



Alumna Oral History

Interviewee: Mary Bland Josey

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Notes:

- Transcribed July 2024
- Uses Baylor Oral History Style Guide
- Notes made by the transcriber are attributed in brackets as “editor” (ed.). Any corrections added by interviewer or interviewee are input in brackets with no notes.

Johnson: Okay, so today is Wednesday, June 12th, 2024. And we’re on campus at Meredith College in Raleigh, North Carolina. My name is Morgan Johnson, and today I’m here with, if you could give us your full name?

Josey: Mary Bland Josey. J-o-s-e-y.

Johnson: Okay. And when and where were you born?

Josey: I was born on September the 26th, 1929; in Tarboro, North Carolina, which is in eastern North Carolina.

Johnson: And have you lived in North Carolina your whole life?

Josey: Yes I have.

Johnson: Okay. And, so you grew up in Tarboro? Like, where all have you lived in North Carolina?

Josey: Grew up in Tarboro, was there really until age 24, other than my student days at Meredith, but my hometown was still Tarboro. And I did not move to Raleigh until—I think it was September '53 when—but ever since then I have been in Raleigh.

Johnson: Okay, great. And kind of going back to your childhood, so what are the names of your parents and what did they do for a living?

Josey: My father's name was Richard Brewer Josey, and my mother's name—Mary Bland Josey. But her maiden name was Pitt, so we always had to say Mary Bland Pitt Josey, for Mother, since the double name carried over for both of us.

Johnson: Right. So people didn't get confused between the two of you.

Josey: Exactly, that's exactly right.

Johnson: I see. And what did your parents do for work?

Josey: My father was city clerk and tax collector. And my mother, when it became appropriate for married women to work—which was at the beginning of World War II, when the workforce—the male workforce youth were in service—military. Mother began to work then, the same type of work she did before marriage—it was secretary or clerical work in various offices there until she retired.

Johnson: Got you. And do you remember when she went back to work? Like, during that time?

Josey: I remember the—in Tarboro, the tent factory was built. to build tents for the military. And in the office work, they needed staff, and so she was asked if she would be willing to go and work in the office there. And then that just sort of weighted(?) her appetite to continue work after that was closed. And she worked for a medical insurance office and then later for a farm equipment office, but stayed in that type of work until she retired. Probably when she was about 70.

Johnson: Okay, yeah. And do you remember feeling any particular way when she returned to work or did she have any feelings about returning to work that she shared with you?

Josey: Uh, no. I think she would be very happy for the extra income. When I said I was born in 1929, that was just before the Great Depression started, and my mother and father lost everything they had in the Depression because he had been in the fertilizer manufacturing business prior to that. And farmers didn't have the money to buy fertilizer. And if the product you're manufacturing (Josey laughs) isn't being bought, you don't have money coming in. So that was a hard time financially, I realize now. I didn't realize it as a child, but I do realize

it now, that was just a hard time financially. Therefore when she was able to add income, I think that's the way she looked at it. It allowed the whole family to have more than they would if it had been just on Daddy's salary coming in.

Johnson: Yeah, thank you for sharing. That's such like a pivotal moment in time when women were returning to the workforce, so I'm glad you're able to share that. Do you have any siblings?

Josey: I had an older sister by 13 years.

Johnson: Oh, okay.

Josey: And interestingly, it's her children—the first one, a daughter, came along when I was age 9. Then at age 14 came the first son, and at age 16 for me came the second son. And it's those children of hers that have made a family for me.

Johnson: Okay.

Josey: They are the daughters of the first child. Two of them, two of those three daughters—would be grandchildren of my sister—live here in the Raleigh area. And then grandchildren from the son live up at the Morganton area. But as a result in the next generation, their children, the eleven of those—and they have woven me into their families, so that—that's where my family life is, is with them. Even though I'm single, I have more family than many people have.

Johnson: Yeah.

Josey: Thank you sister Martha, thank you (they both laugh).

Johnson: Yeah, that's great. (Looking at question sheet) Let's see. When you were a child, did you know what you wanted to be when you grew up, or did you have any ideas?

Josey: Don't think I ever gave that any thought.

Johnson: Yeah?

Josey: I just—I just sort of took it day at a time, year at a time. And I was just sort of focusing on school, and that's where life was at that time. And I didn't think that far ahead. We just weren't groomed to do that, at that time. It was just a different culture then.

Johnson: Okay. And what's your educational background before attending Meredith?

Josey: Before Meredith it was twelve years of public school in Tarboro. Elementary

school, and then the grades six through eight were not called middle school at the time, but it's what they were. And then the high school was in Tarboro. And I had very good teachers. Consider I had a very good education at Tarboro. And then came Meredith.

Johnson: Maybe one more question before we get into Meredith. Were you involved in any, like, extracurricular activities in school, like sports or clubs? Anything like that?

Josey: At Meredith or high school?

