

**Lois Cornell Selberg**  
**Narrator**

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**Interviewer**

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**RD:** ...February 2, 1984. An interview with Lois Cornell Selberg, graduate of Moorhead State Teacher's College class of 1947. This is Roland Dille conducting the interview.

Well, Mrs. Selberg, let's start before you get to Moorhead State Teacher's College. Tell us where you come from and something about your family.

**LCS:** Okay. I was born ten miles south of Moorhead at Rustad on a farm where my father's family had moved when he was about seven, which would have been about...well, around 1900. So the family had lived there a long time. And my mother and father were both mainly of...of early American stock. My mother was a teacher, married my father in 1916. Hmmm. I have four sisters, and my mother had been a teacher, so my mother was much concerned that...I believe she was concerned that we...we be freed from many things.

I have come to believe that she felt that hmmm...ah, probably especially because we were daughters, we needed to have all the education we could to be freed from some of the pretty stultifying effects of a small community. And she was very much interested in education. So my oldest sister was handicapped in that she was deaf. My mother felt it was absolutely necessary that she go to college. And once she went and convinced my father that she must go, once my sister went, we all followed. And of course the only reason we were able to go was because Moorhead State was a very inexpensive college, and it was only ten miles from home. And that allowed us, all of us, to have an education. And I have no doubt that if Moorhead State hadn't been here, we would never have been...hmmm... we wouldn't have had a chance to go.

**RD:** Er, ah...you graduated then from the grade school at Rustad.

**LCS:** At Rustad. And they also had three...a three-year high school in Rustad, ah, when both my two oldest sisters were going, so they must have had three years of high school until about...about 1938, I would say.

**RD:** Where did they take the fourth year of high school then?

**LCS:** And they transferred to Moorhead for the fourth year.

**RD:** So when you...?

**LCS:** And one teacher for the three years, three grades of high school in Rustad.

**RD:** I see. And one grade...one teacher for the eight grades?

**LCS:** Ah, two teachers in the eight grades, yes, a consolidated school.

**RD:** How many...when you went to school...there was only eight grades by that time?

**LCS:** Yes.

**RD:** How many students were in the school?

**LCS:** About forty-five.

**RD:** And in your eighth grade class?

**LCS:** Were fourteen.

**RD:** How many of those went on to high school then?

**LCS:** Okay. To high school at...

**RD:** Which...well, at that time was at Moorhead, in Moorhead.

**LCS:** Yeah, Moorhead or Comstock. Comstock was five miles to the south; it was a small high school. Most of the students went there. My father did not want us to go to a small high school, and partly it was an ethnic kind of thing. Hmmm...[Laughs]

**RD:** It...

**LCS:** It seems strange now, because everybody was Norwegian. We were not Norwegians. And felt...he somehow felt a little...that...that we were outsiders in a certain kind of way. He wanted us to go to a bigger school. So we went to Moorhead. On to answer your question, I believe everybody except one person graduated from high school out of that grade.

**RD:** Mmmm-hmmm. Which is...hmmm...probably a little better than in most...ah...well, most eighth grade schools in the state, I would think.

**LCS:** Yes. That may well be. The community of Rustad is so close to Moorhead that it was very much affected by it. It wasn't *really* like a small town, it wasn't very isolated. Ah, even by the time I came along, with the automobiles and so on, it was part of Moorhead, in a fashion. It was still a community, but it was very much affected by its proximity to Moorhead, I think.

**RD:** Before I get to Moorhead State Teacher's, let's talk for a few minutes about Moorhead High School. Ah...the school bus system didn't cover Rustad, I take it?

**LCS:** No. No. Well, the district of Rustad was an independent district, and there...a special arrangement had been made to pay tuition of some sort for those of us who attended high school there. So...no, there was no school bus. It was necessary for us to live in Moorhead. Hmm...well, I don't think anyone considered our driving back and forth.

**RD:** How about the trains?

**LCS:** And the train did come. We never took the train while we were in high school, but there was a very early morning train that came through Rustad about...six thirty. And I know at least one quarter when I was in college, we stayed at home and took the train in every morning, mostly because it seemed rather romantic. But that, of course, couldn't have been done...it couldn't be done when one went to public schools all day, I don't think, and it couldn't have been done in the winter, I'm sure.

**RD:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**LCS:** So...so we lived in an apartment, a kind of apartment, as did some other rural students, did from the time we were in ninth grade on.

**RD:** You lived in an apartment with ninth graders only?

**LCS:** Yes. My...I lived with an older sister until she went to college. Ah...and the others were, yes, ninth graders. Well, we...we lived as though we were adults. [Laughs]

**RD:** That...that seems surprising.

**LCS:** Yes, this, it...yeah.

**RD:** As...when you look back forty years.

**LCS:** [Chuckles] Yes.

**RD:** Forty-five years and think about that kind of freedom extended to you. [Chuckles]

**LCS:** Yeah. Yes. And we had to do all of our own cooking. We took care of our clothes. It didn't seem a burden. And now that I look back, I think probably it was a very good thing to have that freedom, you know, sense of responsibility, hmmm, that was developed there. We...we were very adult, I'd say. But we were unsupervised almost completely. Yeah. We were expected to be adults.

