



Voices of Lycoming Oral Histories

Lycoming College Archives - Snowden Library

Oral History of

Julie Bell Martin

Alumna, Class of 1963

Date: November 17, 2008

Interview conducted by: Julie Dougherty

Transcribed by: Alysha Russo

Copyright ©Lycoming College, Williamsport, PA

NOTICE:

This is a transcript of a tape-recorded interview conducted for the Lycoming College Archives-Snowden Library. A draft of this transcript was edited by the interviewee but only minor emendations were made; therefore, the reader should remember that this is essentially a transcript of the spoken, rather than the written word.

RESTRICTIONS:

This oral history transcript may be read, quoted from, cited, and reproduced for purposes of research. It may not be published in full except by permission of Lycoming College.

Julie Bell Martin

November 17, 2008

Interviewer: Julie Dougherty

Transcriber: Alysha Russo

DOUGHERTY: The date is Monday, November 17, 2008. I'm speaking with Julie Bell Martin—who we're thrilled to have with us—and I'm Julie Dougherty from the archives.

We'd like to start at the beginning of when you came to school here at Lycoming.

MARTIN: Well, I was very excited to come to Lycoming because I had tried another school in Maine and I was so homesick that I cried every day. So I came home to Pennsylvania and I came to Lycoming.

DOUGHERTY: And when was that?

MARTIN: That was in the fall of 1958, I think. I wanted to be close to home but I never went home. I was planning to go here for just a semester and then transfer to Ohio-Wesleyan where my father had gone but I got here and I just loved it. I loved being with the professors and the students and I said, "Well, I'm going to stay at Lycoming".

DOUGHERTY: That's wonderful. You were really active. Do you want to tell us what some of the things you were involved in?

MARTIN: Well, I loved sports so I was very active in intramural sports. I organized teams for my friends and we played volleyball and basketball. I actually ended up teaching my friends swimming for my gym class so I got an A in gym and I was a teacher. I also played field hockey. I enjoyed playing the position of right wing.

DOUGHERTY: That's wonderful.

MARTIN: And in my summers I taught swimming and boating and sailing and canoeing and I worked in camps in New Hampshire and then also at the national music camp called Interlochen in Michigan and I spent five summers there. One summer I was a graduate student at the University of Michigan and Interlochen and I took flute, modern dance, and orchestra. Then I found out that if I taught my flute teacher's wife how to swim I could get free flute lessons so I worked on the college waterfront and it was the most wonderful experience.

DOUGHERTY: Oh my gosh that's wonderful. And you're from a very famous family in this area. You are part of the Rich family from Woolrich. Do you want to tell me a little bit about your family?

MARTIN: Well, it's very interesting because my father was a minister. He went to war and he was on the USS Card for two years and we lived with my grandparents in Woolrich so we have a very special, close connection to Woolrich and to Lycoming. We did all sorts of things that irritated my grandmother. My brother was two and I was four and we put linen napkins on the dog house and then we put all the rags down the clothes chute. So Mother thought Grandmother needed new underwear and

Grandmother thought Mother needed new underwear. But we lived there for two years and this part of the country is very special.

DOUGHERTY: Is that the only time you ever lived in this area—when you were there with your grandparents and when you were here at Lycoming?

MARTIN: Yes. After Daddy got off the ship we moved to Florida and I started school in Florida. And then we moved to Franklin, Ohio and then to Delaware, Ohio where Daddy was a pastor at Williams Street Church which actually burned to the ground after we left. And then we moved to Harrisburg and because we were in Harrisburg, we were close to Woolrich and Williamsport and my aunts and uncles. So we would get together at Christmastime and we had a big family dinner at the Harrisburger Hotel and the grandchildren would perform. Baba would give us silver dollars for performing so since I was the oldest one that was really lots of fun. [laughs]

DOUGHERTY: I'll bet it was. What was your father's—what was his line of work—what did he do?

MARTIN: Daddy was a minister and when we moved to Pennsylvania, we moved to Grace Methodist Church on State Street in Harrisburg and we lived right next to the church. And it was really fun because we could just run right next door to Girl Scouts or Sunday school. Then the church needed space so they bought another parsonage up on Second Street in Harrisburg and we were able to walk to school then. But when we lived next to the capital, my friend Alex Chapel and Marianne Cannon would come to my house and we'd walk to the capital grounds and take the bus on Third Street to the end of the line to Camp Curtin Junior High School. So we were city kids.

DOUGHERTY: You were city kids. Okay, let's get back to Lycoming a little bit. Did you make friends that you still are in touch with?

MARTIN: Oh yes. My best friend and my roommate was Onalee Nixon—Onalee Barton—and I lost track of her for many years but we got back together and Onnie lives in Keuka Lake up near Hammondsport, New York. She and her husband Jack are bridge players and my husband's a bridge player so I became one too and we would go have marathon bridge weekends with them. And then as their hobby, they did antique shows and I used to work with them at Madison-Bouckville and we would sell cookie jars and lamps. I finally got my husband to go once. So Onalee is my closest friend from Lycoming.

