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## Richard Muirhead

Richard Muirhead '66  
*Illinois Wesleyan University*

Meg Miner  
*Illinois Wesleyan University*

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Oral History Interview with Richard Muirhead

On May 30, 2017

Conducted by Meg Miner, Illinois Wesleyan Archivist

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Oral History Interview with Richard Muirhead,  
Conducted over Skype, May 30th, 2018  
Conducted by Meg Miner, Illinois Wesleyan Archivist

Meg Miner: This is Meg Miner. I'm the archivist and special collections librarian at Illinois Wesleyan University, and I am working on an oral history project, and today I am speaking with one of our alumni. Today is May 30th, and I am speaking with Richard Muirhead. May I call you Richard?

Richard Muirhead: Yes, that's fine.

Miner: Okay. Thank you. So, we're just going to have a conversation about Richard's experiences at Illinois Wesleyan. So, if you would state your full name, your affiliation to IWU, and we'll see where the conversation takes us.

Muirhead: Okay. Well, I'll just- my name is Richard Muirhead. I graduate in 1966. I was at Wesleyan four years, started in '62, graduated in spring of '66 with a- a degree in history.

Miner: And-

Muirhead: Yes.

Miner: Okay. Where were you before you came to Illinois Wesleyan, and why did you choose to come here?

Muirhead: Well, I went to Wesleyan straight out of high school, so I graduated from a small high school in northern Illinois farm country. And at age eighteen, I was a freshman at college frightened in the big city of Bloomington, Illinois. And why did I choose Wesleyan? Well, one thing was pretty apparent. I had- my older brother had just graduated also with a degree in history. My brother Jack graduated in the spring of '62. I came in the fall of '62. So I was certainly aware of Wesleyan, and there was a certain comfort about the visits I had made as a high school student. I knew a few people on campus, and when I applied, I was fortunate to have a small scholarship which would make Wesleyan affordable for me. So, I was also looking at size. Coming from a small high school, it just- the idea of the University of Illinois was intimidating and I thought a nice community- a smaller community like Wesleyan would be an appropriate place for me, and it was. It did turn out to be that. And finally, even though we were farm kids- we grew up on the farm, my mother always insisted that, "If you want to come back and farm, that's okay, but you're all getting a liberal arts education." So going to a small liberal arts college was- that was our destiny, I guess. We- we all ended up doing that.

Miner: And where did your mom go to school? Or why did she think that was appropriate for you?

Muirhead: She- well, of course she was a- she- she was a teacher. She went to what's today Northern Illinois. Dekalb State- I believe it was Dekalb State Teachers College at the time, and it was a two-year degree that allowed her to teach in a one room school. But I think the key was that she read a great deal, and even though, you know, tending to the farm family with five kids, and she was always an interesting- she was always an interesting- just an incredible role model for all of us. She read a great deal, and she was very, very progressive in her ideas, and so coming out of a small farm town of about a hundred people, we came out I think thinking of a larger world even though we had never traveled. That was out of our reach.

Miner: That seems kind of remarkable to me. Do you know if other people in your community experienced this too, or do you think that your- your family was-

Muirhead: That's a really interesting question, and it is- it is kind of amazing, but we had a whole bunch of folks around my age, some a little older, some a little younger, who all ended up going to the Peace Corps.

Miner: Huh.

Muirhead: And some of us were- were relatives but certainly all neighbors who grew up in this small high school. We- we have some teachers at that high school who impacted us. In fact, one of those teachers is one hundred and five today and I still get letters from her.

Miner: Oh my goodness!

Muirhead: It's pretty intimidating. She was my English teacher. So when I wrote back, I had to be really clear in my writing and made sure I wasn't making too many mistakes. I had this fear that she would come back with red ink. [Miner laughs] But she was a professor who in the- in the thirties, she had stories of traveling through Europe as a young woman as the Nazis were coming to power and so there were- so she was one, and there were several other teachers who obviously impacted us. I think we were fortunate to have a...a really sound public school education.

Miner: Wow. That's great. Well, you said when you- you made reference to Bloomington being the big city, so I take it that it was a little bit of a change for you probably in a number of ways. What kind of culture shock do you think you experienced?

Muirhead: Yeah, I mean, you know, even though Wesleyan is small, Bloomington is small. You can walk everywhere. Obviously it was a lifestyle change. You- you go from being in high

school and being very active and involved in everything and knowing everyone and being known throughout the community to- to being one of many new people. I ran into a couple of people on campus that first few days that I had known before, but I think the cult- part of the culture shock was just not knowing anyone, and me being younger and not having- not necessarily having any of the background that many of my classmates had, many of my classmates that had come from suburban Chicago schools and where they had taken calculus and I still hadn't had calculus because we didn't have calculus at this rural high school. So some of that was intimidating. I was also working on campus. I worked in the commons cafeteria washing dishes and that was a- many of my friends did, but I also had many friends who didn't have to do stuff like that, and their college experience perhaps was a little bit different. I don't regret having that. It's certainly an important part of my experience, but it was different, so yeah. It's- you know, and you're no longer in your parents' homes, so it was not major culture shock, but there were- there were some adjustments to be made.

