

Madison Historical: The Online Encyclopedia and Digital Archive for Madison County, Illinois

Mary Huntley Oral History Interview

Steve Hansen, Interviewer

Edwardsville, Illinois

May 27, 2019

Steve Hansen (SH): Okay, so today is May the 27th 2019, and I am Steve Hansen. I am talking with Mary Dean Huntley, and Matt and Laurie Huntley are also present today. Um Mary Dean, can you tell us about? Tell us first when you were born, and then a little bit about you know, your childhood and your family?

Mary Dean Huntley (MDH): My birthday was March 18, 1930. I am an only child, was an only child. My mother and father were both North Carolinians and had met when my mother was in college in the town where my father grew up. And that's how they met, and then they married, and they had me, and I was the only one. And as a child, we moved to Chapel Hill, North Carolina, the University, and that's where I met my husband, and our life began.

SH: Were your parent's academics?

MDH: No, my father was just a salesman, a shop clothes horse, and my mother thought she could do anything. She was great.

SH: So, was it unusual for your mother to have gone to college?

MDH: Not at all, that was accepted by my mother's family. He was...she was a baby of eight and all of her brothers and sisters had gone to college.

SH: And so the expectation all along was that you would go to college?

MDH: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. My father had gone shortly, but it was during the early, early stages of the 20th century. And so...they...he went to work and worked as a clerk and had businesses and so forth.

SH: So your father owned his own business?

MDH: No, he did not own, he worked for.

SH: He worked for, okay. Did either one of them come from wealth?

MDH: My mother did, my grandfather, my mother was a baby of eight, and my grandfather, Will Sutton was a very wealthy farmer in the North Caro... in Chapel, outside of North Carolina, in North Carolina in the state.

SH: So, like tobacco farming?

MDH: Oh yeah, tobacco, you name it, my grandfather had a farm.

SH: Okay, so you grew up in a farm town?

MDH: Farm town, Clinton, North Carolina, which is between uh Raleigh and Wilmington. So it's right here.

SH: Okay, and um... so tell me about the house, tell me about some of the traditions you had growing up.

MDH: Well, my grandfather had this big plantation, and all of us would spend a lot of time there. Cousins, and all that kind of family. I was an only child, and I wasn't very spoiled [Laughter]. But I liked it. And my mother and father met when my mother was in college, and my dad was working, and then they had me, and then we lived in Clinton, North Carolina, which was close to my grandfather's plantation. And so we were there a lot, and then after that, they moved to Raleigh and lived there for a while and then moved on to Chapel Hill, and lived... and I grew up in Chapel Hill. If you know anything about the University of North Carolina, that's where I grew up.

SH: Okay, so you grew up in the midst of the depression, but do you have any memories of the depression?

MDH: Not from me, not from...my mother and father did, but I never worried about the depression. I was looked after very, very well. Spoiled a lot.

SH: Did your folks have any deprivation as a result, or a concern were they were hit hard by the depression that you remember?

MDH: My dad struggled. He lost his job and paced and looked for a job in Raleigh, North Carolina where they were living. Ultimately, he got into Efir's store and stayed there for a while and then move onto other areas and became quite well to do and did very well, and my mother was bound and determined that they were gonna have money, so they did.

[Laughter]

SH: Well, your mother sounds like a strong...

MDH: She was a baby of eight, and she could do no wrong until the day she died.

SH: So then you must have been about seven when World War II broke out?

MDH: It was 1942, wasn't it? '41 '42 so I would have been twelve since cause I was born in 30. It was easy for me to remember how old I was.

SH: Do you have many strong memories about the homefront growing up during World War II?

MDH: Oh yes, my cousins were great, and I had great cousins, and we spent a lot of time at the beach, we were only an hour away from Wilmington, North Carolina where we were living. And uh so I just grew

up as a spoiled only child who liked being an only child, but I had great aunts and uncles, and 42 first cousins.

SH: 42?

MDH: Because my father had brothers and with children, and my mother's brothers and sisters had children, and I had 42 first cousins, and we all liked it. I did, I thought they thought I was wonderful, I was spoiled rotten.

SH: Well you are wonderful, I don't know if you were spoiled rotten but... So your dad would have been, he probably didn't serve in WWII...

MDH: No no, my father did not serve, and neither did my mother.

SH: Okay, so how aware were you of the world at war?

MDH: I just heard a lot about it, and when you lived in Chapel Hill at that time, the university was going through flux because of the war, uh but I was never scared, I - I was very well aware of what we were going through, and my mother and father had friends by that time in Chapel Hill who were very much involved in everything with the city and so forth. So I just had a very free feeling life, I was an only child, I was spoiled, but I never wanted for anything, I was - my family were very... all my relatives were very kind to me, and I am the last one of all of us.

SH: What is your maiden name?

MDH: Williams.

SH: Williams.

MDH: Williams, my father was a Williams, my mother was a Sutton, and my Mary Dean were my mother's aunts' names.

SH: So you didn't follow the war news closely?

MDH: Uh by the time the war was over, I was very well aware, and of course, then the army, the soldiers began to come and go back to Carolina to go to college. And so I became more and more aware of it and the university had grown, and it was such a wonderful little town, still, have you ever been there?

SH: No, I have not.

MDH: Well you should treat yourself to Chapel Hill, North Carolina between Durham and Raleigh, great town, beautiful university, very very up and coming, so yeah it was uh... I had a very good uh life.

SH: Did you have any close relatives that served in the war?

MDH: I had a cousin or two that did, but that was it.

SH: Alright, so what was, what was, what was life like, I know you said you had a good life... um, what was...were you aware...what was the racial climate like when you were...?

MDH: There were black people who lived in a segment of Chapel Hill, in ah one area, and uh they were maids, and my mother had servants. Uh but the people within the town were very liberal, Chapel Hill was a liberal town, we didn't put up with mess, so we gained a lot of stuff.

