

UNCG CENTENNIAL ORAL HISTORY PROJECT COLLECTION

INTERVIEWEE: Brenda Meadows Cooper

INTERVIEWER: Missy Foy

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[Begin Side A]

MF: And if you could start just by giving some general information like when you were a student here, etcetera?

BC: Okay. I came to UNCG [The University of North Carolina at Greensboro] as a freshman in the fall of 1961, graduated in 1965. Lived on campus my first year and a half. Lived in Guilford Dormitory as a freshman. It was the first year Guilford Dorm had been used for underclassmen or for freshmen, really. It had been an upperclassman dorm prior to that. Then moved to Mendenhall, Ragsdale-Mendenhall. And then, funds being what they were, I moved home at the second semester of my sophomore year. And I commuted then as a day student (We called ourselves town students in those days.) for the next—until I graduated as a senior. I was from Greensboro, so it was a little different in that I stayed on the campus almost all the time. We did not go home on the weekends like students do now. Although, my house was a popular place for out-of-towners, for us to go home for a good home-cooked meal.

MF: Oh, yeah. I hear that pretty frequently.

BC: And we were also the place—my mom and dad had laughed through the years because we were the place where everybody stored all of their things in the summertime.

MF: Oh, yeah.

BC: Because you had to completely clear out the dormitory. I don't know whether you still do or not.

MF: Yeah.

BC: [You] completely clear out the dormitory in June, which is when we finished up the end of the semester, and so all the pick-up trucks came. Everybody loaded up their cars here, and we took it all to my father's garage. And that's where everything stayed for the summer.

MF: I think now you can even like rent space in the basement of the dormitory if you're going to room there the following semester.

BC: Oh, that would be very helpful.

MF: I think you can do that. I'm not sure.

BC: We couldn't do that in those days. And so it was all just trunks and so forth. I think it was an interesting experience, and I've encouraged people in the meantime who come on campus and who say they only have funds to live on campus a particular period of time—not the full four years. I think I made a wise decision to live on it as a freshman because then I established friendships and got into clubs and activities and things and then that kept up. I always had a home on campus to go to in somebody's dorm room afterwards because of all the friendships that I had developed as a freshman.

MF: Oh, yeah. I agree.

BC: So I think that was very helpful.

MF: Yeah. That's the best strategy, I think, for someone starting out.

BC: We were the Guilford Glowworms.

MF: Glowworms?

BC: The dorms—there was—of course, no men on campus in '61. It was all freshmen, and there were still freshman dorms. We'd had no cross-sectional housing in those days. All of the freshmen were housed in dorms by themselves. And then at the end of your freshman year, you went in to take your assignments for the upperclassmen dorms, or stand in line, which is what actually happened. You went to the dorm of your choice at a given time in the spring on a given day, and you stood in long lines waiting to sign up for the spaces available in that dorm.

MF: When you said no cross-sectional housing, you mean no cross-class? Like if you were a freshman, you were in a freshman dorm?

BC: Correct.

MF: If you were an upperclass?

BC: Yeah, upperclass. And if you were a graduate student, then you were in the graduate student dorm, which in those days was North Spencer. Actually, Spencer Annex. The graduate school was not very large, and it was mostly Spencer Annex which went down beside Guilford Dorm.

MF: Yes.

BC: But freshmen were very much—freshmen had a whole different set of rules for living in the

dorm. We had lights out. Our times were very different for being locked in the dorm at night, and social rules were totally different for freshmen. So those were governed by dorms. And intense competition between dorms in those days for different events and things that went on between the freshmen dorms primarily. That changed as upperclassmen. We had a junior house president. The junior class elected the house presidents, but there was a junior house president in every dorm, and then she had an assistant. And that was essentially the structure of the governance of the dorm, in addition to a house counselor, of course. There was a counselor.

And the counselors in those days were not graduate students in any way. They were—I think by the time I got here in '61, they were very grandmotherly figures. Most of them were of retirement age, widowed, of course, or had never been married because—otherwise they wouldn't have wanted to live in a dormitory with a bunch of girls all their life. So a number of them [were] widowed, but some of them were mothers of their own and had grown children and so forth. I knew of no situation where there were young children in the dorms. But they were very grandmotherly. Open door policy. You could always get to them to talk about your problems. And it was a little like having a mother away from home setting [unclear] your situation. Our freshman year was Mrs. Estes, who is still living in Greensboro. And the fellows that we dated always remembered Mrs. Estes because she demanded that the gentlemen, our dates, stand if we were in the parlor socializing or anything. And the minute she entered the parlor, all the gentlemen were to stand in her honor or in politeness to her. And so the fellows still laugh about Mrs. Estes.

MF: That was in Guilford?

BC: Uh, huh. That was in Guilford Dorm, and then there was a Mrs. Carter—Ann Carter, who has just recently passed away in Asheville—excuse me, Ruth [McKaughan] Carter [class of 1932, Woman's College of the University of North Carolina], not Ann Carter—who was the counselor in Mendenhall. And Ragsdale-Mendenhall in those days had a ballroom. I guess it still does in that middle section. And we had dances in the dorms on Saturday nights very often. Great fun.

MF: Yeah. There seems to be a long tradition of weekend dances.

BC: I was looking at some pictures the other day, and someone may have told you about the coming to school as a freshman—one of the events that you did during freshman orientation, was the buses to [University of North Carolina at] Chapel Hill. Have you heard that story?