Miner: So I would imagine that you found friends through your work in the commons. Did you participate in other activities initially that helped you with that or were there other- I don't know, other avenues through courses or other things that you did?

Muirhead: Yeah. Yeah, you- I met people in- in courses. I was very active in intramural athletics due to- because I wasn't good enough to play on any of the teams, but I enjoyed sports so I got to know people playing intramural tennis and basketball and...so there were a few remaining friends of my brothers and seniors and they would look after me sometimes but, you know, quickly you make friends. There was one friend who I ran into the very first day on campus who had gone to a rival high school, and we had played sports against each other forever and of course we became very close friends, so yeah. Making friends wasn't difficult. It was certainly an open, inviting environment.

Miner: Huh. So intramural athletics was pretty big at that-

Muirhead: They were, yeah.

Miner: -time. Yeah.

Muirhead: They were, and that was a space for those of us who weren't quite good enough. But we had fun.

Miner: That's great.

Muirhead: So a lot of pick-up basketball games and things like that.

Miner: That's great. Are there other kinds of- I don't know if that would really seem like a tradition, but other kinds of practices on campus? I guess I should start with how in touch are you with campus still today?

Muirhead: Somewhat. My sister-in-law retired from Wesleyan several years ago. She was in the English department. She was a student when I was there and we were friends, but- so being in touch with the campus, visiting the campus periodically, but I think maybe to get at your the question the- sort of- many people did Greek life offered the opportunity to develop a social life together and community, and I was not part of that. Part of it was resources, part of it was just didn't really believe in it. I believe it was my second semester of sophomore year I actually pledged a fraternity for a while and quickly decided this was not for me and by then we had a community and friends. We had been living in Magill hall, later Blackstock Hall. Later we lived in a house that the university owned, which was torn down upon our graduation so it was a smaller house and we were all good friends, and yeah. None of us were involved in Greek life. We were- we were the rebels in a sense I guess since we weren't a part of that. I think- quite frankly, one of the issues as I experienced more college and broadened my friendship base with all of that, but in- in my days, there was no opportunities for minorities to be in any of the fraternities, and while I was recruited and pledged for a while, I realized that one of my best friends who was African-American could not become part of that same fraternity. I thought, "Why am I wasting my time here?" And so a group of us- a number of us who had been campus leaders- eventually became campus leaders left the Greek system and we were proud independents, and so I don't know if that helps explain where I was socially, but that was- that was what happened.

Miner: That helps quite a bit. So, let's talk a little bit more about that, because this is an issue that comes up. In my- you know, I certainly don't have a day to day knowledge of Illinois Wesleyan history, but certainly the racial climate on campus and student rights- I want to say student pressure to make changes on campus is something that I see ebb and flow, and I think that's completely predictable but what- so let's talk a little bit more about housing on campus. Then what kinds of opportunities would your friend have had access to for housing I guess?

Muirhead: Dorms. The- I think it would be accurate to say that all of the African-American students lived in dorms. The- people didn't live off-campus in those days. For many African-Americans, social life drew them to students at Illinois State where there was a larger minority population, and there was a house in town. One of the women who worked in the cafeteria in the commons, an African-American, Mrs. Stewart, used to lend us her house for our parties and I'm sure that's not in any recorded history at Illinois Wesleyan but it gave- it gave African-American students and those of us who were not involved in Greek life an avenue for a social life. So we used to have parties and dances and so on.

Miner: So it really stayed pretty much social at a- and not necessarily something students on campus would have gone to, I don't know, any kind of administrative level to try to get changed or because Greeks are so-