DOUGHERTY: Did you interact with your grandfather, Robert F. Rich, who was on the board when you were here as a student?

MARTIN: I was very embarrassed because I didn't want anybody to know anything about me because I wanted to be Julie Bell, so my first year I was just Julie Bell. And then the Alumni magazine published a picture and an article and I was mortified. But now I'm proud of the fact that we have such a long history at Lycoming, because in looking for information for the college I found out many, many interesting things about our family.

I have a great-great-grandmother—Anna Wesley Butler—Snyder—her name was Anna Wesley Butler and she went to the seminary in the 1850s and then her daughter—Elizabeth Snyder—who became Elizabeth Snyder Trump, my great-grandmother—went to the seminary also. But then on my grandfather's side, his father, M. B. Rich, went to the seminary and his children, including my grandfather, Robert F. Rich, and his sisters, all went to the seminary. And then my mother went when she was twelve years old because there was no school in Woolrich. Her sisters—Aunt Margie, and Aunt Katie—also went to the seminary but many of her cousins and many of my relatives. So the college had a contest and I entered Mother in the contest to see how many relatives she had that went to Lycoming and she won.

DOUGHERTY: That's wonderful. As a Lycoming student you were awarded the—

MARTIN: Pocahontas.

DOUGHERTY: Pocahontas award. Now what did that entail?

MARTIN: Well, I just loved sports and it was a sports award given to a senior in sports. My nephew Sheridan Bell interviewed at Lycoming—he didn't go here but he interviewed—and he saw a plaque near the gymnasium that had my name on it so he told me about it. And when I came to visit, we couldn't find it but Julie Dougherty has found it.

DOUGHERTY: It's out in the entranceway; we'll look at it before you go.

MARTIN: I loved sports and at one time I thought I would get a master's degree in physical education and I went to Columbia and got accepted but I was having too much fun and I never went to grad school.

DOUGHERTY: How did you meet your husband?

MARTIN: Oh, this is very interesting. I met him skiing. I was working in New York City as a tour guide at Lincoln Center and I loved my job but they promoted me to supervisor and I didn't like that because I had to count the money and go to the bank with a guard and my boss had said drop the money if anybody comes to you. So I decided I wanted to learn to ski so I went up to Vermont and worked in the Troll Shop at the Sugarbush Inn. On weekends I worked most of the time because that was their busy time, but one weekend some friends came and I was skiing with them and I got cold so I went into the mid-station and there was this very nice young man who offered me a cookie. I said, "Wouldn't you like to ski with us?" So I rode up one ride on the lift and then I had to go back to work but you know something? There was magic in the air because he came back to see me and we got engaged the day the men landed on the moon and we were married September 6 and my father married me in Grace Church in Harrisburg.

DOUGHERTY: That's a great story. I am doing some research here on the mace—on the college mace—and I heard that you were on the committee to obtain that for the school.

MARTIN: Yes, I was on the committee and John Dunston was president of our class at that time. We found a wood carver who could carve it for us and I think Dr. Skeath was the official mace carrier.

DOUGHERTY: Yes he was.

MARTIN: The class gave that to the college and it was very exciting because we were on the committee to choose a gift and we wanted something that would be lasting.

DOUGHERTY: It is very lasting. Do you have any knowledge of whether there was a mace previous to that one?

MARTIN: No I don't think there was. That's why we decided to donate that.

DOUGHERTY: Okay well I'm doing a history of that now and it's been a real struggle trying to find the facts. Graduates who graduated before that time frame claim there was one.

MARTIN: Oh really?

DOUGHERTY: But I can't find any evidence of it so—

MARTIN: And John Dunston I think is a dentist. I don't know I haven't seen him since college. He was the head of the committee so if you were able to get hold of him, maybe he could remember things about that.

DOUGHERTY: Good. Tell me what you used to do for fun while you were here.

MARTIN: Oh, I did sports. That was my first love. I also practiced the flute; I loved playing the flute and I practiced every day in the old music building. It was locked on Sundays so I would unlock the window and I climbed in the window to practice. Then I played in some groups. Mr. Josephson was the band director and we had a little string—a chamber music group—and Heddy VonLingen who was from Germany, played the recorder and I played the flute and Mr. Josephson the cello. And then Dr. Morgan came and I took lessons from Dr. Fries, the German teacher, but since he wasn't a music teacher I got no credit for all the lessons I took but I loved it. And then Dr. Morgan was here and I took flute lessons from Dr. Morgan and I had to give a recital my senior year. I also took music theory which is the hardest course I ever took—it was very difficult.

DOUGHERTY: Was it really? Who was your favorite faculty person?

MARTIN: I loved both Dr. Skeaths—Dr. Francis Skeath and her husband.

