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Nancy Hamilton

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: Nancy M. Hamilton
INTERVIEWER: Sarah E. John
PROJECT: History of the University
DATE OF INTERVIEW: January 31, 1985
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BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

Student at the College of Mines, 1946-1949; UTEP News and Publications Associate Director.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

Campus activities, including sorority life, dances, St. Patrick's Day initiation, and pranks; the Journalism Department; recollections of professors and students; desegregation of Texas Western College in the 1950s.

Length of interview: 45 minutes Length of transcript: 22 pages

Nancy M. Hamilton
by Sarah E. John
January 31, 1985

J: Nancy, I guess I've known you for a long time but I've never asked you this before. Are you originally from El Paso?

H: Yes, I was born in El Paso.

J: And so you went to grade school and high school here?

H: Yes. I went to Coldwell grade school in the days when it was the only school the Army kids went to, and of course now there are several schools in the city that are Army kids. And then I went to Austin High School and graduated there in January of '46, in the days when the public schools had January and May classes. And I stayed out until the following fall before I entered the College of Mines, because I was only 16 when I graduated from high school and I felt my age. (Chuckles)

J: So you wanted to wait a little bit, mature a little bit before you started.

H: Yeah.

J: In those years was it pretty common for people from El Paso to go to school at the College of Mines--was it the rule rather than the exception, you think--or did more kids go out of town to college?

H: I think it was the rule because we were still...well, of course through the Depression years people couldn't afford to go away much. When I entered college in 1946, the veterans were returning from World War II. We had lots of people who came from other places who were veterans. Some of them came here because they were treated at Beaumont Hospital. For instance, one of those was John Phelan, who stayed on to work at KTSM and is one of our loyal alumni. And we had an interesting mix of people then.

J: Some that were maybe your age, 16 or 17, plus the young men that were coming back from the war. What did the campus look like when you first

started up here in '46? Obviously it was smaller. What buildings do you recall as being here when you came to school?

H: It was concentrated in the area of the old buildings, which would be... Old Main is the oldest building, of course, from 1917; and the adjacent buildings; and what were then called Kelly Hall and Burges Hall, which are now, I think there's a move to call the former Kelly Hall, Old Kelly, since we have a dormitory now that's named Kelly. And then what had been Burges Hall has been renamed Graham Hall in honor of Pop Graham, who was a faculty member when I was in school.

J: And what did he teach?

H: He taught Mining. And he had the most marvelous structure in the hallway of Seamon Hall. It was a great big metal stand with pages that turned on it. And he corresponded with his former students who lived all over the world, because mining engineers do that. And they all kept up with Pop Graham and he kept up with them, and he would post their letters there. And if you wanted to know what became of good old so and so, you could go see Pop Graham and look on his announcement board for their letters.

J: Well, that's really something. The College of Mines at that time was still basically a mining school, am I right, or engineering and mining?

H: Engineering was very strong. There were only about 2,000 students. Politically, the two political parties were the engineers and the academics. There were several fraternities and sororities which tended to control the academ political party by putting up candidates and urging their members to take part in the electoral process. But there were also some social organizations that the engineers had, and professional organizations, which were involved in their political party. And we had a real green line down the street to divide the west side from the east side.

J: They painted it even in those days, then? Was that only on St. Patrick's Day or was that all year around, or just as a reminder? (Laughter)

H: It stayed there as a reminder, but it was easier to divide the campus then because the campus was quite small. It was while I was a student that the Union Building, the first wing of it, was built, and Magoffin Auditorium was built, Cotton Memorial was built.

J: So those were the new buildings.

H: [Yes.] And where the present Psychology Building stands was the tennis court.

J: Right below Old Main. I've heard stories about that. Some of our older graduates from the twenties and thirties talked about having parties out there and barbecues and what not, out there on the tennis courts.

Do you recall any kind, besides the painting of the green line and the division of the campus, any real animosity, for example, between the engineers and the academs? I mean was that sort of just a playful thing, or was it true that they were resentful that there were academs on the campus?

H: Well, I think the balance was even enough in those days that there was not a great resentment until the name change. The name was changed to Texas Western in 1949, and during the year or so preceding that change there were a lot of feelings expressed.

J: Do you remember any in particular?

