

3-20-1984

## Interview no. 675

Catherine Kistenmacher

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.utep.edu/interviews>



Part of the [Oral History Commons](#), and the [Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Interview with Catherine Kistenmacher by Rebecca Craver, 1984, "Interview no. 675," Institute of Oral History, University of Texas at El Paso.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Institute of Oral History at ScholarWorks@UTEP. It has been accepted for inclusion in Combined Interviews by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UTEP. For more information, please contact [lweber@utep.edu](mailto:lweber@utep.edu).

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: Catherine Kistenmacher  
INTERVIEWER: Rebecca Craver  
PROJECT: History of the University  
DATE OF INTERVIEW: March 20, 1984  
TERMS OF USE: Unrestricted  
TAPE NO.: 675  
TRANSCRIPT NO.: 675

BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

Student at the College of Mines, 1944-48.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

Recollections of the College of Mines, 1944-48.

Length of interview: 50 minutes      Length of transcript: 27 pages

Catherine Kistenmacher  
by Rebecca Craver  
March 20, 1984

- C: Let's just begin. Tell me what your maiden name was and the years you attended. Was it the College of Mines?
- K: Oh, yes. It was the College of Mines and Metallurgy. My maiden name was Burnett, and the years that I attended was 1944 to 1948.
- C: So you were there at the end of the war when the men came back.
- K: Yes. When I began it was a woman's college for sure because there were 400 girls and a hundred boys, and these hundred boys-- or men, shall I call them--were made up of the 17-year-olds who were not yet eligible for the draft, you know, they took them when they were eighteen. And we had 11 veterans and a few 4-Fs. And that was the number of men on campus.
- C: But were you a local girl? I mean an El Pasoan?
- K: Yes, I've lived here since I was four years old, so I consider myself a naturalized El Pasoan by now.
- C: So why did you decide to go to UTEP?
- K: Oh, I guess it was convenient. My parents wanted me particularly to stay here in El Paso to go to college, and well, you know in those days, a lot of people stayed home and went to college instead of going out of town so much.
- C: Where did your family live?
- K: Well, here in El Paso, of course. The area in which we lived was Detroit Street, just one block south of Southwestern General Hospital, just off Cotton Avenue.
- C: Well, did you have a car or did you ride the bus to school?
- K: Well, my dad took me sometimes and then otherwise we had a car pool that would stop by and pick me up and we'd go on to college. And those were the good old days when you, if you took the bus...

well, this would be the Highland bus that I took, that would pick me up right at the corner. And if we took the Highland bus, we got off on Arizona Street and Mesa. And these were the days when the motorists would see a lot of college kids standing around and they would just stop for us and take us up the hill to college, and it was wonderful. [laughter]

C: Isn't that great, people were so kind. And you weren't afraid.

K: No, because there were always a whole bunch of us standing there, you know, those mornings that we didn't get a ride to college if we were running late or something like that. If we would just gather there on the corner they would say, "Oh, those are college kids, let's stop for them." So I know that isn't a good thing to say, that you get in with a motorist who is a stranger, but El Paso seemed to be so friendly in those days, and there were so many of us that two or three of us would just hop in the back of the car and we'd go on up the hill. And of course that was also the days of gasoline rationing. So I think the motorists were extra friendly, and if they had a gallon of gasoline they wanted to share it with as many people as they could. Wasn't that nice of them?

C: What was your major?

K: I began to major in Journalism, that was my field, because I planned to go into advertising. That was when Jud Williams was dean of the students at the college. And he had the brilliant idea to go around to the various businesses in El Paso, including the American Furniture Company and the Popular Dry Goods Company and KTSM, the station that's been here for longer than anybody else. And he went to these businessmen and asked if they would

offer cooperative scholarships to some of the graduating seniors from high school. And they said yes they would. So that gave me a chance to apply for the scholarship in which I was interested, and that was advertising. And I applied for it and won a four-year scholarship from the Popular Dry Goods Company in advertising. So it was just wonderful. I had labs there to learn advertising all four years that I was in college, and then on the holidays and during the summer I had a job waiting for me if I wanted to work there. So it was really great.