**RD:** Moorhead at that time had a population, I would guess, of under ten thousand.

**LCS:** Well, yeah. Uh huh. As I remember...about ten thousand. [Chuckles] It was seven thousand at one time, and then ten thousand.

**RD:** Alright.

**LCS:** I believe it was, yeah.

**RD:** Hmmm, but most of the student in your class were really town kids, I take it?

**LCS:** Oh, yes. Yes. Yes. Uh huh. Right. There were really very few of us who...who were from the country. Mmmm-hmmm.

**RD:** Hmmm...I don't really need the statistics here as you can't give me, I suppose.

**LCS:** Yeah. [Chuckles]

**RD:** But of the country kids, what proportion of them went on to college, do you think?

**LCS:** I think a very high proportion. And as I look back, they did very well. There were several valedictorians. And the valedictorian of my class, for instance, was from the country north of Moorhead. Hmmm. I was a good student, and I remember there were a couple people from Rustad who were salutatorians at Moorhead High. And I gather that it was no disadvantage to go to the country school at all. And my own experience was that I had no disadvantage academically when I entered Moorhead High. It was...the same.

**RD:** And they looked on you as college bound?

**LCS:** Oh, no. No. At the time I went to Moorhead High, I'd...to the best of my knowledge, no one ever thought about college. No one ever asked me in the whole time I was there if I intended to go to college. And no one ever suggested...[chuckles] suggested anything intellectual or academic that I can ever remember. There wasn't any interest, at least for me, and I don't suppose for many of the other people. Now, at the time I graduated, the war had just...well, we were in the midst of the war, so...a good deal of attention was paid to that sort of thing. But I was never aware of anyone sitting down and saying, "Hmmm, you do very well and you get A's. You plan to go on to school?" There didn't seem to be any...any interest in that kind of thing. Which seems a little strange to me, but...[Chuckles]

**RD:** I assume you took home ec. and...foreign languages?

**LCS:** When people came in from the country in the ninth grade, they were automatically put in...the boys had shop, and the girls had home ec. Some of the other people who were town kids [chuckles] who had been in the system were allowed to take a foreign language, or I believe some other kinds of things. But we were not given any choice at all; we were automatically put in... But Moorhead High offered German, I remember. There was a person who taught German

that I had seen occasionally or heard about. Ah, but I believe no other language, no art, and very little music. So I never took any languages, art, or music in high school at all, and there was no suggestion that anybody should, that I remember.

**RD:** Alright. You graduated from high school in the town of around ten thousand with two colleges.

**LCS:** Yes.

**RD:** Do you remember anything about...? Hmm...you said nobody at the school talked to you about going on to college.

**LCS:** Not that I remember.

**RD:** Was there much talk among you about going on to college, and about choosing which of the colleges to go to? And did some go away to college?

**LCS:** Ah, there was very little talk. I'm sure that some people in my class went to Concordia. But of course almost all the boys went in the service, I presume. So there were some people who went to Concordia. Right now, I can only think of the name of one. There were at least seven, eight of us who went to Moorhead State. Hmm...but I think the war had a good deal to do with that, you know.

**RD:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**LCS:** It...it upset everything.

**RD:** Right.

**LCS:** So with all the boys...and of course afterwards, after the war, hmmm, I'm sure many men in our class went to college. And I'm sure...I know they did. Yeah.

**RD:** Alright. In the summer of 1943, you're getting ready to go to college.

**LCS:** Yes.

**RD:** That was the summer that eighteen-year-olds were first drafted. That is, some...

**LCS:** Yes.

**RD:** Some students went directly out of your graduation and were drafted.

**LCS:** Yes, somewhat before we graduated. Yes.

**RD:** Ah, because of the eighteen-year-old draft, which means that the freshman class at Moorhead State was not likely to have very many fellows in it, though some seventeen-year-olds, I suppose. And the other three classes would...would have been pretty well empty.  
[Chuckles]

**LCS:** Very few men. People who were 4F for one reason or another were there. But I wouldn't think...I would think of those first two years, there weren't more than say, ten or fifteen men, or maybe twenty-five at the very most, that I can remember at Moorhead State.

**RD:** And how many women?

**LCS:** Oh...I would...ah, it seems to me, it was under two hundred.

**RD:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**LCS:** I don't suppose...You know, there is one interesting thing about that summer before I went college. I had a sister living in Washington, D.C., and she wanted me to come and stay for the summer. And my mother was very reluctant, but there were some girls who were working for the government, as my sister was, who were home on vacation. So she let me go, and I began a work cycle. And it was wonderful because, hmmm, at that time, one...if one had the power of speech and looked normal, you could walk into any office in Washington or any place of business and get a job. They'd be *delighted* to have you. So starting with that summer, I was able to go and get a job in Washington and later, San Francisco, and so on. But I had no fear of...getting a job immediately was the last thing one had to worry about. Mmmm, and that was a sense of freedom, too, being able to go in the summer and stay away from home there.

