H: This is Lisa Heard. Today is April 13, 1992. I am interviewing Dean Phyllis Meek in her office at the University of Florida in Gainesville, Florida. [Dr. Meek is associate dean for Student Services and assistant professor of education.] We are recording this interview for the University of Florida Oral History Archives.

Can you tell me, Dean Meek, where you were born?

M: I was born in a little town in Oklahoma called Panama.

H: When were you born?

M: 1935.

H: Tell me who your parents were.

M: My parents were Ada and Clarence Meek, and they both had grown up near there. My mother was born in a little town about four miles away from there, and my father was born in Texas. They had grown up in that part of the country and lived there all their lives, and certainly after they got married. [As a child] my mother had lived in a little town five miles from where I grew up.

H: What did your parents do?

M: My father was an electrician, and my mother did not work outside the home.

H: How did they feel about education? Did they encourage you to go ahead with your education?

M: They were very encouraging. Unfortunately, neither of my parents was able to finish high school. My father, because his father had died when he was very young, went to about the eighth grade. Then he had to start working. My mother had finished tenth grade in high school. [In] the small town she lived in, there really was not a high school from which students could graduate when she was growing up. But her mother had been a teacher, so she certainly was very encouraging in her approach with [us]. I have a brother and a sister, and their approach with all of us was to encourage us to go to school. We were a very poor family, so going to college meant a matter of getting scholarships, getting jobs, and that type of thing. My brother, who is a year and a half older than I am, actually went into the navy as soon
as he graduated from high school so that he later could go to college. At that time there was the GI Bill.

I was very encouraged all through school by a lot of teachers, and especially by the man who was the principal of our high school and also my basketball and softball coach. So I got a scholarship based on having been a fairly good student. Then he was able to help me get a job.

I went to a very small school in Oklahoma. Oklahoma had a series of junior colleges. They were residential. They were really set up for people who came from fairly poor backgrounds, because tuition was extremely low. Most of us worked. I remember I worked seventy-five hours a month for room and board. It was a tremendous opportunity, because otherwise a lot of us could not ever have gone to college. We certainly could not afford to go to places like the University of Oklahoma or what is now Oklahoma State University.

H: You had one brother and one sister?

M: Yes, I have an older brother and a younger sister.

H: What are their names?

M: My brother's name is Cleo and my sister's name is Elaine.

H: What was it like growing up in Oklahoma?

M: I grew up in a very small town. The town probably had about 800 people in it. It was a very typical small town in lots of ways. There were certain advantages in that. As a female, I never did really feel discriminated against as I was growing up because out in that part of the country (the Southwest) women were, because of the history there, expected to do just about anything that men could do. Sports for women were very important. I remember from the time I was old enough having either a softball, baseball, or basketball in my hand. I played softball and basketball with the school. The girls' teams were really more popular (in terms of people coming to watch us) than boys' teams were because we always did better. So school was very much an important part of any small community. When you have a community that small, of course, the school activities are really central to it. I was extremely active in all sorts of things, particularly sports. I was also very involved in a lot of clubs and organizations. In a small school it is very easy to be a leader because if you want to work you can do that. I was very lucky in that I was always encouraged a lot by teachers.

Even though I used to get in trouble in school--I got sent out in the hall a lot for mouthing off--I think I got by with certain things because I was a good student. I was editor of the school paper and president of the student body and [participated in] different things of that nature.
So I think one of the things about a small town is the fairly insular kind of experience.

I remember a big thing was going down to the county seat, which was only nine miles away, on Saturdays. One of my aunts was a teacher, and she was the principal at a small school, one of the schools that had eight grades. There were two teachers, and she was the principal. On Saturdays she always had to go down to the county seat to turn in things to the county office. I would usually go with her. That was always a big deal, to go down to Poteau, which was the county seat. Occasionally, we would get to go over to Fort Smith, Arkansas, which is not too far away, and that, of course, was a large city.

A lot of our travels involved softball games, getting to go to different places and different schools. [With] basketball [it was] the same thing. Some summers I played softball, and we traveled throughout the state. We had fast-pitch softball. That was a lot of fun.

Growing up there was a very insular type of situation. There were traditional expectations of women. By the time everybody was fifteen or sixteen, you either were married or about to be married. I remember I was engaged when I was sixteen with the idea of getting married and thought that that was really what I would be doing because that is what women did. Of course, when I went to college, I learned that I did not have to do that. So that was good. [laughter]

H: When you went away to college, did you live at school?

M: Yes. The schools were residential; they had residence halls. It was a very small school. [It had] probably 800 students. I remember there were a lot more men than women at this school, partly because they had an ROTC program. It was at that time called Eastern Oklahoma A & M Junior College. It was tied in with what was then Oklahoma A & M University, which was a land-grant school. This junior college was kind of like a mini land-grant school. It had ROTC, [and] it had an agricultural component to it. I remember all of our food was grown by the farm that was attached to the school. This part of Oklahoma is very rural.

There was only one women's residence hall. We were very much in the minority as females, to which there was a certain advantage. On the other hand, in terms of male-female ratio [there was a disadvantage]. But it was a fantastic experience for me and for those of us who had gone to very small high schools. It was a nice transition. I would have been swallowed up if I had gone to a place like the University of Oklahoma right off the bat. It would have been much too large. So it was a nice transition. Again, we got lots of attention. The classes were small, and we got a lot of attention from faculty members. [We also got] lots of encouragement and the opportunity to be involved in many different kinds of activities.
H: Did you continue with sports?

M: Yes. I played basketball for two years. They did not have softball. They had a basketball team, and I played on that, which was fun. We had intercollegiate competition. The thing that is different about Oklahoma, as far as athletics for women at that point, was Oklahoma, Iowa, and some states like that had competitive sports for women, even back in the 1950s. When I was in college, the same thing was true. We played other schools. I remember we went to a tournament. They were just changing the rules from six-person basketball, where you had three forwards on one end and three guards on the other end. You did not go across the center line. When I was a sophomore we played AAU [Amateur Athletic Union of the U.S.] rules, and that meant you had a roving player. I was too short ever to rove and too slow to play forward. But I enjoyed it. It was a good experience and a lot of fun.

When I was in college, I think, was for me a very defining time in my life. I had a job working for a woman who was assistant dean of students [Jacqueline Jones]. She was the first unmarried female professional I had ever known. Before, everybody I had known who was a professional was married and had families. So I assumed that was what I had to do as well. As I said, I was engaged--still engaged--when I went to college. The person to whom I was engaged was in the navy, but the idea was we would get married and settle down and have lots of children.

When I went to college, I suddenly realized that there really were lots of things that I as a female could do, and part of that was through this person who became a tremendous role model for me. She opened up all kinds of horizons. From her and other people there, I learned that women could do a lot of other things. She, along with other people, was extremely encouraging to me as far as going on to school. They apparently saw some capabilities in me academically. So she certainly encouraged me a great deal, as did a lot of other people.

H: At that school you majored in English?

M: Yes, I began a major in English there. Of course, that was the junior college, so I finished two years there. I took a general education [degree]. Then I decided I really wanted to major in psychology, because I was very interested in people. So I took a lot of psychology courses. I took a lot of literature because I like to read. Also, this person I worked for taught English, and so I am sure I was influenced by her as well.

Then I left there and went to another school, Southeastern State College (it is now Southeastern State University). It was a four-year school. At that time it had about 1,000 students. It had been, at one time, a teachers' college. I decided to major in English there because, again, the school was so small [that] there was not a major
in psychology. So I did the next best thing, which was to major in English. But I took all the courses that were offered in psychology.

The thing that was different in those days was that there was a woman who was chair of the Department of English. In fact, all of the faculty in that department were female except for one male, which was really quite unusual. Our classes were small. We got a tremendous amount of personal attention, so it was a fantastic experience for me. Again, I received a lot of personal encouragement.

I also worked my way through school, both at the two-year school and at Southeastern State College. I started out working in the president's office for a while. Then I worked for the man who was director of testing and did a lot in educational psychology. So, again, that continued my interest in psychology and working with people. I also found it was almost more fun learning about behavior through reading literature than it was taking dry psychology courses. [laughter] Again, I was lucky there in that I was very involved in many activities and had an opportunity to be a leader. Like most small schools, if one wants to do something, that is not so impossible. It was a time when we had a lot of fun. There was only one women's residence hall, and I lived there.