And as I say, I started out majoring in Journalism because, of course, at that time the college didn't have a major in Advertising, so it was just the related field that we could choose. So I figured that Journalism would be the most related field of any, plus I was going to minor in Art. But my Sophomore year I changed my major to Art mainly because we did not have a very good instructor in the Journalism Department. He was just out of college and I'm afraid he didn't know any more than the students did, really. So that year I said well, I just couldn't see going ahead and majoring in Journalism, so I changed my major to Art and my minor to Journalism. And that turned out...oh, that's another interesting story. We were the pioneer radio class at the college.

C: Is that right?

K: Never before had they had any radio instruction, and KTSM gave us their old equipment and we had all of these wonderful turntables and console that they gave us, plus they gave us an instructor, who was Virgil Hicks.

C: Oh, really?

- K: And he came out and he was our first instructor in radio.
- C: Do you remember any of the programs that you all put together?
- K: Oh, yes. [laughs] Oh, that was wonderful. Well, of course, you know our mascot is el burro and I guess it was my idea and some of the other students, primarily it was my idea, to put this program on the air as if el burro was talking. Well, of course, in this day and time they wouldn't like it because el burro had a Mexican accent, but it was so funny. You know, he'd talk to the students, he'd sort of interview some of the students, and then we would play some of the music. KTSM also gave us these records. And we just had a complete radio station. So we would write the scripts and perform the program. Once a week we aired it and it was good experience to teach us copy writing and how to put a program together, and how to use the music in between and things like that. So it aired once a week. [laughs]
- C: Which other teachers do you remember?
- K: Oh, let's see. Dr. Strickland was teaching History up there and I took History under him. Of course, Vera Wise was head of Art Department. I learned watercolor under her, and am still partial to it and that's what I paint in today, watercolor. Let's see, who else was up there? Dr. Nelson in Geology. I took Geology under him. Mr. Bald and Dr. M\_\_\_\_\_ in the Chemistry Department-- they were both my professors. Who else? Mr. Skerritt was there in the English Department. I don't think he stayed too long. Oh, and Mr. Skerritt was also in the Journalism Department too. He taught Journalism and English, so he was our professor when we were putting out the newspaper, etc.

C: Did you work on the newspaper?

K: [Yes.]

C: And the yearbook?

K: Yes. I worked on the newspaper, I guess it was my Sophomore and Junior years. And then it came time to apply for the editorships and everybody thought that I should apply for the editorship of the newspaper, but I had this secret desire to edit a yearbook. And I applied for it and got the editorship for the yearbook.

C: So you were editor in '47, was it?

K: Yes, it was the Fall of '47 and the book came out the Spring of '48.

C: The Flowsheet.

K: The Flowsheet, yes. Don't you love the names of our publications?

C: Yes, yes.

K: The Flowsheet, and The Prospector, and all of those wonderful names.

[Laughter]

C: And the Gold Diggers. [Chuckles]

K: You want to hear a story about the Gold Diggers?

C: Yeah?

K: Well, when I was a Freshman, of course, we didn't have a football team, this was right in the middle of the war, you know, and so there wasn't anything for the Gold Diggers to pep for, you know, no football game. So what do you do with Gold Diggers when there is no football team? So we went and sang for the soldiers out at Beaumont Hospital. (Laughs) Isn't that unusual?

C: Yeah. How often would you go over?

K: Oh, I guess it was about twice a month or something like that.

C: This went on for a year or two?

K: Yeah, this went on for two years. Let's see, 1944 and '45, '46, the Spring of '46, and that's what the Gold Diggers did during that time.

C: How many were in the Gold Diggers at that time?

K: I would think there were about 40 or forty-five.

C: And what did you wear?

K: You know I'm trying to remember, it seems like when we went out to sing that we didn't particularly have uniforms. I think I'm remembering correctly on that. But then when we started marching and pepping at the football games, well, we had white wool suits, which were really quite attractive. I think they had a kick pleat in front, and the jacket was just the traditional sort of Chanel-type jacket, collarless, and had three buttons down the front. They were really very attractive. And seems like we wore orange hats with them and maybe an orange dickey or something to repeat the orange coloring.

C: How did you get to be a Gold Digger?

K: Well, of course, when we were singing you had to try out your voice.

You know, I'll take that back, I think we did have uniforms when we sang out at the hospital. You know all of this is coming back to me, but it's been so long since I remembered it. Seems like the skirts were white and we had white sweaters when we were singing at the hospital. And somebody, I don't know where they got these, had little pins, oh, I guess about five inches long, and they had very painstakingly cut them out of wood. It said Gold Diggers, out of wood. Now, isn't that something? I hadn't even thought about that until today. But that's what we wore to



the hospital to sing.