MF: A little bit about going to Chapel Hill on the weekend.

BC: Okay. Well, the first weekend that you were on the campus as a freshman, they chartered buses—"they" being the university—or the college at that point—chartered busses, and they lined them up on Walker Avenue in front of Shaw Dorm. They usually went the entire length from Aycock Street back to Walker Avenue. And students boarded the buses, and we went to Chapel Hill for the big dance that was on that first Saturday night. You got to Chapel Hill, great excitement in the air. Most of us had friends who were at Chapel Hill—

certainly North Carolina girls all had friends they knew were going to meet them at Chapel Hill because they were high school friends and so forth. But you got to Chapel Hill, and the buses pulled into the stadium and unloaded.

And, in retrospect, I realize how much like cattle we probably were. I could see that we would never tolerate that this day and time. But getting all of these women getting off of these buses, dressed in our best college finery—I mean, the very, the very thing that you had taken to be very in that year—is what you wore. And here were thousands, literally thousands, of Chapel Hill young men waiting to pick out their date for the evening as we unboarded [sic]. I'm very glad we don't tolerate that anymore, when I think back. It must have been the height of degradation or something for women. [laughs] Thank goodness we've come beyond that.

MF: School sponsored?

BC: School sponsored. Oh, yes. And I ran across a picture the other day of the buses all being loaded by the students. And we loved it. It was a big event. We looked forward to it. We loved it. We were part of the generation, Missy, that did everything everybody told us to. We didn't know that you could say, "No." We didn't know that you could object to something. We came into that. By graduate school, we were very much into it, by the '70s. But in the early sixties, the first half of the sixties, we were very polite and obeyed rules and didn't question a great deal.

I think probably the time that we began to question was—as far as—two times that were real very big social issues, of course, on the campus in those days. One was the whole racial situation. And we began to question, with the Woolworth Sit-ins, why our classmates, who were black, could not go with us to certain restaurants in town. And the class of 1960 was actually the class that graduated the first black students, but our class—and the Woolworth Sit-ins [series of nonviolent protests in 1960 at downtown Greensboro Woolworth's which led to the Woolworth's department store chain reversing its policy of racial segregation in the Southern United States] had come and gone at that point. Our class and our generation—the class of '63 really leading the way, picketed the business establishments down at The Corner [variety store at the corner of Tate and Walker streets]. There was a place then called, "The Red Door," which was a very popular hangout for the girls at the college, and it was over next door to where, I guess, the Bestway is now. Whatever the little grocery store is that's down there.

MF: Yeah. Safe—safe.

BC: The Safeway. Okay, it was next door to there. And it was—I don't know if it's Subway [fast food chain selling submarine sandwiches] or one of those little eating places in there—was called, "The Red Door." A number of us had black friends. Black friends from here on campus that we thought ought to be able to go with us in to the Red Door to eat. And, of course, they could not. And so we picketed the Red Door until it opened its doors to minority students at the Woman's College. And, as I said, the class of '63 really led the way on that. But I still remember marching in the pickets at The Corner. And we did it for several weeks until the pressure came about to make them open their doors.

And, of course, the other thing that happened was that as sophomores, I guess, the

legislature was considering making this a university instead of a college and making it coeducational. And so that was—by our sophomore year—the big issue on the campus. And the two—the campus was literally divided into two factions. And in those days color, of course, was very sex linked, and so pink—we had the "Think Pink" faction and the "Think Blue" faction. And you would get up one morning and you would find Dr. [Charles D.] McIver's [school's founder and first president] statue in front of the library painted completely blue, and you would find blue—we didn't do balloons very much in those days. I guess we did, but we didn't decorate with balloons like people do now. But you would find blue paper, blue—everything blue all over the campus. The signs would be covered in blue construction paper, and the blue forces had struck during the night. Or, a few days later, the Pink forces would strike. So very much divided on the campus between those two forces. And, of course, what the students thought on the campus had no effect on anybody. It didn't matter. It was a legislative decision. And so the legislature decided to vote us university status and to make coeducation come in. And, of course, by 1963-64, that had happened.

MF: Yeah. This is the state legislature?

BC: Yes, state legislature. It was a very political thing and really was not in the hands of the student government at all here. Nor the alumni. There was no—you know, there really was not any—much to be said about it in any way.

MF: What about with the board of trustees for the UNC [University of North Carolina] system? I wonder if they had any—?

BC: I honestly do not know. Being a student in those days, we didn't know—I didn't know about that.

MF: Well, see, the question I'm thinking of is—prior to going coeducational, there were men allowed in graduate school, and I'm not sure—

BC: Correct. All the way back to the fifties.

MF: I'm not sure if there were any black men allowed in graduate school though. But I'm wondering if before they went coeducational and black students were admitted, if they reversed their decision on letting male graduate students in because of that fear of letting black males in?

BC: Isn't that interesting? And I have no idea.

MF: I think that's something I'd have to find somebody from the state legislature who was involved in that process.

BC: I think so, too. And I honestly don't know—and your best source for that has passed away, and that's Mr. Charlie Phillips [director of public relations from 1935-62], who was both a state legislature—legislator—and was on the campus doing public relations work in those days. I don't know how that worked.

