

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO
INSTITUTIONAL MEMORY COLLECTION

INTERVIEWEE: Laura Goldin Hirsch

INTERVIEWER: Hermann Trojanowski

DATE: April 8, 2011

HT: Today is Friday, April 8, 2011, and my name is Hermann Trojanowski, and I'm in the UNCG Alumni House with Mrs. Laura Goldin Hirsch. Mrs. Hirsch, thank you so much for talking with me this morning about your time at the Woman's College, and really I appreciate that. If you could tell me your full name, we'll use that as a test on the recorder.

LGH: Okay. It is Laura Goldin Hirsch.

HT: Okay. Good. Well, tell me something about your background, about where you were born, when you were born, and that sort of thing.

LGH: Well, I was born in Greensboro, North Carolina. Dr. Ravenel was my family's pediatrician. My grandparents were here. As a matter of fact, my mother's parents were from Greensboro. My grandmother owned a boarding house across the street from Cone Mills, and my grandfather worked at Cone Mills. When my mother got out of high school she went to secretarial college, which I guess most women did in those days, and her job, first job, she got was with Julius Cone, who was Laura Cone's husband. And my mother became very good friends with her, and that's whom I'm named after.

HT: And, so, you lived most of your life in Greensboro?

LGH: No, my parents left Greensboro when I was probably not quite two years old. They moved south. And we lived somewhere different almost every eighteen months. My father was a Georgia Tech engineer, and his specialty was kitchen engineer, and we kept moving, because he kept getting jobs other places. So, I never lived anywhere longer than about eighteen months. We lived all over the South.

HT: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

LGH: I had a sister, Rose Lea Goldin Rudder, R-U-D-D-E-R, and she is probably the reason I came to Woman's College, because she came here in 1955. She was two years ahead of me. And she started her college career here. She ended up transferring to The University of Florida, but she started here her first couple of years.

HT: And no other siblings?

LGH: None.

HT: And where did you go to high school?

LGH: I went to high school—I started at Broughton High [School] in the eighth grade, and my parents moved to Miami, [Florida]. As I said, we never lived anywhere more than eighteen months. So, by the time I was in tenth grade, we were in Miami. And they did stay there almost two years, and they moved to Hollywood, Florida, at which point I stayed and finished at Miami High.

HT: And do you recall what your favorite subjects were in high school?

LGH: Always science. Always science. Chemistry, the sciences, and the maths. I was the only girl in most of my math classes.

HT: And I know you attended WC or Woman's College. What made you decide to come here?

LGH: I had originally started to plan in terms of becoming a dentist, a child dentist, and I applied with Emory [University] as well as here. And I did not get into Emory, and decided to come to Woman's College at which point—about a month after the information came back, I got a call from Emory saying that they were accepting me. They had a full quota of students, and someone had dropped out, and that I was accepted at which point I had changed my major. Decided instead of going into dentistry I would go into psychology. And at that point I didn't want to not come to Woman's College. And I had every intention of staying here for two years and transferring to Johns Hopkins, at which point after two years, again, I didn't want to leave. This was a fabulous education.

HT: And, so, what was your major when you were at WC?

LGH: When I started I was a science major. When I finished I was a psychology major. I graduated with a degree in psychology that—I had already finished all of my requirements by the time I was a junior. I graduated actually in three years, yes.

HT: Do you recall what WC was like in those days in the late '50s?

LGH: I thought WC was wonderful in those days. I think most of us did not realize a lack of freedom. I mean people gasp now when I say, oh, they locked the dorms at 7:30 p.m., and you had to sign out. But I felt as though we had more responsibility for what we were to do than most of the young people do today. I mean we had, for instance, exams. You were on the honor system. You took an exam. You were responsible for taking it honestly. I could take my exam back to my dorm if I needed to. You can't do that now. But no one expected you not to be honorable. That's a big responsibility.

HT: A great responsibility—it really is. What do you recall about some of the professors, particularly your psychology professors?

LGH: At this point I can't remember all of their names. I remember the head of our department I believe was Dr. [Kendon] Smith [Head of the Department of Psychology]. He was wonderful. We had a female psychologist that wrote the book that we used. And, unfortunately, it was just like reading the book, excuse me, going to her class, because the class was the same thing as the book. But most of my psych professors were absolutely fabulous. And we had one young man, wish I could recall his name, because he had married a student from here. And he was exceptional. He is probably the main reason that I stuck with psychology. I remember him opening the windows in the science building and we dropping our desks outside on the lawn and climbing out the window to have our class out there.

HT: Oh, gosh. Did you take any courses in the history department?

