separate jobs, so I was in charge of the rat lab, so I fed and watered the rats, bred them and so on for the experimental rat lab. Then, um, I had another job, uh, over in AV, but I was using another name and another Social Security Number, because I couldn’t have three jobs. And so, my third job was actually using someone else’s name - Is this going to be used against me in a trial? – and someone else’s Social Security – that was my brother’s actually, because he was out of town. And so, uh, with these three little jobs which were paying, like twenty dollars a month. I mean we were – not even enough to eat on, so there are two other graduate assistants and we got in the habit of going down to the Mission to eat dinner, so we were eating a lot of potato soup and corn and (inaudible); and then the College found out that we were down there at night, singing with the homeless, which I don’t think were called homeless then. And, uh, and so they said it would be best, given that we taught classes here, and, you know, other forms of test-giving and so on, if were not down there at the Mission, so they suggested that we go to surplus foods and sign up, because we didn’t have enough money to not qualify. So, we signed up for surplus food. Well, we used to get these five-pound things of cheese - that was good - and some mystery meat in cans, which I really liked. I wish I could find out what it was and where to buy it. I really liked it. But we had some other things that I didn’t recognize, in terms of what I should do with them; and one was – we got these ten-pound sacks of pinto beans, and I don’t know where pinto beans are from, but I don’t think they’re from here because I had never seen one in my life. There was like white and it had a little kidney colored – I don’t cook, see, this is the other reason I wouldn’t know this, and, uh, several other things. But meanwhile, every month, I’m gettin’ another sack of these pinto beans. Well, as time passes, I’m getting, like a little (inaudible) of pinto beans in my room. So, I say to the two guys, “What are you doing with your pinto beans?” And they said, “We don’t know. We got like little (inaudible) of pinto beans. You know, like if it floods, we could put ‘em up.” So, I said, “Well, you know, the Commons must get the same food we do. If it’s surplus food, they probably get it too. Why don’t we go find out what they do with pinto beans?” So, I go to the Commons and they said that they made ham hocks and beans and cornbread. And they said, “You must be getting the things for cornbread too?” And sure enough, we were. I hadn’t done anything with that either. So, we decided we’d have, uh, an “All You Can Eat” for ninety-nine cents. So, I go to the Commons and I borrowed stainless steel pots, and we’re gonna have ham hocks and beans and, uh, and cornbread. Only we didn’t have any money for ham hocks, so we just went down and got three dog bones which we boiled up. Uh, so it was dog beef bones, but who knew; and there was a lot of seasoning (chuckle) and so in case the ham hocks would have given flavor, a whole lot of salt and pepper might. And then we took our food – there was a kind of a quadrangle of married student housing – and we put our “All You Can Eat for 99 Cents” in there and served up this surplus food and made enough money that we could go out and buy vegetables and meat and everything for about a week. It was just wonderful. Someone lately asked me how it tasted. I said, “I don’t know. We never ate it.” (chuckle)

HS: It sold well. Just once?

MG: Just once.

HS: Just one time, and that gave you a . . .

MG: Yes, because we had to ask permission and in those days you didn’t do a lot without asking permission, so we figured, get in, get out (chuckle).

HS: You mentioned the two on Sunday meals at the dorms – at the . . .

MG: Oh, that’s because we went there – we went to married housing on Sundays, figuring that - that as students, we only had, like breakfast and a mid-meal on Sunday; so you could only do well if you were selling something Sunday night, because you knew they didn’t have anyplace to go for dinner.

HS: So, that’s when you had your . . .
MG: Right. Sunday night.

HS: All right.

MG: And this is a nice climate in Ellensburg, so, you know, you could do an outdoor feed.

HS: Were you required to dress up for Sunday dinner at the Commons?

MG: Oh, yes.

HS: More so – not just wear a dress, but dress up a bit?

MG: A little bit dressier. Um, in fact, I can remember the first summer – this was when I was in graduate school – I had on long shorts. I can’t remember what they used to call, but they were like, to the knees, and they were grey and white striped and I had a skirt and it was a wrap-around skirt; and it was – you know how hot it is in here in the summer – and so I’d wear my shorts and then if there was any college administrator coming, somebody would yell to me and I’d wrap my skirt around myself, so that by the time anybody saw me, I was, in fact, wearing my skirt. But by then, it was over my shorts. And so, I mean that was like, a big deal in the sixties, still. (laugh) You know, it’s hard to believe.

HS: What about students, uh, during any of your times here – uh, were there outstanding students that, uh, you felt were just great contributors to the campus? Or who have gone on to be?