Johnson: Before, yeah, in high school.

Josey: High school, yes. I was editor of the newspaper, I was editor of the annual, I played basketball on the team. And the editorship of the paper ran for two years because we were the first class to graduate from twelve years rather than eleven years, and therefore there was actually no senior class when we were juniors. There were four that had come in from another school, but not Tarboro ____ (??) (unintelligible). And so for two years I did the editorship of the newspaper, which was—I think, was a monthly publication. And of course the annual is the one time thing. But apparently, I must've had a gift for that because that's what I was nominated to do and elected to do.

Johnson: That's great. And that was the main, kind of, extra thing that you did?

Josey: That's right. And I was a member of the Beta Club, but that was a thing that came from your grade average more than doing anything else except applying yourself to studies.

Johnson: So that's kind of the end of our first section, just kind of about your childhood life background. Is there anything else you want to share about kind of before Meredith, before we move on?

Josey: I think one thing I would welcome sharing is growing up in a small town in Tarboro in the 1930s was a real blessing I realize now. Life was slow. You—the whole town moved slowly. You weren't in a rush all of the time. It was a marvelous time of life there. And childhood was a joy; you were left to figure out things for yourself, you didn't have all of these toys—you had some but you didn't have everything done for you. You had to figure out yourself on what to do. It was a very good growing up time, I could wish that today's children had the opportunity to have that kind of childhood. I enjoyed my childhood very much. And there was a swimming team that came after we finally had a swimming pool and I was very active in the summer months on the team. [ed. clarification: Talking about swim team levels] Midget first, and then junior, and you became a senior team. So I did a lot of swimming in my youth. Did enough in my youth that I've never wanted to swim again (both laugh).

Johnson: And I guess this one kind of transitions us to talking about Meredith. How did it

feel moving to Raleigh for college, like did it feel different from Tarboro, what was that transition like?

Josey: It was different. But Raleigh was only fifty thousand in population at that time. It was certainly a larger place than my hometown of Tarboro—about nine thousand then. And so there was that difference. And your travel was by bus, very few people had automobiles, even in Tarboro. Some did, but I'd say half the population had automobiles and half the population didn't. But you did your—children, and teenagers, even—did your traveling as a pedestrian. It was ten blocks to school. Well, we walked our ten blocks to school. And when I was a first grader, I think my father took me and dropped me off at school. But by the third or fourth grade I was riding the bicycle to get to school. That was in elementary school. And once it's in the high school building, it was a ten block walk. But that was just part of the daily routine. It was a—just a different, different time. But a great time. I'm just grateful for that foundation of life that I was fortunate enough to have.

Johnson: That's great. So are you ready to talk about Meredith now?

Josey: Yes, I can talk.

Johnson: I've been looking forward to this part. So, just for the record, what years did you attend Meredith?

Josey: What was the question?

Johnson: What years did you attend Meredith?

Josey: Nineteen forty-seven. September, 1947 is when I entered, and June of 1951 is when I was graduated. Forty-seven—1947 to 1951.

Johnson: And how did you hear about Meredith and what made you decide you wanted to come here?

Josey: I guess the first time I ever heard the name Meredith was when my sister who graduated from high school in 1933 was going to college. She was going to Meredith College in Raleigh, North Carolina. That was the first time. Yet I later learned that my father, who was born in 1890, had his four sisters—and he had five brothers also, he was one of ten children there—but all of them went to college simply because it was fortunate that his father running a fertilizer factory had the money to send them. But all four of his sisters had come to Meredith. So it was ingrained in his family—Meredith College. But my sister was the first time—I was three years old at the time, almost four when she entered—that I had ever heard the name of the college.

Johnson: Do you remember maybe the names of any of your aunts that attended here?

Josey: Yes. The oldest was Mary Lou or Mary Louise Josey. The next would be Annie Josey. The next one Sallie Mae Josey [ed. note: Sallie Miriam Josey]. And the next one Lydia Brewer—Bruce Josey. And I think that Lydia became a trustee some time in the 1950s, I believe she did. Living in Scotland, that was the home base of all of those—that tribe. So it was a family that was ingrained in Meredith College.

Johnson: Yeah it sounds like it. And it sounds like, you know, your aunts would have been here very early in—

Josey: Yes.

Johnson: —in the history of the school. So it's good to have that connection.

Josey: That third one graduated in [nineteen] fourteen [ed. note: this is in reference to Sallie, who actually graduated in 1913], the other two would have been before. And Meredith didn't open until 1899, so in the first fifteen years (both laugh) there were three.

Johnson: All of these Josey women coming through.

Josey: And Lydia was the youngest of the girls, and I think maybe it was 1920 when she graduated. But I wasn't on earth at that time, that's just what I—

Johnson: After the fact.

Josey: —figured out over the years, it was about 1920.

Johnson: Okay, great. And so, what made you—so you heard about Meredith, your sister was going to come here—but what made you decide personally, I want to go here?