C: And the songs, were they patriotic songs?

K: I guess there were a few of those, but mostly the songs of the day, you know. Of course it was before rock'n' roll and all that and people just loved the music of the day, so that's what we used to sing more or less. [Chuckles]

C: Where was the office when you worked on the yearbook?

K: In Kelly Hall.

C: In Kelly Hall. Who else worked on it with you?

K: Joe Parrish. He was the editor one of the years that I worked on it. I think he died about ten years ago. But he was the editor, and Les Turner, and Lucky Leveritt [chuckles], and Nancy Hamilton. Yeah, she was one of my society reporters. I was editor of the society page and Nancy Hamilton was one of my reporters. [Laughs] How about that? Nancy has stayed in journalism, hasn't she?

C: Yes, she has. What about the sororities, were they active on campus then?

K: Yes, quite active. We had three: Tri Delt, and Zeta, and Chi Omega.

C: And were you in one of those?

K: [Yes.] I was a Chi Omega, all four years. I pledged when I was a Freshman and went all through four years with the sorority. This was a good thing, especially in those days when not too much was happening on the campus, because with 500 students you don't have too much going on. But then everybody knew everybody, you know. The teachers knew all the students and all of the students knew each other, and it was just a very nice thing, really.

- C: What did the sororities do during the war? I mean, if you had a dance, you were hard pressed to find a date, huh?
- K: Really we were. However, we did used to have dances on campus. I remember them well.
- C: Where?
- K: Holliday Hall. [Laughs] Isn't that strange to say now? You don't think of Holliday Hall as being used for a dance, but that's where we had them. And I remember when I was a high Freshman, the Chi Omegas sponsored a dance that had a circus theme, and it was really quite nice. Our colors were yellow and red and so we draped streamers from the very top and brought them out as a giant circus tent. And they were beautiful. And then we decided that we would have horses like on a real merry-go-round, and I drew all of the different horses that were on this merry-go-round and we just positioned them around. Well, if you can visualize this giant tent and with the streamers establishing the size of it and everything, and then all of these horses going around as if it were a giant merry-go-round.
- C: Well, I've heard from several people that Holliday Hall was transformed into all kinds of things for dances. [Laughs]
- K: And so this one of them. I remember it particularly 'cause we worked so hard on it.
- C: Well, was it a formal?
- K: Yes, I think it was a formal dance. But all the sorority members, we had our little room where we worked on it, and every time anybody would come back to this room we'd give them a paint brush and we'd say, "Here, paint a horse." [Laughter] But I think they really had fun doing it.

- C: I bet they did. What other dances do you remember? Did they ever have teas or anything like that?
- K: I would say only during rush, when you go to a rush party, some of them would be teas and that type of thing. But this was the era when a lot of the girls wanted to belong to sororities, you know, and we had quite a number of girls going through in those days as I recall.
- C: Were a lot of them from out of town?
- K: Quite a number of them were, though when you think of it nowadays not too many of them. But of the total 500, quite a few of them stayed at the dorm.
- C: Did you eat once a week in the house?
- K: Not necessarily; if we were entertaining. Of course that didn't usually happen once a week. But like in the Spring we would have the faculty breakfast or something like that. I think we used to invite all of the faculty on campus, you know, because there weren't that many faculty in those days, and we would invite them over for breakfast--you know, serve the traditional breakfast food. Then of course there were the parties at which we would honor the pledges every semester, and we would invite not only the pledges' parents, but friends and the faculty were invited to that, too. But no regularity of entertaining in the house.
- C: Where was the Chi Omega House?
- K: It seems like it's where the Education Building now is.
- C: Were all three sorority houses up there?
- K: No, there were just two. The Chi Omegas and the Tri Deltas were next door to each other, and the Zetas were on the other side of the campus. I think that particular building is being used

at this time, for I don't know what, Becky.

C: Yeah, it's next to the Administration Building.

K: Yeah, it was a white sort of pueblo-style building, seems like that's what it looked like. So they were across the campus from us.

Oh, and then it seems like during my Junior year another sorority came on the campus, and it seems like that was Delta Gamma, if I'm not mistaken. So we had four sororities on the campus actually.