SH: Um...You said that you were, you were kind of expected to go to college?

MDH: Oh, absolutely!

SH: And where did you go?

MDH: Chapel hill, Okay.

SH: And um, were you aware that - that was unusual?

MDH: No, I was aware that was one of the best schools in the state of Illinois... or uh of the state of [Laughter]

SH: North Carolina...

MDH: North Carolina... didn't get any better!

SH: But you weren't aware that it was different or unique for a woman to go to college?

MDH: Oh no! My mother went to college, I had cousins going to college, we all went to college.

SH: Did you go to public high school?

MDH: Oh yes, a great public school, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, in the little town of Chapel Hill. It was a great high school, and I had a ball. I did a lot of stuff.

[Laughter]

SH: Oh, I bet you did.

MDH: Oh, it was fun... it was fun!

SH: And in college, tell me what college life was like, did you...

MDH: The college in North Carolina was and is a great university, and that's where David and I met each other. He was a freshman there, and he, we met in the spring passing each other on the street, and I said hello, and he turned to me and said hello and then that weekend he was dating a girl that was at a party that I went to, and he came up and I looked at him and said, "you know what, you're probably the ugliest boy I've ever met," and he looked at me and said "Honey, I'm ugly, you're ugly, I can get uglier, you

can't." And I thought I have got to have him, and next thing I knew I was dancing with him and wasn't long after that we got serious.

SH: What year was this?

MDH: 19...what was it, oh god, my final year in college, where would 1940, we graduated in '49 or '50, and we married in '51.

SH: Okay, and so you went, and you must have gone to college then...

MDH: In Carolina, as a freshman...

SH: So I'm trying to get the chronology, so like '47?

MDH: '48, I graduated from high school in '48, started college in '48 in fall, and then we, once I married David I didn't go back until I came to here and started to finish up my college.

SH: Ohh Okay

MDH: So I graduated from here ultimately after I had 5 children and decided I needed my education finished, and David wanted me to also.

SH: Alright, okay, and tell me a little about David's background

MDH: Oh my lord, have mercy that boy, that boy, that boy. He was the second child. His older brother, uh Neil, thought he was the most brilliant thing in the world, and he wasn't, David was. [Laughter] But uh David was very gifted, even as a young child, but he was sickly, and had some major heart problems and so forth and outgrew them.

SH: And where did David...?

MDH: And it was in Elmore, North Carolina, in the foothills, close to Morganton, North Carolina, right on the highway between Wilmington and Asheville. So they were very... my grandma's husband's father was head of a pharmacy, very bright, very... and big Repub... uh, Democrat, who was in all kinds of stuff. His mother was very ambitious and very smart, and they had uh the brother and then two sisters, two children, so there was a full family, and they were very interesting people when I met them and grew to love them, and they was always so kind to me.

SH: So you mentioned that you grew up liberal?

MDH: Oh, yes.

SH: So how did ... how was it to be a liberal in the South?

MDH: Easy for us, my mother and father were always big Democrats, always my grandfathers on both sides of the house, and they were just people that were very interested in their churches. They were all Baptist, or whatever [laughter] That wasn't easy. But it was interesting.

SH: In what way?

MDH: It was, they were interesting people, they were intelligent, argumentative, uh all did extremely well in business, all of em, my uncles, and uh they were people with great backgrounds, and uh very liberal, very liberal a-lot of them.

SH: Okay, so I'm gonna come back to that, but let's pick up where you and David got married, uh...

MDH: We were in graduate school, I mean David was in graduate school, I went - we were living, and I immediately got pregnant, so I had to drop out of college, and I started having these babies until one day I just said enough is enough, and I didn't have any more. [Laughter] That took me a few years. But no, we lived in Chapel Hill, and then from there we went to Gaffney, South Carolina when David taught for two years, from there we went to Alabama, and we were there for five years, and then we came here.

SH: And David was pursuing a graduate degree in...

MDH: Ohh yes, degrees...

SH: in Art History?

MDH: Oh, yes, art, everything. He was the art teacher that ran the... to that particular group.

SH: And where in Alabama were you?

MDH: Uh [sigh] Where were we son?

Matt Huntley (MH): Montgomery

MDH: Hugh?

MDH: No, not Montgomery

MH: well it was Mobile or Montgomery

MDH: No, either one... Uh, the city in Alabama was the big city...

SH: Birmingham?

MDH: Birmingham, there we go. He was in Birmingham, we lived in right - 30 miles away in the little town of...ga... or uh no... I can't remember the name, it's all running together. We had a... it'll come in a few minutes...

SH: This was at a public university?

MDH: No, it was a small college, Yes. And we lived there for 5 years, built a home there, and had the...the four children and I got pregnant with the other as we were leaving town. So Matthew was born once we moved to this area.

SH: Okay, and tell us about how David got recruited and uh to come to SIU Edwardsville and your reaction.

MDH: Andy Coachman and his wife had been our close-close friends in Alabama, and uh Andy got a job at SIU and called David and said: "I want you to come for an interview." David said, "I'm not interested," Andy - "I want you to come and see this college, and I would like you to come and stay for a day or two." So he did.

MH: You all were pretty miserable in Alabama, with what was going on.

MDH: Oh, yes, we were...David... uh we supported the Black movement, and we had things burned in our yard because David had been part of a black movement of a black. So that was very important for certain people in town, and we left there after 5 years, and that's when Andy then talked David into coming to SIU. I said, "Where in the hell is SIU?" And we moved to town, and we've been here ever since.

SH: Okay so let's go back then to talking about Civil Rights

MDH: oh yes

MDH: ... and being a liberal in the South. How... did you guys... during the 50s when the civil rights movements were beginning to pick up steam. And uh the...When were the freedom riders? 58, 59, 61?