Josey: Uh, as I mentioned first, I'd really given no thought to it, I just—It was Thanksgiving of my senior year at Meredith [ed. clarification: senior year of high school], my father who knew when to broach subjects and when it was premature, my mother had mentioned that possibly I would go to a very good one year commercial program at what was then W-UNC, which had an excellent one year—and that's all that had ever been said about it. But my father just waited until Thanksgiving of my senior year. And he was sitting in his den and he says, "Miss Mary Bland, come in, something I need to talk with you about." He says, "We need to discuss your college, you need to be thinking where you go to college, and I want to suggest that Meredith College, where my sisters went, would be a very—" he didn't mention my sister (Johnson laughs), his daughter that had went there, "—and they were well served by Meredith, and I think you would be." Well since my sister had gone there, and I had actually visited her a couple of times there, and I therefore knew the campus, you know, surface-ly, it was a familiar name to me, it was a familiar campus. I said, "Sounds fine to

me.” But my mother passed the door, “Mary Bland, come in, Little Mary Bland and I are talking about her college plans for next year.” My mother who had been the one to say the one year commercial—and Mother was thinking in terms of money because as I explained everything had been taken by the Depression. And she was right on that, but my father, he was thinking about it in terms of education. He was from a family of educators, and he knew that that is the finest thing you can give to a child, is the opportunity for a good education and he knew I would get one Meredith. So that wasn’t really a case of my deciding, it wasn’t his deciding, we as a family of three at that time, just on Thanksgiving morning, it was just sort of settled. And he says, “Mary Bland, you need to write for some application materials,” which I did. And I think by shortly after Christmas I learned that I had been accepted for admission, subject to the completion of a satisfactory year. I gotten in all the papers, or whatever it was. So that just—it was very simple in those days.

Johnson: Sounds like it.

Josey: Because there weren’t—unfortunately that time in the country’s history, in the States’ history, there weren’t a large proportion of graduating classes that went to college because there were no—everybody had been through the Depression. And 1947—then there was World War II, no one had time to build up much in the way of funds. So I was just one of the fortunate ones. And it strapped my mother and father, I’m very much aware of this. For Daddy especially, and Mother was certainly willing to go along with it. It was where that money should go during that four year period. Is to make it possible for me to have an education, and a good education, and I’m grateful.

Johnson: Yeah, absolutely. And so what were you planning on studying? When you applied.

Josey: It’s interesting. I had one friend in high school who knew she was going to be a history teacher. And another one who knew she wanted to be a nurse. And I didn’t have any earthly idea what I wanted to be. You know, I just ought therefore to study. I liked chemistry, so when I entered Meredith I thought—just I liked it in high school there, and I therefore signed up for chemistry as my subject for biology, chemistry, and math, you had to do two of those. And so I signed up for chemistry. But in Tarboro there wasn’t the facility for lab, of course Meredith had its lab. I loved the lecture part of chemistry. I did not care for the lab work at all. The first day I went I didn’t like it, I didn’t like it the last day I went. And I thought, This is not for me. So that’s how I ended up majoring in mathematics. You know, because I did like working with figures and concrete things. But in high school and—the interesting thing to me was one friend who wanted to be a nurse. She went on to nursing school in Wake Forest, it had a nursing school then, and became a nurse. The one who wanted to be a history major, she came to Meredith and she liked the history course, but she fell in love with biology. So she majored in biology. And then when I began working at Meredith and visiting students and they didn’t know what to—I used that as an illustration. You’re worrying about it too soon because you may think you want to do this, but it turns out to be something else. And then I would do the nurse and the history teacher saga, and let

them know it doesn't always turn out that way. Which was a helpful thing for me to have witnessed.

Johnson: So, a couple of questions based off of that. So what was it about the chemistry lab that you didn't like? Do you remember?

Josey: I have no manual dexterity. I never have. And it's all manual. That's the easiest way to answer it. It was no specific thing. It's just handling things. There's a family story, but I won't ought take the time now. It so illustrates that manual dexterity is just not my thing.

Johnson: You're welcome to share the story if you want, but you don't have to.

Josey: Well, it was a Rolodex (Johnson laughs). And it was—one of the great nieces had just come to town to work, and she was coming to my house for supper. And the office—where I was then, at College Foundation, they were just changing over to desktop computers. And so, the secretary to the president was putting addresses from the Rolodex onto the computer. Then she had no use whatsoever for the Rolodex. And it was this big thing, like this (she gestures with her hands). And she says, "Well, Mary Bland, would you be able to use this?" And I said, "Well, I think I might." She says, "You can use it at home, you can use it here, but I'm going to discard it if you don't—" So I took it. Well, I didn't know how—she hadn't taken the cards off, which I think was a mistake, she should have because they had addresses on it. And I saw that they got shredded. But I couldn't get the cards off. And the niece—I said, "Sarah, can you (they both laugh)--- can you tell me how to get these off?" She took it. They just fell off. (Johnson laughs) They fell off. I'm still gogged(?) at this—they just fell off. And she every now and then says, "I think you're having a Rolodex moment." (They both laugh). But it's always related to manual tasks, yup.