Muirhead: Yeah. The change- and there were some faculty members who impacted me. I mean, as I look back in my education, my career, and my life, who just left a lasting input, and some of the things we did, but I think it might have been '64, '65 we started a Human Rights Commission. I believe that was the title of our committee. Emily Dale was one of the sociology professors. I'm sure you've heard of her and know about her, but Emily and a few other professors, I think Dr. Whitehurst, maybe Dr. Stone were influential in setting up this committee, which is students and faculty that would look at issues in social justice. And we- for a student to still- I was twenty, twenty-one maybe, this was a very empowering experience to be a part of this committee, and we were treated as almost an equal, even though we weren't. But one of the things we questioned a lot was- and I became president of the student senate and we would meet with Dr. Berthoff and we would talk about issues. I remember discussing with him the- the issues that were going on with minority students. There weren't many minority students on campus. There were cases where incoming freshmen, there were- they got their roommate assignment, and they found out their roommate was African-American and we were told this was random. It had just happened. It was a coincidence. But we didn't think that was the case necessarily, and I don't know if we were right or wrong, but we pushed the issue. We issued a statement, which it's in the archives, and I could send it to you, but it was a human rights statement, and we asked all organizations to- it was a belief statement. A belief in integration, a belief in social justice. It was a very innocuous kind of a statement, and the student senate signed it. We voted on it, and the majority said yes. Some people objected. There were efforts to get us to rescind that statement, and you read that statement today, and it was like, my god, you know, a liberal arts college believing in social justice? I could sign that statement. But we were able to hang on and we signed the statement. A number of organizations did. Some of the Greek organizations refused to. There was a- it was very- it became divisive. But I'm not- I certainly don't regret the fact that we stood- well, we were- we were- you have to put it in the context of the sixties and civil rights were becoming an issue. King had moved north. He came to campus. A number of us had gone to civil rights conferences in Chicago. We hosted a human relations- state human relations commission at Wesleyan, which had- the students were involved in planning, and a lot of people who worked in human relations in Chicago and throughout the state attended it, so we were being- we were experiencing it from a number of different angles, and of course in the classroom. I was taking classes with Emily Dale, and we were- we were certainly sensitized to issues that were- were pretty new to many of us. But there was resistance. There was resistance I think on campus. Now, after I left in '67, '68, there were more African-Americans on campus. At one point my senior year, the admissions department actually helped us set up meetings. For our spring break, a group of us went to Chicago, visiting integrated schools in the Chicago area, Chicago city schools and suburban schools, and so all of a sudden there were a number of

applicants and the population grew. We- we had a handful of African-American students, but it grew substantially in the years since- after I had gone. Interrupt me, I could go on and on.

Miner: No, no. This is great!

Muirhead: The third- [coughs] actually, my brother Jack graduated in '62. I graduated in '66. My brother Don followed me. He transferred from Knox a year or two after I was gone, and he fell into some of the same circles, some of the- many of the same friends, so he was there when several black students were admitted or recruited became fraternity members. But most of the- the African-American students on campus, that wasn't really appealing, and he was part of a group that formed what is traditionally known as all-black fraternity. They went to the administration and said, "You know, we really don't have anything that works for us," and the administration gave them a- let them all room together in a house that was owned- on the edge of campus, and so my brother Don lived in this house with this group of I think- certainly largely African-American if not all, and then they went through the formal process of appealing or requesting the opportunities to form a fraternity, and the administration's response was, "We will not sanction an all- or a segregated fraternity," because by then they were pushing the fraternities to integrate. So as it turns out, my brother Don became a member of this all-black fraternity, this historic, national fraternity, and of course he has some interesting stories to tell. At that point, I was long gone. I left Wesleyan and went to the Peace Corps in Peru so my life changed drastically after '66.

Miner: We have a lot to think about here. So just to follow up on a couple of things, the Human Rights Commission that you said you formed, and I assume Emily Dale was the faculty advisor, so am I right thinking that?

Muirhead: Yeah.

Miner: Was it a student organization within student senate?

Muirhead: It wasn't within student senate. It was a university-wide committee, and I- I'm not sure. It wasn't sanctioned by the student senate, but-

Miner: Okay.

Muirhead: -it had some sort- it had status within the university. I believe- well, there were other faculty members I believe it was Dr. Collins in chemistry. There was somebody from art or drama. It was a pretty diverse committee. It wasn't just a bunch of, you know, sociology and history majors.



Miner: Huh. So it was really- it was really from the faculty side then that this was formed.

Muirhead: It was actually- it was 50/50.

Miner: Okay.

Muirhead: The membership was 50/50 and a name that you've probably heard, Greg Dell?

Miner: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Muirhead: Greg passed away a couple of years ago and Greg was behind me in school. He was younger than me, and in many ways I would kid at him and say, you know, "You may have been younger but you were a mentor to me," because he was very brave and outspoken as he was throughout his entire life-

Miner: Yeah.

Muirhead: -and a person to be admired, so yeah. There were some students who really pushed the envelope.

Miner: Yeah. So-

Muirhead: And we had support, so I was just going through- last year, I was cleaning some old papers out, and I found a letter that I had received from Dr. Whitehurst. I didn't know him very well, but it was when we were in the midst of controversy, he wrote this personal letter saying, "Hey, you know, most of us on the faculty support what you're doing," and, you know, I mean, it- it's one of those things that really empowers us as students.

Miner: That's wonderful.

Muirhead: I'll never forget the impact those little things had on me. Plus there was someone in the drama department who also intervened and had no reason to get involved, but spoke up about, "Here it is. It's 1966 and we're still talking about this stuff?"

Miner: Yeah.

Muirhead: Of course, I think today it's 2018 and we're still talking about this stuff.

Miner: Yeah.

Muirhead: So-

Miner: I didn't know if- oh, go ahead.