MDH: Yeah, see we had finished high school, and we were just starting college when a lot of that civil rights stuff was starting. But my family was liberal, his family was liberal, all my cousins were, and we didn't mess around, and we were friends with black people, we were, we did as much as we could for em.

[Coughing]

SH: Okay, so now when you were in Alabama, how deeply did you get involved in...

MDH: David and Andy and some of our friends went with the black movement into Birmingham and the big Sunday thing that happened in Birmingham, where the children were killed. And we were 20 minutes away, or half an hour away, and we went into the city. David had to get involved. And that damn Sheriff... Oh, I wish I could've...

SH: Connor? Bull Connor!

MDH: Oh, Connor! Son of a bitch. Oh, he was a terrible human being.

SH: Say again?

MDH: He was a terrible human being! Bull Connor, good for you.

SH: Okay, so when the church was bombed, and those little girls were killed, you guys went...

MDH: Yes, we were still in the little town outside. But, uh David immediately went into the city of uh...

SH: Birmingham.

MDH: Birmingham dear I'm having a lapse.

SH: That's alright. And uh then how did you and David work with the black movement in...King was...

MDH: Throughout the area. They would go there for meetings.

SH: David would?

MDH: David and Andy.

SH: And Andy.

MDH: Yes.

SH: But then you stayed home with the kids?

MDH: I stayed home with the kids, and we only lived there 5 years. But that was sufficient, we were ready to get out of Alabama, we had enough. But uh, we felt we did what we needed to, and we were ready to get our children out of that area...

SH: Okay

MDH: ...and came into Alton, and it was a whole new life for my children and uh so we were very lucky, and then that's how we got involved, with, that's how Andy and David, because Andy Coachman was working here as a dean, and that's when we came and have been here ever since.

SH: Well, let's go back before, let's go back to Alabama, did you participate in the March on Selma, across the bridge?

MDH: Oh no, I did not; now I had friends that did, but uh no. David didn't march then, but he had participated in small movements.

SH: Okay. And do you remember some of the people uh some of the civil rights?

MDH: Oh, the Selma, the march in Selma, and all of that kind of thing, yes. We were very much aware of ah all of that.

SH: Do you remember. Did you interact with any of the civil rights leaders?

MDH: Now David did, David and Andy did, I didn't. I had black maids, and I was very conscious of the fact that I liked these women, and they liked me, and they would come down, and a group that came to call one day, black women, and it was delightful. They came in, and we had a nice visit, and that was just the way. Now other people, "Oh my goodness," well, it was lovely.

SH: It seems to me that you told me one time that you and David had met Martin Luther King. Does that?

MDH: Yes, David did, and we saw Martin Luther King just before he was murdered. Yeah, we happened to be in the little town for something, and he was on the porch of a little hotel, and we saw him. But yeah, we saw him. We knew. David was very much involved in that whole movement.

SH: Okay, and Matt said that you had, there uh was stuff burned in your yard?

MDH: Oh yeah, we had... Let's see. How can I tell you this... A... a good. We lived at least almost a half-mile from the road to our house. [Crosstalk] And outside of the little town of... where we were living, It'll come to me in a little bit. it falls on me. Anyway, we bought this piece of property, David's father bought it for him, and we built a house there, and we were there 5 years. And the boys could play football with friends and the older boys, Mark, and Matthew, and Bubba and so it was a fun, great place for me to teach these children how to be nice to other people. Yep.

SH: And so, why was there stuff, why was there some vandalism at your house because of the civil rights?

MDH: Oh, they burned crosses in our front yard because we, David was a civil rightist.

SH: Really crosses burned

MDH: They burned crosses in our driveway.

SH: more than once?

MDH: Oh, yes. We would go out and blow them down. But it was... we weren't scared, it was just... it was Alabama. Get the hell out of town. That's when we moved to Illinois.

SH: Okay, so you weren't scared, intimidated?

MDH: No, we were not scared, we knew these guys don't know what they're doing, coming over and burning a cross in our yard, big deal.

SH: And what were the years that you were in this little Alabama town?

MDH: 5 years.

SH: Yeah, but do you remember, was it in the...

MDH: What was the first... we moved from Illinois.

MH: I was born in '62, Mark was born in '59, so it was from '61, so '56. '56 through '61 were those five years.

SH: So '56 through '61 you were in Alabama.

MDH: Hmm. Yep.

MH: I'm the only Yankee in the family.

SH: So you were born in Illinois?

MDH: He was born in Illinois, pregnant in Alabama, and on a cold winter night, we had been out playing in the snow, and I thought "This is dumb." [Laughter] Next thing I knew, I was pregnant, and we had our last one, and that's when we moved to Illinois.

SH: Okay, so you were quite early on then in the civil rights movement in Alabama.

MDH: Oh yes, and very proud of the fact that we were, we cared, and we were involved, and our neighbors were also very much liberal.

SH: Oh, is that right?

MDH: A couple on each side. There were those of us that uh were part of the university there that were ready to hightail it out of town. Yep, we had enough.

SH: Okay, so you came up to SIU, and Andy coachman recruited David and uh to come up to SIU.

MDH: And that's right to come to SIU. And he came back from the interview, he had driven his car in into Alabama, into the city, and then had flown into St. Louis, and Andy met him, took him all over Alton, and thought "Good God what kind of place is this." So they had a good visit and then came back. And I went to the door and let him in, and he said, "don't say anything to me. I think I've just been hired by a phantom outfit" [Laughter] And so, that's when we knew we were moving to Illinois, and we had just bought this house 3 years before, and so we buckled up and came to Illinois, came to Alton.

SH: So you, you...you moved to Alton?

MDH: Came directly to Alton, because that was where David was going to teach in uh the building there in Alton, and uh the college there.

