



2010

Jane Rea Norris

Mary Jane Rea Norris '44
Illinois Wesleyan University

Meg Miner
Illinois Wesleyan University

Recommended Citation

Norris '44, Mary Jane Rea and Miner, Meg, "Jane Rea Norris" (2010). *All oral histories*. 8.
http://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/oral_hist/8

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by The Ames Library, the Andrew W. Mellon Center for Curricular and Faculty Development, the Office of the Provost and the Office of the President. It has been accepted for inclusion in Digital Commons @ IWU by the University Archivist & Special Collections Librarian at Illinois Wesleyan University. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@iwu.edu.

©Copyright is owned by the author of this document.

Westminster Village, Bloomington

Meg Miner: Hi.

Jane Norris: Hi.

Miner: My name is Meg Miner and I'm the Archivist at Illinois Wesleyan University and today is June the 10th, 2010 and we are in Westminster Village and I am here today with Jane Norris. Jane if you could start out by giving me your full name and telling us how you're affiliated with Wesleyan, we'll get going.

Norris: Well I'm Mary Norris. My maiden name was Rea, R-e-a, Jane Rea. I was a class of '44 but I only went two years and then the war came along, changed a lot of things, but the summer between '41 and '42 I worked in the office at Wesleyan and it was the nicest bunch of people. I really enjoyed it.

Miner: In the main office—

Norris: Mhmm.

Miner: —for the administration?

Norris: Yes.

Miner: Oh, great.

Norris: And then a little later I joined the night crew at State Farm. Girls from ISU and from Wesleyan walked downtown and we worked from I think it was 3:30 to—maybe 4:00-8:00 or something and Saturday morning. State Farm in all of their promotions and everything have never mentioned the night crew I don't think.

Miner: Oh dear.

Norris: And I have no idea what we were paid. I have no stubs or anything left but we walked in and the girl had the desk ready—the girl—with the same desk, so we had to do that and then we went home to do our homework—

Miner: Oh my.

Norris: —for Wesleyan.

Miner: What did you do in the office then at night...at State Farm?

Norris: Well whatever—I forget what they called me but the girl left work on the desk that I was to do that she didn't get finished during the day.

Miner: Like clerical work kinds of—

Norris: Mhmm, yes, mhhm.

Miner: Okay. And how long were you there in the evenings? You would work there for how many hours?

Norris: 4:00-8:00 perhaps, I think.

Miner: And then home to study.

Norris: Mhmm and a lot of girls from ISU walked down too, a whole bunch of us.

Miner: Hmm. And is that something you did the entire time you were at Wesleyan?

Norris: I did it the second year. I was only there two years and I liked Wesleyan and everything about it so when we had our four children, two boys, two girls, they all graduated from Wesleyan, two Sigma Chis, two Kappa Deltas.

Miner: Oh my. And were you a Kappa Delta in your time too then?

Norris: Yes.

Miner: Okay. Is that where you lived then, with your—did you live in a Kappa Delta house then?

Norris: Actually I lived at home and my children mostly lived at home but they all had good jobs and everything so it worked out. My brother-in-law's boy went to ISU and he asked my husband one day, "Do you think it's worth the extra money to send him to Wesleyan?" and we said, "If we didn't, we wouldn't be doing it"...[laughs].

Miner: There ya go. Proof is in the pudding.

Norris: Right.

Miner: [laughs]...Well what's a good memory for you from your time at Wesleyan?

Norris: Oh the sorority house and we had fun. The old Sigma Chi house was across the street and one time I remember we had a big final coming up in Accounting and they were studying one thing, we were studying the other, and they slipped across and slipped us some answers to what we were studying.

[Both laugh]

Miner: Is that right?

Norris: Right, the usual carrying along.

[Miner laughs]

Norris: Nothing compared to what happens now.

Miner: I'm sure, oh my goodness. Well what—when you say you had fun, what did you do for fun?

Norris: I don't know really, pretty busy but I dated, we had dances, and we had parades back then.

Miner: Were there parades other than just homecoming? Were there parades at different times in the year?

Norris: I don't think so but I'm not sure...[laughs].

Miner: What was the homecoming parade like?

Norris: Oh it was fun and there was a contest, of course, between the fraternities and the sororities for who had the best parade.

Miner: So for the float decorations?

Norris: Yes.

Miner: I've seen pictures of house decorations, too.