Muirhead: No, I mean, I- when I look back at Wesleyan, it gave me opportunities I would not have had at a larger university so it was- it was- why, it set the stage for the rest of my life. What can I say?

Miner: So that's not a lot more that we can ask for I suppose as an institution. That's a wonderful- that's a wonderful thing to hear.

Muirhead: Yeah. It was...yeah. Very empowering, and the opportunity for leadership I guess was more than the quality of the academics perhaps.

Miner: Mm-hmm.

Muirhead: When it was time for our children- I'm in Milwaukee, Wisconsin right now. When it was time for our sons to go to college, we were in the situation where we were really thinking that affording a Wesleyan education was impossible, and fortunately in the state of Wisconsin we have these great universities, small liberal arts kinds of universities, and both boys were accepted at Madison but opted to go to Eau Claire which is a smaller campus, and they both had all sorts of leadership opportunities. It afforded them the opportunity to study abroad, learn other languages, and so Wesleyan would have been nice, but it was not- and that's one of the concerns I have today in education is that it's not very accessible-

Miner: Yeah.

Muirhead: -and becoming more and more difficult.

Miner: Yeah. Yeah, that's something that we talk about quite a bit.

Muirhead: Yeah. Yeah.

Miner: Did you- let's see. I want to talk a little bit more about the Human Rights Commission. I do recall the document that you're talking about, and there was news coverage in the Argus certainly-

Muirhead: Yeah.

Miner: -and I'll see if I can attach it to this interview when I'm done because it's a- it is a wonderful statement. But I also recall there being incidents downtown. Were you involved in- was there any like- was there a connection I guess between- I'm thinking between the Human rights commission on campus and any of the kind of activities in the local community to get more acceptance?

Muirhead: There were people who- who moved off campus to get involved in the local community. I did not.

Miner: Okay.

Muirhead: I think there were more incidents- there were some incidents when I was maybe a sophomore. My sister was at Illinois State and I know she- she was protesting barber shops in Normal that would not cut the hair of African-Americans. But I, other than knowing some of the people in the local community who would come to our human rights events, you know, or come when King came and certainly when we would have any kind of discussion group, there were folks from the the community who would show up. But I was not involved in any of the protests or marches.

Miner: Okay. So the work was done in the Student Senate and trying to get people to agree to this statement, was that- that was something that was an initiated through you then as a member of the human rights commission? Were others involved?

Muirhead: There were others. Greg Dell was certainly one of them. Greg and I think...names I can't remember.

Miner: Sure.

Muirhead: But there were other students involved. There was a core group of students who were really concerned and we weren't- we weren't alone by any means.

Miner: That's great. Was Dr. Berthoff fairly supportive of these things?

Muirhead: He- he was. I do remember- yeah. I mean, in fairness to them and trying to understand what the fuss was about, and they thought, "I just-" you know, "I just don't see it." Not Dr. Berthoff, but they invited us to a- the Board of Trustees meeting, and some of these trustees were old Methodist ministers from rural Illinois. I remember sitting next to this fellow, and oh my God, he must have been close to ninety, and he was on the board, and he said, "You know, when I was in school there was this colored kid who used to sit next to me." And you bite your tongue

and move on, but I think it was- I think it inspired some of the old timers to understand what the fuss was about-

Miner: Yeah.

Muirhead: -and certainly for white people to understand what the fuss was about.

Miner: Yeah. Did you parlay your small farming community background with those- with those audiences?

Muirhead: Oh yeah! I mean, it- it was- they were all learning as we were going along. My goodness, I had no background in...in diversity, so it- it was-

Miner: Right. Right. Yeah.

Muirhead: But then I spent three years in the Peace Corps in Peru, where I met my wife and for the past- almost fifty years I spent two or three months here in Peru, often teaching in exchange programs, and- and teaching in Spanish. Not teaching Spanish, but teaching in Spanish, and Spanish is a language we use at home. So-

Miner: Oh, wonderful!

Muirhead: So yeah. I'd become- I had adapted from the farming experience.

Miner: I was just thinking, when you were talking to the board members who might have had, you know, similar small community backgrounds.

Muirhead: Yeah. Right. Right.

Miner: Not that you had any credibility with them I suppose. [laughs]

Muirhead: I don't know if I pulled that one out or not.

Miner: [laughs] Well, maybe talk a little bit more about Emily Dale and Chaplain Whitehurst. You mentioned- I- I- for this recording I should say that you and I were both interviewed about Martin Luther King's 1966 visit to campus fairly recently, and that's why we were able to start a dialogue about getting more of your experiences on a recording.

Muirhead: Mm-hmm.

Miner: So you mentioned them as being both influential in that visit-

Muirhead: Yeah.

Miner: -and certainly their names loom large in these types of issues, and I just was wondering if you had anything else to add about courses you took from them or experiences you had with them. Were you on the Religious Activities Commission as well?