SH: At Shurtleff?

MDH: Yes, at Shurtleff. And we were there, good God, we lived there for how many years 12, 10?

MH: You lived there until I was 9. Well, yeah, because I had my tenth birthday here.

MDH: Yeah

SH: Okay, wait a minute, let me get that chronology. You moved up to Alton about '61?

MH: Yeah, so '62, winter of '62, cause I was born October of '62 at Alton Memorial.

MDH: We had moved there in the summer,

SH: Okay.

MDH: We had lived there until '71 when we moved to the house here

SH: In Edwardsville.

MDH: In Edwardsville, and then when David died, I moved here.

SH: Now, when you guys moved to Alton, and you had all these kids, what was it that David did for the university?

MDH: He ran their art department; he was chair.

SH: So he was chair of that?

MDH: Yes, he was very involved.

SH: When did David become in charge of the Museum?

MDH: Okay, he was involved in all that, and Andy was moved to the president's office, and he said, "David, I want you on campus." and he said, "What the heck," he said "I want you on campus. We're building a new building, I want you to have the art department." And so, we moved to Edwardsville.

SH: Okay. Now, so now pick up the story now with you, you have the kids.

MDH: We had five. That's enough!

SH: So now you're living in Alton, when is it that you decided then to finish your college degree?

MDH: Let's see. How old were you when you started... We had a lady who came in, were you three years old? You were older than that after, cause you were sickly.

MH: When I got my first case of pneumonia, you were going back then.

MDH: So how old then?

MH: So I would have been... I was in 1st grade so I would have been 5 or 6 years old, so about '68.

SH: Bout '68? and at SIU

MDH: Yep, about '68 that I started back to college. And what did I get a Degree in?

MDH: Library Science.

SH: And from SIU?

MDH: Yep, and got a degree in Library Science.

SH: From SIU?

MDH: Yep, from SIU. That's right. And then I got a call. David, after I had graduated, he said he wanted to take me to New York for holiday, and I said that was lovely. So we got on a plane, and we left the children with nurses, and we took off and went to New York, had a week, came home, and the phone rang. And I answered it, and said: "This is Nick Yost." I said, well hey Nick he was the neighbor, but I didn't talk to him very much. And he said, "We want to interview you, I'm on the board of the library in Alton." Yes, you know we're living in Alton? And he said, "Yes, we would like for you to come to a meeting of the library board." And I said, "Well, for what?" "Well you have a degree in library science, we'd like you to come and interview with us." And I am thinking hell, I just finished college, I haven't had time to enjoy doing nothing. I said "Okay," so I went to this library board meeting, had a great meeting, next thing I knew they had hired me as director as a public library that I had just got a degree for. And for 25 years I ran the Alton Public Library.

SH: The Hayner library?

MDH: The Hayner Public Library in Alton. For 25 years when David retired in December and I quit in June. So that was the end of that.

SH: Alright, so tell me uh, tell me about some of the things you did for the Hayner library, for the public library.

MDH: Oh, mercy. I had it gutted from top to bottom, both buildings, I saw to it refreshed, redone, everything. Got rid of a bunch uh well... Anyways, it was a big, big thing and it is a great library, it was a little piddlin' thing, but it ain't anymore.

SH: How did you build the collection?

MDH: Hugh?

MH: How did you...What did you focus on?

MDH: Everything, everything. I had my feet in... I had good women working for me, and we really rebuilt that library's collection. It is still a very, very good collection and a good library.

MH: You fought tooth and nail to get the tax bill through. With the election with Mark Finida to get the tax bill through.

MDH: Oh yes, I forgot about that.

SH: Okay so, tell us about that, the funding, and how did you get the money to physically renovate the building?

MDH: Well, I went to the city and I said, I want some money to run this public library, and I said, then I will go to the people of the city of Alton, Godfrey, and Fosterburg and I will hit everybody in those three counties and we'll will build a library, and I did. I went on air, I don't know, I just talked a lot.

SH: You talked a lot? Alright, so you campaigned?

MDH: Oh yes, I would go to this lovely luncheon. and ohh yeah, the old bat I was, I knew what I was doing, you want a library, we're gonna have a library, and we did.

SH: And, was there a referendum to increase the taxes?

MDH: Yes, hh yes, we won, I was there in the middle of the night and came home and David had been somewhere. I had been a big referendum, and he had gone to a friend's house and came back and went to bed and I said, you son of a bitch! Get up! I just won an election!

[Laughter]

SH: Okay now, were you aware of the so-called democratic political machine in Madison County?

MDH: Well, because I was a democrat and I could've cared less, and I knew as long as you're a Democrat, we're gonna win, and so I did. Republicans can be damned.

[Laughter]

SH: And uh Matt eluded to the fact that you worked with Mark Von Nida?

MDH: Yeah, Mark Von Nida came and worked for me. Yeah I hired Mark for a while to go out, and he was very good. This is before he really got terribly involved in the courthouse, but he did a good job for me.

SH: Doing what?

MDH: Whatever he wanted to do, and whatever I let him do, I don't know. He just went out and talked.

MH: He did what Mark does, he campaigned in campus and neighborhoods, and Mark and I had been friends in college, and that's his first real step outside to announce, to campaign and run and try to get a foot in the door.

SH: Okay, this is going to be hard to pick you up, sitting over there, but just to summarize again, Matt Huntley and Mark Von Nida went to high school together?

MH: College. We met at SIU, and we were part of the political action committees, we campaigned for Paul Simon, and so when Mark finally got his first step outside of college, and his first real campaign, was with mom. Back in the '80s to get funding for the library.

SH: Okay so Mark Von Nida...

MDH: Oh God he worked very hard for me.

SH: Okay, worked on the campaign to increase the funds.

MDH: To help me really get the funding that I wanted for that library.