In those days we had a lot of rules and regulations. I remember [that] I was a bit of an activist during the time. We decided that some of the rules were somewhat ridiculous. I was vice-president of the residence hall. One of the rules was that we could not wear slacks or blue jeans down in the parlor except after certain hours. We thought that since that was our living room, that was kind of ridiculous. So we challenged the dean of women on that. I got into a little bit of a conflict with her. I told her she was incompetent. For some reason, she did not really like that. [laughter] I do not know why. She got really unhappy with me.

The whole thing ended up in the president's office, again showing how small a school it was. Fortunately, the president knew me, since I had worked for him, so he did not kick me out of school, which the dean of women wanted to do because she thought I was very uppity and very disrespectful. But since he knew me, I escaped unscathed from that. However, later I found out that she did write some very negative letters of recommendation. But that was fun. We had a lot of fun.

H: Did the rule get changed?

M: It did. I think we actually reached a compromise, but we got it modified.

H: That is a great story.

M: Yes. Anyway, from there, the teachers in English encouraged me to go ahead and do graduate work in English. By the way, I had broken off my engagement at that point and decided that education was more important than marriage was. I had
certainly seen other options for women. But I was still very interested in working with people in some way. I was increasingly interested in counseling. So when I was thinking about graduate school, which I definitely wanted to do after finishing undergraduate work, I was torn between getting a master’s in English or going in another direction. I got a lot of encouragement to go ahead in English. But then I was interested in working with people in some way. So I started looking at assistantships or opportunities in the whole field of student personnel, which to me was broad enough. That way I could work with individuals and also work with groups and be in a situation of activism to some extent.

I got an offer at the University of Oklahoma and was tempted to stay there. Then I also heard about Ohio University, where there was a very unique program. It was a two-year interdisciplinary program. It included an assistantship working in a residence hall and working in the dean of women’s office. I had never been [very far away from home]. I had been in four states: Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Missouri. I had made one trip to California, but that was about it. My experiences had been somewhat limited. I just thought it would be kind of neat to go somewhere else.

So I took the job and got accepted at Ohio University, totally sight unseen. But I thought, Well, I will go up north and have a different experience. Talk about cultural shock—for me and I think for the students with whom I worked.

So I went there for the two-year program. That was a good experience. That was my trip “up north,” and I was struck as much as anything by, in many ways, the hypocrisy [of the situation]. One of the things about living in Oklahoma was that I was in all segregated schools when I was growing up, but there were no blacks in that part of the country. Of course, American Indians were the minority group, and there was a lot of prejudice against them, and also [there were] some Mexicans, although there were not that many in that part of Oklahoma. I also did not know any Jewish people.

I used go to softball camp in the summers. The camps were run by Southern Baptists, so I got these really weird ideas about Catholics. Of course, Catholics were considered [by Baptists] in a very negative fashion. I had views of Catholics driving around in these large, black cars with graven images and all that. So I had this very distorted view of Catholics. But I read a lot about them. I remember seeing the movie *Gentlemen’s Agreement* about anti-Semitism and could not figure out all that.

So when I went to Ohio University I had all kinds of experiences in the sense that for the first time I was around blacks, Jews, Catholics, [and] all kinds of people. I had this view of the liberal North, meaning that people were integrated, because that is what I read. What I was struck by was that in the residence hall where I worked, the women who were Jewish all lived on one end of the hall together, and the women
who were black lived on the other end of the hall together. When I raised questions about that, I was told, "That is what they prefer," which did not quite make sense to me.

Also, I found that I could not understand anybody. I had a bit of an Oklahoma accent, which is a fairly distinctive accent. Where I graduated from was very much southern, right down in the southern part of the state called the Campus of a Thousand Magnolias. It is very southern in orientation. Actually, the part of the state I am from is in the southeastern part and is called Little Dixie. It is very southern. I found that at Ohio University there were a lot of students from New York, New Jersey, [and] Pennsylvania. I really had trouble understanding them, and they had trouble understanding me. Also, I found the pace of living very fast and what to me appeared to be rude behavior. I was used to people opening doors for each other, male or female. These students would just knock you down.

But anyway, I am glad I went there. It was a good experience.

H: You say the schools in Oklahoma were segregated and the minority group was Native Americans. Did they go to the same schools as you did?

M: Some did. In fact, at Southeastern there were quite a few Native [Americans] there. I became very aware of the prejudice when my roommate in my senior year was dating a full-blood Indian. Her parents were very opposed to that. But they did let her get married, and they are still married. But in the southern part of Oklahoma, there were quite a few Native Americans, and there were several at Southeastern. [There were] some at Eastern when I was there as well, because that part of eastern Oklahoma is where the Indians were moved to. They went out to all of Oklahoma, and then they were pushed over to the eastern section. In fact, I am 1/32 Cherokee and very proud of that. It does not show, but I am still very proud of that heritage. On my father's side, my aunt, my grandmother, and my great-grandfather were very Indian-looking. So even though I have a very limited amount, I am very proud of that heritage.

But there just were no blacks in that part of the country. They just did not live there. There was not anything for them to do, I think. They just did not live in that part of Oklahoma. [They] still do not.

H: So you really underwent some culture shock when you went to Ohio.

M: Well, it was just interesting to me. I mean, I could not figure out, and have never been able to figure out, why there was bias and prejudice. [I] still do not understand it. I understand it more intellectually now. I could not understand anti-Semitism. I had only read about that. I had known some people who were Catholic, and I could not quite figure out why the Southern Baptist view of Catholics [was so negative]. I was not Southern Baptist, but as I said, had gone to their camps in the summer.
Ohio University had a much more diverse population. For the first time [I was] dealing with people who lived in all parts of the country. [Ohio University] had about 8,000 students. I worked in a residence hall. [My position was] similar to a hall director. It was a very good experience. I learned a lot. Then I was in classes with people from all over the country. It was a very enlightening kind of experience for me.

I learned that I did not like the pace of living in that part of the country. [It was] much faster. People seemed in a hurry to have a good time. I was struck by students working very hard to play. I had trouble understanding [that]. I like a more southern way of life.

I also did not like the weather. It was so cold. I did not like the gray, leaden skies [of winter]. The part of Oklahoma I am from is very similar to the climate here [in Gainesville, Florida]. It does get colder, but the sun shines most of the time. You can be outside a great deal. When I was in Athens in the southern part of Ohio, the sun did not shine from November until March it seemed, and I did not like the gray, leaden skies. But it was a good experience. I am glad I went there, and I am glad I had that chance to really learn about another part of the country.

H: Did you feel you fit in there? Did you make friends?

M: Oh, I finally did. Working in the residence hall in the capacity I did, obviously, I got to know the students. Then I was in this interdisciplinary program in human relations, and there was a group of us, about eighteen students, who took classes together. So I met a lot of people through that, and some of them I still have contact with.

H: So you went from there to another school?

M: Right. Once I got my master's degree in 1960, then I taught psychology in the summer at Muskingum College, which is a small school [in New Concord], near Ohio University. I did that in between [graduation and my first job in student personnel]. I had already taken a job as an assistant dean of women at Madison College in [Harrisonburg] Virginia, which at that time was a women's college. (It is now James Madison University.) That was my first job. That was very exciting because it was a brand-new job. In fact, I have been lucky in that every full-time job I have ever had has been a new position. So the value of that has been that I have been able to kind of blend that position the way I wanted.

[The job at Madison College] was a brand-new position. I was much younger than the dean of women and the dean of students. I lived right across the campus, and we had about 1,800 students. I thoroughly enjoyed working in a women's college. It
was very, very exciting. I loved Virginia. I love that part of the country; it is in the Shenandoah Valley.

I had gotten some other offers, one of which was at Berea College [in Berea, KY]. I almost took that job because it would have been exciting to work with a population from Appalachia. I was intrigued by mountains, because eastern Oklahoma is very mountainous and very hilly. (It is in the foothills of the Ozarks.) So I missed that, and I have always been intrigued by and done a lot of reading about mountains. One of the reasons I chose [Madison College at] Harrisonburg was because it was in the Shenandoah Valley with the mountains all around. But I was tempted [and] almost took the job at Berea. I decided I felt more comfortable at Madison.

That [the position at Madison] was a fantastic experience. I was there three years. I got to do all sorts of things. I taught. My background is in counseling. My master's program was an interdisciplinary degree in human relations, and we could then focus on a particular area. I focused on counseling and psychology. That was really my true love (and still is). So I did a lot of work with individual students. But I got to do everything that one can do in a small dean of women's office.

H: What did you like about being at a women's college?