H: Well, I was very sympathetic with the engineers, and I didn't really care about having the change because I had grown up with the College of Mines in my hometown, and it meant something to me. But I began to realize, as the arguments progressed, that other parts of world... For example, I had a friend who was an Art major. She went away to the Chicago Art Institute and she said that they said, "You went to a

college of mines and metallurgy and you majored in Art?" (Laughter) So times were changing and the influx of people from outside among the veterans also was influential in making it apparent to us that there did need to be a change to express the broader opportunities here.

J: Were the academs mostly women?

H: No. The social fraternities and sororities were quite influential in those days because it was a small college. Out of about 2,000 students there must have been maybe 500 of them involved in these social groups that were, oh, they did such things as nominate girls for beauty, nominate candidates for class offices and campus-wide offices. They held sing songs on the steps of the library and various kinds of competitions. They would invite each other back and forth for parties, and the sororities would have parties for the faculty--which is how I got to know Pop Graham, since I never took a mining course. And he became my regular date for the faculty luncheon because he was such a dear person, and I had learned about him from Mining students that I knew.

J: How many girls were there on campus? I mean, were there a good number when you were in school out of 2,000?

H: Well, we were outnumbered by the returning veterans, which was very nice. So there was a little balance to the advantage of the girls in having more men than women.

J: What activities in particular stand out in your mind from the days you were here on campus? You mentioned the sing songs for example. Were you in a sorority at the time?

H: Yes, I was in Zeta Tau Alpha.

J: Was most of your social life centered around the sorority at that time?

H: Yes, and particularly in my first two years. I graduated in three years, or three and a half, because I went to summer school. But as I had

mentioned before, I was young when I started college and somewhat socially immature, so it was very good for me to have a group that was helping me to adjust to the social change because college was a very different life from high school, and I was a very shy person. And the sorority required us, for instance, to join two organizations, and I became a Golddigger. And the Golddiggers were very different then than they are now. We wore a white wool suit that had a long slim skirt that extended almost to the ankles, and the suit jacket had long sleeves; and we would wear an orange scarf at the neck and an orange beret, and I think we had gloves that we dyed orange so they would be matching; and saddle oxfords, which rubbed terrible blisters on one's feet. (Chuckles) And the year I was a Golddigger was the year it snowed on the Sun Carnival Parade, which in those days was held on January 1st, and we had to march in the snow. But it was a memorable occasion. (Laughs)

J: Did you still perform little synchronized exercises in those days?

H: We mostly marched and waved pom poms. (Laughs)

J: Oh, okay. Sort of to help the cheerleaders out, I guess, on the side.

H: [Yes.]

J: Besides that, what other kinds of things did your sorority do that are memorable to you?

H: Oh, let's see. One of the things the sororities did was nominate girls to be the Sun Princess from the College. And nowadays those roles are reversed. They call what used to be the princesses duchesses and vice versa. But the College of Mines was entitled to a Sun Princess in the Sun Carnival Court. And one year one of our members was Pat Murchison, who is now the wife of the present mayor of El Paso, Mrs. Jonathan Rogers. Pat was a senior and we thought we really should nominate an upperclassman

for this honor, and we wanted to nominate Pat as our entry in the competition for Sun Princess. Pat hemmed and hawed and she said, "Oh, I don't really want to have my name on the...I don't want to do that." And we thought, "Well, gee whiz, Pat, why don't you want to be princess?" And then we discovered afterwards she had already been chosen as Sun Queen.
(Laughter)

J: Well, that sort of precluded any other kinds of things she might want to do.

H: But we had lots of social activities. The requirement to participate in campus activities was a good one for someone like me, because I probably would not have done this on my own. I was interested in journalism, of course, so I worked on the student newspaper.

J: What kinds of things made news in those days, if you can compare to what we have today? Was it just mostly the social life of the campus or were there politics and so forth?

H: Yes, we were not really interested in anything that extended very far away from our campus. That's a great contrast with current student journalism because they have not only an interest in local news and political news and that sort of thing beyond the campus, but also what happens on other campuses around the country and that sort of thing, which we were so out of touch with the rest of the world. It was a charming isolated way to live. (Chuckles)

J: I guess it is. Was there, as such, a Journalism major?

H: Yes, there was.

J: And you were, what, one of the first students, or had there been a Journalism major for a while?

H: It had been in existence for some time. Judson Williams, who was the Dean of Students at that time, taught Photography. When I was a freshman, the main teacher in the Journalism Department was named Charles Scarritt.