LGH: I did. I did have my—one of my sister's favorite, favorite people, Dr. Beal. I had a class with Dr. Beal. If I'm not wrong, he's the one that thought that no one should go to college who hadn't had Greek and Latin. And I remember my final exam my freshman year I knew I was going to fail it, because that was my worst course. And I wrote my entire final exam in Latin. And he put on my paper, "You would have flunked the exam except your Latin was good enough to get you a D."

HT: Oh, gosh. When you got here, you mentioned dorms, which dorms did you stay in back then?

LGH: I started out—let's see, I think it was Shaw [Residence Hall]. Shaw was the one in the front.

HT: Yes.

LGH: I started out in Shaw. My roommate was Sheila Wahl, W-A-H-L. And she was from an old North Carolina family. And, then, I moved over to—I am trying to think. It was on the—if you face the Quad, it was the middle one. Let's see. It was the middle one on the left.

HT: Coit [Residence Hall] maybe?

LGH: Coit was on the right, I think.

HT: I know all the names, but I cannot remember which one is which.

LGH: I cannot remember which one, because I switched. And I can remember, though, of it getting so hot at one point. We were on the second floor in the room that was over the parlor. So, there was this roof out there. And I can remember we put our mattresses through the window and slept out on the roof of the parlor. And, then, overslept and the

next thing I know is everybody is running around campus going to classes, and there we are on a mattress out on the roof. I can also remember we would get so excited when the weather got warmer, and we would all go to the tennis courts, which were screened in at that time. And we would go over there with our little old pieces of aluminum to lay out and see if we couldn't get a little bit of sun, yep.

HT: I guess you know the Quad is going to be renovated starting this fall?

LGH: No, I didn't know that.

HT: They are going to gut the interiors completely.

LGH: I think they need to.

HT: And turn them into suites. That's what the students want these days.

LGH: Oh, yes.

HT: And, so, they will be closing them sometime down this summer. I'm not exactly sure.

LGH: Because our dorm you had—I don't know how many rooms were on the floor, but you had one bathroom at each end. And I can remember many a night going—because that was the only place that lights were on. We had lights out at a certain hour. I think it was 10:30 [p.m.]. And I remember going and laying in the bathtub with a pillow and a book so that I could study after lights out.

HT: That's amazing. Well, what do you recall about the dress code of the campus?

LGH: I could not leave campus if I was not—it was all hose and gloves. You know, a lady just did not leave campus, especially you wouldn't think of leaving campus in a pair of jeans and sneakers or whatever. Now, our main attire, of course, was a raincoat. Because, then, you could wear your pajamas. Put your raincoat on, roll up the pajama legs, and nobody knew that you didn't have your clothes on underneath there. I went to many classes with my pajamas on under my raincoat, yes.

And it did snow the first year I was here. It snowed that winter. It did not snow every year that I was here. It snowed that winter. And we had two girls from Panama that literally went berserk. At midnight when it started snowing they woke the entire dorm up to let us know that this white stuff was coming down, yes.

HT: Well, you mentioned the dining hall, I think, earlier in our conversation. What do you recall about the dining hall food?

LGH: Well, one of the things is the state must have had a surplus of peanuts and whipped cream. Because everything we had had peanuts and whipped cream on it. I think I gained ten pounds that first semester. And we had sweet potato French fries. I know there was a lot of starch. And by the end of my freshman year I had gotten a note from a friend's

uncle that was a doctor saying that I had dietary necessities that would keep me from eating in the cafeteria. And I got my money—my mother never knew this. And I got my money back from the school. And I ate at The Corner a lot. And looking back, the food wasn't that bad. It was just more fun not to eat there.

HT: You mentioned The Corner.

LGH: Oh God.

HT: What kind of memories do you have of The Corner?

LGH: Fabulous. The Corner was where you went when—it was like going home. And especially the, you know, the little store on The Corner there. I mean they had everything. Fabulous jewelry, of course, that we all coveted. And anything we needed. And, then, of course, they were the places we could get our hamburgers and what we called the good food. Between that and going to Yum Yum for ice cream.

HT: Do you have any special memories of Tate Street, what Tate Street was like in the late '50s? Because it wasn't as big and commercial as it is today.

LGH: No, because—if I—probably if I saw it now I would think back and say, “Oh, you know, it's too bad. This was here.” But I can't really recall it then. It's just where we were other than, wasn't Aycock the auditorium on the corner?

HT: Right.

LGH: And I had really fond memories of Aycock, especially my last year. I took a lot of TV drama courses. And that was my love. I had no talent. I was never going to go into that. But that was my love. And I worked on makeup for the drama department. And, then, when I was in TV they were just starting to use the television here. And I do remember working a camera in there. And my impression of the drama department was that everybody that got to be there with Dr. [Herman] Middleton was really lucky. I mean he was amazing.