We came on the campus as freshmen with a new chancellor. Chancellor Otis Singletary began in 1961 along with our class. And we always felt a special kinship, I think, to him. In many ways, some of us have reminisced since, to think back that this was like a Camelot [legendary castle and court associated with the legendary King Arthur] during those days. And that we often compared Otis Singletary and his family with John Kennedy [35th president of the United States, 1961-63] and his family. Of course, the Kennedys were in the White House. And Otis Singletary was a young man—young chancellor, very handsome. You spoke earlier about good looking. He was very good looking, very personable. His young wife was, as well, most attractive. They had two small children, Kendall and Scott, who were toddlers when they came to campus, much like the Kennedys in the White House with John and Caroline [President Kennedy's children]. And these little toddlers were adopted by the entire campus. They also had another daughter who was older, who was in junior high school. Or, excuse me, I guess upper elementary school—probably fifth or sixth grade. And we didn't see as much of her. Of course, she had her own friends and so forth. But the two little ones had a swing set in the chancellor's back yard in those days, and it was nothing unusual for students to go by and play with the children, understanding, of course, that the campus was much smaller in those days and much more personable. The chancellor was out and about talking to students all the time, and one of his laughing comments that he made—but here again, we would not tolerate now—but was that this was the only place he knew where you had the opportunity to—how do I say this? That he had the opportunity to pat three thousand young women on the bottom, and it was all in the line of duty. [laughs] And he said that very often and laughed about it. As I said, in this day and time, he couldn't do that. But he was very loved on the campus. I can remember that when it was for his birthday party—that in connection with his birthday, the entire student body gave him a giant birthday party out back behind Elliott Hall and the Alumni House. The dining hall baked a cake, and the whole dining hall that night—for supper, we all—there was a big sign up that there would be no dessert served that night, but dessert would be served at the chancellor's birthday party. It was organized by the students, and we all collected money to give him a desk set, if I recall. Pen, pencil, the whole bit. The matching lamp and the whole thing. And so that was his first year on the campus and how the students celebrated his birthday. I doubt now that they even know who the chancellor is.

MF: Well, I think [unclear]. I was surprised to find out that a lot do, and they know the whole situation going on and then, of course, you have some who have no idea.

BC: Who don't—. [both laugh] It was a very personal relationship in those days with the chancellor. And I worked here in the Alumni House as a student. And the two little children were in and out of the house all of the time. You could hear the doors banging and this was before the days of air conditioning too. But you could hear the doors banging, and it would be the two young children running in and out. And this was kind of like their annex, and the whole campus became their babysitters. And so it was kind of nice.

Chancellor Singletary went on to be named by Kennedy [actually President Lyndon Johnson], as a matter of fact, to head up—to become the first director of the Job Corps [free education and training program that helps young people learn a career, earn a high school diploma or GED, and find and keep a good job] in Washington [DC]. And so he left us after a year or two as our chancellor and went to Washington on temporary

assignment to organize the Job Corps. That only enhanced his image, you understand, to us, because Kennedy [sic] had taken our little "John Kennedy," you see, to Washington. And in the meantime, Chancellor Singletary had brought in Dr. [James S.] Ferguson, who had been his history teacher, as a matter of fact, when Dr. Singletary was in undergraduate school [Millsaps College]. Jim Ferguson had been one of his history professors. And so he brought him here as dean of the faculty, and then he was named acting chancellor when Singletary went to Washington. Singletary came back our senior year for a little while, and that's the point at which Jim Ferguson was named, I guess, the first vice chancellor on the campus and became into that capacity. And then, of course, Chancellor Singletary did not stay long. He then was named president of the University of Kentucky—the whole, overall system, not just one campus. So he became the Dr. [William C.] Friday [head of University of North Carolina System, 1956-86], the Bill Friday of Kentucky. And stayed there until he retired just recently, as a matter of fact. It's only been in the last two to three years that he's retired from Kentucky and has come back often to the campus. He was here when Bill Moran [Dr. William E. Moran] was inaugurated as chancellor [1979-94]. And he will be here for the Centennial. He will be back. So he thinks very fondly, I think, on his couple of years on this campus. He has often said that his greatest contribution was that he gave Jim Ferguson to the University at Greensboro because, of course, that turned out to be a long and very good relationship for the years that were to follow.

MF: I wonder if Bill Link [history professor] has interviewed him or not?

BC: Chancellor Singletary? I don't know, but that would be a good person to interview.

MF: If he has not, then he will be here some time.

BC: Yeah. He will be. And he also I think, still has a daughter that lives in Greensboro, so it may be that he comes often. One daughter is here. Or could be done with a telephone interview, either way. He would probably be a very good person to talk about the legislative and political aspects of us becoming a university and coed because he would have been at the helm at that point. My feeling was that he always supported it, but that was a student's view. And I don't know administratively what really happened in that regard.

Some wonderful traditions on campus that we were still a part of from '61 to '65—they really didn't go out of the way—didn't go by the wayside until the late sixties. But Rat Day was still a very popular thing to have happen. Have you had folks talk about Rat Day with you?

MF: Yeah. It seems that it was very popular, and then there's a group of people that don't know anything about it and then it seems like it regained popularity.

BC: Regained popularity. Okay. Well, in '61 to '65, Rat Day was in full swing. We were, at some point during—as freshmen—at some point during the night, the night before, the sophomore class would decide that the next day would be Rat Day. Now they might have decided that earlier. I don't know exactly when it was decided, but anyway we would be awakened about 5:00 or 5:30 [am] on a given morning unaware, and they would come through the dorms

knocking on the doors and announced that this was to be Rat Day. It was—usually happened within the first month or so of being on the campus.