MG: Yeah. Whom I tend to remember are girls that were President of the Dorm – now many which I’ve run into, uh, in other profe – I mean in professions since I’ve lived here. Uh, I can remember one, uh, Beth was Dorm President and became, uh, a Speech Therapist and School Psychologist and although those don’t seem like much now; if you think of how few people there – how few women – there were women teachers but you didn’t see women principals. Even though they had been popular in the forties, by now it’s all men, and there were women teachers; but in secondary school, again, it was primarily men. And in school psychology, speech therapy, it tended to be men, so to see these different women that had been Dorm Presidents or outstanding students in school – uh, but I was never an outstanding student, so I wouldn’t have known who was like in the, uh, oh, the, you know, honor roll. Actually, I did become an outstanding student in graduate school. I finally figured it out. In fact, it was probably your class and I actually learned how to be an A student. I’m not just making this up. This is why I remember you. Because we had this five hour class that – in Education – and I don’t know what it was about that, but for the first time, I could see the connection between the tests and what we were doing the rest of the time. I mean, prior to that, it had always been like, I should just go and guess my best thought. But somehow, the way that you taught, it was a definite – maybe you even said things like, “And this will be on the test,” you know? (chuckle) Or something. But I started right then, getting a sense of how you did it to be an A student, and by the time I came back as a graduate student, I got one C, which was because there were only five people in an experimental design class. And the four of those and I decided that Dr. Crawford wouldn’t fail us all, and so, instead of studying like mad the night before because he was a very hard instructor, if we all went to the Highway Grill and had five or six drinks because we were all twenty-one by this time, uh, and had a wonderful party, and then we’d all do equally bad. And we did. And we all – C was the highest grade that was given in the class, so I was one of only two C’s in the class. And then I got one B and other than that I had a four point for all of my graduate work which was only two and a half years . . .

HS: So, perhaps you were a late bloomer.

MG: That’s got to be it (chuckle).

HS: And let the viewer understand that she was speaking about Dr. Hamm Howard in his class.
MG: Right.

HS: Give us a brief résumé, in the last few minutes here of you life, since you left Central. Now, we know that you’ve spent a great deal of time going around giving talks to people and you have taught – you do teach university and . . .