HT: Well, what did you for fun?

LGH: Probably had a taxi driver in town that got friendly with us and gave us a cheap rate. And I spent a lot of time going back and forth over to Chapel Hill. Because I had met a young man over there, so.

HT: You took a taxi from Greensboro to Chapel Hill?

LGH: Yep.

HT: I've never heard of that before.

LGH: Oh, yeah, we had a taxi driver in town that got very attached to a group of us. There were about four or five of us. And we would call him, and he would give us a set rate and drive us to Chapel Hill.

HT: So, there was a carload of girls who went over there?

LGH: Yes.

HT: My gosh.

LGH: And there were many times when it was not right that we—it wasn't legal that we went. Because we went after school but didn't get back before the dorms closed, so.

HT: So, how did you get in?

LGH: Through the windows.

HT: And the dorm mother didn't catch you?

LGH: No. No, she didn't. And I don't know if Ann Dearsley ever told you that she managed to sneak her boyfriend into the dorm when we were at Guilford [Dormitory]. And he lived there for months. And the house mother never—we were very proud of the fact that we were able to conceal him for all that time.

HT: How did you get away with that?

LGH: I don't know. I don't know. We just—she was one of the few that had the nerve to do it. And we were very proud that we were able to help out.

HT: Oh, my gosh. Didn't they have dorm checks and things? How did he sneak in and out? I find that's hard to believe.

LGH: Wouldn't be hard, because there were side doors. You didn't have to go by the parlor. And you didn't have to go by the house mother. It's just—

HT: So, it could be done?

LGH: Oh, yes.

HT: And, so, he ate in the—

LGH: No, oh, no, no. We brought food in. We brought food back.

HT: So, he was not a student somewhere else?

LGH: I don't know. I don't think so.

HT: He couldn't have been.

LGH: I don't think so. He was probably older than us. Ann was very sophisticated, ahead of her time.

HT: Oh, my gosh. Well, do you recall any special social or academic events that really stick out in your mind during the three years you were here?

LGH: Some of the things that we would have like at the Alumni House. I remember Robert Frost coming, which to me was—he was my favorite poet. And to me it was the most exciting thing probably that happened to me during my college years. And I think only a dozen of us showed up. But, remember, Woman's College was small back then. My high school was bigger than Woman's College. I had 4,000 people in my high school. And I think at that time there were only 3,000 people at Woman's College.

HT: There were some great names who came in—It's just amazing when you look back.

LGH: There was a—at that same time there was a rabbi, who I can't remember his name, but he was from Washington, D.C. Probably one of the best-known rabbis in the world at that time. And I remember when he came I think we listened to him in Aycock. And I couldn't believe how—I mean the auditorium was full. The students were overwhelmed. And we had people like that who came to visit. I felt like we were really fortunate. And we had professors here that were—Randall—

HT: Randall Jarrell.

LGH: Jarrell. Now, I did not ever have him. My sister had him as a professor. And I think that's one of the things when she left—I think that's one of the reasons she left, because I think that was the year he took off, that he took a sabbatical, yes.

HT: Well, before we started you actually mentioned the Black Stocking Girls. Can you tell me something about what you know about the Black Stocking Girls?

LGH: Well, the only thing I knew—because I was, as I said, I was younger than a lot of the students. Number one, I was very unsophisticated. I was—socially I was not as mature probably as the average college kid was. I was—mentally, I was ahead of most of them, but socially I was not. I was a little bit naïve. They seemed to be wild and crazy. Basically, most of them were free thinkers. They didn't want to fit in. I remember the Harris girls [Carolyn and Bertha]. I remember them not standing up and singing the National Anthem. I felt like at Woman's College I had at least found a place that those of us that didn't want to think along the regular lines, or what was acceptable, that we were not—were not—we didn't not have a place. And I also felt that we were lucky to have the dean we had. Because Dean [Katherine] Taylor was a phenomenal woman who was very willing to let her girls break out of a mold. She literally told us when the sit-down strikes were getting set, "Okay, you follow the rules. You do it legally, and you are going to have my support." Now, whether she actually said that in print, or made that, but we

knew that we were okay as long as we didn't break the law we had someone who was going to give us support.

HT: Well, speaking of Katherine Taylor, can you give me some more information about her? What kind of interaction did you have with her?

