2010

Margaret Davidson Watson

Margaret Davidson Watson '46
Illinois Wesleyan University

Ann Harding
Illinois Wesleyan University

Recommended Citation
Watson '46, Margaret Davidson and Harding, Ann, "Margaret Davidson Watson" (2010). All oral histories. 11.
http://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/oral_hist/11
Ann Harding: Okay, we’re ready.

Margaret Watson: [inaudible]

Harding: And your name?

Watson: My name is Margaret Davidson Watson.

Harding: Davidson Watson, and your class year?

Watson: 1946.

Harding: And this is June 9, 2010 and we’re here today talking to Margaret about—do you prefer to be called Margaret or Margy?

Watson: Margy.

Harding: Margy. About her memories of her time at Illinois Wesleyan and she’s also stayed very connected to the university all these years, so—

Watson: I love being at Wesleyan.

Harding: Love it, huh?

Watson: Uh-huh.

Harding: Tell me, you were a—

Watson: Sigma Kappa.

Harding: You were a Sigma—in the Sigma Kappa sorority. What was your major?

Watson: English Lit—

Harding: English Literature and—

Watson: —I had MacDonald.

Harding: And did you—did you work after you graduated? Did you teach or anything?

Watson: No I didn’t.

Harding: Did you get married during school?

Watson: No.

Harding: Right after?
Watson: After—three or four years after we got out.

Harding: Did you meet your husband at Illinois Wesleyan?

Watson: Yep.

Harding: How did you meet Denny?

Watson: I don’t know how I met him. I—he sang to me when we were…

Harding: He sang to you?

Watson: Mhmm, when we were students.

Harding: He sang to you.

Watson: Right, that’s when…Phi Gam…

Harding: Oh, he was a Phi Gam?

Watson: He was a Phi Gam.

Harding: And you were a Sigma Kappa. Did you live in the sorority house?

Watson: Mhmm.

Harding: Tell me about what that was like.

Watson: It was really good. I loved being in the—there wasn’t room for me other than in the house, so I lived in the house, and I loved the house mother. She was nice.

Harding: Do you remember her name?

Watson: Mother Dee.

Harding: Mother Dee.

Watson: Mhmm.

Harding: Did you live there three years?

Watson: I didn’t go to school all the years.

Harding: Oh.

Watson: I went two years.

Harding: Two years, okay.
Watson: And then I went to—I started working at Gailey Eye Clinic.

Harding: Gailey’s?...right across the street from Illinois Wesleyan.

Watson: Mhmm, yeah, and they let me stay. Wesleyan—they let me stay.

Harding: They let you stay at the sorority house? Oh.

Watson: So I had a good time and then I didn’t have to worry about studying.

Harding: [Laughs] So you got to live in the sorority house but you weren’t going to school.

Watson: No.

Harding: Oh, you did have the best of both worlds then.

Watson: I did. Yeah, it was good.

[Both laugh]

Watson: And I had a lot of fun. But I’d walk over to…Gailey Eye Clinic…[inaudible] came in. I was at the front desk and I remember I had a good time.

Harding: Now was the Sigma Kappa house on Main Street or where was it?

Watson: On…

Harding: East?

Watson: East Street.

Harding: On East Street.

Watson: North East Street.

Harding: Okay.

Watson: Northeast Street, excuse me.

Harding: Mhmm. What do you remember about being a student at Illinois Wesleyan? Can you talk about, you know, if you were a sorority girl, you were probably going to the dances.

Watson: I loved that, I loved that, and then I started dating...all the fellas. I loved being at the sorority house.

Harding: Do you stay in touch with any of your sorority sisters?
Watson: I don’t know.

Harding: Well I remember in Florida, when you were in Florida a few years ago, Mary Lou Mercier was there—

Watson: Yeah well I…I still see her. I talked to her today.

Harding: What was her maiden name?

Watson: Gooding.

Harding: Mary Lou Gooding.

Watson: Uh-huh, Gooding. She was a nice gal.

Harding: Do you remember anything about any of the teachers that you had when you were a student?

Watson: I had Ms. Oggel.

Harding: Oh.

Watson: I loved being with her. My major was English Literature. She was nice.

Harding: Now she lived out here [meaning, Westminster Village]. Did you see her when she was out here?

Watson: Mhmm, I did.

Harding: Oh, good. She was 105 I think, wasn’t she when she passed?

Watson: She was pretty old. Yeah, she passed away.

Harding: How has the campus changed?

Watson: Oh, good. It’s so pretty now.

Harding: Wasn’t it pretty when you were there?

Watson: Oh I thought so but my dad sent me up to Wesleyan. I should say dad and mother – but my dad.

Harding: Where did you grow up? What town?

Watson: Salem.

Harding: Where?
Watson: Nobody knows Salem: S-a-l-e-m.

Harding: Oh, Salem. Is it down by Springfield? No?

Watson: Nuh-uh. It’s…it’s near … the town north of there was Centralia.

Harding: Oh, Centralia, yeah, so your mother and father sent you to Illinois Wesleyan?

Watson: Mhmm.

Harding: Did you not want to come here?

Watson: Where are we?

Harding: At Illinois—did you not want to come to Illinois Wesleyan?

Watson: No I did.

Harding: You did want to.

Watson: Uh-huh.

Harding: Oh.

Watson: It was hard for my parents to pay for it.

Harding: Yeah.

Watson: There were six of us.

Harding: You were one of six?

Watson: Mhmm.

Harding: Did any other of your siblings come to Illinois Wesleyan?

Watson: One.

Harding: One other one.

Watson: But she didn’t stay very long.

Harding: Oh, [laughs]. Now Margy you have how many children?