C: What were some of the rules and regulations, either written or just understood, about women's behavior on campus? I mean, like smoking. Were there standards that you had to meet as far as your appearance or your clothing?

K: Well, of course, according to today's standards I guess you would definitely consider them standards, but we wore what was in style at that time, and that was the bobby socks and saddle oxfords and skirts and sweaters. So by today's standards, I guess that would be a standard to live up to. We certainly didn't ever wear blue jeans, that would've been unheard of, you know. Nor would we have considered wearing any type of trousers; the women just didn't wear any kind of slacks or anything to the campus then. That was just not the thing to do. [Laughter] And we never permitted any boys in the sorority lodge. If they wanted to come to pick up their date or their girlfriend or whatever, they would come to the front door, and whoever answered the front door would say, "Well, just a minute, I'll call her." But he could not come into the house or into the foyer or anything. That was one of the rules I best remember about the sorority

lodge. /~Chuckles~/

C: And there were curfew hours in the dorms, I'm sure.

K: Oh, I'm sure there were, and they were strictly adhered to I'm sure.

C: There was not a dean of women, I don't think yet, was there?

K: Well, I seem to remember one. I believe her name was Cordelia Caldwell. And I think after Miss Caldwell, I remember Dean Resley. I believe you've talked to Miss Resley, have you?

C: /~Yes.~/

K: And in addition to being the Dean, well, let's see, she was a Math teacher first, I believe, before she became the Dean of Women. As a matter of fact she was my Freshman Math teacher.

C: Was she really?

K: /~Yes.~/ A good one too. But you know this was the day before you could take tests and place out of various subjects like the students now--if they think they can take the English test and place out of it or the History test and place out of it, fine, and they don't need to waste their time on the campus doing that. I wish we had had those in my day, because that would've left several things that I could've placed out of that I could've taken different subjects when I was a Freshman. Because, for instance, this Algebra that Miss Resley taught, it was just to me a repeat of high school Algebra, and I had taken three and a half years of Math in high school.

C: Did you go to El Paso High?

K: /~Yes.~/

C: Did you have Miss Kelly?

K: Yes! How do you know that?

- C: Oh... /Laughter/
- K: Isn't that wonderful" Oh, and Miss Kelly was a wonderful teacher.
- C: I've heard that.
- K: Yes, in fact we had two Kellys teaching, and I believe it was Charlee Kelly and Ann Kelly.
- C: And Charlee went to war.
- K: Yes, and she became a Major in the WACs. Well, Charlee was one of my favorite teachers. We just got along beautifully. And as a matter of fact I had taken Freshman Algebra under her, and then when I was a Sophomore she asked me to be her student assistant. And I just loved that.
- C: So you were really kind of bored in Freshman Algebra at the college.
- K: Yes, because it was just a repetition of everything I had had in high school. And for instance, I think we had nine tests during my freshman semester in Algebra, and I made hundred on eight of them, so you can see I wasn't getting a thing out of it, you know. So I could've very nicely placed out of Freshman Math, I could've placed out of Freshman English and all of these sort of things and left that time for additional courses. So I was just delighted when my own children went to college and they said, "Oh, mother, we have a chance to take such and such a test and place out of it." All my daughters placed out of different things, but I can remember my son placed out of English and History and something, there were three things. And this is great, to place out of three things, and that leaves a lot more time to get in other courses. So I think that's good about today's colleges and universities.

C: Sounds like you filled a lot of hours, though, with these extra curricular activities. /Laughs/

K: I did. /Chuckles/ I was busy every afternoon taking labs. For instance when I was a Freshman, I had a Chemistry lab, then I would go to the Popular the other afternoons and learn layout and copy and things like that. And then I guess during my succeeding years I used to actually prepare ads for the Popular. Besides advertising in the Times and Herald-Post they did a lot of advertising in El Continental and El Fronterizo, which are two of the Mexican newspapers. And so by my Junior year, I was doing a lot of the actual ad preparation for these El Continental and El Fronterizo papers. So I really got in my labs what the course itself meant and what I would be doing later on, because of course I had a job waiting for me as soon as I graduated.

C: So you worked for the Popular after you graduated?

K: Well, I worked for them about four months after I graduated, and during that time I was approached by KTSM, saying, "We didn't know you were going to work for the Popular, you know. You might've come to work for us as a copy writer at the radio station." So I inquired, but they didn't want to pay any more money than at the Popular, so I decided to stay where I was. In the meantime I had learned that Medoff Advertising was losing their production manager and I went over there and applied for his job, and then I was with Medoff Advertising for six years.