**RD:** You were able to pay most of your own way then through college with your summer work.

**LCS:** Yeah, it was very, very low tuition. And I worked every summer, paid my way there and back, paid for my clothes, and I believe all my tuition. Hmmm, and I also worked always when I was in college. I worked downtown a bit, and then at school on the telephone exchange, and...and other places. Yes. I think I paid most of my tuition myself, as I remember. But it was so low. My father paid some, yeah.

**RD:** Mmmm-hmmm. Alright. You started school...MacLean Hall, Flora...

**LCS:** Yes.

**RD:** Flora Frick Gymnasium.

**LCS:** Yes.

**RD:** Ah, the campus school.

**LCS:** And with Flora...Flora Frick [Gymnasium] was not named that then, she was still very much alive and here.

**RD:** Oh, yes.

**LCS:** And I had her in physical education, yeah.

**RD:** Ah...the campus school, Weld Hall.

**LCS:** Yes.

**RD:** And the two dormitories.

**LCS:** Yes, Wheeler and Comstock. And that's all, isn't it? Yes, right.

**RD:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**LCS:** Mmmm-hmmm. Yeah.

**RD:** Ah, the two dormitories were...one men and one women? No, there wouldn't have been any men, weren't there?

**LCS:** No, they were both women. But of course when I was a freshman, they were all used by the V12 program.

**RD:** Okay, tell us about that.

**LCS:** Hmmm. They had been at Concordia and had not...I believe not been able to arrange something satisfactory about the dorms. I...I can't remember how that went. But at least...but I believe it was the summer before I started as a freshman, or very early in the year, hmmm, that they had...I don't know how many. It seemed like millions of young men one didn't know, and they were in uniform, and they marched up and down the hall to classes, and they were frightening to me because they were a faceless group of marchers, I remember that! [Chuckles] So I didn't get to know any of them, personally. Some...some people did. But I never knew one personally at all. We didn't have classes with them or anything. And there were some opportunities for socializing, but...hmmm...but I personally didn't...

**RD:** Now they were not...V12, they were Army, Army Air Force, weren't they?

**LCS:** Yeah, well I thought...oh. Well, perhaps they were...?

**RD:** Or Navy?

**LCS:** Why do we call them V12? That's the way I remember it. I...I might remember that wrong. [Laughs]

**RD:** [Laughs] Maybe, I don't...I don't know.

**LCS:** [Laughing] I know they had Army uniforms on! Yes, I...

**RD:** Yes.

**LCS:** I ought to know this, but I'm not sure.

**RD:** Rather than...rather than the blue of the Navy.

**LCS:** That would be the V12 program, is the Navy program.

**RD:** Right.

**LCS:** Well...okay, well, I'm sorry. Yeah, that...that's strange. What were they called then? Just [unclear] well, some were.

**RD:** I don't know...it was Army Air Force pre-flight training is what they...what they were, yes.

**LCS:** Yeah, well, okay, that must have been it. I don't know where the V12 business came into my memory, yeah.

**RD:** Yeah. The reason...the reason I think about that, is I was going ask you about sports.

**LCS:** [Chuckles]

**RD:** If they had been Navy, then Moorhead State would have had a football team, because Navy students could play football.

**LCS:** Oh, really? Mmmm-hmmm.

**RD:** Army students could not. And, I take it, there was no football team?

**LCS:** I'm sure there was not a...I...well, see, I was a junior at 1945 and 1946...Hmmm...enough men had come back from the service...Well, I can't remember whether it was the fall of 1945 or the fall of 1946 we had a football team. Hmmm, we had basketball team those two years, I think.

**RD:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**LCS:** Those two winters. And...hmmm...oh, some of the people were back out of the service then. Yeah. Of course, yeah.

**RD:** Mmmm. Right. Right. Alright. [Sighs] Here you are at essentially an all-women's school, a couple hundred of you.



**LCS:** Yes.

**RD:** I would assume that quite a few faculty members, both male and female, had gone off to do other things when the war broke out.

**LCS:** Yes, they had.

**RD:** Ah...talk about the faculty a little bit.

**LCS:** Hmmm. Well, in general, my memory of entering Moorhead State is of a...that it was a very dramatic and wonderful enlightenment for me. Hmmm. Best...but part of it was classes, but I believe more than classes were the students...ah...who, as I remember now, at least, held long discussions about ideas, and were...hmmm...were very unconventional from my way of thinking then. And I was perhaps ready for it, but questions, intellectual questions, academic questions, questions about life, ideas, that sort of thing, were posed to me in classes, and a good deal outside of classes, in a way that high school had *never* even touched. There was no comparison. I always felt I had walked into great...light when I came to Moorhead State. At least, that's the way it seems to me now.