And then Wallace, nicknamed Pete, Snelson, a very young man, also taught in the department, and he later of course was to serve as a State Senator from Midland with great distinction, and is one of our Outstanding Ex-students. The curriculum of course was pretty limited in those days, but we supplemented it.

When I was growing up in high school journalism, I became involved in something that I guess is peculiar to El Paso journalists. This was the print shop of a man named Jesus V. Ochoa. It was on Main Street facing the San Jacinto Plaza and the train tracks ran in front of the print shop. It was located in an old building that had been a dance hall and still had wonderful pictures of palm trees and moons gazing down around the walls, and a wonderful dance floor on which Jesus had his equipment. He printed all the high school newspapers in town and did so for many, many years. And he also printed the Prospector, the student newspaper for the College of Mines.

The tradition among the dedicated young journalists was to go to the print shop in the afternoon after school and hand set the headlines and put the pages together. He would put the advertisements together. His brother, Jose, was the linotype operator. And we would take the type and hand set the headlines and put the pages together and pull the proofs. And this was all, you know, the old fashioned way. And you would wet the page of newsprint and take a roller and put the ink on the type, and then take a large wooden block and hammer it across the page to make the page proof and check the page proof.

Jesus had a wonderful sense of morality, which was our first experience with censorship in journalism. Students liked to put one over on their teacher, and if anyone wrote anything that Jesus thought they were getting by without the teacher seeing it, he would fold his

arms and say, "I will not print that. That is not going in the newspaper. I will not print any of your newspapers henceforth if you leave that in."
(Laughs) So he had better control over us than a principal, for instance.

J: I guess so, yeah.

H: But he did teach us the value of being careful of what we were saying in print.

J: Did he have a newspaper as such of his own also, or had he been a journalist?

H: No, but he did have various...he dabbled in various enterprises, I guess. When I was a freshman in college, then, a group of returning veterans pooled some of their savings and started a weekly newspaper called The El Paso Sun with Jesus as publisher, which meant that he footed the printing cost, mostly. Jack Salem was the editor. Some of the others were...well, Jack later on was news director at KTSM for a while in the fifties; and Scott Thurber, who later was a columnist for the San Francisco Chronicle; Jerry Geitz, who worked for the Post Office Department and probably made more money than any of the rest of us; and Les Turner, who ended up in the insurance business and some other, various other businesses. He was a technical writer for a while. And let's see, for a week or two I think Mike Martínez was doing our advertising soliciting, and he ended up working in advertising for Sears in South America for a while.

At any rate, we were all would-be journalists, and our problem was that we all wanted to be writers and we didn't want to sell ads, so we didn't have any income coming in. We were all writing gorgeous prose. (Chuckles) It lasted for 12 weeks. And I gave my set of papers, which I think may be the only complete set around, to the University archives. And they are in some box up there with my name on it. (Chuckles)

J: Oh, we're just going to have to go and see those one day. That sounds wonderful.

You mentioned Mike Martínez. What was the percentage, or do you have a feeling for how many Mexican American students were in the school in the late forties?

H: Oh, that... An interesting thing came up the other day in my job, since I work for the University in the news service. Bob Ybarra, who is now with the Boundary Commission and with whom I used to work at the Herald-Post, sent to our office a clipping from the El Paso Times. It was a wire story from Ohio saying that Ohio State University had organized the first fraternity of Mexican American students in the country. And Bob said, "We had them at UTEP long before this." So I remembered that J. R. Provencio, who teaches mathematics here and has for many years, was president of an organization called Mu Epsilon Chi when I was in school, and this was a social group of both men and women students.

J: And he was a student at that time?

H: Yes, he was a returned veteran coming under the G. I. Bill. And I remember that our sorority members were very jealous of their group because they had men in their group as well as women, and much more interesting. (Laughter) But at any rate, I called J. R. and he reminisced a little bit about their organization. And I looked in some back year-books, and there was a men's fraternity organized in 1933 of Hispanics on this campus, and nobody has claimed they are first but they were here certainly much longer ago than Ohio State. And one of those members was Emilio Peinado, who established a very important construction business here and served on the school board and so on. So, I think most of their other members were mining students who went away.