We were told to don caps—in fact, we were given caps, I guess—that had rat ears almost like Mickey Mouse that had little mouse ears on them. We stuffed nylon hose—and in those days, they weren't pantyhose. You actually had nylon hose. But you took one of your hose and stuffed it with something and pinned it on so that you had a rat tail, you understand. And then whatever else you wore for the day was your costume. And during that day then, essentially, you were identified, of course, by this costume, and you would then become the slaves of any sophomore that you ran into for the day—All in good jest and fun, but at any point a sophomore could ask you to carry their books to class, could ask you to stop and sing a song for them or to get on your knees and bow to them or any of the fun things. I found it to be a great deal of fun, but any of the funny, funny kinds of things. We were, again, of a generation that we were not violent from the standpoint of asking people to do things that were not—were not acceptable and so forth, and most of the behaviors were just fun kinds of things. If you refused to do this, then you were taken before Rat Court, which was that night at Elliott Hall. And the president of the sophomore class sat on the stage and administered the punishment to any freshman who had not obeyed during the day. And I remember that I was one of those, and I was late to class that day and therefore did not carry the sophomore's books to where she needed them carried—back to her dorm, if I'm not mistaken. I could not do it because I was going to be late to class if I had. And so I was taken before Rat Court. And our punishment—I was in a group of five or six of us, I guess—who were told that we had to plant a tree on front campus out along College Avenue, which was no problem, except we were to dig the hole with tablespoons.

MF: Oh, no!

BC: And we did the next day. That was—that's exactly what we did. And I guess there were maybe eight or ten of us who dug the hole with tablespoons to plant this tree. I can even tell you which tree it was, and it's still alive. [laughs]

MF: Oh, is it? I'll bet you know that tree.

BC: I know the tree well. And before we got the hole completely dug, you understand, physical plant came along, took pity on us and finished digging the hole. But we did start it and—. So the punishments were not very severe and a great deal of fun. I think that added a lot to the camaraderie and the beginning to know each other and kind of the spirit of things.

Sister classes were very much in effect. Of course, being all females, your sister class was the class that—the junior class was the sister class to the freshmen and the senior class were sister classes to the sophomores. And to this day, there is a, I think a kindredship between those two classes. And that the class of '63 was our sister class, and I feel very close to those members. They became our junior class advisors when we came on as freshmen. They kind of took us under their wing and adopted us, and it was their responsibility to show us the campus, to help us through freshman orientation and to then be there whenever we needed them. We did lots of activities together, socials together, sponsored things. There was a sister class song that very often the two classes got together and sang. We have one verse of it in needlepoint in here, as a matter of fact. A graph of it. And so you'll find it in

the books and so forth. The same sister class song was used throughout the years. But a very close kindredship between the sister classes. And I think that was kind of a nice identity and a nice way to come onto campus as a freshman and know that you were being adopted by someone or someone who had already been through the ropes were looking out after you and so forth. A real strong support system that existed for students in those days, from the counselors and the on campus support system you received through that system all the way through, I think, to this sister class support. So there was a very strong bonding that you became a part of the minute you walked on campus.

MF: Town students were able to experience this same support system?

BC: They were. The town student organization in those days, of course, was smaller. You must remember that there were more dorm students than town students in those days, rather than vice versa, so that you became a part of things. There was a town student lounge that honestly accommodated most people. I think town students—the only place that town students were really discriminated against, as far as—as I felt later on, was that I wasn't sure that in Elliott Center activities and in some things like that that town students might not have been chosen into some activities and leadership positions because they weren't having the undergraduate experience. After coming back to work in the alumni office, I felt—I really felt the discrimination more because very often on choosing committees and things I would hear, "Oh well, that person was a town student, so they wouldn't be as good a committee member." But that gets over into another tape that we'll talk about from my role in this office.

But I didn't feel—as a town student, I never felt discriminated against or I never felt that I was not included in things. I think, here again, that had to do with living on campus the first year and a half and already being into everything. By the time I was a town student, I was elected to the student legislature and I was editing the yearbook. And so I was very much on third floor Elliott Hall or second floor Elliott—the top floor of Elliott—which is where all of the student government things were going on. And we were very much into all of the activities. I was on senior class commission and a number of things, so I never felt that really. But I think involvement as a freshman made the difference.

Ring Day. Has anyone ever talked to you about Ring Day or Jacket Day?

MF: Yeah. Ring Day and class jackets, but not Jacket Day.

BC: Okay, we had—the day that we got our jackets—and jackets you ordered at the end of your sophomore year. Excuse me. We got rings. We ordered rings at the end of our sophomore year, and they arrived in the fall of our freshman year.

MF: Junior year.

BC: I mean—Yes, the fall of our junior year. We may have gotten jackets as sophomores. I believe we did.

MF: I think so.

BC: Yeah. We got jackets as sophomores.

MF: And then your rings as juniors.

BC: As juniors. That's correct. And then a diploma as seniors.