SH: Okay, so how was it interacting with all of these hard-boiled politicians?

MDH: I schmoozed. I just go uh "hello da da da da," but I knew what I was doing, I knew what I wanted, I knew how to get it. And I did.

SH: So you knew how to get it because...?

MDH: I wanted the city of Alton to have one of the best libraries anywhere. And that's what I worked on. I didn't know if I was going to achieve it or not. I thought I would blow the whole thing, and David never said a word. He just sat back, and every time I needed something, I take care of that. He was back there behind me 100%, and the kids were there. It was... everybody was so kind to me, but then I was a bitch.

SH: I, uh well I think you were determined, that may not be the same thing...

MDH: Well, this is true. I started out in a little bitty office, I ended up in a new office with a new desk and just have to be asked in. But I was there 25 years, and it worked.

MH: Mean Mary Dean, the librarian.

SH: Mean Mary Dean the librarian? The library queen?

MDH: Oh no. Not quite. But I had a terrific staff. I really had a, I fired a few, you know, I had a couple of guys that thought they were hot stuff and I got rid of them. Let the women do it, and the women did it, and have always done it. They ran a first-class library.

SH: So what year were you hired in as director of Hayner, and what year did you retire?

MDH: What year did I retire? What year did I finish college?

MH: You would've finished college in... You graduated right before we moved?

MDH: Yes.

MH: So that would have been '70, '71.

MDH: Okay, that's when I took over at the library.

SH: Okay.

MH: And then dad decided he had to be here, and then she was commuting.

SH: Okay and then, so then you retired about '96?

MDH: Yes, yes, yes.

SH: And over that span of 25 years, Alton went through a lot of changes.

MDH: Oh, a lot of changes, and Steve Cousley was running at the Alton Telegraph and he and I were good friends and he kept telling me how great he was and I kept saying thank you very much, but we, we were running a tight ship. The Telegraph became a much better paper, and it was an interesting town. It really was an interesting town. It was awful every night to come home to Edwardsville, to my big house that David and I had finally, we had all moved into. It was a great, great life.

SH: And uh, describe some of the changes you witnessed in Alton over those 25 years, with the steel...

MDH: Well the steel mill closed, this one, the glass factory closed, uh it was difficult to say because there were so many changes. Attitudes changed, a little bit more liberal than it had been before. I was always welcomed and always appreciated, and for that I was grateful. And so I don't know, we just built a good system, and the town grew, and its a... it isn't the greatest town in the world, but it's a first-class town.

SH: Matt or Laurie, I mean, do you have any particular remembrances that you want to jog Mary Deans memory about?

MH: Oh God...

Laurie Huntley (LH): Well maybe the reason why her father wasn't in WWII was an injury that had quite a story.

MH: She wants you to tell the story of K.P. getting shot.

MDH: Well, yeah you can do that.

MH: I just political and historical reference nothing maybe, but it is a family story...

SH: Okay Mary come over here, Matt.

MH: And how you came to be kind of brushed over a lot in your childhood. My mother is one generation removed from slaveholders. The plantation that she talked about in the big family [inaudible] had slaves. He was a slaveholder. Her mother, youngest of 8, was raised with the last of the family slaves as a maid taking care of it. So yes, there's a lot of family history there you sort of glassed over mother, which is kind of big. Whatever. The reas... when my grandfather was in his mid-teens, about 17 if I remember the story correctly, he and his friends, one of the boys had taken a shine to one of the girls in a town nearby, so they all piled into a model-A, and cruised over, and the father did not particularly care for this young man, and had warned him not to come back by. Well, they came by and out stepped the old man with a gun on the porch and shot at the car. My grandfather was sitting, and the cabin sat 3 across and took a bullet right here.

SH: Where were you pointing at?

MH: Right at the sternum. He never went bare-chested from that moment on.

MDH: That's true.

MH: After several months in the hospital, he had met Gladys at that point, Gladys being my grandmother.

MDH: She was a student at the girl's school there in town. And my daddy had just finished high school when they met. When he was recuperating, my mother and some of her girlfriends dropped by to say hello to my father, and that's how my father met my mother. She came to see him because he had been really sick.

MH: He had been shot!

MDH: He fell in love big time.

SH: That must have been in the late 30s?

MDH: In the late 20s. In the 20s.

MH: In the late 20s. And so that's... and so then they got married and you came around. There's a bit of a gap there. Whatever.

MDH: Whatever.

SH: So did you know any of the people who had been enslaved? Were they still...because during the 1930s there were still people alive who had been enslaved.

MDH: Ohh yeah, my mother. Well... There reached a point that they were still hiring black people to run the farm for my grandfather and women that would work in my grandmother's house. As a little girl, she grew up with black women. When we were living in and I was growing up, we thought nothing of having lovely black women come in and work at my mother's home. And my father had black women, men, work in the store, department store where he worked, and uh it was... we were very liberal.

MH: Now you keep saying that, but no, you weren't. Your family was not. You were liberal, you didn't think anything of it, but uh to actually think about K.P. and everybody else, they were still letting the, they were using the black labor at half the price.

MDH: Well, you may be right. I was just different. I thought I was being interviewed, I didn't know my daddy was. He died.

SH: Alright kids, so let's pick this up again and fill me in more about what happened in Alabama. Did you remember the name of the town?

MDH: You wouldn't. He would not.

MH: I texted to mark, to see if he'd respond. I can't... can not remember for the life of me the name of the town.

MDH: Alton?

MH: No, in Alabama.

MD: Oh my god... the little town with the university in it where we lived...

MH: I wasn't born yet... [laughter]

SH: Outside of Birmingham

MDH: 25-30 miles outside of Birmingham. Uh, It'll come to me in the middle of the night. We lived there for 5 years.

SH: Okay now, so David took the lead in the family, in your famil-

MDH: yes.