Muirhead: No.

Miner: Okay.

Muirhead: No, although Dr. Whitehurst and I became good friends after he wrote this letter to me out of nowhere. I didn't really know him, and so he- actually, years later we would be in Milwaukee and he was coming through town and we stayed in touch, and he stopped to visit us. But...in Emily's case, you know, she was this young professor compared to many of the people we had. She- I took a course in sociology and minority relations, and it was a fairly small group, and I think I was a sophomore. And I was also to- and this might surprise you, but I was very shy. I didn't speak up in class. I- I think I was intimidated by students. There were my classmates who had gone to fancy suburban schools, and here I was coming up from a small farm town. So I wasn't very confident, and I remember the moment, and years later she told me that she remembered the moment. She asked a question talking about Rosa Parks and, you know, sitting in front of the bus, and she asked what we thought about it. And I didn't react to it, and there were students who said, "Well, she should have lobbied city hall or gone through the process." And I was sitting there thinking, "Well, that's really- that's really- naive," and finally- I was in a large group- she turned to me and said, "Mr. Muirhead, what do you think?" So I think that if she hadn't moved to the front of the bus, she'd still be sitting on the back of the bus, and spoke out in favor of the notion of civil disobedience, and we clicked. And I taught- I'm a retired teacher. I taught for forty-three years. But there are moments where you- you remember a moment with a student and I told her that story and she said, "I remember that exact moment." And you think back in terms of being a teacher, you know, whether the effort was all worth it, but a moment like that? I mean, my God, it doesn't get any better.

Miner: [laughs]

Muirhead: So yeah, Emily, and then after that she was an advocate. She would push me to do things, and then she invited me to the Human Rights Commission and Dr. Whitehurst was on that also, and Jerry Stone was also around, and he, you know, always very supportive. There was one other thing I was thinking about. Of course, this is mid-sixties and the craze was coffee houses were popping up all over the place, and it was Greg Dell who- there was a big house next

to Bakerfield house that was owned by the University. It was vacant, and Greg said, "We can take that over and make a coffee house out of it and have, you know, poetry readings or have speakers come in or people who could perform music." We had a lot of talented music majors or the drama majors could do something, and it was- it became very controversial. It was also- you can find it in the Argus, but the- we budgeted a thousand dollars to do this thing, and during spring break a group of us stayed on campus and we painted. We carpeted. We- we built the stages. We did it all, and there was a group who criticized us saying, "This is- you're throwing student money away. This came out of student activity money. How can you spend a thousand dollars?" Well, we hired a student manager, student workers, paid what they were paying in the Dugout, the Commons, and the- there was a student manager who moved the whole thing. And we even had Second City appear in that coffee house. They- they did a com- they did a show at the Bakerfield house, and then we told them we had this cool little coffee house and it was in those days everyone smoked. Fortunately, I never did but a lot of smoke in the pre-hippie movement, and the Second City people came in and did a performance there. The thing paid for itself in like two weeks.

Miner: Ah.

Muirhead: And it was extremely popular. Eventually, the university tore the building down and of course, we disbanded and moved into different directions, but at least- anyway, we were providing avenues for people who weren't attached to Greek life.

Miner: That's great.

Muirhead: And they were really unifying kind of things I think on campus. But they were just- I always have to remember Greg Dell's contributions to so many of those things.

Miner: Huh.

Muirhead: Yeah. Just- yet another of those things- I'm thinking of some of the drama majors. When we moved- we had been several years in Milwaukee. Larry Shue came to our repertory company. Larry Shue, the- the drama major who-

Miner: Yeah.

Muirhead: -who died too early, but had tremendous success on stage. And you know, for a farm boy who didn't have opportunity for things like that, I became an avid fan of theatre when Larry was here in Milwaukee. We spent a lot of time with his friends, and we had just seen him weeks before he died in a plane accident.

Miner: Oh dear.

Muirhead: But Wesleyan- I guess when I had all of those experiences at Wesleyan, we- you know to recognize it. The fact that I have- we have season tickets to the repertory theater is probably because of John Ficca and his theater program.

Miner: Huh.

Muirhead: It was first class.

Miner: That's- still is. Yeah.

Muirhead: It sure is. Yeah. And every time I see Richard Jenkins, I say he was a little freshman when I was a senior, but yeah.

Miner: [laughs] That's great. But do you have pictures of him wearing the beanie?

Muirhead: [laughs] Is it the one in the yearbook, I think?

Miner: Probably. Hopefully he knows. So the Bakerfield house. You mentioned that by name. You said the coffee house was right next to it. What is the Bakerfield house then?

Muirhead: Oh, it's- I don't know what it's called now. It's right across from Franklin Hall. They changed the name. It's where the basketball games were played, and then they built the Fred Young Fieldhouse which was torn down and they have a new one.