DOUGHERTY: Dr. Milton Skeath.

MARTIN: And then I loved Dr. Van Balen—he was another math professor—and I was going to be a math major but I flunked a final [laughs], so I changed to biology.

DOUGHERTY: And that's what you graduated with—biology.

MARTIN: Yes. And I loved Dr. Radspinner from chemistry. I really loved all my teachers because I loved school. And I was very happy to be close to home but I never went home.

DOUGHERTY: Why is that?

MARTIN: Well, I knew I could come home if I wanted to but when I was in school in Maine, it was so far. There was no way I could get home.

DOUGHERTY: So you were used to not going home.

MARTIN: Well, I only stayed there a semester so I didn't stay very long. It was just the idea that I could go home if I wanted to.

DOUGHERTY: Okay, and did you ever communicate with your grandfather when you were here?

MARTIN: Oh yes. When he would come, I'd go visit with him and my Grammy. My stepmother Grammy was really wonderful. My real grandmother, Julia Trump Rich died when I was eleven and we helped unveil a picture in the original library. My sister remembers that all four of us were there unveiling it but I don't remember anything and I'm going to look for pictures—there might be something.

But I loved Lycoming. I loved the fact that you got to know professors and you visited in their homes and they visited with you and it was very personal. I would have been lost at a big school.

DOUGHERTY: But you were a wonderful student too, which really helped. I'm sure you were a great favorite around here.

MARTIN: I don't know. It was funny—my freshman year I ran for treasurer and I made all these signs—little bells—"Bell for Treasurer". I didn't win. But then another year I was the treasurer and then my senior year I was the vice president and John Dunston was the president. I had gotten sick my junior year so it took me a little bit longer to finish.

DOUGHERTY: But you did graduate in—

MARTIN: In '63 but I was really in the Class of '62.

DOUGHERTY: Oh, really? I didn't realize that.

MARTIN: And I came with Onalee to our 25th reunion and we just laughed, we had so much fun. We're looking forward to the 50th reunion. Onalee plays the piano; she's a very accomplished pianist. Her daughter lives in Texas and she had her come to Texas to record and I have a recording of Onalee playing and whenever I'm tired or have to do book work I put that recording on and it makes me work harder.

DOUGHERTY: Do you still play the flute?

MARTIN: No. I hurt my jaw scuba diving on my honeymoon. I was an excellent swimmer and I nearly drowned because I thought I had the air and I had the snorkel and they had to pull me out of the water and I hurt my jaw. The last time I really played was before our daughter was born—I played in New York

City at St. Bartholomew's community club in an Irish concert. And maybe I'll try to start playing again because it's been a long time since I hurt my jaw.

DOUGHERTY: So what do you do now for fun, other than search for things for our wonderful collection?

MARTIN: Well, my husband has a small company and I help him. There's just the two of us so I do everything that needs to be done like watering the plants, paying the bills, balancing the books, filing, all sorts of things like that. Tom's partner just died and so he was pretty lost because he's been his friend for forty-four years and Tom and Paul used to play bridge. So Tom found a bridge group and I don't have card sense, but I'm learning. He wants me to be his partner so we go on Thursday nights for lessons. Then we go on Saturdays for a lesson and then we have lunch and then we play in the afternoon. And at first I said I can't possibly do that, but they give you lunch. We're playing with the Good Timers—the dark side of the excellent players. So we've met a lot of nice friends doing that.

Another thing we love to do is ski. We are a skiing family. Our daughter has grown up skiing. In fact, when she was born, Tom gave me a cartoon showing a skier looking over a crib saying, "When's she going to start?" [laughs]

DOUGHERTY: That's a great story.

MARTIN: It was very special to get involved with this research project for the archives because I sort of poo-pooed family history and my husband has been doing genealogy for fifteen years and I didn't help him at all. But since I've gotten involved with Julie, I've given him all sorts of information and he puts it in the computer before I give it to the college, so we have a lot of family history.

DOUGHERTY: That's great, and I think we've about covered it. Is there anything else you'd like to say?

MARTIN: Well, I'm very proud of my family's relationship with the school. At one point I was embarrassed because I didn't want anyone to know me other than Julie Bell but since they know me as Julie Bell, I'm very proud that there's such a long history.

DOUGHERTY: Well, we're thrilled to death that you are part of it and we have this connection now and all this material that we did not have.

MARTIN: Well, it's interesting it was all in the Harrisburg house of my parents during the flood of Agnes in '72 and then it was transferred to my brother's house in Wilmington, to his basement. And then on my birthday last year, my brother gave me forty boxes. Plus, I had two big boxes from my mother and my mother died nine years ago and I never looked at any of this until I got involved in this exciting adventure.

DOUGHERTY: Its fun though isn't it? It's interesting.

MARTIN: Yes it is.

DOUGHERTY: Okay, thanks so very much, I really appreciate it.

MARTIN: You're welcome.