M: I liked the idea that women at a women's college tend to thrive in much more positive ways in some respects than they do at a co-ed school. For example, in leadership positions, I think women just generally feel freer to be themselves. They do not have to worry as much about men in the sense of relationships with men. We had some male day students, and I found that when I taught a class that was all female, the atmosphere was very different than if we had two men in the class. Hopefully, that has changed somewhat now. This was back in the 1960s. In 1960 women were more hesitant to talk. They would not speak up as freely, [and] they would not express their opinions as freely, even with [only] two men in a class. So I think the women [at Madison] were able to achieve. They had the opportunity to be in all kinds of leadership positions. They just were freer overall and certainly proved that they could excel in all sorts of ways. [It was] a very supportive environment.

There were a lot of men on the faculty, but at the same time there were also women faculty [and] women administrators. So I was able to see women in a lot of leadership roles, which I had not always seen. When I went to graduate school, for the first time I became aware of sex discrimination. I had not really run into it very much in Oklahoma, but when I went to Ohio it hit me right in the face. I had no female faculty. All the time I was in graduate school there, I had no women faculty members. [We were] surrounded by men. Suddenly I became aware that because I was female there were certain limitations, and I had never had that experience before. It was a very odd experience.

H: What kind of limitations?

- 9 -
M: Mainly messages. I found that the expectation level of the teachers was different for women students than for men. Then if we did well, it was kind of like a big surprise. [We as women were not given attention] in terms of opportunities [or] in terms of being encouraged about certain things. Now, I must admit that I, again, had a very positive experience in [graduate] school and had some faculty members who were very supportive of me once they got to know me. But I am talking about overall attitudes [toward women]. And, of course, we were in the dean of women's office [and were somewhat separated]. We had a dean of women's office and a dean of men's office, so again there was [a further separation]. Both years I worked in sex-segregated residence halls. The first year I worked in one that was an all-women's residence hall away from any [men's residence halls]. There were not even any men's residence halls around. The second year I worked in an area where at least there was a men's residence hall next door. The [people from the] residence hall where I worked and the one next door at least ate in the same dining area. So we had men and women eating together, whereas before it had just been strictly female. So that was interesting to see that difference, in terms of my own experience.

H: And that was different from your previous experience.

M: Yes. Again, when I was in Oklahoma, we would eat together with men and women. The idea again was that if you wanted to do something, you could do it. There were just not the restrictions there [in Oklahoma]. If you wanted to be a leader, you could be a leader. If you wanted to do something, you could do it. There was the opportunity to achieve. There was certainly equal recognition for men and women, I think, partly because there were a lot of women administrators. Now, that was partly the history of the school. It had been a teachers' college at one time, and there was some carryover from that.

H: Teachers' colleges characteristically are taught and administered by women?

M: Right. There were several women who were heads of departments. Again, if I think back, the president was male, the dean of students was male, [and] the dean of instruction was male. There were a lot of women who were department chairs. But in graduate school I suddenly became a little more aware of the fact that there were no women around, although in the dean of women's office there were women. But [there were] no other visible women administrators.

H: So did you continue with any of your activism during your graduate study years?

M: I was pretty much involved in coursework. Of course, I would help students do certain things. Things were in the process of beginning to change a little bit. For example, the second year I was there, the green where we moved to had been an all-male area. So what they were beginning to do was at least have residence halls
next to each other, one of which was all-female and one of which was male. That was real daring to do that.

H: Yes, at that time.

M: So that was just the beginning of switching over to what ultimately became co-ed residence halls. So that was kind of the beginning of that process. I really was so involved in school [that] I did not have the opportunity to be that active. My role was different there.

When I was at Madison College, one of the things that was fun for me was that I was an advisor. I worked with student government, and I worked with the honor court, which was part of the honor system. Because of my role in the dean of women's office we were able to begin the process of changing a lot of the rules and regulations. That was a very conservative school, being a women's college in Virginia, which is a very conservative state. There were all kinds of rules and regulations. [It was] very restrictive in the sense that freshmen and sophomores, for example, had to come up to an area that was in the same building where we were in a large formal living area to meet their dates. We had chaperons on dates. The first year I was here they [individuals dating students] had to be on a list approved by the president and all those kinds of things.

So we began working with the students to begin changing a few things. That had to be gradual. But that was fun, just to be on that. [It was fun] to work with students so that they were coming up with ideas for beginning to effect some change.

But the main thing was I met some very strong women colleagues. [They were] women faculty members [and] department chairs. I learned a lot from them, because many of them were involved with what now would certainly be considered feminist [activity]. For example, there was a very strong women's physical education program. There were some powerful women in that department. It was one of the strongest departments [on campus]. Through that, [they gave] the kind of encouragement and did different types of things for the women students themselves, [offering them] a sense of their own self-esteem and success. So while we did not call it feminism, that is exactly what was happening at that time.

So it was fun, and that was a fun time to be there. I probably would have stayed there except I had this plan in my head of going there two years and then going back and getting my doctorate. That was my life plan. Then, during the third year, all these friends of mine, all of whom had their doctorates, kept saying: "If you are ever going to leave here, if you are ever really going to go ahead and get your doctorate, you better do it. [Otherwise,] you will get so enamored of this place [that] you will stay." So that third year I realized that I did need to do that. I realized that since I wanted to stay in higher education I needed to get a doctorate just to do that. Plus I had also realized that, as a female, I would be at a disadvantage unless I had
the best credentials I could. So that third year I decided to go ahead and look for a place where I would want to get my doctorate.

By then I had decided that I definitely wanted to stay in the South. I had had enough of the cold North [and] the Yankees. So I looked in different places. I actually brought a group of students down to Stetson University for a conference and had came over to Gainesville. I had applied to different programs in counseling psychology, so I came here [to the University of Florida] and talked to a person in the psychology department. He told me that the counseling psych program at that time was not very strong. He referred me over to a person in what is now the counselor education department.

I was very struck by the department because it was very humanistically oriented. I was very interested in humanism. There were some really top-notch people in the counselor education department as well as [the] education foundations [department]. And I liked this area; I liked Gainesville. So I got an opportunity, kind of an offer, to be a half-time clinician at the counseling center. I then got admitted to the graduate program in what is now counselor education. I came down here [and] did not know anyone, but decided this might be kind of a neat place.

Also, at that time I had thought I wanted to do full-time counseling. I [thought I] would get my doctorate and work in a counseling center. I thought that is what I wanted to do, so I worked for two years at the counseling center. [But I] found I really missed being where the action was. While I enjoyed the individual work with students, I really missed being involved with policy issues. I felt very isolated. So that caused me to begin wondering if that was really what I wanted to do.

Also, during that time (it was 1963) a lot of activism had begun. Of course, with the death of John Kennedy there was a tremendous loss, certainly for me and a lot of people. The civil rights movement, of course, was beginning. The women's movement was resurging at that time.

H: You came here in 1963?

M: [Yes], to go to school. So I was very tuned in to what was happening.

H: What was it like on campus thirty years ago?

M: I probably paid more attention after I started working in 1966. From 1963 until 1966, when I was a student, I probably did not pay nearly as much attention. I was looking at it more from a graduate student's [perspective and from the viewpoint of] someone working half time in the counseling center. There was not that much activism on campus. Of course, we are always behind. But I personally had become more and more interested, particularly in civil rights issues.
As I said, the resurgence of the women's movement just was beginning at that time. There was some activism happening at Berkeley and other places. I remember I used to read the Village Voice all the time. That was kind of my pipeline of information. I also had become very interested in existentialism and had read Simone du Beauvoir's The Second Sex (when I was at Ohio University, actually) and did some additional work on her and [Jean Paul] Sartre.

The third year I was a [doctoral] student was one of the most exciting years of my life. I worked as a research assistant for Charles Morris, who was a graduate research professor in philosophy. I had had a class with him and felt very honored by the fact that he asked me to be his research assistant. That was a fantastic job. I spent my time going to the library, reading, and doing abstracts for him. Then I met with him one day a week. He was such a fantastic individual as well as a brilliant person. He was doing a book on American pragmatism, and he was interested in seeing how the whole existential/phenomenological movement had impacted American pragmatism. So that is what I got to do, which was "quite a job." I did that for a year.

Then I was trying to decide what to do about my dissertation, because I had finished my coursework. I had a lot of trouble narrowing the topic. But Dr. Morris was on my committee, and he helped me with that as well. So that was really a fantastic year. I became a little more tuned in with what was happening not only in this country but what was happening internationally.