MF: Yeah. The big one, right? [laughs]

BC: That's right. The big one. [laughs] But on jacket day, and I think there's some pictures in the older yearbooks and things. The day that class jackets were distributed was—we all marched—we did marches through the dining hall sporting the jackets. It was a parade, I guess, more so than a march. But a parade through the dining hall at dinner wearing our new jackets and singing the sophomore class song and so forth. All classes had songs in those days. And so that was kind of—when I say Jacket Day, I guess just the jacket march that night through the dining hall. And then there was actually a ring ceremony as juniors that took place in the quad and usually had a bonfire. Certainly, ours did. Had a bonfire in the middle and as a junior class, we assembled in a circle and our—all sported our rings and so forth. And for some reason, I also don't remember—I remember the atmosphere of the ceremony, but I don't remember the words of the ceremony. I don't know whether that's available anywhere or not. For some reason, it was a very solemn ceremony. But I don't remember what the actual words were. I don't think we took oaths or anything. But, I just remember the atmosphere of that ceremony.

Having and being able to afford both a jacket and a ring—of course, in those days, the jackets and the rings were not expensive. I think the jackets were like ten or twelve dollars. You know, nothing like what a blazer would cost now. And it was in your class color. In our case, we were a blue class. So our blazers were navy blue and had a patch on the pocket which had to do with the university, the college. Ours still said, "Woman's College," which is another—that's the other reason that tells me that it would have been as a sophomore—and then the rings were like twenty-five or thirty five-dollars, so very—relatively inexpensive. But I've often wondered about how students felt who could not afford those things, and I don't know. But the folks that I knew and that I ran around with, it was the thing to do and you saved and scrimped or did what you had to do in order to do them. So I honestly don't know how other students felt who could not afford those things.

But a few of the traditions—and then as juniors—excuse me—as sophomores, we also picked the daisies and did the Daisy Chain for our senior class who were our sister class.

MF: Yeah. I've heard talk that somewhere somebody is trying to encourage that again.

BC: To return? How interesting. It was great fun. Physical plant took us out on large flatbed trucks to large daisy fields that were identified out in the county that belonged to people who lived in the county. It certainly wasn't university property, but who didn't mind us coming out to pick daisies. I think the same fields were probably used for years and years. But you went out and you picked daisies by the thousands and then came back on the campus and sat and entwined these into long chains. And intertwined ivy in with them, which physical plant, again, the grounds crew provided for us. And we always did this on the day before

and never knew how they lasted except daisies apparently have a very strong staying power, so that they made it until the next day. And this was for class day that we formed the daisy chain. Not for graduation, but for the class day ceremony, which was held traditionally and for many years. And I'm sure at some point it was held somewhere else, but certainly during all my time it was held on front campus in the park in front of Foust Building.

MF: That's what other people have said.

BC: Okay. A stage was put down there, and there were speakers. You always had a class day speaker. This was on the day before graduation. And—usually on Saturday, and then graduation on Sunday. The daisy chain, then—the sophomore class all donned bright dresses and stood at attention with the daisy chain held and then this was what the senior class walked through—kind of a salute by your sister class.

MF: Yeah.

BC: To your graduating. Interesting, because it wasn't—in many ways, I don't think it was a very feminine thing to have happen. But the guys felt very strongly when they came. That was not the thing that they wanted. And that was an era, too, that we'll get back to when we talk in another role Jim Lancaster's [assistant dean of students in 1974; retired as associate vice chancellor of student affairs in 2002; BA 1972, MA 1974, EdD 1985, all from UNCG] class—as a matter fact, would have been one of the classes that did away with many of those traditions. And I think it was just a total reversal to try to get rid of everything that was Woman's College and maybe we have come far enough now that some of the things can start filtering back in. But I think there was such a strong desire to completely bring a turnabout to the atmosphere that existed and to the stereotype of a women's college. But it probably had to happen. We probably had to abolish everything and then begin picking things back up.

MF: Well, now let's see, you were a student here when this change occurred and what did that do to student life?

BC: Very little because we had so very few men. We had no resident men by the time I graduated. We had very few men to come. There were some men in student legislature. In fact, the man that I'm currently married to—I didn't know him in those days—but came to campus in '64, so he was on campus '64- '65, my senior year, and was a student—was a male representative from the town students' association in the student legislature. But we really saw very few men around. I didn't feel the effects of men on the campus at all before I graduated. The ones that came were very nice; they were very smart. They were not very evident on campus.

MF: Real low key?

BC: Very low key. And I don't think—I know the first male graduated in '64, but he had not been all the way through the year's experience. I think the first men admitted as freshmen were probably '64.

MF: Well, besides graduate students.

BC: Yeah. But undergraduate. To really infiltrate the life of the campus was in '64. I think the men felt—and that you'll learn when you work with them. But I think those early men felt very severe discrimination.

My husband has referred to it—in fact, has referred to the fact that he came here as a town student, of course, and lived over on Sterling Street, had been to Curry School for twelve years and this was a very logical place for him to come to college. With money restraints, all he had to do was walk across the street and go to class, and so it made very good sense to him and to his family. But he was told in no uncertain terms by the director of financial aid in those days that he could get a student job after all her girls were taken care of. And so—and there were other situations like that, that I think the early men on the campus confronted that we were unaware of. But I think the real discrimination came from administrators and so forth. And you'll probably pick that up as you interview some of them. And that has affected, I think, some of their feel about the campus—that they were not met with a warm attitude at all.