C: And then as soon as you got married you quit work?

K: Oh, no. I worked for three years before I was married and then three years after I was married. Then I started having a family and I had four children, so I quit work at that point.

C: You didn't want two full-time jobs.

K: Isn't that the truth?

C: Oh, that sounds fascinating.

Okay, let's think about after the war. What changes occurred on campus as soon as the war over?

K: Well, let's see, the changes that occurred were all the men started coming back, which was nice, because then we could have a football team and this sort of thing. And the Gold Diggers could actually be a pep squad and march as they were supposed to do instead of singing. And, let's see, I guess it was the Spring of my Sophomore year when the war ended and then the veterans started coming back to attend classes. We had many, many veterans on the campus as the Spring semester came about. A few of them registered, and then for the next two years many, many more of them came back. And we had...have you heard about this Vet Village on the campus?

C: Tell me about it. They started with trailers, is that correct?

K: I believe so, and then they actually built housing for them.

C: I talked to the Phelans. They lived over there.

K: Oh, yes, I know it, and as a matter of fact John Phelan was in my radio class.

C: Well, I was going to ask you if you knew him.

K: Yes. We were in, as I say, that pioneer radio class, and he was so interested to come to that radio class because he had in mind making his career in radio--which he did, of course. And, yes, as you say they were among the people who lived there at Vet Village.

C: I've heard that those students that came back from the war were



such serious students compared to... 'cause of what they had gone through and they knew exactly what they wanted.

K: Yes, they brought a note of seriousness to the campus. Some of the students felt that sometimes they didn't pay enough attention to campus life as such, you know; they knew where they were going, etc. So maybe they took some of the fun and joy out of going to college. A few of them were like that--bitter, you might say--but the majority of them seemed to fit in very well. As a matter of fact, my neighbor that lives two doors down, named Henry Lyde, he was one of the veterans who lived on the campus. And as a matter of fact I think he owned the washing machine that the veterans used, the veterans' wives used, and I think he had a concession for the washing machine. Because he was in my Psychology class--seems like it was my Psychology class during my Senior year--and we had to tell about a project that we had undertaken or whatever. And it seems like Henry Lyde told us about those washing machines. He's always been a businessman, so even during his college days, you know, he was being a businessman.

[ PAUSE ]

K: ...a project to tell about in Psychology class. The project was to be to convince somebody that they should pay attention to what our project was, and I can remember that I told about M-Day because I was the chairman for M-Day. And I had made a whole bunch of posters to try to get people to participate in M-Day because that was a big celebration, you know.

C: Well, tell me about that.

K: [Laughs] Well, I just made the typical posters to try and get

them in the mood to come to M-Day.

C: Was that in the Fall, at the beginning of school?

K: You know, it seems like it was in the Spring. I believe it was in the Spring. It must've been, because one of the things we did for M-Day...I'm sure it was in the Spring, because the more I think about it, I'm convinced. We wanted to fill the swimming pool and have some kind of a contest, swimming contest, to be part of M-Day. And I had to go and get permission from the Dean of Engineering, that was Dean Eugene Thomas, in order to fill that swimming pool. [Laughs]

C: Did he give you permission?

K: Yes, he did.

C: And what of swimming contest? You mean, just races?

K: I guess that's what it was. I hadn't thought about it for so long. It must've been just a swimming contest. We were thinking of all the things that we could do in conjunction with M-Day that the students would like to do. I can remember one of the things was, we decided to have a dance out on the tennis courts that evening as a culmination of all the day's activities. And I had to get permission from somebody to have a dance on the tennis courts, and we sprinkled corn meal around so that the courts would not be quite so rough to dance on. [laughter]

C: Were they painting the "M" on the mountain?

K: Yes, we always painted the "M" on the mountain.

C: So, that was part of that M-Day?

K: Let's see, I'm calling this M-Day and yet that wasn't the same as the day we painted the letter on the mountain.

C: Maybe it was two different things.

K: Maybe it was two different things because we usually painted the "M" on the mountain in the Fall--yes.

C: Well, was this the St. Patrick's Day celebration?