SH: In your family, as far as the civil rights.

MDH: Oh absolutely.

SH: And, um you are completely supportive of David's actions, and activism?

MDH: Oh completely, completely supportive of what David wanted to do. He was very liberal, the friends in the university were very liberal, and he was bound and determined to do... and we had guys on the department that were black. There were 2 or 3, and they were good, good, good.

SH: Okay, so this was in the late 50s then that this was occurring.

MDH: 60s.

MH: Wasnt there a black college nearby? I remember him telling the story of Andy having a friend, a black professor?

MDH: About an hour away. This black guy and his friend and they would go there.

MH: And they would have to show up and-

MDH: Yes.

MH: Play the dumb farmhand for the security guard to let him on campus, and go around back, and yes, yes. "Those ignorant bastards." Left with dad and Andy.

MDH: Well, so they were very supportive.

SH: Well there was an Alabama-

MH: Montevallo!

MDH: Montevallo, Alabama.

SH: Montevallo?

MDH: Why can I not remember? Okay, that's the name of where we were, just outside of Birmingham.

SH: Okay. What is the historically black college in...

MH: Not Tuskegee, that's in Mississippi...

SH: Yeah, in Birmingham. There's Alabama A&M which is in Huntsville...

MDH: Yes.

MH: Tuscaloosa, Birmingham...

MDH: There's a big black college in Birmingham, and I can't remember the name of that either.

SH: It'll come. So is there other remembrances that you two... that she has either glossed over, or I failed to ask...

MH: Well...

SH: Now I know, and I'm not making this up Mary Dean, you told me that you and David had Martin Luther King in your house.

MDH: Yes. I'm trying to remember which house...but I think it was a big house of plaster we had...

MH: Well, it wasn't Alton, and it wasn't in Edwardsville... No, cause it was before we moved to Edwardsville...

MDH: He visits and eats, and leaves... but yes.

MH: That was in Alabama...

MDH: Yes, that was in Alabama.

SH: That was in Alabama...

MDH: Oh yeah, Martin Luther King.

SH: Well, because his first pastor was at the Dexter Avenue Church in Montgomery.

MDH: Yeah, Montgomery, this is true.

SH: Okay.

MDH: And David went to Montgomery often with Andy, to meetings when Martin Luther King was there. Oh yeah. And he would come back and tell me.

SH: So, David was very active.

MDH: David was very, very liberal.

SH: This would've been probably before the Montgomery yeah, bus boycott...

MDH: Yep.

SH: And before the march to Selma, so you guys were early on pioneers...

MDH: That's when the things were burned in our yard because the word was out that David and Andy were out with the black people.

SH: And this was Andy Coachman?

MDH: Hmm.

SH: And Andy Coachman became-

MDH: The President of the university here in Edwardsville.

MH: The dean of the college of arts and sciences.

MDH: He was the president before...

SH: Rendleman.

MH: After John, before Earl.

MDH: No, after Rendleman. Because Rendleman got sick and then Andy took over, and then...

SH: Bushaw.

MH: I always forget about those

MDH: But what happened, got Andy out of there, was he and the guy on the board who was... guy from here... in southern Illinois that was part of the... oh he's a son of a bitch. [inaudible] It began with an "S." And he lived in southern Illinois, and he came to Edwardsville on a board meeting, and took Andy on, and walked out and left the university, gathered his stuff and walked out. Oh, it was awful. David was ready to kill him. But they were really- it was an embarrassment for all of us, because of Andy. They all felt so terrible, so awful. And what... The guy's name will come to me. Elliott somebody from southern Illinois. Elliott. Banker? Well neither here nor there.

SH: Well, you guys were here when the core campus was built after the referendum passed to build the Edwardsville campus, and it must have been exciting times with the faculty that were being gathered, and tell me about the community you guys developed at the university.

MDH: They just came, uh everybody was out looking for them, we had some guys from way out that began to bring in, that's how the faculty grew because they had terrific support from all the friends that had been at universities that wanted to come here. And when we watched it grow, that first building was built, and then the library was built, and then the... it was all, an interesting, interesting time.

SH: Who uh who were some of the faculty that you socialized with?

MDH: Oh my god, everybody. we were a small faculty, all of the women went to luncheons together and we had a great time, and we'd go to the country club and Lupps and, it was a big group and so many of them are dead, and I can't remember.

SH: Was it people like Jack Shaheen?

MDH: I remember very, very well Jack Shaheen; I like jack a lot.

MH: John and Francis Sabot.

MDH: John and Francis Sabot, closest friend right across the street, yeah. The 4 of us were best friends, and then uh the, oh the couple- he was- that in the student union

MH: Well you didn't, it was Delyte Morris-

MDH: Yes, Delyte was president. He was president at the time. Delyte and Dorothy. No, no I'm thinking in different areas. oh I can't remember,

MH: Shyla Stempson.

MDH: Shyla Stempson, big mouth Shyla, did you know Shyla?

SH: No I didn't.

MDH: Oh, honey! You ain't miss nothing. She thought she owned everything, but she didn't.

LH: She was my first boss.

MDH: There was a great group though up on the hill.

SH: Where does that mean, up on the hill?

MDH: Well, Andy was up there, had his own office up there, called it up on the hill.

MH: The Rendleman Building, yeah. I adored Rendleman. He and I were Buddies.

SH: John Rendleman.

MDH: John Rendleman. He would pick- we would pick on each other but I enjoyed John, I really did. What a character he was. I knew what he was doing in Springfield, he was screwing around like crazy,

and everybody knew it, and he'd come home, and he was so perfect with her, and I thought poor darling, he's been at it again. Oh dear, he was funny, but John died a quick death, he really did. He had a rough go.

SH: Yeah, he was deeply involved in democratic politics.

MDH: Oh yes, he was a good Democrat.