The ones—I honestly knew very few men. By my senior year, I was doing student teaching one semester, so I was not even on campus the first semester of my senior year. And the second semester, we were doing—I was involved again, with the *Pine Needles* [yearbook]. And I literally went to class and went upstairs to Elliott Hall and did very little else except trying to meet yearbook deadlines, and then I was working. In those days, we were not limited on the number of hours we could work on campus. And so there was Judy Wolfe [class of 1965], who was a close friend of mine in those days and a real good—she and I were in the same financial situation. But Judy and I were working forty hours a week on campus jobs.

MF: Yeah. And they limit you to twenty, I think, now.

BC: But we could work as much as we wanted to, and we were both student assistants here in the alumni office. And we had a key so that we would come in and work until twelve and one o'clock in the morning in the mail room processing mail and doing things like that after we got through with class and we got through with our extracurricular activities. So it was a whole different ballgame. And we really didn't have much of a social life in those days. We were trying to make money to stay in school. [laughs]

MF: Gosh, that's familiar.

BC: You recognize that, Missy?

MF: Yes.

BC: Some things didn't change, although tuition was so much very different in those days. My father said when I came as a freshman, it was three hundred and some dollars a year to come to school and live on campus. And he said, "I can't keep you at home that cheaply." And so, as I say, I did come for a little while, and I had some scholarship aid too. Three hundred was

a lot in those days, but not in comparison to what it is now. So, went home. I think one of the real advantages and one of the things that happened to me as a freshman that was a real education for me, socially, was that I had chosen as a high school senior not to pick a friend for a roommate—that I wanted to be assigned a roommate.

MF: I've heard of a lot of people doing that.

BC: And it was just—I wanted that new experience and so forth. And I was assigned to a gal named Beth Ann Vinick [class of 1965, did not graduate] who at that point lived in Connecticut. So it was my first real encounter with a foreigner. But Beth Ann also happened to be Jewish and I had grown up in a Protestant family and had not come in contact, in those days, with any of the Jewish community in Greensboro. So this was my first introduction to living with a Jewish family and Jewish tradition. Beth Ann's family was Orthodox Jew, which was very different, and she had come from a community where she had faced very severe discrimination. Separate water fountains were still in effect in Connecticut at that point, which I thought was unheard of for—now, we still had them here for blacks and whites. They were just on the verge of going out. But it never occurred to me that because of a faith—of a religious faith, that there would be discrimination. She found it very—not very unusual at all, as we drove to Florida together our first summer out to go to where her parents had moved that there were certain restaurants that had signs posted that said, "No Jews allowed." And this was a whole new experience for me to be introduced to that form of discrimination. Beth Ann and I became very close friends. We lived together again our first semester sophomore year, and we have stayed in touch all through these years and are still very close friends. She's in Richmond now. But it was a wonderful introduction to me to a whole different culture and whole different way of life. And I went home with her every summer to wherever. Her father was with the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation], and so they traveled a great deal. And every summer we [sic] went and spent a couple of weeks with her and learned even more about Orthodox Judaism, and I went to services with her. And it was just a wonderful experience all the way around. And I encourage people not to choose roommates, to be willing to branch out and to accept what happens and see how you can get along and to use it as a socially widening experience, as well, by coming to campus.

MF: One of the other things—you were talking about your Jewish roommate and the discrimination she felt and blacks were just starting to be allowed onto campus. And I'm sure it was—it created a lot of tension for the white students here as well.

BC: I think the tension may have been gone by that point, Missy. I think '56, you see, was the first year that—there was definite tension in '56, and those folks can tell you about a whole wing of the dorm, for instance, being set aside because two black students lived in that wing and they didn't want bathroom facilities to be integrated, and that kind of thing—just, I consider, horror stories. By the time I got here in '61, blacks were living in the dorm. There were no—there didn't seem to be any problems that I recognized from that standpoint.

I remember Francine McAdoo [class of 1964] being in swimming class with me, and—she and I both had difficulty learning to swim. It was not one of the things that we were naturally able to do, and we used to laugh and talk about it and I remember us becoming very good friends in physical education class. Sina McGimpsey Reid [class of

1965], who is my class also and I were very close, beginning with our freshman year. She was very smart in math, and I was not very smart in math. And I tease her now because she's come on to be a real entrepreneur and owns a whole series of fast food chains and so forth in Baltimore [MD]. Very outstanding young businesswoman. And I tease her about always wanting to look on her paper, and she ended up being my math tutor in freshman—I asked her to help me in math, and she did.

And so I think maybe we had come beyond the tension part. At least, I didn't feel any tension with the blacks. I had come from a little different background racially, I think. I'd been very involved in Y-Teens [leadership group for women sponsored by Young Women's Christian Association] as a junior high and senior high student. Our high school was already integrated by the time I came here, so at Greensboro Senior High—. And in the eighth grade, I had gone to Y-Teen camp up in the Blue Ridge [mountains], and I had been the first person to have a black roommate from the Y. And the girl here that later became the first black student at Greensboro Senior High School, as a matter of fact, was my roommate that summer at camp, and I had—

[End Side A—Begin Side B]

BC: So there had been great discussion among the Y and my parents about my being willing, as an eighth grader—or their being willing as an eighth grader—for me to have a black roommate at camp. She and I, again, became very close friends. We had no trouble—loved each other immediately, so I probably was at a little different perspective, racially, than a lot of folks who came to campus.