Watson: Two.

Harding: And did either of them come to Illinois Wesleyan?

Watson: They went to Illinois.
Harding: Illinois. Did you want them to come here?

Watson: I would have loved it…[inaudible]

Harding: Well they turned out okay anyway, didn’t they?

[Both laugh]

Harding: Now you and Denny have been married how long?

Watson: [inaudible] a lot of years…I was married in 1941 and this is—what is it now?

Harding: This is 2010.

Watson: Well we’ve been married a long time.

Harding: Yes you have been married for a long time. Looks like you picked the right one though, huh?

Watson: I guess so.

Harding: [laughs] You know Margy do you remember—I know somebody else that I talked to today said when she came to Illinois Wesleyan there was no laundry facilities that you put your—

Watson: I had to send mine home.

Harding: You had to send your clothes home?

Watson: Mhmm…[clears throat]…Excuse me.

Harding: Then they’d come back washed and folded and—

Watson: And dried and everything.

Harding: And perfect, starched…[laughs]

Watson: Mhmm.

Harding: Do you remember anything about homecoming?

Watson: Oh boy, [clears throat]…Excuse me…. [clears throat]. For homecoming, we paraded in and out and down Main Street…we were there.

Harding: On a float?

Watson: On a float. Mhmm, it was good.
Harding: Was it the Sigma Kappa float?

Watson: Yep.

Harding: Now after you graduated, did you stay connected with the sorority? Were you an advisor or did you help at all with the sorority?

Watson: No, I still go with them and I get…[inaudible]…a meeting once a month.

Harding: Oh, an alumni meeting.

Watson: Uh-huh, I go to that … and I have a good time seeing the people there still. Several girls that I went to…that were in with…it sounds like my voice is [inaudible] and it isn’t.

Harding: Oh, it’s alright. I gotcha.

Watson: You got me…[laughs]

Harding: Is there any shenanigans that you remember the boys doing when you were at school with the sorority girls?

Watson: Well…I had a lot of fun.

[Both laugh]

Watson: I tell ya—right behind us lived Dean—Dean—the Dean.

Harding: The Dean lived behind you?

Watson: Yep and we had to be careful.

[Both laugh]

Harding: I think it’s better the Dean lived behind the Sigma Kappas than the Sigma Chis.

Watson: Yeah, that’s true.

[Both laugh]

Harding: So now did you always date Denny when you were a student?

Watson: Nope.

Harding: You dated some other fellas too?

Watson: Yeah, a lot.

Harding: A lot, huh? Oh.
Watson: I didn’t date Denny very long and then we were married but…um…

Harding: Do you remember any particular building on campus that you had a fond memory of? Where you had your classes?

Watson: I can’t think right now.

Harding: Do you remember any rules that they had for the girls living in the sorority house?

Watson: Yeah, you had to be in—you had to be in by, on the weekends—the week and during the week you had to be in by 10:30.

Harding: 10:30.

Watson: Mhmm, and then I went to my husband’s house or a girl’s house because my good friend…she lived in town. I always stayed at her house and we had a lot of fun.

Harding: Yeah, if you went to her house and stayed, you didn’t have to be in at 10:30 then, right?

Watson: No.

[Both laugh]

Watson: I didn’t drink though, I just had fun.

Harding: Do you remember at any of the dances that you went to, do you remember a particular dress that you wore that was your favorite formal?

Watson: I made all my clothes.

Harding: You made your clothes.

Watson: After I decided where I was going and…I got the material and made it.

Harding: You had your own sewing machine—

Watson: No.

Harding: —or did you use one on campus?

Watson: No…at my house…[clearing throat]…we had fun. I had fun.

Harding: Now you say you only went to Illinois Wesleyan for two years?

Watson: Three.
Harding: Oh, three years and why’d you drop out?

Watson: Because of money.

Harding: Money.

Watson: That was the main reason. My daddy always wanted me to go to Wesleyan but it was hard. There were six of us kids.

Harding: Yeah, did all of your siblings go to college?

Watson: My—one of my sisters went to Illinois and I know two went to Wesleyan.

Harding: Mhmm.

Watson: Ellen Marie…[inaudible]…went to Illinois later on.

Harding: But your sister that went, what was her name?

Watson: Ellen Marie.

Harding: Ellen Marie, but she only went for one year did you say? Okay, alright. Is there anything that you would—let’s just say that there was a student right now at Illinois Wesleyan that was listening to you talk about your time at Illinois Wesleyan, is there any advice that you would give to a student today?

Watson: I like Don Larson an awful lot.

Harding: You like Don Larson...[laughs].

Watson: He married—his wife lives in Normal…

Harding: Yes.

Watson: And she’s nice though also…

Harding: But if there was a young student now on campus, is there anything that you would tell a young person to make sure they do while they’re a young student?

Watson: Just have fun.

Harding: Have fun.

[Both laugh]

Harding: That is the underlying message to your whole interview. You had fun.

[Both laugh]
Watson: I did, lots of fun.

Harding: Okay, anything else you want to share?

Watson: We used to parade down the street on homecoming. That was good.

Harding: And people from town would come and stand on the lawn and watch?

Watson: Yeah, mhmm, they did. I remember one time when my sorority…I can’t remember all I did.

Harding: Do you still have your sorority pin?

Watson: No, somebody stole it.

Harding: Somebody stole your pin?!

Watson: Yeah, then I got another one. I have that one.

Harding: Oh, that’s good. That’s great, good. Okay Margy, well I appreciate your stories and heard about all your good times.

Watson: [laughs] I had lots of good times.

[Both laugh]

Harding: Alright, thank you.