SH: When David became director of the museum, he was able to collect some very interesting and impressive pieces, like the Sullivan collection. Tell me about your memory of that and your involvement in.

MDH: Very little, because I was so involved in what I was doing, all I was doing was supporting him, and I didn't get involved in his choices, I knew he went to New York a lot, I pushed him to do that, he bought a lot, he was being David and he was wonderful, and so, I was doing my thing.

SH: Do you have any recollection of how he was able to get the ornamental collection, the Sullivan ornamental collection?

MDH: I think he just decided he wanted to do that, and I have forgotten who he screwed. But I think he was hell-bent on doing this. He really was.

SH: Matt?

MH: So the Sullivan collection, Louis Sullivan designed a lot of the classic buildings that were in Illinois and Chicago downtown and in the outskirts of Chicago, and Springfield, and in the early 80s progress moving forward, the buildings were being marked for destruction, so daD at that point now at that point dad, head of the university museums, grabs Jerry Feyhe and a couple of the grad students, and they get 3 of the university vans and they drive. And they get up and have just enough time from the demolition team, to go in and grab whatever they can off of the building and from inside the buildings, before they explode before the buildings are completely destroyed. Ah there are shots, there are books someplace of Jerry hanging out a window getting one of, a couple of the ornaments off of the side of the buildings, they took a blow torch with them and took the bolts off of the elevator doors that Sullivan had designed, these buildings were uh... they did it at the last second, they got stuff out. That collection is the largest collection of Sullivan ornaments left in the world, because dad and those crazy kids got in, and dad screamed "let us save this, let us save this," and the foreman went "We don't blow it up until tomorrow, you have got until then, but we're not responsible for anything that goes on in there. You're not covered by our insurance, university I'm sure did not know what they were doing because they would have never allowed it. But they saved everything. So that's how the Sullivans came, that's how the Sullivan collection got saved and got brought back.

MDH: They worked themselves to death.

MH: They did- And that was another one of dad's heart attacks. Dad's first heart attack was the James Madison statue, then the courthouse.

SH: Tell us about that.

MH: For the bicentennial of our nation, he was commissioned to do a statue of James Madison. So you wanna take the story from there?

MDH: No, keep going, I'm tired.

MH: You're tired.

[Laughing]

MDH: Keep going, telling the truth.

MH: He starts doing the clay and then the wax in the basement-

MDH: In the basement, in our basement. He's building the Madison statue out of clay in the basement.

MH: At that time, I am 5 foot 2, and in 7th grade and I am the perfect size for Madison, so he uses me as the model. Me in my pajamas, standing there for proper proportions for Madison, I didn't know madison was that short.

MDH: Short little sucker.

MH: Yep, but he again, out of the old Wagner complex, which is now the N.O. Nelson complex, I still call it Wagner, always will, eventually poured, and then worked on that piece, they started in January originally?

MDH: Something like that, I cant remember.

MH: And had to have it done by July 4th for unveil.

MDH: Worked until 4 in the morning on July 4th to get it into the...

MH: They just finished everything up and moved it into place, well...

MDH: Had the police watching. The police get them, the group into the courthouse, and uh Dick Mudge

MH: Dick Mudge showed up who had keys to the courthouse, opened it up because he wasn't going to miss anything that dad did, and the police come swarming because the courthouse is being broken into, and dad and all the grad students and they're moving this bronze statue and base, and Dick says "I got this David, put it in" and he told the police to back off, and this was what it was.

MDH: And they did.

MH: And they did, and they said okay were watching, they knew the instant they knew what was going on they were thrilled by it.

MDH: They wanted to watch.

MH: But that was what caused him to have his first heart attack, he worked so hard.

MDH: He was so ready to get that- and it was that morning at 11 o'clock, there was a crowd at that courthouse and there was the unveiling, and you've seen in since, but that was his piece de resistance. He had worked so hard.

SH: What things should I- should I ask Mary Dean about?

MH: [sigh] Let's see.

LH: The trip, the travels that you were able to do?

MH: Your travels with dad? You went all over the world, you and dad traveled everywhere.

MDH: Ohh yeah! Hell, I don't know, we've just been to everywhere.

MH: Well you got to see the Sistine Chapel before and after the cleaning,

MDH: That's true.

MH: You're one of the few people to see it right after the cleaning.

MDH: Oh no, we had some great trips, we really did. He was so, he'd get so involved and I would sit over in the corner and think, okay David, hed just redo this mentally, this piece. But very exciting and fun.

MH: You hosted some amazing people at your house from the arts and issues when dad was in charge of arts and issues.

MDH: Yeah, we had some interesting, interesting people.

SH: Like who?

MDH: I can't remember.

MH: Edward Albee.

SH: Edward Albee?

MDH: Yep, Edward Albee, I remember. With bedroom slippers on. We had interesting, interesting people in and out.

LH: You guys hosted Japanese or Chinese students.

MH: The Chinese students when dad was doing his teaching.

MDH: I can't remember all of those people. They were fun.

SH: Okay, alright, so we have a chronology down pretty well, we uh have some glimpses into your life, during the 30s and the 40s, and 50s, and 60s.

MDH: And the 60s, keep her going.

SH: And so you have, you had a career, a professional career, you went to college,

MDH: That's right.

SH: Did you, did you have any sense at all that you, were um, that your life was different than the norm of most American women?

MDH: I never thought about it. I never... [sigh] I'm doing what I'm doing. I'm enjoying what I'm doing, I hope I'm doing a good job, but I'm not going to go out and compete. I just never had - I couldn't live with myself if I had to be competitive.

SH: I don't understand what you're trying to express there.

MDH: I didn't ever want anyone to feel that I was better than I thought I was.

SH: Okay

MDH: Yep.

SH: So you were active in the Civil Rights movement, were you active in women's rights?