- J: They might have had a number from México also, because I know there were a lot of South American and Mexican students coming to school here, too.
- H: That's right.
- J: That's very interesting. Were the relations pretty cordial between Mexican Americans and Anglo Americans in those days that you can recall?
- H: I think so. Now, the sororities and fraternities, some of them tended to discriminate, I think. But probably...you know, we had no blacks in those days.
- J: Right.
- H: So I would guess that nationwide probably the discrimination against blacks was felt more heavily in the social fraternities and sororities than among the Hispanics, although I can't really... You know, we had some Spanish speaking girls in our sorority, and I can't really remember a particular incident or anything.
- J: Do you remember any of them? Are they still here or do you see them anymore?
- H: Oh, well, Conchita Pangburn, whose father was a doctor, was in our group. And her son, I hear him speaking on KTEP. He does music commentary.
- J: Oh, so he stayed in your field sort of, Mass Communications.
- H: And let's see. Oh, there is another girl, I can't remember if she was a member or not, she hung around our group a lot. But I think when the Hispanics started coming in larger numbers, it was after the war under the G.I. Bill, like J. R. Provencio and some of the others, because they were given the opportunity that they had been denied before.
- J: Was he also from El Paso originally then?
- H: I think so.

J: That's interesting, too. If there was discrimination, you said there probably was some, would that be also toward let's say the Jewish students here on campus? Girls who wanted to be in sororities, would they also have been maybe excluded?

H: Oh, I think so. Yeah, I'd forgotten about that. But you know (chuckles), that reminds me of a funny story. I had a friend named Lou Cope who was a mining engineer. He's now a retired consultant. He goes all over the world. He specializes in gold, consulting about gold, in Colorado. One time a group of Jewish boys wanted to organize a social fraternity and invited Lou to join, and he already belonged to the engineers' social fraternity, the APOs, and he turned them down. And he said one of them accused him of being anti-Semitic. (Laughter)

J: That's really something. Let's see, besides Judson Williams and Pop Graham, are there any other professors that you can think of that stand out in your mind; and if so, what makes those people stand out in your mind?

H: Well, one of my all time favorites was Haldeen Braddy. When I was working on my Master's Degree, which I finished in 1954, I was taking his Poe course. He had just written one of his...he wrote several books about Poe, and he had just written I think the first one. And he taught this course at night, and I didn't drive and my mother didn't want me riding the bus at night, so she would drive me over here and wait for me to get out of class. I was working at the El Paso Times at that time and, oh, about halfway through the course I thought, "What do I want with a Master's Degree? Why am I taking this course?" And I just quit going to school. You know, I thought, "I'm inconveniencing my mother and I already have a job, and why do I need this degree?" And Dr. Braddy came to my house and he said, "Your mind is too good to waste. Come back to school. I will overlook your absences. You can make up the work that

you lost out on. Come back and finish your degree." So I did. (Chuckles)

J: Oh, that's really something.

H: But I was thinking about that last semester because my daughter is a sophomore majoring in Metallurgy, and she had taken the first half of freshman chemistry with the engineering dean, Dean Robert Grieves. He was teaching the second semester and she wanted very much to be in his class again because she says he's one of the finest teachers she's ever had. And she was at the end of the registration list alphabetically and couldn't get in his class. The first day of class he phoned me at my office and he said, "Where's Jeannie? Why isn't she in my class?" I thought, "We still have teachers who really care." She was able to get in it finally.

J: Oh, that's great. I know people like that really do have an impact on you because they influence you so much.

H: And there were a couple of others whose teaching I always was fascinated by, and they were Dr. Anton Berkman, who was the long-time Biology professor and at one time I think was acting president of the institution; and Bill Timmons, a History professor, who came when I was a senior, and he was fresh out of college with his Doctor's degree. I'm on a committee with him now. We just met yesterday about the University's observance of the Sesquicentennial. But he's retired already now, professor emeritus. At any rate, both these professors did something which intrigued me and which I thought if I were a teacher I would love to be able to teach this way. They would come in the classroom with not a note in their hand, write an outline on the chalkboard, start teaching from the outline, cover every item on the outline exactly, and the bell would ring. And that always intrigued me as a teaching technique. How are they able to manage

the time that well? And to keep it all in their head. (Chuckles) But they were both among the many marvelous teachers we had.

J: What women professors were on campus in the forties that you recall?