Johnson: Thank you for sharing that. And then the other question I had from that story of how you landed on your major: when you decided to major in chemistry—or in math, did you have an idea on what you wanted to do with that as a job or long term? At that point?

Josey: Well the math at that point I'd given thought. I will either teach math or—there were math majors that were going to Langley Field up in the Newport News, Virginia area to be assistants to engineers to do the math work—so like the *Hidden Figures*, like that. But a number of Meredith—if another opportunity had not come along for me, and I had been dependent on the math, I have a feeling I would've gone to Langley Field. I really don't see myself teaching, but they were the two things I was thinking of. But I was fortunate enough to get a fellowship to study abroad after—right after graduation. And accepted it. And that's another story. That can come later.

Johnson: Yeah, yeah, we can come back to that. But yeah, thank you for sharing. Is there anything else you remember about the Meredith students who went on to be the human computers? We've been doing a lot of research about that lately, so I just wonder if you have

any other info to provide.

Josey: No, not really. There was one from a class above me. I think her name was Martha Norman—one of my classmates, Martha Norman. And I think another one, Margaret Leach. But I never heard anything from them, so I really never had any feedback from the classmates who went. I just knew it was a good opportunity. And because of that movie, there's been a lot of interest in that.

Johnson: And so, kind of getting into the campus culture at the time that you were a student—so about how many students were at Meredith when you were a student?

Josey: Oh, no more than six hundred there. And in my class, freshman class then, it was probably about one hundred and fifty students there. So we were a small student body. Small faculty in comparison with now. But that was recognized gradually by the trustees, that had to change. In the mid '60s, graduated in '51, so it was some years later. But in the mid sixties, the trustees began to focus in on the need for the enrollment to grow to increase the financial stability of the college. But I happened to experience it when it was a small, very, very good—it was just the excellence of the teaching that we got, I can just consider a blessing. To this day. And the quality of the professors we had. And it's a contemporary ____ (??). I didn't realize it at the time, says "Mary Bland, at that time, female professors had nowhere else to go. Universities were not employing women at that time. Anyone that had a PhD in a subject, if they couldn't get employed at a women's college, then tough luck. So to speak. So we had, and there were a number of male teachers, also excellent. We had a high quality of professors. Julia Hamley Harris, for example, whose room we are in right now, the one dedicated to her. She was a joy. Just her manner of teaching made me aware of how much there was to know, and I had her for my freshman year. Just—I just did not realize that there was just a wealth of knowledge out there, and it went on infinity, you know, but that is something I learned from Dr. Harris. Not because she preached it, but because in her teaching she would just throw a tidbit out and a tidbit out and thought if anyone was really interested, they'd follow up on it. But it's taken me a lifetime to follow up on some of those things, but I've gradually made some ____ (?? interims?) on it.

Johnson: I guess we can kind of go off of that. So Professor Harris was one that you remember, are there any other professors that you remember fondly, really made an impact on you?

Josey: Well Dr. Ralph McClain, he was also a master teacher. He was department of religion. I was fortunate to have him. It was required at that time to take a semester course in an introduction to old testament and one introduction to new testament. And he was my professor in my freshman year. And he just had a way of teaching—giving you an overview of the old testament, just an exciting overview. He could just dramatize it, and he would just point out the salient things that would lead you through the whole journey of the old testament people and then relate it to today, today at that time. Just such a masterful teacher,

that I took a number of courses in the department because of that. Because the most important thing, he taught us how to think.

Johnson: Yeah. (Josey laughs)

Josey: And he didn't say, "I'm teaching you how to think," but just his manner of teaching and approaching things made you realize that you needed to focus the mind on things, so to speak. And then Dr. Canady was my math professor, and the math curriculum in colleges those days was very limited in comparison, but it was—Freshman year was freshman algebra and trig, the next year was analytical geometry, the next was calculus, and then there was theory of equations, and then one other course. But Dr. Canady's way of teaching just gave you a lifetime feel for figures. That's the carry over that I have from him. That something like figures can be mentioned and I start thinking in terms of ratios. I think in terms of percentages, and not the whole numbers, and this kind of thing. And I attribute that to the way that Dr. Canady taught, so I'm just grateful to him as well. And I don't remember having a teacher that I thought was not good, some of them were more exciting and I have mentioned three of the exciting ones.

Johnson: Okay. I believe—so we have the science and math building now where the math classes are held, it's like way over there. And I believe one of the wings is named after Dr. Canaday. I believe. That name sounds familiar to me, so.

Josey: I think you're probably right.