K: No, because just the engineers participated in that. This was a campuswide thing. It must have had another name, Becky, and I'm going to have to look that up for you because that's not the right name. M-Day was when we white-washed the "M" high on Mount Franklin, but this was a Spring celebration put on by the student council, and it aimed to get all of the students on campus participating in it. And I even have my medal that the student council gave me for having been chairman of whatever this celebration was. I'll have to look that up for you because it was something connected with an "M", but not the same designation as the Fall M-Day.

C: Well, did you ever participate in the engineering activities in any way, maybe as a date of one of the engineers or anything like that?

K: I don't believe so, even though my husband turned out to be an engineer. It was before we started dating, I didn't really start dating him till we were Seniors. So as far as being a date of an engineer, I don't believe that I was. However, we had politics on the campus. I guess all campuses have their politics, but in those days you were either an academ or an engineer, and they would line up the people accordingly. So the sororities were lined up either as Academs or Engineers. So at first, the Chi Omegas voted with the Academs, and then something came about that they didn't like and they changed their allegiance to the Engineers, and for the rest of the time, the Chi Omegas voted

Engineer. Whoever the candidates were that the engineering party was running, that's how we voted. Isn't that strange?

C: Do you remember posters and banners and all kinds of campaign activities?

K: Yeah. As a matter of fact I helped make some of those posters.

/Laughs/

C: Looks like you were called on to do that quite a bit. /Laughs/

K: Well, as a matter of fact, that was a rather lucrative business for making pocket money in those days, you know. And I had just somehow brought this talent with me from high school because I had been on the student council at El Paso High, and this boy who was the president of the student council decided that everyone on the student council should learn to make posters. He didn't care whether we had any talent or not, everybody on the student council were poster-makers because the student council at El Paso High was always promoting some cause that we needed posters made. So I guess I was probably a Sophomore in high school when I started making posters, so by the time I got to be a Senior in high school, I was quite adept at making posters.

And I can remember that I had told the Dean of Students, Jud Williams, that I could make posters, in case anybody wanted posters made that they should just call me and I'd make posters for them, for a nominative sum, of course. So all during my college days, that's the way I made my spending money, making posters for whatever group needed them. /Laughs/ So we were always making posters for something happening that the student council was promoting, or whatever they needed posters for.

C: Well, you mentioned talking to Gene Thomas. What kind of a man

was he?

K: When I was a student I was rather scared of him, you might say. He was very deliberate and everything. Of course the engineers got along with him well, but one of the first occasions that I had to talk to him personally was when I was chairman of this Spring event. So I went over and I think when I asked him if we could fill the swimming pool, he said, "Well, why do you want to fill it?" [Chuckles] So, you know, as I say he was a very deliberate person and somewhat scary for the student who didn't really know him. And I had never had occasion to talk to him before then. I said, "Well, it's part of this Spring celebration and we need it filled." You know. [Laughs]

C: Do you remember any pranks that were played on you, or that you played on someone else?

K: Not pranks that were necessarily played on me. I can remember a prank whereby some students got one of those poor alligators out of the park from San Jacinto Plaza and placed it in one of the professor's rooms. [Laughter] I remember which professor it was, but imagine opening your door and finding this alligator there.

C: It was Dr. Quinn.

K: Dr. Quinn, yes.

C: You don't know who were the boys that were responsible?

K: No, I really don't remember who they were. Oh, I have seen this one man at Homecoming and, I think he had something to do with it, but I don't remember well enough.

C: You mentioned Homecoming. Were there Homecoming parades?

K: Yes, and they were just wonderful.

C: Where did they begin, where did they go?

K: Let's see, now these Homecoming parades, I don't know if they were in the '40s. Probably I remember them from the '50s perhaps rather than the '40s, and it seems like they went just in the downtown area. I guess maybe they began at the campus, went in the downtown area and then maybe went back to the campus. But it seems like the ex-students' association sponsored them by that time. I was one of the officers in the ex-students' association. And we told the sororities to have displays in front of their houses as well as have the Homecoming parade floats. And at that time they were doing that, it was marvelous, not only to decorate their lodge but to have floats as well. And it seems like one of the floats that I remember that was so clever was the Chi Omega float during some '50s parade, and they had music to go with it, and it was a giant cake, and they were playing, "If We Knew You Were Coming, We'd Have Baked A Cake." /Laughter/

But those were wonderful parades, and the sorority people were very ingenious at making floats that didn't cost much and, of course, at enlisting the aids of their boyfriends to help on the floats, you know, and that sort of thing. So it was really a nice thing, and that was sponsored by the ex-students' association. We would tell them to both have the floats and decorate the lodge, and that was really a nice thing. They participated beautifully.