H: We had Pearl Ponsford. She was another excellent teacher. She, unfortunately, was...as I recall, her scholastic field had been History but she was teaching English. And the tradition was that this was why she was never promoted much in the English Department, because she was not teaching in the field in which she had been trained. I don't know how true that was. But at any rate, she was a wonderful teacher of shlock English courses, you know, and making you write things.

J: Did that help you, do you think, also in your journalism?

H: Yes. She was good about teaching for attention to detail in what you're doing. And then Gladys Gregory, I learned when she died a few years ago, she was the first full professor, female full professor. She was the faculty sponsor of the Zetas, and we saw a lot of her. I had her as a teacher, and she wasn't too dynamic because she taught law cases, she taught government. And we were mostly reviewing law cases and nodding off to sleep (chuckles) in an old barracks building that was a classroom building.

J: Were there any others on campus?

H: Oh, yes. Mary Quinn. I never had her as a teacher. And then Mrs. Myrtle Ball, I didn't have her as a teacher either, but she was around. And Vera Wise, that dear sweet lady. I sang in the church choir with her. She was the sponsor of the Chi Omegas and the head of the Art Department for many years.

J: So there were a few.

H: Quite a few, [yes].

- J: You had said you came on campus a little younger maybe than some of the other students that were here. Were you allowed to date in those days?
- H: Oh, yes--if I got invited for a date. That was the problem. (Laughter)
- J: What would be a typical date for you, let's say, your first year and a half on campus? Because I'm thinking that maybe the older you got, there was a difference in the kinds of dates you had. But that may not be true.
- H: I don't know what they do now, but we had, seemed like we had a lot of dances. This was another thing that the social groups did. The sororities and fraternities tended to have dances, annual dance or spring dance or whatever. There was the Hard Luck Dance in the springtime. This was when the engineers celebrated St. Patrick's Day. They had a beard growing contest, which with the influx of lady engineers they don't have anymore. (Chuckles) And there would be a Hard Luck Dance in Holliday Hall, and the fellows would wear their hard hats and their beards and boots, and the girls dressed informally, too. And that was kind of fun. Then one of the great honors for a girl was to be taken to the St. Patrick's initiation. That was held at Oro Grande and we would have to drive all that way. The year that I got to go I was in the car that had the gallon jugs of gardenia perfume, and it was pretty bad on the way up--this perfume being for sprinkling the initiates with. And in those days also since they didn't initiate girls 'cause there weren't girls in engineering, we just watched. They would go in one end of a mine tunnel and come out the other end. And they'd have to take their shoes off and walk back across the mountain to get their shoes and get stickers in their feet. But in the mine tunnel they would kiss the Blarney Stone and get the green paint on their faces and shake hands with St. Pat and get green paint all over. They do that now but it's on

campus. And my daughter was initiated when she was a freshman, so I thought that was signs of the times.

J: Exactly. The other dances besides the Hard Luck Dances that were put on, they were formal occasions then?

H: Yes, there were lots of formal dances. We would rent, oh, say the ballroom of the Hilton Hotel downtown, which is now the Plaza Hotel. Or after they built the Union there was the Union ballroom.

J: And you said that was built during the time you were in school.

H: In '49, [yes]. It opened in the spring of '49, I think, because I was the editor of El Burro magazine and Jo Freeman was the editor of the Flowsheet. And we had our office together which, when we started out, was under the steam pipes on the first floor of Old Main behind Jud Williams' office. And they had the geology specimens stored back there. That was where the Geology Department was. And when they opened the Union, then the part of it that is now the Foreign Students' Office, International Students' Office, was the Publications Office for the year-book and the magazine, and Jo and I had our office in there.

J: There was a Dean of Women on campus also when you were there?

H: Yes. When I was a freshman Cordelia Caldwell was the Dean of Women, and the rule was that girls could not wear slacks on the campus unless it was in P.E. class. P.E. was required.

[PAUSE]

J: Besides your P.E., you had language requirements and which others?

H: Oh, let's see, algebra.

J: I was going to say, probably math and maybe a science or two.

H: Yeah. Another great teacher who comes to mind...I had taken a lot of math in high school and it came easy for me. So when I was in college

and had to take two semesters of algebra, it was so easy, a repetition of what I'd had in high school, I kept putting off the last semester. Finally, in the summer of '49 when I was to graduate I still had this freshman algebra to take, and I took it with Tom Barnes, who has retired only recently. He's an emeritus professor of Physics. In those days the professors in Physics and math taught both fields. In fact, most of our professors had to teach a broad spectrum of courses compared to the specialists we have today. Dr. Barnes was a marvelous, marvelous teacher. I really enjoyed the opportunity to get to study with him.