Johnson: Yeah that's great. Okay, so kind of back to your life as a student and campus culture. So what extracurricular activities were you involved in at Meredith?

Josey: Oh my. Well in my freshman year I was a member of the soccer team. I had never heard of soccer, but it was offered in the curriculum, so I took soccer, and I had done basketball in high school. And apparently I was fairly good in soccer, so the PE teacher persuaded me to be on the soccer team, so that was one thing. Then there was a freshman tennis tournament. I didn't take tennis but I had played at home. And so I did it, the tennis tournament, and won.

Johnson: Wow.

Josey: Thankfully I was good. And the extra—there were two literary societies at the time that were really on their way out. The Astrotekton literary society and Philaretian. The literary societies were probably of those aunts of mine in the early 1900s that were here, that was an activity that excited that generation, but they—I think they were just phasing out. But I became vice president of that, but I really do not know what we did (they both laugh) I cannot remember. I'm sure I could've told you at the end of the year what we did, but it wasn't exciting enough for me to remember now. Then in my junior year, I was taken into

the Kappa Nu Sigma honor society and became president for the next year, and pretty much the only responsibility being an officer was working with the faculty advisor who was Dr. Helen Price of the ancient language department to get set up for the annual banquet where the junior year people are taken in and they have a speaker. But it was good experience to have to have a part in this. It was limited, I was always concentrating more on my studies than on the extracurriculars, but I did a few things extracurricularly.

Johnson: And just, I'm sorry if you said this already and I missed it, but with the literary societies, were you an Astro or were you a Phi?

Josey: I was an Astro.

Johnson: Okay.

Josey: (unintelligible)

Johnson: Okay. Yeah, I was gonna ask, like, what was the difference between them? And like how did you become one or the other?

Josey: I found that the most—I'm glad you've asked that—because the most interesting thing is, you know, when there's sororities, it interested you, you were hoping you would get a bid for sororities. This was the opposite. The competition was between the societies, which will get the most new members. And so it was the freshman that held the cards on the competition, and they were the same function, it's just, probably, which members that you saw in that first six to eight weeks while you were deciding as to which members most appealed to you. That's all I can say is—I had a cousin here in the year before me who was an Astrotekton. I later learned my sister who was here in the thirties, she was a Philaretian.

Johnson: I see.

Josey: So, they really had no weight to them. They just were here and that was about all.

Johnson: So family loyalty, it sounds like.

Josey: That's right, none whatsoever.

Johnson: No that's great. I'm always trying to learn more about them because they are kind of, like, what did they do? Okay, great. And let's see—and also just so you know Kappa Nu Sigma is still around today and I was also in it when I was a student, so the legacy lives on of that honor society.

Josey: Very good.

Johnson: So, let's see, we did extracurriculars. How about any particular classmates that you were close to when you were a student, any of your close friends?

Josey: Well, the Sarah Jane Newburn who was the one that was going to be a history major, she came and we were suitemates for four years, so she remained a lifetime friend. And then my college roommate, Nancy Walker who was from Hendersonville, she and I got along fine and she was a lifetime friend. In addition, in my classes but also on the same dormitory hall in my sophomore through senior year were two friends from Nashville, Tennessee—Nashville, North Carolina near Rocky Mount who became good friends. Shirley Bone Beal and Nancy Batchelor Cooper, they became lifelong friends, so I'm grateful for those friendships. And there were others, but these were the ones that I maintained the friendships with through life. But we were small enough that we knew most people.

Johnson: And how about the rules you had to follow as a student? So I imagine they might have been different from when I was a student.

Josey: And the rules related to student life so to speak were, and your comings and goings, were referred to more as privileges rather than rules. I mean, it was really presented very positively. But what I'm remembering, if you were going off campus, there was a sign out box in each residence hall with a card with your name on it. And you had to put what the date was, what the time you were leaving, and then when you came back and check in, and that was simply so if anyone at the college needed to know where Mary Bland is, they would know that she was off campus. I do not recall having to put where I was going or anything. In terms of actually being off campus, it seems to me as if in the freshman year you had three day privileges and maybe two night privileges which meant that during the day, I guess by six o'clock, you could be off campus three times a week. And then night, two times a week. The interesting thing is for the freshman, and I think this is one reason I chose not to do much night outs there, you had to have a chaperone from an upperclassmen. Then by your sophomore year however you could double date. And double dating was much easier than trying to find a senior to chaperone. That was the only one I found a little obnoxious. So that was the comings and goings. And then, see whatever rules there were. If you were going to a dance—Oh, and closing time at that time was ten thirty at night even while I was here it changed to eleven at night and then it eventually got changed to midnight as far as I remember. If you were going to dance that was going to last until eleven and it would be a little later you would have to get special permission. So my recollection of this is you signed your card that I'm leaving at 7 o'clock I'd say, but you'd put 'SP' in the return column so that they would know you had special permission to be out beyond that. And then you had to go and fill in a special permission slip or you were given one at the time you got the permission but you had to have that slip in the box near the Dean of Women's Office, the Dean of Students office. So long ago, it's hard to remember the details of it. But my junior and senior year, as best I recall, you could go out as many days and as many nights as you wished, but most of us, the academic work was taking enough time that you were foolish if you did take advantage of all of that.