LGH: I had very little interaction with her other than, you know, she was who was in charge. But I didn't fear her nor did I have any feeling that she wasn't an ally. I mean she was not someone—and I was very much a rebel. As a matter of fact, I'm sure my record shows it. Because I took some graduate studies at Barry College down at Miami [Florida], and it's a Catholic college, and I remember the Mother Superior calling me in her office and saying, "I need to talk to you before you start here. You do know where you are going to school? And we have some set rules." And she said, "You need to put your soapbox away." And, so, I knew that something in my transcript, but I never felt inhibited here. And I think it's why I didn't leave. I felt I had plenty of room to grow. And to be different if that's what it was going to take.

HT: Did you have any interaction with the chancellor at that time?

LGH: None. None whatsoever. I didn't even—probably didn't even think about the chancellor. I would say if you talk to most of the women who were in school in those days the chancellor had no power as far as we were concerned. The person who had power was Dean Taylor. And the person that we felt connection to. There may be other women that were here that felt much closer to the administration than I did. Because I was in the group that was going to be fighting City Hall.

HT: I'm going to mention a couple of your professors and see if you have memories of them. You've already mentioned Randall Jarrell.

LGH: Yes.

HT: How about Warren Ashby?

LGH: No, no.

HT: He was [a] philosophy [professor].

LGH: No, did not.

HT: Gregory Ivy in the Art Department?

LGH: No, no. Oh, wait a minute. Now, the person I took art from when I finally got around to that was a young professor at that time. And I can't remember who that was.

HT: And I think you've already told me your favorite teacher was Mr. Smith?

LGH: Well, he was one of my favorites. He was head of the Psych department. I adored my biology teacher, and it's terrible, because I'm drawing a blank on her name right now. I wrote her probably for twenty years after I left, and had a very funny story. I was on the board at the Hartford Stage Company in Hartford, Connecticut. And they had a new costume designer, who turned out to be a graduate of UNCG, and I went to talk to her, and I was telling her who my favorite professor was, Dr. so and so in the biology department. And she said, "Oh, my God." She said, "I had her," and she said, "You know, she entertained our class by bringing in this can of cookies. And they were all shaped like little flagella and perimysiums and, etcetera that we had seen in class." I had baked those cookies, and she had never eaten them. That was a gift that I did one year for her birthday. With a couple of girls, we went over to one of the professor's houses and used her kitchen and made her these cookies that were shaped like all the different little one-celled animals we had looked at. And she had never eaten them. She had kept them for years. And showed them to her classes.

HT: Petrified by that time.

LGH: Yeah, they were. They were probably rocks. It's a shame when you don't remember the names of your professors.

HT: It wasn't Florence Schaeffer, was it?

LGH: No, she was head of the department, I believe. No, it was—she was a dainty little lady. And I want to say her name started with a K. Oh. Can't remember. I—she was wonderful. And, then, there was a really young professor that I had in chemistry that I liked a lot. I remember her calling me the night before our final exams, because I didn't have to—I never had to take my final exams in my chemistry and biology classes. If you had a certain grade average, then you didn't have to take it because it wasn't going to affect it. And she called me and she said, "Okay, you don't need to come to the exam, but I'm also calling to tell you to tell your roommate she doesn't need to come, because no matter what she does, she can't pass the course." So, neither one of us went to the final chemistry exam. My roommate had done things like turn on the Bunsen burner and went to look for the matches.

HT: Oh, gosh.

LGH: So, that's, you know, she—I remember her opening sulfuric acid, turning the stop cock, and then walking off to get something to put under it—yeah. So, she really needed to stay out of the chemistry lab.

HT: She's a danger to everyone, it sounds like.

LGH: Yes.

HT: Oh, my gosh. Oh, my goodness. Well, how did you get involved in the Greensboro Sit-ins, which happened February 1960.

LGH: It was because of the dorm I was in. The girls that were planning it lived in my dorm. And, of course, with Ann Dearsley being older, she was the one I looked up to. A lot of those girls I was just in awe of the fact that they were doing something about something I felt was important.

HT: So, by that time you were living in New Guilford?

LGH: Yes. And, plus, the fact that I had grown up in a—I had grown up in a family where my mother had made it very very clear, both my parents, that when things weren't right in the world, until they were it was your job to change them. And laws were there to protect people. But if you were willing to take the consequences, it was okay to break the law as long as you were willing to pay the consequence for it. And, therefore, think about how important it was. And I felt like this was a law that was—that needed to be broken.

HT: How did you find out about the Sit-ins?

LGH: I guess just in the dorm. And somehow or another I can't remember how it came about, but I remember being asked to take petitions around, get people to sign it. So, I had for weeks, you know, months ahead of time, I would go out in the community and knock on doors. And, of course, people did that in those days. If you remember, when there were politicians that wanted changes, etcetera, we would often have a young man come and knock on your door and ask you to sign a petition, which you just don't do anymore. But I did go all over Greensboro. I walked for miles knocking on doors. And it did surprise me how many people slammed the door in my face as soon as they heard what the petition was for. And, of course, it was, "Sign this petition if you are in favor blacks being able to eat at the counter." I thought if they can spend their money there, why in the heck can't they eat?