J: In your Journalism courses, maybe you could tell me a little bit of what that entailed in those years, what kinds of courses were being taught and what you had to do for each one.

H: Yes. I haven't mentioned so far the most influential man for many of us who came through in those years who succeeded Charles Scarritt, and this was John Judy Middagh. And John had been a professional journalist for many years. And the great thing about Middagh was not any information that I remember. The main thing I remember that he taught us was, "Don't ask somebody how to spell it, look it up in the dictionary." Because this is a great failing in newsrooms, you turn to the next person and say, "How do you spell-----?" And that was one thing that he tried to cure us of. But the great thing about Middagh was not so much what he taught as he himself being an example of a person, and he was such a fantastic guy.

J: I never knew him, but I have heard people that came to school in the early sixties that remember him and always spoke highly of him. That's why I know the name. So he came when, about '47 or '48 maybe?

H: Let's see, I guess it was the fall of '47.

J: Fall of '47. And where had he come from?

H: The Herald-Post. And before that he was in the Army, and he married an El Paso girl and stayed here.

J: That's really something.

H: He had one marvelous characteristic. We had window shades that had a little piece of something that hung down with a little circle hanging from it, and Middagh had from the days when he was an instructor in the Army a baton, a professor's stick, that he would use to point out things on the chalk-board. And from time to time in order to get our attention while he was lecturing, he would suddenly lunge and thrust this through the little loop hanging down from the window shade. He always speared it just exactly.

(Laughter)

J: That's amazing. When he saw you sort of drifting off, huh. (Laughs)

H: Yeah. And the newsroom was on the second floor of Old Kelly Hall. And at some time in the past the third floor of Kelly Hall, which in those days was used for the Radio Department, had its own outside stairway as access. This had been done sometime before when that was the library, that floor had been the library. So there was no way to reach the third floor from the second floor without going outside. This meant you had to go downstairs to the first floor and out, and then climb back up the hill, because it backed up to the hill. So our...the easier way was to simply go out the window. There were no screens on the windows. And Middagh used to fuss at us about going out the window. I think he was told officially to do this. But we did it anyway because it was much easier. (Chuckles)

J: While you were studying Journalism, besides, let's say you worked on El Burro at that time, whatever, did you get to do any work in town at all to help you in your craft or was it strictly doing University writing?

H: I didn't, but some of the other students did. Scott Thurber and Jo Freeman both worked at the El Paso Times. Scott worked on the sports desk and she did general assignment reporting.

J: So that would help her later on, I guess, for what she did. So there were those kind of opportunities for some of the students?

H: Yes.

J: That's very good. This goes back I guess to student activities in a way, but do you recall any particular pranks that some of the students would pull on the campus in those days? Were there any that were more popular than others or any that stand out in your mind?

H: I remember one time in a creative writing class I was in, one of the returned veterans came in and told us that he and some friends had been up to New Mexico State before the traditional game between our two football teams, and had gone up in the tower in I think it's Hadley Hall up there, they had an old tower and [had] a lot of old records stored up there, and they had moved all the records around so it would confuse someone. And they had released some cattle from some research pens so that they got mixed up. (Chuckles) But that was their idea of a good prank.

J: I guess so. (Laughs)

H: I was so shocked. I thought, "Oh, that's terrible." (Chuckles)

J: When you think about yourself as a student from the College of Mines or Texas Western College, what really stands out in your mind about those years? I mean, is there any particular feeling you get?

H: I guess one thing that I enjoyed was the opportunity to know a lot of faculty members and to know them well, because it was a small school and it was easy to get to know everybody. Since I've been working at the

University, in the office where I work we get a chance to talk to people from all different kinds of disciplines. I didn't realize until Dr. Monroe and his wife started having an annual open house for the faculty and staff that a lot of these people don't know each other, the faculty members themselves don't know each other. And I would find myself at these parties introducing a biologist to a linguist, and both of whom I knew separately as great people, you know. And I thought, "Gee, how sad, they don't know each other."

J: In those days it was much closer.