MG: After I left here, uh, after teaching a year and then I left here and became a school psychologist in Arlington, uh, for about four years, and Snohomish for one; and then for the next twenty-four years, I was a school psychologist in Edmonds School District. During that time, I also taught at Western, Seattle Pacific, Seattle U, and finally, at the University of Washington (inaudible). And isn’t that a great word (inaudible) it makes me sound like I picked fruit and popped. Uh, but in any case, that’s what it’s called. So, I, uh, I was teaching – I think I’ve had two jobs the whole time, even when I was here, I worked at the Rat Lab and I also worked at, uh, (inaudible) and when I was at Community College, I worked full-time at, uh, the telephone company. And so, all of my life, I’ve had two jobs; and so while I was School Psychologist, I was also teaching. Well, then in, uh, ’91, I retired, uh, from the Education – Washington State Education, and during the time that I was teaching at the colleges, I eventually kind of evolved into teaching a class called Current Issues in Education, and sometimes it was called Current Issues in Psychology or Ed Psych. Current issues meant whatever I happened to read in the paper that I thought was interesting, so my current issue was always some new thing and then we would explore that. Well, given the nature of what I’m talking about, if you were – well you couldn’t have been in Rotary because you’re a woman, but, uh, if your club or Dr. Howard’s club went to the Rotary and said, “Oh, gee, we need a speaker because our speaker’s ill,” and they would say, “Oh, let’s get Marilyn Gray because she could just tell what she’s teaching in class,” which, as a matter of fact I could because my audience would have also just read it. So I would come in and fill in, and, uh, the next thing you know, um – the first speech I did had a very good response. Now also, I’d been giving speeches as a school psychologist for, uh, PTA and things like that. Well, the first time I ever got paid, uh, that was a fairly big gift; and someone who heard me there called me about a week later and they said, “Governor Spellman (inaudible). Governor Spellman was to be our lunch speaker at a City Managers’ Conference in, uh, Eastern Washington, and he had an emergency at the Capitol and can’t be there. If we fly a small plane over to pick you up, would you come speak?” And so I had been at the time of the phone call, been talking to our Superintendent and so I was about to say, “No. I have to work,” and he said, “No. Go, go. It would be an honor.” So, someone who heard me there was on the Planning Department of their International Meeting. Uh, so the third speech I ever gave was for seven thousand people for the International City Managers’ Association. Well, that kind of exposure allowed – I mean, from then on, I worked full-time as a speaker and never had an agent or anything like that. It’s just word of mouth, but I do, as a matter of fact, work full-time across the United States and, uh Canada and Australia. So, now I travel and talk. Uh, I always have had a sense of humor, even as a child. I would always do anything for - for a laugh, which is how I managed to be not such a good speaker in my younger years, because I’d always go for the funny part and not the serious part. So, now I travel and talk. Uh, I have become a bit more of an adventurer. I have a “To Do” list, but my “To Do” lists are not the serious things. They’re, uh, oh, I wanted to parasail or swim in the Molikini Crater and then snorkel in the Molikini Crater which was really good at the time because I didn’t know how to swim, so that was braver than it looked. I wanted to dogsled in Alaska or ride a camel or elephant, you know, all these things I’ve done. I have my new list. My new list has on it – used to be an item called “Have Lunch With Jane Fonda,” and then Jane, during the Olympics came to Seattle and to Pasco, you know, because Ted, her husband had some involvement and she didn’t call me. Uh, so, at the same time, I was on a speaking tour with Helen Reddy, so Helen and I had lunch together every day, so I crossed out Jane’s name and wrote in Helen’s. So, sometimes my goals changed depending on the opportunities that present themselves. But now I have, uh – I have a great life. I’ve always had a great life. I feel so lucky to live here. I can’t tell you how much I thank my parents and grandparents who came from other countries and didn’t know people. I mean, came here and just – I mean, who would have – I think I do brave things by parasailing. I mean, they go to a country where they don’t even speak the language. (inaudible) and would come here and make a home here and that they believed in education; and even when I was not a good student, they always believed in me and my brother, believing that we were the oldest in our families and believed that we would go to school – you know, they had been on the farm, they come here and get blue collar jobs and the children will go to college. You know, it’s really their dreams that – I mean I never thought about not
going to college and I wasn’t even a good student, uh, then. But it never occurred to me to do anything else, because it was always my parents’ and grandparents’ aspiration that I would do this, and it would always have this goal of somehow being – I don’t know better than you were, but a little higher, a few steps higher and that, uh, that their job was to prepare you to move on to this next step that they could never attain, but you could. Although my mother plays a better game of golf now than I do (chuckle).

HS: But you brought honor to their family because of their expectations of you?

MG: Yes. Oh, yes. And I don’t know whether that was just because we were new in the country or that it was the time we grew up on – in, but you would never want to dishonor your family even if you did something wicked or illegal, you certainly would want to keep it a secret and never have it be revealed, because, uh – I can remember when I first lived in Seattle, one of my friend’s sister, who was a teacher got pregnant, but she wasn’t married, and so she asked me – she didn’t work in our school district – and she said, “Ask your Personnel Director if a teacher became pregnant and wasn’t married, what would they do?” So, I asked, and they said, “Oh, we’d fire her and write to the State and have her Teaching Certificate revoked.” Well, that couldn’t happen, so, but she had wanted to have the baby and, of course, abortions were illegal then, but no one even thought of them in the first place. Uh, well – I mean, some people, I mean, I’m sure we did, but they weren’t immediately available. So, she lived in the attic of her sister’s house, and her parents would come to visit and she’s up there in the attic. She had to go to the bathroom in a little can when anybody visited; and she lived in the attic until she had that baby and, at school, she had told them that, uh, she was ill and had to go for surgery in Idaho. And so – I mean, this was the (inaudible) uh, but a very, very different kind of life. But you certainly wouldn’t want to – you know those parents today do not know that that girl had a baby.

HS: Hmm. (inaudible) Give us a thirty second wrap-up either of your attitude toward education or your years here at Central, and we’ll call it a day.

MG: All right. Well, first of all, my years at Central were great. It was my first “away from home.” I was scared and nervous until I felt like I was part of the family here. Um, my life, like I say, has been a joy. Uh, it hasn’t been all (inaudible), but I always felt that I had the support of my family, the support of the college – always proud that I went to school here, and felt like that this would be a good place for a student to come and go from being a naive (stupy??) to being really an adult. It was a chance to grow, and so, this – And I’m not just saying this because I’m on this tape, I say this when I’m doing my speeches. So, this college was wonderful, my opportunities, both here in the State of Washington, and the United States – yeah, it’s been a joy.

HS: We thank you, Marilyn Grey, very, very much.

MG: Thank you.

END OF TRANSCRIPTION