Johnson: Right. What about the dress code? Was there a dress code when you were a student?

Josey: Yes, there was. I don't think there was one written, you expected to wear dresses there, and it was after I had—I'm certain it was after '51, but sometime in the late sixties when students got permission to wear slacks during the day time, so there was—any time, there, but I just remember this not being, I don't remember there ever a dress code, but I think it was just society that—even young women wore dresses and seldom wore jeans or the equivalent of that. First part of my life, it was all dresses.

Johnson: Yeah that makes sense. So we talked about kind of going out, needing a chaperone, how to dress, were there any other rules or sort of unspoken—unwritten rules or expectations that you remember?

Josey: Not really. And I think we had come from, all of us, had come from homes that had you coming in at 11 o'clock at night. It was just the procedural things were what was different more than anything else. I never sensed that we considered them a negative, it was just sometimes annoying some of the procedures there. We understood, but. And dating was an interesting thing because it certainly—very few students had cars, Meredith students couldn't have cars at my time except if you were doing student teaching and your family would let you have a car to bring from home, you could have it here. Even in your senior year, maybe your last six weeks, something like that, you might. But even boys at State, they didn't have cars. Families were one car people, if that, in that era. But you had wonderful public buses, and the bus's route that ended at the front of Johnson Hall for turning around and going back into town, so your date and you would jump onto the bus. And off you would go to either some event at North Carolina State or to downtown for a movie, or just walking around window shopping. Because all of Fayetteville Street was the only shopping area at that time, it was before Cameron Village, and before the shopping malls and such. But it was a pleasant experience, we really enjoyed it. I could remember the window shopping and the waiting at the bus stop and one of my dates was a little older, he had come back from the service, and I thought this was big time. He says, "Well I'm going to smoke a cigarette." He was the only one that I dated that I remember that smoked, but it was fairly typical in those times. He says, "I'll pull out a cigarette and as soon as I light it the bus will come." And he was about right. So I may have sometimes said, "Why don't you light a cigarette?"

Johnson: Get the bus to come faster.

Josey: That's right, exactly. It was a simple time in those days, it was. But enjoyable, you know, it was a different experience certainly for me. Maybe anyone coming from Charlotte or Winston-Salem or Greensboro would have experienced bus travel, internal bus travel, but I never had. And it was just a nickel. A nickel went a long ways in those days.

Johnson: Let's see. So, what was the religious culture like on campus? Were you—because Meredith was still affiliated with the Baptist Church at the time, so were you required to go to chapel services or other things like that?

Josey: Yes, chapel was required. The class schedule was sort of built around the time for chapel. Classes in my student days began at 8:30 and went to 9:30 and then 9:30 to 10:30. 10:30 to 11 was referred to as 'Chapel Hour.' But chapel was held just Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. On Tuesdays, the half hour could be used for student organizations to have meetings. The Thursday one, was for the student government association to have the meeting of the whole student body in the auditorium to discuss any matters that wanted to be discussed, and then classes resumed at 11 o'clock and got on the hour, but they started on the half hour. Chapel, sometimes it was President Campbell who did the bit of devotional, but it would always open with a hymn. It would have a—President Campbell, he might read some scripture, he might just talk from it, but he was a marvelous man. And then Dr. McClain had become—had actually been asked by Dr. Campbell to be in touch with ministers in the general area. To have some ministers, usually they were Baptist but not always, to come and do the chapel hour. And that was a good opportunity to have people coming in. And it was, you just knew it was required and that you went and that was it. Let's see, what else. I guess that the daily chapel was about the most things—having the Old Testament and the New Testament in the curriculum and as a requirement was—I think we students looked about it as a sensible thing to do. Our only exposure had been in Sunday school at home, and sometimes there you had a good teacher and sometimes you didn't. So you were grateful for an opportunity to learn a little bit more about the culture and religion that you had been brought up on by some people who were educated to the field and knew something about it. So, I don't think anyone looked upon that as an obstacle or in any negative way at all. There were evening vespers for those who wanted to have evening vespers, in central part of Johnson Hall, which is another story. I don't ever remember going to them as a student. But I do remember when I returned to work a friend of mine was sort of in charge of this Baptist Student Union at the time and she would go to vespers and I was living on campus at the time as a staff member. Because I was traveling so much that it was just helpful to have the room here and dining facilities available to me when I was here. I would go to vespers with her and it was—attending, this would be in the early fifties, it would be about twenty people attending, but it was an opportunity but not a requirement. And all of this got overhauled in the late sixties when President Bruce Heilman was here, not by him, but. There were—one of his contributions, I think, to the college—he was here five years, but he made wonderful contributions. But one was to turn the every ten year, Southern Association Self-Study, into the opportunity for the Meredith faculty to do a long range plan, and that just changed many things that put it more forward looking and more in line with the culture of the day. It—chapel was no longer required, and it was just one day a week. You were encouraged to simply, but you didn't have to go. I think the same was true with class attendance, if you're stupid enough not to go to class (they both laugh) you're the one to suffer for it, not by penalty, but you don't know the course work as well as you would have if you have gone to the class. And then the broadening of the community, to offer courses for adults—the