**RD:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**LCS:** I had a *wonderful* set of biology teachers who were among the best teachers I can ever remember having. Dr. [Unclear] and Dr. Westfall[sp?]. Hmmm, I had a tremendous speech teacher who did a lot to encourage us to question our beliefs. His name was Harold Lilywhite[sp?], a very fine man. I had some other teachers of course, at Moorhead who had lost their incentive and seemed to...[chuckles] seemed to have no particular interest in those directions of many of them, I guess. But hmmm, I had many excellent teachers, too.

And there were some wonderfully brilliant, and especially some very, very funny people around. Hmmm. Even...even though it was so small, there were some great advantages, I suppose, especially for women. Hmmm. Because there were...there were officers of clubs, and all kinds of positions of student power at school that were waiting for somebody to take them over. And a person like me, who was rather essentially shy, found myself into all kinds of positions of responsibility, editorships, and president of things, and...I had experiences, I was forced into experiences in the newspaper, in the annual, and all these organizations that, hmmm, well, I think really were...were really good, things I might not have gotten in a large college. And as I say, I have never been quite able to understand...but these other students, I remember them all, some older than I was, were...they were very, very interesting and were very stimulating, I think, intellectually.

**RD:** I suppose you know what happened to some of them?

**LCS:** Well, yes, I guess so...hmmm...

**RD:** Ah, I don't mean...go into them, individually. [Chuckles]

**LCS:** [Chuckles]

**RD:** But I've got to say, do you...do you think, as you look back, that they really were? That what happened to them afterwards suggests they really were bright?

**LCS:** Yes. Yes. Oh yes, indeed, I see...see them occasionally today. I've seen them over the years. They're very bright. Yeah, very bright, it seems to me. And most...many of them successful, and very funny. Hmmm. Yeah. Yeah, I thought...well, this...my estimation, I'm sure, was right. [Chuckles]

**RD:** Alright. 1943. Hmmm. North Africa, the war in North Africa was behind us. Ah, the tide had turned a bit in the Pacific. How did the war seem? Did it hang over like a cloud...threatening you? Or was it simply a kind of...hmmm...pleasure withheld situation? I guess everybody wanted the war to be over with, but...

**LCS:** I really have always been sorry to say that the war...I was not immediately concerned with the news of the war all the time. I had no person that I was very close to in any battle. That must have made a difference. If I had a brother, or a boyfriend, or someone I knew who was over there fighting, I'm sure I would have been more aware of the movement of the battle. I was...I know I was aware generally, and so on, but didn't pay a lot of attention to it. I...I was all taken up with the facts of my everyday life, and we had a sorority that I was very active in. [Laughs]

**RD:** What was the...what was sorority life...?

**LCS:** Well, the...

**RD:** What did it amount to then?

**LCS:** Well, it was terrific! It was a local sorority, and for me at least, it was pretty wonderful.

**RD:** How many sororities were there?

**LCS:** There were four. They were local sororities and ah...they...we had two-year and four-year students. Almost all four-year girls were in sororities. We had an apartment...a kind of apartment, a living room, big living room and the kitchen. All four of the sororities had this in the basement of MacLean, where we could go between classes and have our parties. We took it rather seriously.

Hmmm, it's interesting that...of course, I was never in college when there were men in college, so that...there was no change for me. Hmmm, I liked it very much as it was. I suppose it was quite a bit like a women's college, I would guess. Hmmm...didn't even think about men being there or not there very much. Hmmm...we had a lot of fun, the sororities were very active. Hmmm...I really enjoyed it, I must say. [Chuckles] And for...you know, it was...it did...[unclear]

a lot of good, and there must have been a lot of us coming from what we might call somewhat disadvantaged backgrounds, where that kind of experience was very nice for us.

**RD:** Were faculty members involved with the sororities?

**LCS:** Oh, very much. Yeah. We had patron...we had advisors, we had several advisors, we had patrons. And patrons was...almost all faculty members had an affiliation with a sorority. And no, they wouldn't come to meetings regularly, but we would give teas, parties, had dinners, that kind of thing, and they would all be there, both men and women on faculty...it was probably...probably pretty well divided, so that all of the sororities had some of them.

**RD:** Were there any different...other differences? This is in the...an important difference between the second...the two-year and the four-year students.

**LCS:** [Chuckles]

**RD:** You said most of the four-year students joined the sororities.

**LCS:** Oh, yes...we were aware that they were two-year students. Ah, for one thing, they didn't...they had to get into their education courses for it. That was of course a teaching degree, the two-year degree, and immediately sent to take some of the courses, ah, liberal arts types of courses. Hmmm, so...after the first year, we didn't see very much of them, and then they were very busy student teaching. They were gone. They really weren't there very long.

**RD:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**LCS:** So that it was very difficult for one of them to get involved in the activities or in any responsible positions, because they weren't...just weren't able to do that. They were over at the campus school and so on, I believe, yeah.