HT: So, this petition was circulated after the Sit-ins started?

LGH: No, no, it was circling long before.

HT: Oh, before.

LGH: Long before.

HT: And how did you get involved in the petition?

LGH: I guess to tell you the truth probably somebody in the dorm.

HT: Because I had never heard of this.

LGH: One of Ann—somebody in the dorm got us started doing that.

HT: So, was that in the fall of 1959?

LGH: It would have to have been, because I'm trying to think what month we did the Sit-ins.

HT: The Sit-ins started February 1—

LGH: Okay.

HT: —1960, which was in the middle of the winter.

LGH: Yeah. And we had to have done it—because I was not—it wasn't so cold that it was uncomfortable. Yeah, so it had to have been.

HT: And did students from [North Carolina] A&T [State College] or Bennett [College] participate in the petitions as well, or just—

LGH: I don't know. Because each one of us was doing it. I mean I went out by myself. I mean in those days it didn't dawn us that it might not be safe. Yeah, it didn't dawn on me it might not be safe until we got to the Sit-ins. And that's the first time that I physically felt fear.

HT: Were any of your professors involved in the petitions?

LGH: I don't know. I would hope so. You know what? They might not been, because they probably needed to stay out of it. I don't know.

HT: I mentioned Warren Ashby earlier, and he, I have heard, actually was instrumental in sort of getting people from Bennett College, and he went over to Bennett College from time to time. Because he was a philosopher and helped sort of smooth that area. Well, tell me about your actual participation in the Sit-ins downtown.

LGH: Well, I remember the first day of the Sit-ins going down there.

HT: Your first day?

LGH: Well, it was almost the first day of the Sit-ins.

HT: Because that was on the—I think it was on a Monday maybe.

LGH: I have not a clue. You know, I don't think any of us thought that we were making history. So, you know, this was not something, "Oh, wow, we're doing something wonderful." All I can remember is, "This is what you should be doing. This was not right." And I remember going down. I don't know how I got down there. I must have gone down there with a bunch of the girls—were going down. And I was—the counter kind of made an L. And I was way down at that far end. And I remember getting up and leaving and it was late in the afternoon. And I remember going outside and that was the first time that I felt fear. Because there were all of these redneck guys in their bib overalls and screaming and yelling and calling obscenities, and people out there. And I thought, "Oh, my God." You

know, "Someone might hurt me." I mean that's the first time I felt that. And when I walked out and it was like there were thousands of people out there that didn't like what I was doing. And before anything could happen a wall set up around me, and it was about a half a dozen or so—for all I know it could have been two dozen, but it was like I was totally surrounded by these huge, big, black men from A&T that just surrounded me. And they walked me out to the cab and put me in a cab. Got me in a cab safely. And it brought me back to school. I had not a clue who they were. All I remember is coming out. I mean it was almost a blank. Because I was scared. I was afraid I was going to be, you know, you'd seen too many pictures and heard too many stories.

HT: Did you go down more than once?

LGH: Yes, yeah. Because I remember getting a phone call from my mother. She must have seen me leaving on that first day. Because she said she had—she called and said we were a little upset when we turned on the television, and our daughter was on there. So, they must have been taking pictures, yeah.

HT: We've often tried to find those images on TV, but they've disappeared.

LGH: I do not know—

HT: Nobody knows who took them.

LGH: Now, my mother—my parents were in—they were in Hollywood, Florida. They were still down in the Miami area. They were in Hollywood. So, you know, I had to go out on some kind of broadcast whether it went out here or not, I don't know.

HT: At that time there was only one TV station in Greensboro, WFMY, which was a CBS affiliate.

LGH: And what I'm wondering is would the school have done some of the televising and then sent it over.

HT: I don't know. In those days they didn't have tapes and things. All the equipment was so big.

LGH: Oh, the equipment was huge.

HT: Huge, yes, because you know what it was exactly like on TV.

LGH: Yeah.

HT: Well, did you wear your class jacket that identified—

LGH: Oh, God, no, no, no. I had on this—that's why they called them the Black Stocking Group. I wore black stockings and a black skirt and an orange top—it seemed forever, forever. It was almost a uniform, yeah.

HT: Well, we've talked to Genie Seamans, and she wore her class jacket. Marilyn Lott wore her class jacket. And Betsy Toth wore her class jacket as did Ann Dearsley.

LGH: I probably didn't own a class jacket. That would have gone against my grain.