Then, just as I was doing my dissertation, the dean of women at the University of Florida and her whole staff retired. So that opened up. Someone told me that there was a new dean of women who was being hired, and they were going to have some assistant deans of women. I was encouraged to apply.

I looked at other possibilities. I was offered the job of assistant dean of women and decided to take it because I thought I would stay here and would be more likely to finish my dissertation. I was afraid if I left I would not do that. Also, since it was a new staff, the assistant dean of women's position I was offered was very heavily involved with counseling. I had decided that I really did not want to work at a counseling center, but I wanted to get back into more traditional student personnel work because of my interest in being involved in policy making and trying to effect change. I thought I would have more latitude to do that than I would in a counseling center.

When I started in 1966 in the dean of women's office, that was an extremely exciting time because by then there was a lot of activism, even on this campus. As I said, we were always behind. Groups like SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) had tried to get a foothold here and had not had much success.
But the first year I was in the dean of women's office, all kinds of things happened. We had the famous Pam Brewer case. I do not know if you have ever heard about that. The University at that time had a policy in our conduct code that said something to the effect that behavior unbecoming to a University of Florida student or a University of Florida co-ed was a violation of the code of conduct. We had a faculty discipline committee. It was all faculty, unlike the student conduct committee we have now, [and] there were a lot of regulations. (I remember when I came here I could not believe we had this thick book of regulations for women students. At that time the residence halls were still single-sex. There were women's residence halls and men's residence halls the first year I was here.)

The Pam Brewer case involved a student who posed nude in an off-campus publication [The Charlatan]. According to the interpretation of the code of conduct, that could have been viewed as conduct unbecoming of a University of Florida co-ed. The president of the University was Dr. Wayne Reitz at that time. He was just about to retire at the end of that fall. Then Dr. Stephen O'Connell came. Dr. Lester Hale was vice-president of student affairs. I remember he [Lester Hale] and Betty Cosby, who was dean of women, talking about whether or not to charge Pam Brewer because she had posed nude in The Charlatan magazine, which was a good name. The decision was made to pursue the case.

Well, that case caused the first sit-in that we had in Tigert Hall. Pam Brewer was charged with that violation. I think what happened was all the activist groups, the SDS and other groups, never really had a cause. They had never gotten anybody excited [enough to protest, and] it became a focus. Her hearing was scheduled before the faculty discipline committee in a conference room up in Tigert. She had an attorney, Selig Golden, who has since died. He was a young attorney [who was] very involved in civil rights issues, and he took on the case.

One of the first things that happened that turned out to be a mistake, at least from our standpoint, was [that] he, on her behalf, demanded an open hearing. Typically, those hearings were closed. He wanted an open hearing and [wanted it] moved to a larger room. I think [we] made a mistake in moving it over to the auditorium in Bryan Hall. The University, at that time, did not have an attorney. They just had a person on retainer. So we were obviously not used to that kind of hearing. What Selig Golden did was essentially put the dean of women on trial rather than Pam Brewer. He focused on her. It was an extremely terrible experience. But, anyway, Pam was found guilty and placed on probation.

There was a lot of reaction to that [verdict]. The whole issue that arose was: Should the University pay attention to off-campus behavior? We, at the same time, had been in the process of really looking at the whole code of conduct and [all of our] rules and regulations regarding conduct. [We were trying to decide] just exactly what was considered something the University should look at. So the Pam Brewer case really became kind of a rallying point for that.
Then a lot of people at the law school got involved and wanted to go through a very
legalistic process. We were just in the process [of evaluating our rules], really, and
that whole issue of in loco parentis was being challenged everywhere. What was
going on at that time during the 1960s was [that] the student activists were really
attacking all institutions, including institutions of higher education. And they certainly
needed to do some of that, because we had been in loco parentis; that is, we acted
in place of parents [to the point that] we in the dean of women's office and the men
in the dean of men's office often did do things like call students in if there were a
problem. I do not think we went by due process very much.

The idea was that we were being very benign. We were being very parental to
these students and taking care of them. For example, if a woman student were
arrested and put in jail (this did not happen very often), I could go down as assistant
dean of women and sign her out on my own recognizance. The dean of men could
do the same thing for men students. That was the whole idea; it was all very
informal. If a student "misbehaved," we could call her in [and talk with her].

In those days, when I first came, there was a dress code. We did not have one for
men, but we did for women. During my first one or two years here, the dress code
extended to the fact that if a woman wanted to come in to see me or other members
of the dean of women's staff, she would be told by our secretaries that she had to go
home and change into a dress or a skirt. It was kind of ridiculous, but we had a lot
of things like that.

So what the student activists were doing was challenging the whole idea of to what
extent universities should pay attention to the behavior of students. That was one
issue. There were other issues, such as curriculum reform and governance of the
University. But the area where there was probably the most response had to do
with those of us in Student Affairs. Many of us were very sympathetic to a lot of the
issues that students were bringing up and thought that those were legitimate issues.

The reason I mention the Pam Brewer case is because it became very much a
rallying point. It forced us to really look at our whole policy on behavior off campus.
For example, we had rules that said a woman student could not stay overnight in a
man's apartment. If she did, that was really a no-no. If a male and female student
who were not married spent the night in a hotel room, for example, then both of
them could be suspended from the University. It was really in loco parentis. We
had all kinds of curfews for women, [but] we did not have them for men. I used to
think we should have them for men, not women. [laughter]

Regarding senior curfews, we worked with a group called the Association for
Women Students, and through them we were recommending [the University's]
considering doing away with curfews for senior women. We thought we would start
gradually. We did not want to come in and do away with all curfews because that
would be a little upsetting to everybody. What was interesting was [that] we found a lot of women themselves were resistant to the idea. Part of that was that while curfews may sound weird now, at the time they were a safety valve for many women. If a woman got into a difficult situation, she could always say to the guy, "I am sorry, [but] I have to be in at a certain time." I think many women did not want to lose that security. But we wrote to parents. So we did away with senior curfews the first year, and then we just gradually [did away with them entirely]. The next year we went to juniors and [then to] sophomores.

So we were involved in trying to change quite a few things, [and] it was interesting. We were doing things from an internal standpoint, but there was a lot of external pressure to look at different policies. What we had to really struggle with was a move from the law school to go to an extremely legalistic procedure, which was understandable because there had been very little due process prior to that. I could understand why the students would push to go to almost the other extreme. So what we were trying to do was pull a little closer to the middle. For awhile it did become much more legalistic. Then, over time, it has evolved.

H: What do you mean by "legalistic"?

M: They wanted to go to all formal hearings with attorneys. The University's approach to discipline has always been [that] it should be an educational process. It is not like a court of law. Students should have due process, but you do not just look at everything from a highly legalistic, technical standpoint. You are trying to find out more about what occurred. Any penalty that is given to the person you hopefully put within a context that it is being somewhat educational. The law students, as you can imagine, just wanted us to go very much as if it were a court downtown. We resisted that because that would get away from the idea of discipline having any kind of educational intent. So that was a real struggle.

Of course, at that time, too, the student demonstrations were beginning to happen on campus. But, again, everything here was late. It was not until [students were shot by National Guard troops at] Kent State [University in Kent, OH] in 1970 that we had the first really large demonstration. Then there was another [demonstration here] in 1971 and another in 1972. So there were three years when we had serious campuswide demonstrations.

Our offices were in Tigert Hall then. What was happening all during that time was that students would go out on the Plaza of the Americas and start as a rallying point and then come over to Tigert. So particularly in the late 1960s and early 1970s in the spring--when the weather was nice--was usually when the demonstrations occurred. We would come back from lunch on Friday, and much of the time they would lock us inside. The students would be coming over to the front of Tigert. Stephen O'Connell was president, and he took a very hard line from the students' standpoint of what they could or could not do.
There were some things that happened earlier that I think were significant. When I first came, we had a ban-on-speakers policy. That is why I think I feel very strongly about First Amendment rights. The first year [I was here] we [also] had a ban on publications.

H: Did that affect students? Was there control over what students could say?

M: No. [The ban was on] outside speakers. It was on both, but particularly outside speakers. For example, the plaza at that time was not a free speech area. It is a free speech area now. The kinds of speakers who came were very conservative. They certainly were not people that had very radical [ideas] in any way.