continuing education program was born at that time. It was the faculty that created it. It was that thinking over a two year period, various committees and academic committees, student life committees, a community service committee, this type of thing. And worked hard at it and it just gave a whole new thrust to the college. And it was sort of a move from these rules. For example, of check in, a move from the context of the college acting as in local 'parent-ice' in place of the parent, to putting the responsibility to everything that you do on the shoulders of the student, but with guidance. But without it being regulations that keep you in toe, so to speak, but that took until the late 1960s to come about. And Heilman is the one that brought it about at that time simply by saying, "We will do a long range study, you faculty get on with it." And they appointed the chairmen, the chairmen of various committees and this and that, and worked hard at it. It was just a work of love simply because it was an opportunity to get the changes that were really needed at the time.

Johnson: And what was the response to that from students, or from parents, or from alums, to those changes?

Josey: I don't really know. I really don't know. I think students—I remember some student in session in which whether to change the requirement of Old Testament, New Testament, for example. Because I think some faculty were saying it just needs to be a broader option, and there was a student in that session who says, "I think it should be kept as it is because we haven't had this kind of exposure to Bible readings in our churches, we've gone to Sunday school, but you don't get the same type of education about it." There were some things that were not changed and I think that student's comment swayed the faculty at that time. So that's the only thing I can remember. And the parents, I'm not sure they were even aware that it was going on. In terms of the privileges, I guess the students—whoever their child was on campus kept them informed about what she was doing. And if they had any questions then they could be in touch, but I'm just not aware of any feedback at all, positive or negative.

Johnson: Gotcha. Okay. Let's see (going through papers). So let's do a few more questions before we get into traditions, maybe we can take a little break before we get into traditions. So, one question, what dorms did you live in on campus?

Josey: My freshman year I lived on first Stringfield. And then sophomore, junior year I lived on third Faircloth. And for some reason in our senior year we three or four suites that had become friends, we decided we'd move down to second Faircloth. But it was really Faircloth for the next three years.

Johnson: And just for the record, which dorms were on campus at that time? Which existed?

Josey: At that time there were only four dorms. There was the quadangle(?). The permanent buildings at the time of my student life here was Johnson Hall, then facing Johnson Hall on the left side—Vann Dormitory, Stringfield Dormitory. They're connected at the back to the dining room, and then connected on the other side from Vann and Stringfield would be

Faircloth and Brewer Dormitory. The Quadrangle was the permanent structure that had been built for moving into it in December 1924, from a downtown location. Where were classes? Where was the auditorium? At that time, there was not the money to do anything permanent except for what I've described. Therefore, they used a bit of money to build three wooden buildings on the far side of Faircloth and Brewer, but more parallel to Brewer. The first one up at the Quadrangle. That first was the auditorium. The next was the arts building where all classes in English, art, history, sociology, that type of thing. Both classrooms and offices for faculty. Then the next one was the science building for the biology and chemistry. And so the auditorium was replaced in my student life. Jones Auditorium, that we still have, opened for use in September 1949, which was my junior year. And the music building, it was in the temporary auditorium, the music offices and studios were in the back of the auditorium. And the same is true with Jones Hall, before there was Coswell, the music was in the lower floor of Jones Hall at the back. So we did have one building added during my student days here and the rest were added later. But those wooden buildings were wonderful, we just accepted them. But the thing about the auditorium is that, chapel took place, but I cannot even remember it because it just was not a, was not a satisfactory place to have 600 students. It had seats, but you just couldn't hear what was coming from the platform or anything like that. Dr. Campbell probably was giving some of the worship services, was in charge at that time, but I can't even remember it. I can remember it only after we got to the auditorium.

Johnson: Okay, I see. Maybe last question before we get into traditions, what was your favorite class that you took? So you mentioned some professors that really had an impact on you but was there one specific class that was your favorite?