MDH: Not particularly, not particularly.

MH: Mother!

MDH: By that time, I had all of these children, and I had a business to run, and I just stopped, let somebody else do it now.

MH: Well, you worked with the League of Women Voters.

MDH: Well, a little. I made a few phone calls, but I never did anything major.

SH: And you had your fingers in politics, in county politics. In county politics.

MDH: In county politics because I needed to at one point, to clean - to get what I wanted for the library, that I had to get out there and get my fingers involved in the politics, and I did, and it won. So, yep.

SH: Okay, um I would say that there's something that you're going to remember and say I wish I had asked Mary Dean or had my mom say something, and the thing will be you - you'll think of something particularly after you get the transcript. So we can add to this, but I would ask that you kinda jot something down, or send me an email, or a text so that we can do a follow-up. Is that alright?

MDH: Yes.

SH: I'm going to turn this off unless you have something profound to say before.

MDH: No, I think I've profounded enough.

[recording stops]

SH: Alright go ahead.

MDH: Her family were very well to do farmers, she came along in the middles of a rather large family, and she was limited, mentally. Her name, oh God what was her name.

SH: You had a nickname for her didn't you? Didn't you have a nickname for her?

MDH: Oh yes, had a nickname that everybody called her. Why would I not, remember, I loved her. I felt so sorry for her, but I loved her. And she loved me. And we'd pick at each other, and just have the best time passing in the yard and so forth, and but anyway, oh God I wish I could remember. But she was a farm girl and she came to see me once when I was at mother's with all of you and you may remember being in the entryway to mothers house and this little woman walking in and all of you just fell apart because of, she had found out I was in town and she had made a point to come to my daddy's- my mother's house, and knock on the door and my mother called from downstairs and said, Mary Dean, what is her name, "So and so is here." I said where? She's down here waiting to see you. And I came down, and there she was, it was quite moving. And I cannot at this point remember her name, and I'm sure she's been gone for years cause she was much younger than me.

MH: The only other story that comes to mind for you to tell right now, Is um, I hate to put you through it

MDH: You what?

MH: I hate to have you do it, but your cousin who had the store and was murdered?

MDH: Yes, Aunt Eunice?

MH: Yes, that's the story of Aunt Eunice getting murdered. Is a story that is important to be down.

MDH: Well...

MH: They had a general store?

MDH: Yes, they had been farmers, my grandfather left them a big, big plot of, but my uncle was sorry as water and he was my aunt's husband. And so, they sold the farm and she finally had some major money and they bought this little store with this gas station and my Aunt Eunice would just go in and fiddle around with the customers and so forth. But she was in the, my uncle was off fishing, or something and my little cousin, my aunts youngest child, had the flu. And so she had closed the store and, he was in the, uh, this black man came to the door and knocked. And Aunt Eunice went to the door and said "Hello" and whatever his name was, "what do you need I have the store closed." "I need some cigarettes." She said I'll follow you out, she slipped on her shoes. They walked out, they opened the door to the store, she goes in, goes down, goes around the counter, bends down to get a carton of cigarettes for this young black man, and the next thing she knew he was on her back and he had killed her. She was dead. On the floor. He had

just knocked her and killed her. Well, he took off. At about that time, my uncle came back and the door was open to the store. And he thought, "why is the door open, Eunice is not in here." He came in and she wasn't there, and he didn't look around, he went in the house, my cousin was there still in bed, and my uncle said: "Where is Eunice?" He said she went to the store, so he went back and went around and there she was dead on the floor. So he immediately called the police, and then they started searching because for some reason, the son had heard the man ask for the cigarettes, so they knew what had happened. And they knew he was not bright, the man, and so they broke through woods and farmland, and finally the police found this guy, and he ended up in the federal prison, and they killed him. But he was- she was my favorite aunt.

SH: You dont, did you remember roughly when this was?

MDH: Okay, I was in high school. I was 16, so that would have been 194-

SH: '46.

MDH: Yes, '46. Yes, that is exactly when it happened. I had forgotten so... I purposefully forget things like that.

SH: Yeah.

MDH: She and I were so close. It was a terrible-terrible...[gasp]

MH: Sorry mama.

SH: Well that's rough.

MDH: [Sniffing] But things like that happen. And you don't get over, it ever. She would leave the store and I would go in the summertime and go and stay with her for a week or two weeks at a time in the little country town and where the little store was, and I walked in the store, and I said "Hey Eunice what're you doing?" "I don't know what I'm doing, lets go for a walk," and I said "Okay, we'll go for a walk." We walked out the door, we walked down the road, and there's a church there, a baptist church, and we went into the church, opened it up, and went in, Aunt Eunice sat down and started playing the piano. And we sat there, and Aunt Eunice just let me listen, but that was the way she was. It was, it wasn't long after that before she was killed. And that was really rough. Good lord, I've told tales I haven't told forever.
[Laughing]

SH: How big was your parent's house?

MDH: My parent's house?

SH: Yes.

MDH: Four stories, basement, 1st floor, 2nd floor, 3rd floor, 4th floor, attic.

SH: Did it have, was it built it kind of a southern style with a porch?

MDH: No, I can take you by there, it's right there on-

MH: Not our house honey... K.P.'s house.

MDH: K.P.'s house. Oh, K.P.'s house was just three floors, a basement and two. Nice house, but a living room, big long living room, sunporch, little bar, kitchen, backroom, uh dining room, and a bathroom and den. That was the first floor, and then upstairs was one, two, three, four bedrooms, and two baths. And that was the house, it was a nice house, yep, in Chapel Hill.

SH: In town?

MDH: In town, right in town, right off the main road, between Chapel Hill and Durham.

SH: Okay, alright.

MDH: Yep.

SH: Well, thank you for indulging me.

MDH: Oh my god, you put up with a lot. [Laughter]