I remember that one of the first persons who spoke after that ban was lifted was Madelyn O'Hare. She and her son had led the case to the Supreme Court that banned prayer in schools. She is considered an atheist, and she led that case. I remember that she spoke on the plaza, and it was so crowded that we had to stand across the street by the auditorium. Of course, I thought that was great.

Also there was a ban on things like the Charlatan and these other publications. The [Florida] Alligator at that time was an on-campus publication. It was the only publication allowed on campus, and that began to be challenged, too. So there were some very exciting things going on during that time, things that obviously needed to change. I think what we were trying to do was effect some of this change internally and not just be reactive to the pressures that we were getting from outside.

Obviously, though, I think there was some real value in the outside pressure, because I think institutions are slow to change. There has to be a push from the outside as well as hopefully people from the inside trying to effect change.

H: How was it for you during that time? It sounds like a tumultuous time on campus. Was it difficult for you to know where to stand? How did you feel about what was going on? It sounds like you were on the side of the students a lot of the time.

M: Yes. I think that most of us in Student Affairs really were on the side of the students. We all viewed ourselves as being very student-oriented. I think where we sometimes got caught was that, obviously, as administrators we had to go ahead and carry out whatever the position of the University was. [It was] either that or quit our jobs. So I think what a lot of us were trying to do (we certainly were trying to do it in the dean of women's office when I was on that staff, and that was until 1969, when we merged with the dean of men) was to effect change internally.

It was a kind of simultaneous thing going on. My frustration probably was less because of that, because I could at least see where we were trying to effect some change. Of course, what became difficult was that I was by nature an activist and also very interested in civil rights issues [and] very interested in women's concerns.
[and] women's issues. So I viewed myself as being a liberal, activist person, and yet being labeled as part of the administration. In those days the student activists saw us as being the enemy. So at times that was very difficult to deal with.

As we moved away from the in loco parentis idea, we had to become much more formal with students. It had been that we could just call students in. We thought we were trying to be helpful to them. Then for awhile it became a much more formalized thing. Of course, that was awkward because it meant we had to change our approach. I realize that while we thought being able to call them in was very benign and helpful, I am sure for some students it looked as if we were exploiting them or being authoritarian and so forth. So I am sure there were some misuses of that power. I obviously never did any of that. [laughter] But I am sure there were misuses of that particular power that we had. Anytime you have change like that, and particularly when the change is being pushed from outside, there is a tendency to go to extremes both ways. We all had to work through that process.

I think I felt less frustrated than I might have otherwise because we were beginning to do a lot of changing. We really did away with most of the regulations for women students during that period. The first year we did away with the dress code. As I said, we began changing the curfews. At the same time, there was a move to go to co-ed residence halls.

The advantage of the dean of women's office [over the dean of men's office] was—and it is something we lost when we merged the two—was that we were really promoting leadership opportunities for women. We were very involved with that and really trying to champion the concerns and needs of women. So there were a lot of positive things that were happening as well. When we merged the dean of men and dean of women's offices in 1969, we lost a lot of that.

I had really ambivalent feelings about the merger. It was a national trend, and as we went to co-ed residence halls, it did not make quite as much sense to have separate dean of men and dean of women’s offices. [This was] partly because historically those had been built up because there were different rules and regulations for women than there were for men. We needed different offices to run those and look over those. As things were moving more and more to co-education, it did not make quite as much sense. Unfortunately, when we merged the two staffs we lost [a woman administrator]. At least when there had been a dean of women there had always been one woman who was a top-level administrator: the dean of women. Well, what happened here was what happened nationally, and that was when the dean of men and the dean of women were merged, it was not the dean of women who became the dean of students. The dean of men became the dean of students almost everywhere. That happened here, and we lost a lot of really top-notch talent in those women who had been deans of women. Many of them got out of their profession and went into teaching.
What happened here was that the dean of women ([Betty Cosby,] who was, by the way, only the second dean of women we had ever had) became a special assistant to the vice-president for student affairs. She stayed there for a couple of years and then went over to full-time teaching. But the talents of those people often were not utilized.

I benefited from that merger in that I became the only associate dean for student development that we had. So I gained from that. It was kind of awkward in some ways because I inherited three men who had been assistant deans of men who did not want me as their supervisor. There was a male who, [like me,] had his doctorate. They wanted him; they did not want me. So I inherited a staff of some people who did not really want me and some who were older than I was. That was a tricky transition there.

H: I can imagine.

M: Then trying to merge those two areas [was difficult] because we had had very different philosophies in terms of how to deal with things and how we dealt with students and all. So that was a real challenge.

H: In a way, women lost their venue.

M: I think so. We still do not have any top-level female administrators, and we still do not have an office that really [takes care of women’s issues]. While we try to do some things through our office for women, one of my disappointments is that we have never established--even in our office--[a position for] someone whose primary responsibility is working for women students. I do a lot of that, but I mean in terms of one of our assistant deans having that as her primary area of responsibility. We still do not do that. I think that is a real loss.

H: I just want to backtrack a little and ask you about your dissertation. What was your dissertation [topic]?

M: It was kind of fun. I had gotten very interested in the existential movement. The whole issue of commitment [and] lack of commitment is all tied in with existentialism and with a lot of the activism that was occurring. I got interested in the whole concept of tolerance and intolerance of ambiguity. At that time it was a psychological concept that essentially said that people who were tolerant of ambiguity were considered to be adaptive in their behavior. That was considered healthy behavior. People who were intolerant of ambiguity were considered to be unhealthy or maladaptive. What occurred to me was, if you believed in the existentially estranged individual, as I did (because there were certainly people like that), there were some people who were essentially tolerant of ambiguity but who were so because they did not really care. They had kind of stopped the world and gotten off. So I was challenging that whole concept of being either/or and was
saying that people who were extremely tolerant of ambiguity could be just as maladaptive in their behavior as people who were extremely intolerant of ambiguity. [I argued] that you could not look at behavior as an either/or kind of phenomenon. I tested that out. It was kind of fun. I enjoyed that.

My dissertation showed, like other studies that were being done about that time, that it was a faulty concept in that you could not look at behavior as either/or. It did show you really have to put it in context and that most of it is not black or white, either/or, but that, in fact, there are some people who really lack commitment. They literally have stopped the world and gotten off. That is what I would call the "existentially estranged person." I was influenced a lot in that dissertation by the work I had done with Charles Morris. He was on my committee.

It was fun. It was a somewhat atypical dissertation for the counselor education department, but I still enjoyed it and learned a lot from it.

H: I am glad we went back to that.

M: Yes. I had forgotten to mention that. I finally finished [my dissertation].

Right after that, another thing I did, which I thoroughly enjoyed, was that I became an affiliate member of the counselor education department. I have taught over there and have been affiliated with that department since 1967. I have taught courses and have been on a lot of dissertation committees. I also supervise individual work. Then I supervise practicum and internship students in our office who are in the student personnel track. That is another important component. Then, in 1978, another person and I began teaching a course on women's issues in the counseling profession, and I still teach that course once a year. That is a fun course for me.

H: How about the 1970s? What went on here for you?

M: We merged the two staffs in 1969. As an associate dean, my responsibilities certainly broadened quite a bit. We were student development at that time. In reaction to the legalism that had occurred, the discipline process was actually moved from our office so that we could get away from the stereotypes of dean of men and dean of women. We actually hired a half-time attorney who took that on for a while. Our focus was more on the student development concept. I still had as my major responsibility what we called the counseling/advisement component of the office. I was a member of the University Petitions Committee. I got involved in a lot of different kinds of activities on campus.

In the early 1970s the women's movement had really become more full-blown. Even on this campus, we had a lot of activity in the 1970s. I remember Gloria Steinem, before she became famous, coming here and speaking along with another person. We had some forums that involved women's issues in the early 1970s. I used to
always go to those. I had been interested in those issues all along, but I think I became much more aware and much more involved at that time. I had been active in the National Association of Women Deans, Administrators, and Counselors, which is still an all-female group. It was set up initially for deans of women and their staffs, but then it broadened its purpose. In fact, we recently changed the name. So, professionally, I have been in women's issues and looking at women and their unique problems from that standpoint.

Also in Gainesville in the early 1970s there was a women's center that had been started up by some very strong feminists. (I cannot remember the name of it.)

H: [This was started] in the community?