**RD:** Yeah. You mentioned a basketball team. Ah, were there sports for women?

**LCS:** Well, we all had to take two full years of physical education at that time. So we played them. But there were no competitive sports. I'm sure there were none. I can't remember any interschool competitive sports. I don't really remember any intramural sports either. I don't think we had them.

**RD:** What other extra activities...extracurricular activities were there?

**LCS:** Well, we always had the yearbook, and the newspaper, and I was very active in those. And we had the sororities, and we continued most of the clubs. Like...hmmm, like the drama honor society, and the English society...oh, the education honorary societies...hmmm...and that, I believe, kept us pretty busy. All of those continued.

**RD:** Were there...were there plays?

**LCS:** Yes. Yes, there were plays. I was in a play, ah, which was called *Nine Girls* in my freshman year. And obviously, that play was chosen because there weren't many boys. So they...everybody in the cast was a girl, and we were as excited about putting that on as if...hmmm, you know, as if we...as if we'd had a college of ten thousand people, I guess. [Chuckles] It seemed wonderful, yes.

**RD:** Now where was that represented?

**LCS:** In Weld.

**RD:** In Weld Hall.

**LCS:** Yes. I thought it was wonderful, and I think there were plays every year. Because I know *The Corn is Green* was on...then perhaps done after some of the boys were back. Yes, it must have been. Dale Barnes[sp?] was...was the young boy in *The Corn is Green*. Yeah.

**RD:** Mmmm. How about music?

**LCS:** There was always a band, and always...a choir...I think. There was Euterpe, Maude Wencke had Euterpe. But yes, there were active...

**RD:** Euterpe was the women's choir?

**LCS:** Women's group, right. Yeah.

**RD:** Yeah.

**LCS:** Yeah. There might not...I don't suppose there was a mixed choir. As...a while...for...well, I don't know. I'm not sure about that. I wasn't in music, I had friends who were. And all of those things kept on in some way, I think.

**RD:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**LCS:** It must have been very small sometimes. Yes.

**RD:** When you came in, well, what did you major in? Or were you undeclared?

**LCS:** English. And oh...I wasn't undeclared. I had never heard of such...I never heard of...I don't think there was any such thing as undeclared. And I don't think...I wonder if it was possible to withdraw from classes or get incompletes? I never heard of such a thing. Hmmm. Didn't really take classes terribly seriously. Hmmm. I majored in English, because English had appealed to me in high school. I liked it, and I didn't give it much thought. I wanted to be a journalist, but...it wasn't really possible to get that degree at Moorhead State, and so that interest died out.

**RD:** Mmmm-hmmm. Ah, and you lived in the dorm?

**LCS:** Lived in the dorm some of the time. The first year, we couldn't live in the dorm. We had to live in rooms off campus. Of course, they were not very hard to get.

**RD:** No.

**LCS:** Rooms were very cheap. We always had meals served that were available. Oh...and after the fellows were gone who were in the Army, Air Force, hmmm, then we moved back into the dorms. Ah...we had a wonderful student center...built a room, a large room built in MacLean close to the...close to the tunnel, for people who remember that. Ah, it was a big, beautiful, sunny room with a big mural painted by students on one end where we could get coffee, and ice cream, and rolls. And that was open all day, and faculty would be there a lot, and we would be there a lot. There was a good deal of mingling of faculty and students in those days. Hmmm. A lot of it. And that room lent itself to that.

**RD:** Mmmm-hmmm. What kind of a library was there?

**LCS:** [Chuckles] Not very much. We didn't pay any attention to the library. One of the really bad things, I'm sure...well, I suppose wonderful, but pretty bad, is that we got our books free. And so, as a result, we had very old textbooks. And, hmmm, they were...I'm sure the teachers weren't allowed to change the textbooks. I know they were years old. And you got them free, and you had to turn them in undamaged, ah, and pay a dollar or something if you had damaged the textbooks, they went on and on. So there was no bookstore. I don't suppose I ever bought a book the whole time I was in college. Can you imagine? No one ever suggested I buy one. Hmmm, I didn't know about bookstores and books at that time.

And the library was very small, and ruled...and it was in where the bookstore is now, was part of MacLean, a minor room in MacLean. [Chuckles] And one...well, I went in there sometimes, but there was not much there, and it was ruled over by a very forbidding person. And...in general, there wasn't much told about the library. I mean, it didn't seem to be a very important...the part of a college that...that whole idea of the library as a heart of the college was quite new to me after I graduated! [Laughs]

**RD:** Not up to your...not up to your waist in term papers, apparently, then?

**LCS:** No, very few term papers. Although I *do* remember being in the library looking...but I think in education, we were supposed to look up curriculum materials, that kind of thing. They had quite a bit of that, as I remember. I'm sure there were lots of books to read. It's not one of the things that a lot of people did, I think, unfortunately.