Miner: Okay.

Muirhead: It's a red brick building. I think it's still there from-

Miner: So Bakerfield house, the one I'm thinking of is the Memorial Gym.

Muirhead: Yeah, I think we called it the Bakerfield house, but maybe not.

Miner: I have not heard of that before. Okay.

Muirhead: I think that was the name, but I- I did my graduate work at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee which was a couple blocks away and they had an old fieldhouse which was called Bakerfield house, so I thought- I think they were both- whatever. There were- that was where the basketball was played.

Miner: Sure. And that was in-

Muirhead: And that's- convocations were held there. We- in those days, there were four convocations here. Attendance was taken. You had to attend. If you did not go, you lost a credit. It was just wiped off your transcript.

Miner: Wow. Do you think that was a good policy? [laughs]

Muirhead: I think it was- no. No. [Miner laughs] I've worked in education for too long. If anything- part of the problem. Oh my God, *Black Like Me*, the author of *Black Like Me*. I just- it escaped me. He came to campus, John Howard Griffin I believe. And I remember him speaking at Baker- or Memorial Gym, whatever it's called, and it was amazing. He told the story of traveling through the South as a black, and I can remember some of the younger students sitting up in the balcony, talking and laughing and being rude the whole time-

Miner: Hmm.

Muirhead: -and I thought, "No. They should not have been here. They should have been elsewhere."

Miner: Hmm.

Muirhead: There was a- it was frankly quite embarrassing. But no, that was not a really good policy.

Miner: But this was the facility that had the pool in the basement too?

Muirhead: Yeah. Yeah.

Miner: Yep. That's the- we- I know that as the Memorial Gym.

Muirhead: Well, the pool I suspect is long gone then?

Miner: Yeah, it's actually a restaurant now.

Muirhead: [laughs] Oh, you're kidding.

Miner: So the coffee house would have been the building that had sort of a barn-like look to it?



Muirhead: No, it was a- well, it was just a little frame house.

Miner: A small house, okay.

Muirhead: It was- you know, the university bought property around campus-

Miner: Yeah.

Muirhead: -for future expansion, and I can't remember if it was immediately east or two or three buildings east. Is that Emerson? What street is that?

Miner: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Muirhead: I think it was in front of Magill.

Miner: Mm-hmm.

Muirhead: Yeah. We lived in a place called Thrall Hall which was behind Magill. But it's- it's been torn down long- long-

Miner: Yeah.

Muirhead: -after we graduated.

Miner: Okay.

Muirhead: There were about twenty of us living in that- in that dorm.

Miner: Oh wow!

Muirhead: In that house.

Miner: So...you mentioned that you spoke out in favor of civil disobedience in your class. Do you recall that being an activity that students engaged in- in?

Muirhead: No, not really.

Miner: Okay.

Muirhead: No. I mean, things were- on campus, there may have been. Greg I know marched in Chicago, so people may have done things outside of their Wesleyan life. Maybe some people did in Bloomington. I don't know. I'm not really aware-

Miner: Hmm.

Muirhead: -that any of us exercised it.

Miner: Hmm. Okay. I wanted to talk a little bit too about your teaching after you left Wesleyan. Where did you- you said you went to the Peace Corps, so that's a two-year commitment, right?

Muirhead: Well, actually, I was there for three.

Miner: Okay.

Muirhead: And the one- one note about my Peace Corps experience, I had graduated I guess in those days it was early June. Our graduation speaker was Sarge Shriver, who was the director of the Peace Corps.

Miner: Yes.

Muirhead: And I was the only one from our class going to the Peace Corps, so I got to meet him. Then a week later, I took my first plane ride to Kansas City for training, and I was there for ten weeks. Then by September I was in Peru, and I was assigned to work in agriculture because with- because I grew up on a farm. And those were the days in the Peace Corps where most of the volunteers were people with Bachelor degrees in sociology or political science or history, and we didn't know much about other stuff, and since I was a farm boy, I got assigned to a ministry, and so for- I stayed for three years. Obviously, it took time to learn the language and fortunately, I was isolated in the village by myself for six months, and by myself in the sense that I was the only person in the village who spoke English. None of the Peruvians spoke English, so I was forced to learn it. I had taken German at Wesleyan, and after six months, I was pretty competent conversationally, and then I was moved to a project in the fairly large city similar to the farmers. But when you look at it, it takes a year or more to really get comfortable in the work you're doing, and so at the end of two years, it was time to come home, and I was- I wasn't ready to come home, and that third year, I had met my wife and we got married that third year and then came back to the states, and fortunately, I ended up getting a job in Milwaukee, and I ended up working in the community college system for thirty-two years teaching history, teaching Latin American history for the most part, and summers we would go back to Peru. My wife's hometown is Arequipa, the second largest city in Peru, and I hooked up with Augustana College because they had- Augustana had really just been doing great work in study abroad and the- the