S: Yes, in the community, and there was activism there. Then in 1974 I became a member of the University Committee on the Status of Women. That had been an outgrowth [of a previous initiative]. In 1971 there had been a study done—and actually chaired by the [University of Florida's] first dean of women, Marna Brady—to look at the status of women on campus. There was some movement by then to say: We are looking at this everywhere else. Let us look at it here. Stephen O'Connell, who was president, appointed this task force to look at the status of women. [They were] looking at women students, women faculty, [and] women staff. One of the recommendations of that group was to set up a standing committee on the status of women. I joined and became a member of that committee in 1974 and became chair in 1975 or 1976. I was the chair for about four years.

That was an extremely exciting time. In 1972 Title IX had been passed. Title IX was the legislation that said that students could not be discriminated against because of gender. That was the first federal legislation that really covered sex discrimination. That meant then that we had to look at groups that were single-sex such as Mortarboard, ODK [Omicron Delta Kappa], [and] things of that nature.

Again, that [legislation] had a double edge to it. While there has been a lot of progress because of Title IX, the downside of it has been with groups like Mortarboard and Alpha Lambda Delta, which were all-female honoraries, we have lost automatic leadership roles for women. The University of Florida, among its students and certainly as a University, reflects the fact that it was all male until 1947. That whole all-male attitude certainly still dominates and certainly was doing that in the 1970s.

But that was an exciting period on the Committee on the Status of Women. We had a lot of fun because we were looking at issues of Title IX. I was on the Title IX review committee. I guess we did that in 1975, because Title IX became implemented in 1976.
There were some students here who had started the campus NOW [National Organization of Women] chapter, and one of the issues they had really pushed was Florida Blue Key, which was all male at that time. One of the things that kind of paralleled that was that Savant was all female and Mortarboard was all female. Blue Key used to have a banquet—it still has a banquet—that at the time it was all male. Blue Key would bring in some well-known speaker. So that the wives of all these famous alumni and politicians would have a place to go when they came back for Homecoming, Mortarboard and Savant would have a banquet of its own that all the females [attended]. We would bring in speakers. I remember in 1972 when [Edmund] Muskie was running for President. His wife was at our banquet. We had asked Betty Friedan [author of *The Feminine Mystique*] to come as the speaker, which was pretty radical at that time.

Some people in the community and on campus had gotten more and more bothered by the fact that Blue Key was an all-male group and closed to women. So Betty Friedan came to our banquet to give a talk, and then she led a group of people over to Florida Blue Key, which was meeting in the [Florida] Gym, to demonstrate. At that time, even though there were awards given to outstanding faculty, if a female received an award, she could not even go to the banquet to get the award, which was kind of ridiculous. That [demonstration] caused quite a rumble. It was interesting that Mrs. Muskie just happened to have a prepared speech that she gave. That began some pressure there.

Finally, in about 1974, before Title IX went into effect, there was pressure from students for the University to change this policy, saying that no group could represent the University or could receive University funding or have space in the [J. Wayne Reitz] Union if those groups discriminated based on sex or race. (Race had already been in there before.) Florida Blue Key had no choice but to open up and start admitting women, [and] it finally opened up its banquet.

That was quite a struggle, [and] there are a lot of things like that. [For instance, there was no] equity in terms of women's athletics because that was prior to Title IX being passed. There was almost no intercollegiate athletics for women, particularly here. Ruth Alexander [former chair, Department of Physical Education for Women and coordinator of Women's Athletics] was one of the women who really pushed and made tremendous efforts in a very positive way in that regard. But Title IX meant there had to be much more equity in funding. [Dr. Alexander discusses Title IX, funding, and topics related to the development of women's athletics at the University of Florida in her interview. See UF194, UF Oral History Archives.]

That is [also the time] when affirmative action issues were coming up. I remember at one point a friend of mine was chair of the Affirmative Action Advisory Council, I was chair of the Committee on the Status of Women, [and] another friend was president of the Association for Women Faculty (that group had started about 1972),
so we had a three-way opportunity there to really start putting a lot of pressure on [the administration] in terms of affirmative action.

Another example of that was in 1975. The Florida legislature, mainly through efforts of people from here--particularly from the Association for Women Faculty--approved salary equity money. We went through a whole salary equity review. That was a time that I really saw women band together and really learn to cooperate with each other. I think the attitude of the University had been that women could not agree on certain things, that women could not agree among themselves for other women, and we disputed that.

I was chairing the Committee on the Status of Women at that time. The executive vice-president set equity tribunals. I really do think he and other people who were involved were convinced that three women could get together and make a decision that would be positive for another woman. So we got everybody together, and we all agreed on some ground rules and the fact that we would cooperate. It worked very well. Not everybody got the raises that they should have, but at least they got some. I think to the consternation of other people in the University, there was more cooperation than anybody ever anticipated.

So that was an exciting time. I really enjoyed that. That was probably when I became most active, particularly through chairing the Committee on the Status of Women, which I did for about four years. We got involved in all sorts of things.

In about 1980, just as I was leaving the committee, we were one of the first schools to establish an informal grievance procedure on sexual harassment. Most colleges had not done anything in that area, even though we knew there were problems, until the EEOC [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission] guidelines came out in 1981 or 1982 for that. We were a little ahead of the game in that regard.

H: At that time you left the University's Committee on the Status of Women?

M: Yes. I am back on the committee now, but at that time I did [leave]. I had been on there six years. We figured out how to keep maneuvering that so I could be appointed for three-year terms. We did a lot of different things. That was fun.

Then in 1980 I was fortunate enough to be one of the original members of the Gainesville Commission on the Status of Women. I was one of fifteen women appointed to that commission. That was exciting, too.

H: Moving into the 1980s, how did women's issues change?

M: The 1970s really proved to be a very exciting time, and there were a lot of changes that began to occur. Again, change is relative, and certainly we did not effect a lot of it. There still have been a lot of things on this campus that have not changed. For
example, while I think [that] overall the status of women has improved, where we really have not improved as far as I am concerned is we still have very few females in any kind of leadership roles. For example, we have no female vice-presidents. Right now we have only one female dean of a college. We have very few women who are department chairs. While there are some more women in administrative positions, they are not in the kind of administrative positions where they really effect change or where they have say in who is hired and so forth.

H: Why do you think that is?

M: I think it still shows the history of this University. It is still very [much] an all-male [institution]. I think the heritage of its being an all-male school [has a lot to do with it]. I think it reflects what is true in society, generally, and that is reluctance to give women positions of power. I am hoping with Dr. [John] Lombardi [UF president] and Dr. [Andrew] Sorenson [provost and vice-president for academic affairs] [that] there will be some change in that regard. There has not been yet, but I am always the eternal optimist or I would never have stayed at the University as long as I have.

We have increased the number of women on the faculty, but, again, it is not even quite to 20 percent yet. We have very few women who are full professors. We have some more who are associate professors, but it is a fairly recent phenomenon to have very many women who are faculty. So we do not have sufficient role models, as far as I am concerned, for women students.

Now, where I think there has been real progress--and this began happening in the 1970s--was opportunities for women students [increased]. At least a woman student can now major in anything she wants to, and while there may be some subtle discrimination, I do not think it is nearly to the degree it used to be. When we did the Title IX review in 1975, for example, we found magically that all the professional schools limited women to 10 percent [of their enrollment]. It just happened to be 10 percent. [laughter] So at least that has changed.

What is interesting, though, is [that] politically in the 1970s we had women who ran for student body president. Recently there has not been that kind of involvement. We have a female vice-president now. Maybe what has happened in the 1980s is that women have realized that maybe they do not want to get involved with that kind of politics. I am not sure. But anyway, the 1970s were a real exciting time. I really think that with [Ronald] Reagan being [voted president] in 1980, everything has gone downhill since then for women. I think we went into a very conservative period.

Of course, universities always reflect what is happening nationally. After the Vietnam war and all the activism of the 1960s and early 1970s, there was going to be some reaction. I think it has been delayed a little bit. Then, of course, we had a real recession in 1974. There was some delayed reaction probably [because of] Watergate. Then I think [President Jimmy] Carter was almost a weird, kind of odd
phenomenon that really was, I think, the result of Watergate. I think if we had not had Watergate, we would probably have had someone like Reagan earlier. But then [when] Reagan comes along, to me, it has all been downhill for civil rights [and] women's issues [since then].

H: There has been a swing of the pendulum to the right.

M: Very much so. Then a real backlash has occurred against women. So even here, while we have continued some activism in the 1980s, I think we had to begin using somewhat different tactics, probably within the system, although there was some push outside as well. So I think it has to be a different kind of activism.