**RD:** Did you use the public library at all?

**LCS:** A little. And I had used it in high school for some things, I remember, so I was familiar with it. Yes, I think I was down there quite a bit. And I may have taken a lot more books out of the library than I remember now. It doesn't seem to me I was down there very much. [Chuckles]

**RD:** Well...let's...ah, let's look at a typical day.

**LCS:** Yes.

**RD:** Took...how many classes? How many...how many hours?

**LCS:** Alright. I suppose I must have taken an average, most of the time, because one year...one quarter I took twenty-one or two, and that was a lot of hours, so I suppose the average was sixteen to eighteen. And hmmm...I took the same kinds of classes that are offered now. Hmmm. We didn't have freshman English. I must have been excused or something. I don't remember any of that. Ah, I had biology, which I fell in love with. That was wonderful, of course. Those were wonderful courses. Hmmm. We had to take a science course. We had a combination of chemistry and physics, it seems a little weird. It was six weeks of chemistry and six of physics, I guess. Hmmm. You know, I don't even know how many credits were required to graduate. I don't remember taking many, but I...[Laughs]

**RD:** [Chuckles]

**LCS:** [Laughing] I must have! I was very busy with lots of other things!

**RD:** Alright. Hmmm...

**LCS:** Wasn't a very serious student.

**RD:** Was there still chapel in those days?

**LCS:** Yeah! Yes, there was. There was. It died away during my tenure at Moorhead State, I think. Hmmm, yes, we had to go to...I think we called it chapel, or did we call it convocation? I think we called it chapel.

**RD:** Assembly, maybe?

**LCS:** No, not assembly. It was either convocation or chapel...I'm almost sure it was chapel. We sang, we always opened with a hymn. Hmmm, not necessarily a Christian hymn, because it was "Breathe on me, breath of God, fill me with life anew." And then you'd get into other things that might be...might be more controversial. Hmmm...and we had speakers or a program, and it was...we met in Weld, and the faculty had to go, and they took roll. I could see that there wasn't a very good system of enforcement, because one found one could be absent occasionally without anything happening to one. But they did take roll, made quite a show of writing down names of absentee...you were...had assigned seats.

**RD:** Well, how often was this?

**LCS:** Once a week, every Wednesday at ten o'clock, as I remember it.

**RD:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**LCS:** Or something like that. Hmmm, in the morning.

**RD:** What speaker do you remember hearing?

**LCS:** [Sighs] I remember when I was on the program, I had to give a reading. [Chuckles] The rest fade. I think faculty, and I think visitors, and so on. And I...I'm quite sure we had it every week, and I don't seem to remember a single program.

**RD:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**LCS:** We must have had faculty members who gave talks on things. Strange I wouldn't...but I don't. I remember singing "Breathe on me, Breath of God" though.

**RD:** Mmmm. In a small college like that, the president must have been very noticeable.

**LCS:** Yes. Dr. [Otto W.] Snarr. Yes...ah...he...Dr. Snarr was not a very convivial man. Hmmm. I think he was shy, and seemed a little austere, but I think he really was not one to given...given much to banter, hmmm, or circulating with students in a very easy, informal way at all. I don't think it was in his nature to do so. But we did see him a lot. And I was in his office on a number of occasions, I think, so that we had access to him. There was no...no difficulty with that. I don't think it was the kind of thing he enjoyed a lot. Hmmm...

**RD:** Did almost everybody go home every weekend?

**LCS:** No, I don't think so. I didn't, although I only lived ten miles. I went home a lot. I went...I'd go home one night and come back the next if I wanted to. I don't think so. Now one of the things in the first years, I remember that a lot of the girls had boyfriends that they wrote to, and boyfriends came to visit them. That was very big. You know, because all the men were in the service. And...and I worked at the student exchange where we did the telephone switchboard, and it was the school store where we sold paper, and pencils, and candy bars, and all that. And we also had the post office there. And when the mail came in, I think twice a day, and hmmm, there were many people there saying, "Is the mail in? Is the mail in?" Waiting for their letters from their boyfriends. So that was a very big thing, a lot of discussion of that.

So it isn't as though we weren't aware of the war. I was very much aware that this was...you know, many people's lives were centered somewhere else. And occasionally we'd hear about some...some alum or someone being killed in the war, of course, a few people that I'd known in high school did. I didn't happen to have anybody I was very really close to, or knew well at all, so...

But then when I was...hmmm...let's see, I suppose about the spring quarter of my junior year...men, which would have been in...Well, it must have been before that winter quarter of my junior year, which would have been the winter of 1944...no, 1945-46.

**RD:** Yeah.

**LCS:** People were coming back in quite large numbers. And in the spring of that year, spring of 1946, is what I remember, they were there in *big* numbers.

**RD:** Right.

**LCS:** Big numbers. And that...

**RD:** They started getting out in September of 1945. And...

**LCS:** Yes. It was a little shock. And there was that...that it was good to see all those men. On the other hand, I...I resented them. They seemed to upset the routine, and of course they were always in classes, and we soon discovered they were serious students, and it was not nearly as easy to get an A after they came back as it was before. [Laughs]

**RD:** Tell us more about their coming. Well, let's go back though to your weekends on the campus back in 1944-45. What did people do weekends?