HT: And they said that it was a cold winter day. So, they naturally would wear them, because in those days wore them everywhere. So, they were readily identified as being from Woman's College.

LGH: I can't remember having a class jacket. I might have. I can't remember having a class jacket.

HT: So, you were not readily identified as being from Woman's College if you didn't have your jacket on?

LGH: I don't know. Now, I really don't know. I can't remember if I had one. I think everybody did, though. I had to have one, because I remember we had to wear it to something. So, I must have had a class jacket. And maybe I wore it. That I don't remember.

HT: Well, when you first got there the first time, what was the situation like? What do you recall about what was going on?

LGH: It seemed orderly to me. You know, like I said until I came out after that first day, it didn't dawn on me that there were going to be people that were angry and nasty and harmful.

HT: So, nobody threatened you while you were inside?

LGH: No, no.

HT: That must have been a very frightening experience.

LGH: I didn't know it was—and, I guess that's one of the good things about being young is that you're dumb enough to not know when you are in danger. You know? It's like going out by yourself at night. Because most of the stuff—most of the petitions that I was trying to get signed, I did this at night.

HT: Because you went to class during the day, and had to study?

LGH: Yes.

HT: Do you recall going down with other students, you said?

LGH: I have no—I don't know if I went with the whole group that was from New Guilford. It's almost a blank now as far as getting there and coming back. And it seemed like it didn't—it seemed like it didn't last that long. It seemed like it was only—like not even a week that we did this. I can't remember.

HT: When I talked to Genie a couple of years ago, she said she walked down by herself. And I think Marilyn said as best as she can remember she—because there again memory is kind of hazy just like yours a little bit. And she said, “Well, I remember getting there, but I don't remember how I got there.” And that sort of thing. And they also came back in a taxicab.

LGH: Yes, I remember Genie's roommate was Marty, who is now, I understand Marty has died. And it was—and that was very funny, because Marty's father was a dentist in Miami. And she said to me, “My dad would—my dad is real big on the service.” So, my husband and I—from Chapel Hill—after school we got married. And he was in the Navy. She said, “When you get out of the Navy and go back to Miami, you have to go see my dad and meet him, and he would like to be your dentist, because that's his way of giving back.” What she told me, warned me was “My dad is a bigot,” and when you walk into his house there was this huge painting over the fireplace of Robert E. Lee. And, of course, went to meet him the first time, and forgot I had a button on, a big button that I wore that had a black hand shaking a white hand. And this was in 1962. She said, “Whatever you do, Laura, don't wear any of that stuff when you go see my father.” And, of course, I had the button on. I remember her father saying, “Oh, that's interesting. What is that?” And I said, “Oh, it's brotherhood week,” or something ridiculous like that, because we all had these big buttons with a black hand shaking a white hand. And that came from the Sit-ins. And I have no idea what happened to my button. But I just happen to think of that one when I thought of Marty.

HT: When you came back, what do you recall? Did you tell people what you had done, that sort of thing?

LGH: When I came back?

HT: I'm sorry. When you came back from participating in the Sit-ins, did you tell your roommate or other classmates?

LGH: Oh, oh, yeah. But pretty much our whole dorm was somewhat involved. Our dorm was—our dorm was probably the most avant-garde group on campus. In fact there was a lot of finger pointing at the people that lived in that dorm, oh, yeah. They—a lot of the students on campus wanted to avoid us.

HT: Oh, really?

LGH: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

HT: Did you—when you were participating in the Sit-ins, did you remember—Genie, or somebody else, said they had been asked by the waitress, “May I help you?” or something like that. And would say, “Well, this person”—referring to a black student or something like that, “Well, this person was next.” Do you have any recollections of anything like that?

LGH: No.

HT: Was there any conversation between you and—

LGH: No, because it didn’t seem that anybody wanted to help me when I was—I think—it almost seemed like they just stopped serving, yeah.

HT: Okay.

LGH: As I recall it. There wasn’t any service going on. It was almost like the store manager said, “Well, just don’t serve anybody.” Yeah, because I got nothing at the counter.

HT: And did you take your books with you to study? Because I know some other students said that’s what they did—

LGH: No.

HT: —to pass the time.

LGH: No, I don’t think I spent as much time studying as some of the other students.

HT: Oh, my gosh. Well, you mentioned TV earlier. What about newspaper? Do you recall any newspaper people being around? Because there was a very famous photograph, which we have on display over—

LGH: And I have that. I have that in a—

HT: A clipping.

LGH: I have that in a frame. And that’s about it. Of course, it didn’t dawn on me either to save a newspaper. You know, it was only after I got older that I realized these were things that you, you know, I can remember saving certain things for my kids when they grew up. But not at that point, you know. I mean—I was eighteen years, nineteen years old.