For one thing, the discrimination is not as overt as it used to be. It is still there; there is still plenty of sex discrimination and certainly a tremendous amount of sexism. [There is also] a tremendous amount of homophobia and a tremendous amount of racism. All those things are present, but they are more subtle than they used to be.

I think, however, something that concerns me in the last three or four years has been a backlash that I see happening, particularly a lessening of tolerance for differences on campus. So now it is a little more acceptable to be overtly racist [or] overtly homophobic. Well, it has always been all right to be overtly sexist and homophobic. I think for a while it was not appropriate to be racist. Now even that is fair game. But it has always been all right to be sexist. It has always been fair game to be homophobic.

Related to that, one of the things that I have recently been involved with that I have really enjoyed is [a committee on sexism and homophobia]. In 1989, another person on our staff and I decided we needed to do something in a more formalized, systematic way about the issues of sexism. We started out with that, and then we became aware of more instances of homophobia occurring on campus. [We were aware of] gay male students and lesbians being harassed, so we decided to put together the Committee on Sexism and Homophobia. We have been working with that since then. That has been fun, and that [committee work] has been another opportunity for some activism in a different way.

What I really see happening that is very distressing to me is a lessening of tolerance for differences. This is becoming more and more the case as the economy gets tighter. It is kind of like Maslow's hierarchy of needs. A friend of mine used to say that affirmative action is a product of full employment. If you have a lot of latitude, then there is more tolerance. But when things get really tight, as the economy is, people pull back and want to surround themselves in a kind of protective way with [other] people [who are] most like themselves. They become less and less tolerant of people or things who are different from themselves. That is what I see now. I see that as a very alarming trend on our campus.
I really do feel that much of this [lack of toleration] is a reflection of the very selfish, very "me-ism" and "greedism" that has been perpetuated by Reagan and [George] Bush and the ideology that they both represent. (I guess Bush has an ideology; I am not sure. It is by default, if nothing else.) So it has become much more acceptable in our society to be bigoted. People felt that way [previously], but now they feel much more free to express it. I find that very alarming. I think in a tight economy you are going to have that, and it is going to get worse.

H: You do not foresee it getting better?

M: Not for awhile. If people are worried about survival needs, then those more civilized kinds of things take less precedence.

H: What has been the response on campus to the homophobia workshops?

M: I would say generally positive. If nothing else, we have at least gotten the issue out in the open. There is a lot more discussion now than there used to be, and I always feel [that] in an educational environment that is what you want. I am not saying that the homophobia is less, but I think there is at least more discussion about the kind of bias and prejudice against gays and lesbians that exists. So it is more openly discussed, and I always feel that is healthier.

I was horrified, personally, at the referendum that was put on the ballot during the student government elections that had to do with funding of GLSU, the Gay and Lesbian Student Union. I was horrified at the fact that the majority of people voted not to fund it. Of course, the referendum was worded in such a way that it was strange to even know how to vote. On the other hand, in talking with students who are very involved with GLSU, [I found that] they did not view it as being that negative. They looked at the fact that a lot of people supported them.

Hopefully, one of the things we have accomplished through our committee is that the Gay and Lesbian Student Union did come back on campus last spring. That group had been literally harassed on campus for a while. In probably about 1987 the students got so tired of all the harassment they received when they would go up for funding or try to get space in the union [that] they just pulled out and went off campus.

H: They continually had to fight for funding.

M: They got harassed beyond belief, so I can understand that. But I was horrified that a campus like ours could not have a gay and lesbian student group, because most campuses do. So I was very pleased that those students felt comfortable enough to come back on [campus] last spring. I would hope that maybe some of the work we have done through the committee on sexism and homophobia has helped at least make those students feel more comfortable. I hope that is the case. We had a
program during People Awareness Week where we had a lesbian speaker. We have done all kinds of workshops on homophobia and sexism. There have been articles in the Alligator. There was a whole group of letters back and forth.

I just think discussion is healthy, because my sense in talking with gays and lesbians is that the biggest problem is invisibility. Up until when we formed the committee there had been no official acknowledgement that gays and lesbians even existed. Obviously, if national data are correct, 10 percent of the students, faculty, and staff are gay or lesbian or bisexual. So, hopefully, the committee has been helpful.

Working with that committee has been very fulfilling. I felt personally fulfilled by the fact that more gay and lesbian students feel comfortable coming into our office, at least coming in and talking with the other co-chair, Irene Stevens, and me. [I am glad they] come in and talk with one of us at least, which is what we are all about. An office like ours should be like that.

H: Do you feel that gay and lesbian students feel more supported by the administration and your department?

M: They appear to. That is my sense, anyway. Certainly, we have students who are gay and lesbian on our committee and have had ever since we began the committee. [We felt] it was very important for us to do. I hope they feel that support. They have indicated that, and I certainly hope that is the case.

H: How about the issue of violence against women, which is very foremost in everybody's mind right now? How do you feel that relates to the women's movement?

M: To me it is a manifestation of the overall sexism that exists in our society. In other words, if we did not have inequality [we would not have the violence against women that we have]. To me, you have to look at that in a very broad sense. I think sexism is the overriding condition and then manifestations of that are different forms of sexual exploitation, all the way from sexual harassment to battery to sexual assault. I think a lot of that goes back to the basic inequality of women. That is a product of sexism. We devalue and objectify women in this society. And when you get both devaluing and objectification, then you are going to get violence. It is bound to be a product of those.

When I think about that [issue] globally, I have a very pessimistic view, because the way I see the problem means that we have to go back and eradicate sexism before we can eradicate manifestations of it. I do not think we can be paralyzed by that knowledge, although I happen to believe that is true. I think what we have to do is just approach it, not only from the standpoint of the overall sexism and the pervasiveness of that and the insidiousness of that, [but also as] a systemic issue, as far as I am concerned.
But then you have to approach it also at a different level. What we have tried to do [is get the issue of violence against women into the open]. This is something I have been involved in for many, many years. I am a member of the Sexual Battery Committee of the Gainesville Commission on the Status of Women. We set that [organization] up in 1982, I think, and I was the original chair of that committee and am very proud of it. I continue to be on that committee and am really proud of what that group has done. We put on an annual conference every year that has to do with issues of violence against women. (We have one that is happening May 14.)

So I think what you have to do, obviously, is approach the whole issue of violence in many different ways. One would be education, where you educate both men and women and make them much more sensitive to [the fact that] the condition exists, that there is violence, the nature of that violence, the form it takes, the dynamics related to that, and so forth. Hopefully, you empower women to be able to learn how to understand violence, the dynamics of it, and what one can do so that women do not constantly live in a state of siege or fear. [We want them] at the same time to be alert to the fact that they may become a victim but [yet] not [make them] totally feel victimized so that one is paralyzed. I think that can happen. To me, that would mean that sexism really had prevailed.

So you cannot have that [situation]. But at the same time people at least have to be alert and aware. I, for example, live a very independent life. I live by myself; I live out in the country. I go home at all hours of the night and day. If I thought of myself as being a potential victim, I could not live where I do. I would be too afraid. So I have to approach it from the standpoint of trying to be intelligent enough to be alert, be aware, be cautious, but at the same time I am not going to let fear control my life. I would like to translate that same message to [other] women as well.

On the campus, this is an area that I have been involved with--all kinds of issues of sexism. I have done a lot of work with sexual harassment. I have done some work, obviously, with sexual assault. I was on the board of directors of SPARC [Sexual and Physical Abuse Resource Center], which is a spouse abuse center, for many years. I chaired the Coordinating Committee on Sexual Exploitation. We did a lot of work through that committee. We just formed another committee that is probably going to be called that again. The other one was kind of "sunsetted" for a while. There has been a new committee set up that is called Coordinating Committee on Sexual Assault, but I think we need to broaden that, so we may go back to something like sexual exploitation.

So I think [the process of dealing with violence toward women] has to be multifaceted. You have to do education. You have to help men understand and perhaps learn methods of communication other than through violence. Part of the whole issue and another manifestation of sexism is the fact that men and women in our society communicate very differently. [It is important] to understand several things, [such as] that if a woman says no, she really does mean no. [We need] to
get away from all the rape myths. At the same time, there are a lot of men in our society who are sexually coercive, some of whom are on college campuses. [It is important to] try to understand what those dynamics are and try to change those behaviors. It is a very, very complex issue, and certainly one I have been very involved with and have spent a lot of time with.

H: How about in the field of counseling? How has your understanding of sexism and your feminist stance affected your attitudes about counseling or your approach?