Josey: I had Dr. Harris as my freshman English teacher, as I think I mentioned. Just the way she taught was what has inspired me to want to be a learner all of my life. Thank you Dr. Harris. And then Dr. McClain was another master teacher, and taught us, I think, without saying this is what I'm doing. You really had to think and get various points of view, and such. And then Dr. Canady, the feel for figures that I feel that I got. They're the three that I remember. And wonderful, wonderful teachers. I never had Dr. Lydia Parker Wallace, but she was one that was revered. And Dr. Lemmon was a first year teacher in my sophomore year I think it was, and she was an excellent teacher, she was someone different in her approach, more of an outline person. But for the history of civilization that was covering as much as it was, it was a good approach for me. And I can remember she was thoughtful enough at times we were entering the exam period to say, "You need to give yourself some breaks from your studies, you need to give yourself some exercise. You will be doing yourself a favor to do well on your exams if you would take a walk down the driveway just so you get some fresh air. If you make just all study, study, study, study, please believe me you're gonna end up not doing as well as you would have otherwise." So, that kind of common sense guidance was very helpful at the time. And Dr. McClain, in his first semester, I can remember it was so helpful to me especially because I really had no personal idea certainly what I wanted to be, that never occurred to me—but he says, "Young ladies,"--- or young women—"You need to remember you are here to develop the being side of your life.

The doing side will come out of that.” ‘Young women, you need to remember,’ he emphasized that. And I found that in those early years of work here when I was visiting high schools and talking to students I could tell that I would quote him. I said, you know, you just need to keep in mind what the education is about, and just to know that what you’re going to do with it, it will happen. You don’t have to know in advance. It’s got to evolve. So, but this is the kind of thing that I sort of appreciated from our faculty, just gave us good tips about living.

Johnson: Yeah, about life, not just about the class. That’s great. So I think our next two questions are going to be about traditions. Are you good to keep going or would you like to take a break?

Josey: I beg your pardon?

Johnson: Are you good to keep going for now, or would you like to keep going?

Josey: Yes, yes, let’s keep going.

Johnson: So obviously traditions are a big deal at Meredith, and one of the biggest ones now is Cornhuskin’ and you were a student right around the time, right after Cornhuskin’ started. So what do you remember about those early years of Cornhuskin’, what was the tradition like then? We can just start with that.

Josey: Alright. As I mentioned, I entered in ‘47. What I learned was that the head of the Physical Ed department at the time was Doris Peterson, who had come four years earlier to be head of the Physical Ed department. And she came from Nebraska (unintelligible), and she apparently sort of introduced the concept of each October, having a fall festival. “And we’d call it Cornhuskin’” said she, what I surmise it happening, “Because it’s just a way that the people in my part of the country would welcome the harvest season coming in and such, and they would have games and such, and we can think of what we want to do.” So she apparently referred to what was then the Athletic Association Board to create it, and she was the advisor of that board, so she could get it created through that. But it was a case of 95% of your student body was living on campus. And over the supper hour sometime in late June, you would have outdoor hotdogs and hamburgers in front of the dining room. And then you would have the Cornhuskin’ time. And it would be a series of competition and corn shucking, hog calling, apple bobbing, maybe something else, and tall tales from there. And students were encouraged to come, you know, roommates, that one of them dress in something like a gingham dress and another one in jeans to come as a couple. And then each class would earn points for whatever class you were from, according to who won the apple bobbing, and this, each time. I do not know how the tall tale, or how any of the people who would do the bobbing and the hog calling, how these were done. But I’m sure there’s someone was asking for volunteers, or a class meeting probably. And the tall tale, which usually was done by someone who had heard this tale or was making one up. Whether I was

fortunate enough to be here and attending Cornhuskin' at the time that I consider the pivotal change in Cornhuskin', and the reason I know what year it was and I was living on campus at the time so I was going to Cornhuskin' to get my hamburger, and also I was close enough to student age to enjoy witnessing it. But the change that was happening at a tall tale—I recognize one of the characters, and I looked it up and she graduated in 1960, meaning she was a freshman in '56, and therefore a sophomore in '57. So it was Cornhuskin' '57 when time came for the tall tale from the sophomore class. It wasn't one person coming in fourth, it was twelve people that were pilgrims from The Canterbury Tales. The wife of Bath, the Parson, and everyone, parading across the dining room steps and each had some line related to it. And the reason sophomores would think of this, that in the curriculum of the English Department at that time, and the sophomore English, you were studying the Canterbury Tales, and most of the English classes had to memorize the prologue to Canterbury Tales, therefore they—sophomores lived The Canterbury Tales or the first part of the sophomore year, and therefore it brought the house down. It brought the sky down, or whatever. It was just hilarious. But the thing I'm aware of, is in the next year, it was either a whole hall that decided they would carry out some theme, and then another couple of years, a whole class was doing that. So that is what propelled Cornhuskin' into the focus of each class carrying out a theme that is what they marching up the driveway—so important to get to what then was the site of the hamburgers and hot dogs, was the lake that had been developed by that time, and the little island in the lake, and so forth. And then marching to carry out the theme was done up the drive, and it has gotten more and more popular each year. But it was those 12 sophomores that really created the refocusing of Cornhuskin'. Which I think they need to be recognized.

Johnson: Yeah