HT: Just a kid.

LGH: Yes.

HT: Were there any kind of repercussions from the administration about your participation?

LGH: None.

HT: Because Marilyn Lott was expelled.

LGH: I had none. And I don't know why she was expelled, because there were so many of us. Unless she did something that some of us didn't do.

HT: I think she talked back to Dean Taylor.

LGH: Okay. Because my feeling on—

HT: Because she was reinstated though.

LGH: Because my feeling on Dean Taylor was I didn't—I had no hard feelings at all. And my thought process on it was that we had her total support. Now, she may not have wanted either the administration or the news media to know this. But I felt like if I was in trouble, this was somewhere I could go. I felt like she would back us.

HT: Well, in working at the archives, we've looked for material from that period of time, memos and notes, and there are none.

LGH: I have a feeling you won't find any.

HT: No, we won't. There aren't any.

LGH: I don't think so. I think—first of all, I think that there were a lot of people that politically they didn't want—they didn't want it to be recorded. But that they also felt that a change was necessary. And I think another thing that kept me here at Woman's College was that North Carolina was one of the first schools that integrated.

HT: Now, the chancellor gave a speech right after, probably a week or so after the Sit-ins started. Do you recall attending that meeting in Aycock Auditorium?

LGH: I know I attended. I don't recall it. I can't recall it, which would indicate that possibly I wasn't terribly upset by it. I think I would have recalled it if it went counter to what I believed in.

Yeah. I mean I grew up in a household as long as this goes on, I mean I was told from the time I was itty bitty. My mother told me the maid that we had when we were in North Carolina and moved to Florida, my parents took her with us. And my mother told me, "You have to realize this woman is my best friend, and the only reason she works for me is because she is black. If she was not black, I would probably be working for her."

Yeah, I was—I knew this. When I came my freshman year to school here. Now, I hadn't seen this woman since I was two years old, because she left us in Florida. Because she ate with our family. She went shopping with my mother. She left after six months because she said the other black people would not have anything to do with her. They were afraid of her. Because you didn't ride in the front seat in those days. You did not

participate with the family. And she came back to Greensboro. But she and my mother remained best friends forever. And when I entered WC, the first day that I got here she showed up at my dorm with a basket of fried chicken and to let me know that she knew I was here, and that if I needed anything I was to call her. Now, this was the world that I lived in said that she couldn't come and sit down and eat with me. This was a biggie. Yeah.

HT: What do you think made your parents fairly liberal for that period of time?

LGH: Um, I really don't know. My father was first generation. His parents had been immigrants from Russia, had come into New York City and had actually pushed around little carts selling pins and needles in New York City. And when they got enough money together, this was like probably in the 1890 or somewhere around then. When they got enough money they moved to Atlanta. And my grandfather actually made covers for surreys, you know the leather seats. And he managed to accumulate enough money to make a bid when the Ford came out, and he got the contract to outfit the new Ford cars, the seats, and the tops, etcetera. So, here was an immigrant that came here with one suitcase. He and his wife ended up having four children in Atlanta, and sending four boys through Georgia Tech. And my father came after he was an engineer from Georgia Tech came to Cone Mills to, I guess, see about some machinery at Cone Mills. And the person he contacted was Julius Cone. And met my mother, who was his private secretary. And the only thing I can say is that my mother came from a very old Southern Methodist family. And my father was Jewish. And the family adored him and welcomed him with open arms. And I guess it was just a certain amount with both families a broadmindedness here. But my father was probably the one that spearheaded the fact that all people deserve equal chances. But I just grew up with that. I don't know where it came from.

HT: Oh, gosh. Well, if we can backtrack to the Sit-ins. I've heard from other people that there was a possibility that Martin Luther King's organization that might have been—might have contacted some of the participants. Are you aware of that?

LGH: There was—somewhere in there was the connection. I don't know what it was at all. I had not a clue what it was. But I do know that we talked very vehemently about whether or not to join in some of the marches as time went on. And I remember because I—at the end of the semester in '60 is when I got married. I had three courses left to finish. And I finished those after I left here in '60. Okay. That's why I said I graduated early. I didn't finish my courses, but I actually was through with my major. And my husband had said to me, "You cannot go to [the civil rights march in] Selma, [Alabama]. You just can't do that. You can't"—I probably would have done it if I felt like I could have done some good. But I felt there were other ways I could do it. But I remember being uncomfortable about the fact that I wasn't still doing that. And, then, I realized when we went—we were in the [military] service in Key West, [Florida]. And, again, I ran into the same thing. There was different housing. The idea that they used to say the service was integrated was crap. Didn't quite work.