**LCS:** What did they do weekends?

**RD:** They...they wrote letters to their boyfriends...

**LCS:** I'm sure a lot of them wrote letters to their boyfriends.

**RD:** They go downtown to eat?

**LCS:** Yes. We went downtown a lot. We went to movies. Hmmm. And we went downtown to eat a lot. A lot of people went to church on Sunday. But I think we went out to movies a lot, and we would have *parties*. Now the first year I was there, there were men from the Air Force, and there were parties, I remember. Hmmm. And there were sorority...a lot of sorority activities that we enjoyed. Ah...there weren't dances. I don't...I'm quite sure I never had a date the first two years I was in college, or went with a boy...with a man anywhere, I don't believe. I can't remember anything like that. Hmmm. So...I don't know if weekends seemed very much different from other times because I...I worked a lot, I think, on Saturdays and...hmmm...that's all I can remember for the weekends. [Laughs]

**RD:** At the beginning of your sophomore year there was a presidential election. Was there much...?



**LCS:** [Unclear].

**RD:** Was there any political activity at all? Or governors running, both states?

**LCS:** Yes...I don't...think...there was much discussion. Hmmm, I do remember...not...I've forgotten...can't remember what year that was. One student, a man who was a communist and was much of a Roosevelt hater, I think he must have come back from the service though. He talked a good deal about that. Hmmm, my family was very, very passionately pro-Roosevelt, and I don't suppose we ever considered that anyone else would ever be president. I mean it didn't...never considered that, it was very shocking then when he died. Hmmm. No, I would...I don't...I think there was very little political activity. Hmmm. You know, certainly aware of it, and so on, but I don't remember any.

We were very isolated, and because there were nearly all women...and with a few men, I had some very good friends I still have who were here. But we became a small group, and with all the advantages of a small group that meets together a lot, we had a lot of discussions of things. Some things that we learned in class, but also pooling of all kinds of ideas, and humor, and so on. But...but there certainly weren't the advantages of a large population with very much diversity. Not...and that came a lot later.

**RD:** When...? [Sighs] Well, let me think of the question I had. Oh. I was going to say, we all remember where we were when we heard about the assassination of John Kennedy. Do you remember where you were when you heard about the death of Franklin Roosevelt?

**LCS:** Okay. Ah...okay now, you know, I heard it at night. And now I don't remember exactly what I was doing when I heard about his death. I do remember being hideously shocked though, *shattered* by this idea. And I do remember saying to this student, I suppose the reason I remember his politics, the one I just mentioned, was that...was that I said it was something horrible about...you know, "That's horrible about Roosevelt." And he said he thought it was a good thing. And he said, I suppose at the time, that he was a Communist, so...I remember being really resenting...

**RD:** He gave himself as kind of the...

**LCS:** He was.

**RD:** Oh, yeah.

**LCS:** He was a...no, no, that he was a communist. I don't know if he knew what a communist was. [Laughing] But he...he claimed to be one! And I was...very much impressed!

**RD:** [Laughs]

**LCS:** Because I at least knew what Communists were in a very general sort of way. But, anyway, he was anti-Roosevelt and I was shocked at him. Hmmm.

**RD:** Well, let's get back to the reappearance of men on the campus then in the winter and spring of 1946. You said you resented them, and they were serious students, eh? What else happened as a result of the men coming back? Anything?

**LCS:** Well, I think it really...I was probably typical in perhaps the...at the age of what, nineteen or twenty, and then men entered my life, you know, as possible boyfriends, so things were quite new with me. Hmm. I...well, I should add that I was fortunate because I went to Washington, D.C. the one summer, hmmm, our...then I was freed from certain things. In the summer of 1943, a friend of mine and I went down to St. Cloud and worked on C47 airplanes. We riveted and so on, which was a new experience, a factory working experience. And I guess those jobs were...they were very good paying jobs.

**RD:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**LCS:** And they were only available because there was a war and so on. And they made...

**RD:** Yeah, there was still war work in 1945. December of 1945.

**LCS:** Yes, so this was the summer of 1943, then the summer of 1940...

**RD:** Oh, what...?

**LCS:** No, wait a minute. Summer of 1944...

**RD:** 1943, you were in Washington and 1944 in St. Cloud.

**LCS:** Yeah, 1944 I was in St. Cloud, and 1945...oh...just a minute here. Yeah. 1945, yes, I worked...good heavens, it was 1945. Well, I worked in Washington, D.C. again, and we worked in the Navy Annex, worked for the Navy. And those jobs were very easy to get. They recruited you from the hinterlands. And we found out that they would pay your way to Washington. If you worked six months, then you...hmmm...then you didn't have to pay them back. But they gave you some money to get there. But we only worked...didn't intend to stay, and worked only until I was ready...time for school to start again. And so we had to pay them back money, but that was like a loan without any interest. So they were recruiting, actually, people who...who worked, they didn't have to have any particular skills. But you had...I suppose you had to be able to read and write. Things were very...you know, there was no problem getting work. You went to work immediately, and it paid well.