C: Are you still active in the ex-students' association?

K: No. I was for many years, but not anymore. My husband is a former president of the ex-students' association.

C: He could've told me about the engineering activities.

K: Oh, yes, he could tell you about them.

C: Crawling through the mine shafts.

K: Oh, yes. And you know, they used to have so much hazing activities for their engineers as they initiated them on St. Patrick's Day. And my mother-in-law has told me about how they made them crawl on their knees for I don't know how far. And he just had the worst knees from having participated in that St. Patrick's initiation. I mean they got infected and everything. They were really bad.

C: Somehow we survive all that.

K: Isn't that the truth.

C: And it's fun to remember. Well, is there anything else you would like to add?

K: Well, no, not really. I'm sure after you leave I will think of lots of things, but at the moment I [can't] think of too many. Of course, the enrollment at the college went up tremendously from the time I started there until I graduated. As I say, when I started there were 500 people and I'm sure they were probably over 2,000 when I graduated in 1948--which doesn't seem like many today, but at that time it was a tremendous number of people.

C: Well, did that create parking problems?

K: Well, not enough people in those days had cars, Becky [chuckles], to really create parking problems. Of course, we were definitely limited when I first began because that was the era of gasoline rationing, and so not many people had a car, that's why we depended on the bus mostly to get us there or we car pooled so that we could take six students in a car or something like that, you know. But we didn't have a parking problem, not even when I was a Senior can I remember a parking problem. In fact, I think

we were still permitted to park up there by Main Building by the time I was a Senior.

C: Have you ever gone back to take a course?

K: No, not really, I haven't. There was an art sort of a workshop up there about four years ago, and the newspaper story said that alumni students could come back and take the art course, it seems like it was for two or three days, and it happened to be in watercolor. I did go back for that, but it was funded by someone so that all we had to do was be an ex-student and we could just take it, so it wasn't anything that we had to pay for.

C: Well, when you did take the course, do you remember feeling when you were on campus how things had changed? What did you notice that was different?

K: Oh, my, what I noticed mostly that was different was they have this wonderful Fine Arts building now, the Fox Fine Arts Building, which was quite different from the place where I had taken Art. Because I was even before Cotton Memorial Building, and the place that I had my Art courses was the top floor of the Centennial Museum. In one wing there were the Music Students who were playing the piano, and in the other wing were the Art students, on the top floor.

C: And Miss Wise was teaching you Art and Judson Williams' wife teaching you Music.

K: [Yes], Jackie Williams. And also I'm trying to think of who the man was who taught us choir. Gene Hemley was there also, and he taught choir, and I was in the choir I think my Senior year on the campus. And then Gene Hemley went to Texas Tech from the College of Mines--I mean this was years later, but he ultimately



went to Texas Tech. And all four of my children have gone to Texas Tech, and my oldest daughter studied choir under Gene Hemley at Texas Tech. Isn't that unusual? And then, of course, Dr. Wiggins, who was president of the college when I was there, he also went to Texas Tech, and there is a dormitory at Texas Tech called Wiggins Complex and my daughter stayed in the dormitory in Wiggins Complex. So I seem to have these ties from the College of Mines to Texas Tech. That's unusual, isn't it?

C: Yes.

K: But I thought that was most unusual that I would've studied choir under the same person that my daughter studied choir under, and yet it would be two completely different universities.

C: That is interesting. Well, the choir programs, where did you all sing? Did you sing downtown at Liberty Hall?

K: Yes, we would have a spring concert, and that would either be given at probably Liberty Hall or it seems like one of them was given at El Paso High School. They have a nice auditorium. So it seems like we gave one over there.

C: Do you remember bringing in any big bands for dances?

K: No, we didn't need to bring in big bands because we had our own and we just loved them. They were called The Varsitonians. [Laughs]

C: Do you know anybody here in town that was in that group?

K: Yes, Robert Booth and his brother Joe. They were in the Music Department. And I don't know of anybody else who's left in town. I remember Pat Patterson used to play with The Varsitonians, and I don't know where he is now. And Jack Mc\_\_\_\_\_ used to play with them.

C: When you went out on dates, did you go to Juarez?