H: In the old days most of the faculty members knew each other, and the students. In fact, Dr. Wiggins, who was the president when I was a freshman, he could call people by name, call students by name. Somehow he knew my name and, you know, I don't know how he knew my name. But he was just like a lot of school principals that somehow know everybody's name and can call it.

J: Are there any other people that are working now on campus either as professional staff or faculty that were in school when you were in school, any that have come back?

H: Oh, let's see. Eleanor Cotton was in some classes with me. And then there's some people that I had worked with when I worked for the public schools, Norma Hernández and Marie Barker and I were good friends in the public schools.

J: Did you teach in the public schools?

H: No, I did work similar to what I do here. I did public relations work in the public schools for nine years.

J: Any others that you can think of? You said Mr. Provencio.

H: Yeah, he was in school when I was.

J: I'm just curious if there were any more that were students that have come back to work here after all.

H: Surely there are.

J: (Chuckles) Well, I just wondered if there were. Is there anything else you'd like to add? I don't have any more specific questions. If there's anything that you think you'd like to talk about that I haven't touched on, I would be interested.

H: A couple of things about the Journalism when I was here.

J: Okay.

H: In my last year of school, '48 - '49, we organized a journalism fraternity, and I think the reason Middagh was talked into this was that the national president was a teacher at New Mexico State and encouraged him to start this, because Middagh didn't like organizations much. But I was the first president of that group and it was called Alpha Phi Gamma. And Frances Braden and I got to attend a convention in Riverside, California of that group, and we heard Adelai Rogers St. John speak. That was kind of neat, 'cause she's still writing books.

J: That's great.

H: And that was a nice experience. And also during that year the College of Mines hosted the state convention of the Texas Intercollegiate Press Association. Lucky Leveritt was the state president and I think I was vice president, I've forgotten. But at any rate, we had a nice convention and a lot of the local people helped with it. I know somewhere in my archives I have a picture of Karl Wyler helping at the convention. One of the events was held, it was a buffet supper in the basement of the old chamber of commerce building on San Francisco Street. And David Cohen, who was my right arm when I was editor of the magazine...and I don't think he was a Journalism major but somehow he got caught up in our group

and helped all the time. But anyway, David and I were behind the scenes and helping in the kitchen. There was a young man and woman, young married couple, preparing this meal and they had just started a catering service and were going into the restaurant business. And it was Leo and Mary Lou Collins, and of course their group of restaurants became very great landmarks of El Paso until his death.

J: When did you first start working up here at the University?

H: 1976. I had been working at the Herald-Post. In my career I have vacillated back and forth between newspaper work and educational public relations, and I enjoy both of them because in both fields you get to meet a lot of interesting people. It's pretty good.

Just lately I was doing a Nova piece about some history, local history, that I was involved in a little bit as a reporter, but it also bears on the University. I was asked to get something together about Negro History Week. So I remembered, when I was a reporter I was the only reporter present when the El Paso School Board voted to desegregate the schools. And also during that period a young black woman brought suit against the College of Mines because they had refused her admission, and her case ultimately became the first federal court decision ordering higher education to desegregate in Texas. The El Paso School Board decision was not the first, they were not the first school board to act on it, but they were the first to unconditionally desegregate. They said, "As of today we're desegregated." And they didn't put any time limit as some other boards had done. And Alan Shivers, who was governor, threatened to take their money away, but he didn't.

J: Who was this young woman, what was the name?

H: Her name was Thelma White. And to my knowledge she didn't ever attend here, she entered New Mexico State University. But hers became a test case in a sense because there were some other students suing elsewhere in Texas. But El Paso had already established the public school desegregation, and sometime prior had desegregated the parochial schools, which nobody had noticed. So her case, Judge Thomason was the judge, Ewing Thomason. And the U.T. Board of Regents had voted before her case went to the judge's court to allow this school to desegregate out of all the system schools. And the University lawyer argued that they were already desegregated so the judge didn't need to rule, and the judge said, "Yes, I think we need to rule on this for Texas." And he ruled and it became the law.

J: I'll be darned.

H: So, you know, we have some things in our history we can be proud of that have significance for social matters, too.

J: That's great. Well, I sure thank you for giving us the interview, and if there's anything I can think of that I need to come back to you, I hope you don't mind if I come back and talk to you some more.

H: Oh, sure. Yeah.

J: I appreciate it.

H: Well, thank you, Sarah.

J: Okay, thanks.