M: Hopefully, the effect it has had on my own individual approach is to use very much a feminist approach to counseling, which I certainly try to do. That is where I treat the individual as an equal person who has as much power in the relationship as I do. To me, one of the main things we need to do is redefine the whole issue of power so that it is not coercive power but cooperative power. The whole focus would be more on empowerment (or on sharing power). That is what I certainly try to do for the people with whom I work. I think all those things are very important.

I view myself not only as a feminist but as a humanist, and I try to use a very humanistic approach in dealing with students. I believe in the basic worth of people. I think that people basically have the ability to grow, that people do want to become self-fulfilled, self-actualized persons, and most of the people I deal with have barriers to that at this point in time. Fortunately for most of our students, those are situational barriers or maybe a matter of different developmental levels. It just a matter that they have not matured enough or grown enough to get to the other levels. [This includes] things such as learning to take responsibility for one's behavior and things of that nature.

On the other hand, occasionally I have to deal with students who are very ill. Of course, that is another issue. Most of the time I am dealing with people who are basically healthy. Students are very strong, have a lot of ego strength, are resilient, and tend to be bright [and] capable people. It is an easy population in that sense with which to deal. But I try to approach them as worthwhile people. I look at them in a very positive way. Occasionally, as an administrator I have to play the heavy. But I try to do that in a way that hopefully is not too crushing to the person, and I try to do it with the idea that people, in fact, do have to learn to take responsibility for their behavior and their decisions. That is a hard lesson for many people to learn, but that is very much the approach I try to use.

I try to do the same thing with my teaching. I teach graduate students, and I try to work with them on that same level. I try to take my philosophy there as well. I try not to be hierarchical. I try not to put myself in a power position. For example, I use a contract system. The philosophy I have is that students should also make some decisions about what kind of grade they want. So I have a contract system with certain criteria. There are certain criteria or certain requirements that one has to
meet [in order] to get a $B$ and additional ones for an $A$. I think students like that because it gives them some freedom.

H: It gives them some choice.

M: Yes. I believe in choice. That is why I am very much pro-choice [on the abortion issue]. That is another movement I have been very involved with, too, the whole pro-choice issue.

H: We have not even discussed that issue.

M: That is extremely important to me. I felt very lucky to get to go to Washington [DC] in 1989 for the march. I was sorry I did not get to go recently. I could not get away. But that was such an exhilarating experience. We have gone to Tallahassee a couple of times. To me that is such a fundamental issue. If women lose the right to control their own bodies, then they have lost their basic freedoms. It is such a tremendously important issue. [It is] so fundamental.

I have a feeling the [U.S.] Supreme Court will overturn *Roe v. Wade*, and then it is going to be very interesting to see how younger women and men respond to that. It is one thing for someone my age not to have had that right and then get the right and then lose it. That is one dynamic that goes on. But I wonder how people who have always assumed the right and then lose it are going to react. I hope they will react in a very upset way politically. I hope they will really get activated to do some things, and I think they will.

H: That is interesting. I think the attitude of men would be different today.

M: Right. I think so. That has been true with the younger men. Apparently, for the last march (the one that just happened), there were a lot of young men and young women in the march. I think it is very important that they realize that a very basic right is being taken away. They need to challenge that and not let the politicians do that to them. So while the [Supreme] Court may not respond, at least Congress can take some action. We are okay in Florida, I think, with the right of privacy [clause in the state constitution], but it is still very scary.

H: I heard somebody say recently there was an anti-abortion march in [Washington] DC that as many people attended [as there were at the pro-choice rally].

M: That is not true. This [pro-choice march] was the largest march, apparently, of any that have happened. Even the National Park Service, which makes [crowd] estimates--and always makes them lower--estimated 500,000 [people in attendance]. I think the NOW people [National Organization for Women] said it was closer to 700,000.

H: [Was it] the largest march on this issue [or the largest march in general]?
M: Obviously, it was the largest march on this issue. I do not remember when Martin Luther King had his march in Washington whether the numbers were larger then. I am not sure.

H: So you feel that support is on the side of pro-choice in general in this country?

M: Yes. And a lot of polls show that. I think it is important to remember that pro-choice does not mean pro-abortion. It just means that a woman has the right to choose. That is what I believe in. That, to me, is a fundamental right. If women lose control of their bodies, they have lost basic control. If anybody has control of his or her body, that is basic. No one should be able to tell anybody [what to do with his or her body]. With Margaret Sanger and birth control in the 1920s, it was only then that women truly began to be liberated. Unless women have control of their bodies, then they are not liberated. They do not have freedom.

H: That is the first step.

M: That is really basic, ultimate control, as far as I am concerned. In a patriarchy, I can understand why people want women not to have control. In a patriarchy with a war-like mentality, it has always been said that you have to have potential warriors produced and therefore you need other people to make sure the babymakers (i.e., women) are controlled. That is what a lot of it really is. While it gets translated into a religious issue, I do not really think that is what it is. I think for some people it is, but I think for most people it is not. It is the maintenance of a patriarchal society, and it really is putting down uppity women. It is putting them back where they belong, which is not as equal people.

H: Is there anything that you feel you have not addressed yet that you would like to?

M: Some people have asked me why I have stayed at the University as long as I have. I have been here now for almost twenty-six years. [People want to know] why I have not left. That was a big decision. There have been various times when I have considered leaving. I think I have stayed partly because, as I said, I am basically an optimist. I have always felt that while change has not been as rapid here as I would have hoped, there has been some change, and I guess I have particularly seen that change in students. Because I have worked with students and seen the changes that occurred in students, that has kept me going and kept me feeling as if there is a potential for change.

It has also been fun to be at a university that really has grown and [has] been emerging. For me it has been exciting and challenging to be in an environment like that. Plus, I like Gainesville. I would never want to be or work in a place other than a university community. I like the fact that Gainesville is basically a fairly liberal place politically overall. There is a strong women’s community here.
[I also like] the fact that, from a personal standpoint, I can live out in the country. I am very much involved with environmental issues. I am very concerned about the environment. I like the fact that Gainesville has at least made some effort (I do not know how long it is going to continue) to control growth in this area. I like the fact that I can live out where I do and drive in. It takes me thirty minutes to drive in, but it is a very pleasant drive. From the standpoint of climate, I enjoy not only the physical climate but also the kind of emotional, psychological, political climate that exists here.

H: You were saying before we started this interview that you have a horse.

M: Yes. I have five acres out in the country. I have a horse and lots of cats and some chickens. I enjoy that. It is a nice change after working with people and problems all the time. It is nice to go home. My cats are always glad to see me. I realize that is related to the fact that I feed them. [laughter] But that is okay. My horse is glad to see me because I am going to feed her. It is very pleasant, and I enjoy working outside. I like working in the yard. I have a garden. I need that. After the kind of work I do, I need something very different.

I find living in that kind of [rural] setting is very good [for one's] mental health. [It] provides the ability for me to retain my mental health and sanity in that regard. I like being outside and have always been very much an outdoors person. I can live that way here, and that is another reason for staying in this area and at the University.

H: Do you ride?

M: I used to. I used to have an old horse, and I got the one I have now as a companion for him when I moved to where I live now. I moved out there in 1974, and at that time there were not that many people out in this area. I had this horse and boarded him. Well, I brought him over [here], and there was nobody around. My friends who boarded him kept saying: "He is going to be lonely. He needs a companion. We just happen to have this two-year-old that we are sure would be a good companion for him." So I bought her. I had him, and I rode him. Then he passed on, and I got another horse and rode her. Then she passed on. I kept thinking [about my other horse], Boo, [and that] somehow this was not working out. I kept buying companions for her, and she had only been green-broke. She is half quarter horse, half thoroughbred. She is a large horse. I am not that good a rider, and she has never really been broken out.

Fortunately, some people moved in next door who have horses, so she has companions across the fence. I have not ridden for quite awhile. I just do not have that kind of time. I am not a good enough rider to ever break her out and ride her. So she is just a big pet. She has a good life. She seems to enjoy that okay.
The one disadvantage in some ways of this type of work is that it is certainly not an eight-to-five job. I have a lot of things in the evenings. I teach on Wednesday nights this semester. Also, at least one night a week [there is] a night or late-afternoon meeting. Then I am involved in the community in some things, and that takes time. That is another reason it is nice to go home and be able to relax and work in the yard or whatever. [I might] get out and fix the fence [or] something that is totally different and kind of a mindless activity.

H: I can relate to that. Well, thank you for the interview.

M: Thank you.