Norris: Mhmm.

Miner: —is that what you did too?

Norris: Mhmm.

Miner: What were—do you remember any of the themes or any of the decorations from your time here?

Norris: Not really...[laughs].

Miner: Yeah.

Norris: If I went through my yearbooks I might...[laughs].

Miner: Uh-huh, sure. Well what would you—how long would it take you to get a float ready, I mean, was this something that you all did together or were there some people that were particularly better?

Norris: We all did it together when you didn't have a class for an hour you'd run over or at night before dark I suppose.

Miner: So this took quite a bit of time—

Norris: Oh yes.

Miner: —to pull these together.

Norris: A lot of work.

Miner: Were there—on people's vehicles or did you do like trailers?

Norris: Oh I think we did big trucks.

Miner: Uh-huh.

Norris: Or something like that.

Miner: So they were parked somewhere on campus?

Norris: Mhmm.

Miner: And you would dash over and work on them.

Norris: I don't even remember where.

[Both laugh]

Norris: It's been a long time ago.

Miner: Sure. Do you have a favorite friend that you remember from that timeframe or a faculty member or—

Norris: Oh lots of friends and some of them are gone too...too many.

Miner: Sure...well, what was your favorite subject?

Norris: Well my mother was a schoolteacher and she always wanted to be a nurse so she wanted me to be a nurse and I didn't want to be a nurse.

[Miner laughs]

Norris: So basically I would say I took business courses and good thing I did because later I did all of my husband's office work for him when he was a realtor and appraiser.

Miner: Oh my, so that helped out.

Norris: Oh yes.

Miner: Well now the—one of the sayings on campus is that we try and get students out of the Wesleyan bubble, you know, the sort of closed environment of the campus and get them to experience more. Do you feel that there was a—was it a closed environment when you were at Wesleyan or were you involved more in world events because of the war or did you feel you had an outside view or—

Norris: Well I was sad to see some of the boys gone and there were some of them that didn't last too long in the war.

Miner: Was that a topic on campus, a frequent topic?

Norris: Oh yes—who's called up, who's 1A, who's going in the Army, who's going in the Navy—that sort of thing.

Miner: Mhmm. So they would leave campus then in mid-semester when they were called up or was it at the end of the year that you would learn these things or the beginning?

Norris: I'm trying to think. I really don't remember that too much.

Miner: Well since your family was local were you experiencing any of the shortages that we hear about now with rationing of certain things?

Norris: I remember the gasoline shortage. I don't remember about—what'd they have food stamps or something like that?

Miner: Do you know if the campus had a victory garden?...[laughs]

Norris: I don't remember.

[Both laugh]

Miner: I've never heard I story about it, I was just curious.

Norris: No.

[Both laugh]

Miner: Okay. So you don't really feel that you—or you don't recall any effects of shortages due to the war on campus or at home?

Norris: No...it was a nice place to be.

Miner: You feel—obviously you sent your children to Wesleyan, so what do you think the difference is with a liberal arts education and some of the other types of higher education that are available? What does it mean to you?

Norris: Well when our oldest son was ready to go we sent him to Wesleyan and I had the feeling that if he had gone to some place like ISU with the larger classes and—I wasn't sure he would stick with it but my second son went in under probation only because his older brother was just graduating and he said, "I don't know how I got in. I hope I can stay," and he really had no problems. He graduated on time. My second daughter graduated in three years because her husband was at Wesleyan—Bruce Thomas was graduating in 1980 and she was going to graduate then and they were going to get married then. They did.

[Both laugh]

Miner: She was motivated.

Norris: Right.

Miner: [laughs]...Oh my.

Norris: My oldest son said, “She’s saving you a bunch of money,” so we sent them to Hawaii on their honeymoon.

[Both laugh]

Miner: That’s a nice return.

Norris: Right.

[Both laugh]

Norris: So that’s about all I can remember. Of course—

Miner: Alright.

Norris: —I’ve enjoyed the Alumni Association and served as a Sigma Chi Mother’s Club President one year, Kappa Delta Mother’s Club President one year, so I enjoy the Alumni Association—

Miner: That’s great.

Norris: Very much.

Miner: That’s great.

Norris: So I think that’s just about all I can offer...[laughs].

Miner: Okay, well thank you so much for sharing your memories. I really appreciate your time today. It’s been lovely meeting you.

Norris: You, too.

Miner: Thanks.