summer language Spanish program was in the- in Arequipa, Peru. They- their idea was that they would hire Peruvians to teach the American students, and it kind of worked in many of the classes, but they put together a team, and I became part of that team, and they gave me the Latin American history class because I had near native fluency in Spanish, plus I kind of understood American students...[Miner laughs]...that they were different from Peruvian students. So that was- that was perfect. For a number of years, I- I- our family could go to Peru. Our sons grew up in Peru, so Spanish- that's still our language at home, and at one point political violence in Peru became so severe that we had to move the program to Ecuador, and I did go to Ecuador with them for a while, and then after that I eventually- well, after thirty-three years at a community college, I retired and moved to a small liberal arts college as director of international studies, and I did all of their study abroad programs, so again I began teaching in Peru. I spent a significant amount of time teaching in Argentina. We've done programs in Mexico and Costa Rica. So-

Miner: Wow!

Muirhead: -I've been there a few times, so Peru is kind of home to me. Now that I'm retired, I still spend the winter months in Peru, and I help out with some of the programs at small liberal arts colleges who were doing their programs in the same city, and the partnership with the university that I worked with in Peru. I still keep my hands in it a little bit, but not the responsibility I used to have.

Miner: Sounds like a perfect outcome for you after all those years of service.

Muirhead: It's been good.

Miner: Huh.

Muirhead: Can't complain.

Miner: So it's- so study abroad wasn't really an option at Illinois Wesleyan then for you when you were a student?

Muirhead: No. There were a couple of interesting things, and I had a friend who went to Spelman. We had an exchange with Morehouse and Spelman and I thought about doing the Morehouse part of it, but it was just- it was not something I could really afford to do at that time. There was a student- oh, this just entered my mind. One of the classes I took from Dr. Whitehurst was Asian religions, and it was during the short-term. It was the first year of short-term where we had three weeks on Wesleyan's campus or three weeks at anywhere in the world, and one of my friends who was actually from Argentina spent the entire month of January camping on Machu Picchu.

Miner: Oh wow!

Muirhead: And he wrote a paper and got credit for that while I sat in Bloomington with Dr. Whitehurst which was certainly worthwhile, but the idea of study abroad was something which was- it was not something that was on our radar.

Miner: Wow.

Muirhead: Of course, when our kids came along, there wasn't a question of if. It was where-

Miner: Right.

Muirhead: -and when. And they both studied in several different places and speak a bunch of languages and-

Miner: Wow.

Muirhead: Yeah.

Miner: Well, I guess that's all that we can hope for is that we pass on, you know, what we feel is beneficial to the next generation.

Muirhead: Yeah. Yeah.

Miner: That's great.

Muirhead: So I don't know, I- I ramble too much, and as we talk I remember more stuff, but is there anything else that you-

Miner: I would say that you talked about the impact that leadership, or the opportunity of having leadership is the greatest impact on you, and we talked a lot about your work with the Human Rights Commission, and some of the- the conditions for African-Americans on campus. Did you have any perception on gender issues- gender stratification while you were here on campus while you were here?

Muirhead: You know, that's really a good question, and I think that's something that I've thought about certainly in recent years, but something we didn't think about at the time.

Miner: Yeah.

Muirhead: There were- we certainly did not verbalize it. We didn't think about it, but we did have- the women in the Student Senate were active and outspoken and didn't shy away from being involved in the Human Rights Commission and they were actively involved, but I think in my time all of the Student Senate presidents were males. I suspect that was to be the case for a long time.

Miner: Hmm.

Muirhead: I'm sure there were issues I was totally insensitive to.

Miner: Yeah, it's my impression that the activism and that sort of thing came at a later time too. I just- I just wanted to bring it up.

Muirhead: Yeah, no, it's- it's the right question. I'd probably talk to my sister-in-law about that.

Miner: Right.

Muirhead: I- do you know Pam? I'm assuming you.

Miner: Yes, I do. Yeah, and she and I have spoken a couple of times, and she's kind of a-

Muirhead: She was on the Senate. She was on the Senate when I was president.

Miner: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Muirhead: But she was one of a handful of African-American students at the time.

Miner: She is also the first person to alert me or to provide me with one of those admissions cards that actually talked about race, and she talked about getting assigned in the student dorm situation that you described and-

Muirhead: Oh, yeah.

Miner: -it's an interesting perspective.

Muirhead: Well, one of the- I remember the dean of students, I think it might have been Worthenberg or Meierhofer and then the assistant, and we had this discussion, and one of them said, "Well, it was a coincidence," and the other fessed up and said, "No, we thought they'd be more comfortable."

Miner: Yeah.

Muirhead: Yeah. So that's where thinking was.

Miner: Okay.