MF: Oh, I'm sure. Because at this point I'm sure there were still a lot of young girls coming from fairly rural areas.

BC: Well, and still are.

MF: Yes, still now. Yeah.

BC: I honestly don't know the statistics now, but as late as five years ago, which would have been the mid '80s, we still were primarily first-generation-college—attracting students from first-generation-college parents. And this was almost totally true in—by the time we became the university—interestingly enough, as the Woman's College, we had a different identity. We were the largest women's college in the country. We were—there was a uniqueness about coming here that attracted a number of women, especially from the north that were not first generation. But I think North Carolina students—we certainly—a number of us, were first generation—I was a first generation college student from my family.

In fact, I remember so well my graduation. We had moved graduation by '65 to the Greensboro Coliseum. And I can still remember walking out of the coliseum and sitting up in one stand, every cousin, every aunt, every uncle on both sides of my father and mother's family because I was the first person in the family to ever go to college, much less graduate. And so it was very interesting. The same thing happened when I was a—when I was a

junior, I was sent to—and was *Pine Needles* editor—I was sent to New York for a *Pine Needle* —for a yearbook conference that kids went to in those days. And I was the first person in my family who had ever flown on an airplane or had ever been to New York City. And I can still remember the family all being on the observation deck at the Greensboro Airport when I came back to watch somebody land and to know that somebody in the family had been to New York and had been to—and had flown on an airplane. [laughs] And that was in '63, '64. I guess, spring of '64 because it was junior year. But we were indeed, rural, Missy. [laughs]

MF: Yeah. It's funny because being from New Jersey, it's quite a different.

BC: I think it would be. A lot of northern girls came here to school. We had a large contingency [sic] from the north that came down here to school.

MF: Still. Still now, a lot of students from New Jersey and New York. Well, it was cheaper.

BC: Yeah. I think it would be.

MF: It is. It's probably, oh, twelve thousand [dollars] a year to go to school in-state.

BC: But even in those days, there was a large New Jersey contingent that went to Guilford College. And—

MF: All North Carolina schools have a large population of northern students because of the price.

BC: Well, it was a very interesting experience as an undergraduate for me to be—for me to be exposed to students from other states, especially the north. And I remember one of my other close friends was from New Hampshire—Rochester, New Hampshire. I don't know why all these people ended up in Florida. She now lives in Florida, as well. But anyway—

MF: Well, when you hate the snow, you know, you go as far south as you can get.

BC: I guess so. [both laugh] There they all are. I can't stand Florida. But, anyway, it was wonderful because every holiday—and another close friend was Pennsylvania, as a matter of fact, Philadelphia. So every holiday I went home with somebody from the north, and it was just great. And then every summer, we went with Beth Ann and her—I drove down to Florida. So she met—I was dating a young man all through college that went to Guilford [College], and we introduced my roommate to his roommate and so—in fact, they married. And so it became kind of nice that we were a foursome all through college to go home on holidays to Beth Ann's or go home in the summer to Beth Ann's and then go north on holidays. So—

MF: Yeah. Also, one thing I've got written down here to ask you about—had the Neo-Black Society [association of black students] formed yet? I don't think it had. I think it was probably about '69, wasn't it?

BC: [Dr.] Ada Fisher is the mother of the Neo-Black Society, and she is class of 1970. And there was no real formal—to my recognition—no formal organization at all of black students. First of all, there weren't very many of them, and I think the other thing is we were still a part of that "yes" generation. We weren't very rebellious in those days and so forth. So we really didn't organize for social—for social issues very much. Ada came along, and, as I say, formed the Neo-Black Society, and she is class of '70. So '68, '69 would have been the year.

MF: Yeah, that's what I was thinking. Somewhere in there. But then when you came back in '73 for your master's [degree], the Neo-Black Society was formed and was pretty much in the midst of all the turmoil with the student legislature.

BC: Very much so. And had become a very vocal, vocal organization by that point. Jim Ferguson tells the tale—as a matter of fact told the tale that in those days, when you were nominated for membership in the Golden Chain, a campus honor society, the student members elected their membership at night and at the end of the election, they all took candles and went out and tapped the new membership into Golden Chain. It was always a big night on campus because you would know that Golden Chain was meeting and that new members were being taken in. Golden Chain was more known then and was certainly more accepted. There were less campus organizations, and it was the honor society on the campus to belong to and so forth.

The night that they tapped Jim Ferguson into honorary membership, it was very late, and it usually was after midnight when they went around to tap new members. And there was a knock on the door, and his wife said they got up and looked down to see—looked from the upstairs bedroom down to see who might be knocking on the door—if there was a car in the driveway or something. And they saw this whole group of students with candles in front of the house. And Fran Ferguson [his wife] is quoted as saying to Jim, "Oh, my goodness. They've come to sit in." [laughs] Because those were the days of the racial sit-ins and so forth. And they thought surely that the students had come to take over the chancellor's house that night and they had appeared with their candles and so forth. Turned out it was something as mild as—[laughs] At least he went down and opened the door and invited the students in before he found out what they were there for and then learned what it was. So anyway, but that came along much later.

And as a graduate student on the campus, I was teaching school in Winston-Salem, was driving over here taking a course or two, driving back. And so I really was not involved at all in the campus life, you know, the first year or two.

MF: I think that's par for the course for most graduate students who are trying to work.