- K: Definitely not. I came from some very strict parents and they didn't want me over there. [Chuckles] So I never went to Juarez on dates.
- C: Where would you go?
- K: Oh, often to the movies. You just went to the Plaza or the Ellenay. Those were the two nicest theaters. And you always saw everybody waiting in line to go to the movie on the weekends, you know. Otherwise, our social life centered a lot around the campus.
- C: Were there classes on Saturday?
- K: Yes, some of our classes were on Monday, Wednesday and Friday and the others were on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. Now, there weren't any labs scheduled for Saturday afternoon, but we still had classes on Saturday mornings. That was an innovation, to go to school six days a week, wasn't it? [Chuckles]
- C: So, you would go to class early in the morning and you'd stay in the afternoons when you had those labs.
- K: Yeah, then I would go to an afternoon lab always, every Saturday I would go to that afternoon lab.
- C: Well, did you sort of hang out then at the lodge? Is that where you would go between classes?
- K: [Yes.]
- C: If you weren't in a sorority, where would you go?
- K: There was a women's lounge in Kelly Hall, and if you weren't in a sorority you'd just go there to the women's lounge.
- C: Was the Union built then?
- K: Oh, no. We congregated in front of the Co-op. This is the wonderful Co-op that I'm sure you've heard about. It was actually just the bookstore, and it was located in the end of Main Building

and we just called it the Co-op always. That was the place where you went to buy your books, and they also had soda pops and sandwiches, which weren't very good, but [chuckles] they did have sandwiches. I don't know who supplied them with the sandwiches, they were always wrapped and they were rather tasteless. [Chuckles] But, you know, they filled the bill if you hadn't brought your sack lunch from home. And you went to the Co-op to socialize and, of course, in our El Paso weather most of the time we sat out on that andesite wall in front of the Co-op and talked and visited and things like that.

But no, we didn't have a Union Building. In fact, I served during my Senior year on the committee that was trying to get a union building for them, so I remember that--campaigning for one and telling them that we needed it and that sort of thing. But we didn't realize our dream, it wasn't built until after I had graduated.

C: Sounds like Jud Williams helped the students quite a bit, with those scholarships particularly.

K: Yes, and my sorority sister was Bobby Lane Wiggins who, by the way, was the niece of Dr. Wiggins, and she had the scholarship in interior decorating from the American Furniture Company. So several of the people I knew had those scholarships, and so far as I know that was the first time that they had ever been offered. They were called cooperative scholarships. And the businessmen gave Jud the go ahead and said, "We will sponsor them." So it was up to Judson Williams to find the people to match the scholarships, and all we had to do was write a letter saying what field we were interested in and that sort of thing. I never did

know who came to the conclusion that we should get them. I guess I qualified because I was among the top...I was about to say top ten graduates of El Paso High School, but there were eleven of us.

C: There were eleven?

K: There were the top eleven graduates of El Paso High School and I was one of them. [~Laughter~]

C: And your kids went to Eastwood?

K: [~Yes~], all of them went to Eastwood because, of course, we're in the Eastwood district, and my oldest daughter went to...well, all of them went to Scotsdale School also, but the point I was trying to make was that our house wasn't quite ready when school began for her in the first grade, so we were living in a rental house over on Garry Owen, so we would bring her out here to Scotsdale. I guess it was for just a few weeks while they were finishing this house. It worked out very well, and otherwise all of them have gone to Scotsdale and Eastwood, and all four of them have their degrees from Texas Tech. [~Laughs~]

C: Aren't you proud?

K: Very proud. I really am. I'm so pleased that all four of them got their degree.

C: I'm just working on my first one. [~Laughs~]

K: Well, just keep brain-washing them and letting them know that they have eight years of grade school, and four years of high school, and four years of college, and they're not through until they get that in. And then if they want to go for anything else, that's okay.

C: Well, I don't want to take up you entire afternoon, but I want to thank you, and I'll cut off my recorder now.

K: Well, you're most welcome.

---

Note: This is Rebecca Craver and today is March 20th, the same day as the interview with Mrs. Kistenmacher. She just telephoned me and would like to make some corrections to the information on the tape. She says that the M-Day celebration took place in the Fall and it was confused in her mind with All-Mines Day, which was always in the Spring. The All-Mines Day was the celebration in which she asked Gene Thomas for the use of the pool for the swimming races, and they had the dance on the tennis court.

---