Muirhead: The other thing- actually, my brother Don said- I talked to him recently and I asked him about his fraternity experience, and he- he wrote a couple of pages for- for an African-American student who was doing research on that period and contacted him and wanted some background on it, so he wrote this history of what transpired. It's kind of interesting, and I should send that to you.

Miner: Oh, I would love it, and I would greatly appreciate it if you would ask him to consider an interview and to get in touch with me.

Muirhead: Oh, he would love to talk about it.

Miner: Oh, great!

Muirhead: Yeah.

Miner: Oh, wonderful! I'm always happy to have referrals. [laughs]

Muirhead: Yeah. It's a...well, with three brothers who attended, two sisters-in-law who attended, and then a niece and a nephew both attended Wesleyan.

Miner: That's quite a family connection. [laughs]

Muirhead: Yeah. Yeah. I looked at- our son has a Ph.D. in linguistics, and he did not attend Wesleyan, and at the time I think I felt bad about it, and I know he was so much better off at the University of Wisconsin system than Wesleyan.

Miner: Hmm.

Muirhead: It would not have been appropriate for him at that time in his development. And-

Miner: Hmm.

Muirhead: -and he's had just a very, very successful career and we're very, very proud of him. But I think had he gone to Wesleyan, he'd probably still be paying off his debt. Of course, Wesleyan isn't for everybody, and of course, in the day that I went, we could afford- I could paint houses in the summer and pay for a Wesleyan education and graduate without a debt.

Miner: Hmm. Yeah.

Muirhead: That's not the case today, so-

Miner: Yeah.

Muirhead: Anyhow, I will send you Don's little essay-

Miner: That's great.

Muirhead: -and if there's anything you can think of, don't hesitate to send me an e-mail or give me a call.

Miner: That's great. Maybe I could just ask a follow-up- two more questions.

Muirhead: Sure.

Miner: So, I had referenced earlier that you and I had been interviewed about Dr. King's visit in '66, and I just- I will certainly link to that also since we've mentioned it here, but I wanted to ask you were there other things that you thought of after that conversation that you would have added with that interview that was on a radio show for a public radio station. Were there any other things-

Muirhead: At the time?

Miner: -were there any other things after that interview that you thought about that you wish you would have talked about?

Muirhead: That's really funny, because in fact, I did think of things, and you catch me off guard and I can't think of what they were. [both laugh] But...no, no. I think we- we covered a lot.

Miner: Sure.

Muirhead: I thought it was interesting just hearing the other people- hearing Denny, who was ahead of me but his- his experience was different than mine. He seemed to not have seen or

experienced the- the kind of discrimination that some of my friends did. Maybe he was just unaware of it, what the folks I was hanging with were feeling, what we were talking about, and I talked to my brother Don after which he listened to me and most of my brothers listened to me and Don said- I think it was '80- '68 that the first black student in a fraternity, and- and I think it was actually Denny's fraternity, Acacia, that may have taken the first black.

Miner: Yeah.

Muirhead: But no, I- I can't remember the details.

Miner: It's okay.

Miner: I just wanted to give you another opportunity.

Muirhead: Yeah.

Miner: If you think of them, you can send me a note. [laughs]

Muirhead: The thing that struck me the other day when I was listening to the NPR article was a psychologist talking about a state of awe. You know, we were certainly aware of who King was, and I do- I periodically listen to that speech, and I'm still in awe.

Miner: Yeah. Yeah. Certainly a lot that resonates.

Muirhead: Yeah. And there was a second question?

Miner: Just if there were other things that you thought we should hear about from your experiences at Wesleyan or afterwards or if you think you pretty much covered it.

Muirhead: I...you know, I guess the only thing that I'd add is being in education, first at the community college level, then at a small liberal arts college, that actually had a huge- excuse me, a very diverse population, so economically diverse, racially diverse. This- this whole notion of mission and values that was part of a Wesleyan education, I don't think I thought a lot about it in those terms, even though we were questioning the pursuit of civil rights and so on. But certainly at my professional career, working at a community college with a very, very diverse and very large population, it was all pretty compatible with those same value systems that this is where you want to be. And moving to a small Catholic liberal arts college, we thought that it was similar to being at a small Methodist liberal arts college and mission and core values, the mission and core values part of the discussion. We were always centered on why we were there. So, we were looking at people like Dr. Whitehurst, Emily, and it all makes great sense, and I'm glad I



made a great choice I made. What can I say? And so...yeah. I can't think of anything else. I will- I know I'll think of things later, but that's okay.

Miner: Yeah, there's always going to be more, but thank you so much for your time. I really appreciate you sharing your experiences.

Muirhead: Thank you, and good luck with your project. I- and I- I'll...send the attachment of Don's little essay to you now, and I'll send you the email too if that's okay.

Miner: Perfect. Thank you so much! Best of luck to you.

Muirhead: Okay. You too, Meg.

Miner: Take care.

Muirhead: Buh-bye.

Miner: Bye.