BC: It wasn't until I came back to work here full time in '68 that I really kind of began to understand what was happening, but we had a graduate student association that we were forming at that point. And a number of us were meeting to try to get—begin to get a voice for the graduate students into campus life, but we didn't. Graduate students didn't have representation anywhere like in the student legislature or anything at that point. We were just kind of a—the working group that came in to get a degree and then leave.

MF: Sort of ghosts on campus.

BC: That's exactly right.

MF: I think that's still the case to a large extent.

BC: Well, you just don't have the time. And that may be one of the problems of the undergraduates, now too. A number of undergraduates are here getting an education along with full-time jobs and families. As the median age for undergraduates has increased, you learn—realize more and more that there—the days of the traditional undergraduate student who has time to do things like Rat Day and Jacket Day and those things are fewer and fewer.

MF: Yeah. Much fewer.

BC: [laughs]

MF: And then, I've heard from some people that there really wasn't a whole lot of commotion about Vietnam [Cold War-era military conflict by the United States that occurred in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia from 1 November 1955 to the fall of Saigon on 30 April 1975] on campus here.

BC: No. I would have missed that, I think, for the most part. There was not—as an undergraduate, I don't recall any of that.

MF: Yeah. And then, I guess you were a graduate student or working here in '69 when they had the cafeteria workers' strike.

BC: I had come back to work at that point and remember well the burning in effigy and the Sunday afternoon when the cafeteria workers were marching and so forth. But we can talk about that on another tape if you want to. [President John F.] Kennedy [35th president of the United States], assassinated November 22, 1963], of course, while I was a student here.

MF: Oh, that's right. While you were here.

BC: It was probably the—and like every other American, we all know exactly where we were the minute the news was flashed around. I was on third floor, Elliott Hall, in the *Pine Needles* office when the word came. And, of course, everyone then went to the television sets and spent the next few days in front of the sets as did the country and the world. But—

MF: That's funny that you say, you know, just as everybody else, you remembered exactly where you were. Because I've heard some people say the same thing when recently—well, not too recently anymore—when the Challenger [space] shuttle [January 28, 1986] blew up and—because I can remember—

BC: I remember exactly where I was at that point too. Isn't that interesting how you identify immediately with those catastrophes?

MF: Because I remember walking down the street and hearing it on my Walkman [Sony brand trade name originally used for portable audio cassette].

BC: Oh, really. Well, we had gathered in the back of the—in the Alumni House bedrooms that morning for the shuttle to watch it take off, and we had just gotten a television at the other end of the house. And we had all gone down there to watch it.

MF: And saw it happen?

BC: And then saw it happen. And the disbelief that it had happened and the thinking that it must have been another rocket going off the thing. There was just no way that the shuttle could have blown up, and, “That had to be a mistake.” And the whole business with Kennedy was much the same way.

MF: Yeah, but oddly enough, I can't remember what I was doing when Kennedy got shot.

BC: Were you even born?

MF: When [President Ronald W.] Reagan [40th president of the United States] got shot—

BC: Oh, when Reagan got shot? No, I can't either. [both laugh]

MF: I don't have a clue.

BC: Were you born when Kennedy—had you been born in '63?

MF: Yeah.

BC: Oh, okay.

MF: But, I mean, months. I don't know.

BC: You mere child. [laughs]

MF: I was probably crying or something.

BC: [laughs] Oh, me.

MF: Crying, eating or sleeping.

BC: We—Martin Luther King [Jr., American clergyman, activist, and prominent leader in the African-American Civil Rights Movement, assassinated April 4, 1968] was—had become a force in those days. And as a junior, I had an—no, as a senior. Excuse me. I had an opportunity—I was very active in Wesley Foundation on the campus as a student. And I had an opportunity to go as a delegate to a world conference of Methodist students in

Nebraska— in Lincoln, Nebraska. It was the first ever gathering of Methodist students from all over the world. There were about five thousand of us gathered at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln on that Christmas. We went during our Christmas vacation of my senior year. The churches in North Carolina sent a busload of North Carolina students to represent North Carolina, and my church sent two of us and paid for our way and so forth. And this was a very exciting thing to have happen. We went the day after Christmas on the twenty-sixth of December that year and stayed through New Year's. Of course, it took several days to get out there by bus. But our speaker on that New Year's Eve was Dr. Martin Luther King. And the opportunity to have actually heard him and to be in a group of students five thousand strong on New Year's Eve, and Martin Luther King lit the first candle that was passed. The light was then passed throughout the students there. And we stood and sang "We Shall Overcome," of course, led by Dr. King. It was an emotional experience that I'll never forget.

MF: I'm sure.

BC: But—very special thing to have happened.

MF: I'm sure. Yeah.

BC: But there were, I guess, five or six of us from UNCG who were in that group and a number of area students. As I say, there was a bus of North Carolina students who went sponsored by our Methodist churches. But then I was sponsored by the church and by the Wesley Foundation here on campus. And so, kind of a neat thing.

MF: Yeah. Okay. I know that you've got another appointment waiting, and I think most of the other things we can probably talk about when we talk about your other roles.

BC: Okay. I was going to say, you can hold onto this tape, if you want to. And we can—[laughs]

MF: Well, we'll put it on a separate tape. It'll just make it easier for me.

BC: Okay.

MF: Well, thanks very much.

BC: Thank you, Missy.

[End of Interview]