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Margaret Davidson Watson

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Westminster Village, Bloomington

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, mmmm, 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.