HT: To your knowledge, was the FBI ever involved in the Sit-ins in Greensboro?

LGH: That I do not know at all. I do know after the fact—we actually ended up years later—my husband hired someone that had been in the FBI, and know after the fact there was a lot of involvement that we didn't know about. But I had no idea at all.

HT: So, you were never contacted or anything like that?

LGH: No.

HT: As far as you know, you don't have a FBI file?

LGH: No, that I know. That I know for sure, yes.

HT: Well, after you—I think you said you got married while you were still here?

LGH: I got—We finished school in the end of the semester in '60. I went to summer school and the day after final exams I got married in Greensboro. Got married at the temple here in Greensboro.

HT: And, then, you said your husband was in the Navy?

LGH: Yes.

HT: So, you became a Navy wife?

LGH: Became a Navy wife for two years.

HT: Just two years?

LGH: Yes.

HT: And, then, what happened after that?

LGH: Then we went to Miami. And they were starting a pilot project. I was a psychology major, and they were starting a pilot project. I think it was through a doctor that at the University of Michigan—on emotionally disturbed children, and how you could keep them in the—keep them going in the school system and still work with them. So, our goal was to set up some kind of school situation where we could do therapy with emotionally disturbed children. So, there were two of us. There was an art major who was a teacher, and I was a therapist. And we set up a school for emotionally disturbed children in a service garage that one of the auto dealers had given us. And we had four kids to start with and ten when I left. And it's now a major—it's a children's center in Miami. And it's a major, major institute.

HT: Something you can be quite proud of. So, did you ever get your master's degree in psychology or anything like that?

LGH: No, I never finished. I got credits, but I never finished it. And to tell you the truth when you were in Florida literally I could have had a job almost anywhere even if I hadn't finished college as long as I had in those days. Florida was pretty far down the list educationally. And I even—when we were in Key West in the service, I got paid more being a science major. I saw an ad for a dental hygienist. And I thought, “Okay, I can fake this.” And I applied for this job and got it only because there was nobody else that was a college graduate that had applied for it. And the girls in the office taught me what to do. But I got five dollars a week more than everybody else because I was a college graduate. Now, I knew less than they did. But got more. And I could have gotten a job in any school system. I never had an education course. And I could have gotten a job in any of the school systems.

HT: So, how long did you stay in the psychology field?

LGH: I worked six years until I got pregnant. I had always sworn that once I had kids I would give it up, because you can't do the same thing at work that you do at home. And I gave it up when I had kids.

HT: After the kids left home, did you go back into that career?

LGH: Now, I was going to. But after the kids left home I had had enough psychology thank you very much.

HT: Okay.

LGH: I did store design, window designing for quite a few years. I designed jewelry and sold to art galleries and jewelry stores.

HT: Quite different from science.

LGH: Yes. Yes. And, then, let's see. My husband retired at fifty-one. And we moved to Georgia at which point we were really out in the middle of nowhere. I started a new career as a benefits counselor for large companies. And what I did—was for fourteen years I traveled to—depending on who hired me, but, for instance, a hospital, a factory, a college, a school system, and I explained how their benefits worked, you know, the life insurance, the medical, the dental, you know, that kind of thing.

HT: You've had quite a variety of careers?

LGH: You can always get a job. You can always get a job. And I think it's because I went to UNC.

HT: That's it. Oh, my goodness. Well, I don't have any more formal questions, Laura. Is there anything else you would like to add about your time here at the Woman's College, the Sit-ins, or—

LGH: I just—the Sit-ins were not—they were not a major part of my time at UNCG because it happened at the very end. It was a major impact on me that I came to a school—of course; I had never gone to school with anyone that was black, because I lived in the South all my life. But it did become a major issue by the time I was in college that this was something that not only needed changing, but that I was—I could affect it. And I think it affected my whole life in that I truly do believe one person can make a difference. And unless you start, you know, dealing with that I think too many of us go through life without realizing that one person can make a difference. Speak up. You know, it doesn't take much. When you're standing in line and you see somebody ignore that little kid that was in front of them because they're taller, and they can go ahead and order over their head, you need to speak up and say, "Excuse me, but did you not see that kid standing in front of you?" I mean those are little things. But you can—and I think it came from being here.

HT: Well, thank you so much.

LGH: Oh, I wish I had more information that I could give you. But like I said, they did have worker bees, you know? Not everybody—pretty much in my life I've always been the chief. But this was one of those times that I was definitely a worker bee. And the chiefs knew what was going on, and I just participated. Yes, yes.

HT: Great. Well, again, thank you so much. I hope you enjoy the rest of your weekend here—

LGH: Oh, it will be wonderful.

HT: —at UNCG.

[End of Interview]