**RD:** Okay. In the fall of 1946, a lot of men were back by that time. That was the...

**LCS:** In the fall of 1946, yes, they had come back. [Unclear].

**RD:** Yeah. Had some...and the school must have doubled in size.

**LCS:** Yes, it must have. Yes, it must have.

**RD:** Maybe even tripled.

**LCS:** I remember very, very clearly that...oh, I spent a great deal of time in the *Mystic* office, that was the school newspaper, and that was in the second floor of MacLean Hall. And it was a social center. Sometimes we ate there. We ate our meals there, several of us did. We were there all the time. Hmmm, and we also published the school newspaper there, but it was the center of our social life.

And there was a window...hmmm, the middle window facing the mall had no screen on it, so in the spring we would sit there in the window and read. And it was one of our favorite things to do. And I remember sitting there. I suppose it must have been the registration day of spring quarter, it must have been a nice day in 1940...well, then with that...well, no, spring of 1946. I remember the *whistles*. Some whistles and catcalls coming up from the mall, that's the way I remember it, anyway. And I was very annoyed just at all these men...or ten men, or several men, or quite a few men were down below, and...ah...[Laughing] Because no such thing had ever happened! Never noticed that your legs were hanging over or anything like that.

**RD:** [Laughs]

**LCS:** [Laughs] And I just felt very...rather resentful, these men in these large groups that I didn't even know. Well, then one grew...came to know individual men, that was different than...*then* the center of a lot of people's lives, ah, it would switch to a boyfriend, or a great love, or something, you know, like that.

**RD:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**LCS:** Or that kind of new experience. So it made a *lot* of difference. And our...as I remember, it made a difference in classes, too. There were a lot of people who came back to finish their senior year, and were much more sophisticated than we were, and were also serious. Because a lot of them had children and, oh, were married, and were very serious about the classwork. And the teachers were reminded, I guess, that students could be better. And so that those of us who'd got by on a little of this, little of that, and were excused from [unclear].

**RD:** Ah, were...were they a threat to some teachers?

**LCS:** Well, I don't remember that... seeing, noticing that. It never occurred to me. I would think maybe they would have been. I do remember some teachers...[Chuckles] That women, I believe, especially, were *enthralled* with them, with these men, because they were men, I guess. And I do...I thought some older women teachers, as I remember, were very silly about these young men and...were overly impressed about them much more than I was. Well, oh, terribly eager to get their opinions, as they were great men of the world. And I...

**RD:** [Chuckles]

**LCS:** That didn't seem clear that they were to me! [Laughs] So there must have been huge changes for teachers, I'm sure there were.

**RD:** It must have been a huge increase in the number of teachers. Where'd they all come from?

**LCS:** Hmmm. A lot of odds and ends picked up here and there during those years. Seemed to be people came, and were here a little while, and went. Ah...I don't know. I wonder...? I am not sure when the biggest increase was. It must have been during the 1946-47 year, or somewhere in there.

**RD:** 1946 was probably close to a...a crest, yes.

**LCS:** Yeah, it must have been. Yeah. Uh huh. Right. Hmmm. That...I don't know about where the teachers came from. There must have been a lot more. And then by that time I was a senior, didn't pay much attention, I suppose.

**RD:** Mmmm-hmmm. You don't remember any teachers you had who were new that year?

**LCS:** [Sighs] Oh...

**RD:** I know that some people came that year who have...who stayed on until very recently.

**LCS:** Are still here, practically, hmmm? Yeah.

**RD:** [Unclear] came that year, I think. Marla Wagner[sp?]?

**LCS:** Yeah...No, I think they must have been right after I came.

**RD:** Mmmm.

**LCS:** And Karen [Unclear] came right after, and Soc came...[Clarence] "Soc" Glasrud came the year after I graduated. Must have just missed them. No, I don't remember now. I suppose I would think...I don't believe there's anybody on the faculty now who was a teacher here when I was a student. I don't think there is anyone there...well...until a few years ago, but...

**RD:** Ah, did you...you student taught your senior year?

**LCS:** Yes, we taught over in the campus school.

**RD:** Did everybody teach in the campus school?

**LCS:** Ah, I...almost everybody did. Ah, the rural schoolteachers used to teach out at Oak Mound, and Averill, and so on. Ah, but...I think it was possible to teach in other schools, but all my friends taught in the campus school, everybody I knew, so most of us must have. Campus school

was an interesting place. I think there were a number of students who...probably who were faculty children who were good students. Hmmm, and some odds and ends of students who would...that somehow weren't at all adjusted to the public schools, and they had generally a rather...hmmm...[chuckles] terrible disciplinary level. They weren't very interested in doing anything.

I remember that there was a tremendous change between my experience student teaching in the campus school, and when I went to really teach in Glenwood, Minnesota the next year. The students in Glenwood were very serious and they all did their homework almost every single day. It was really incredible, the best students I've ever had in my life. I never saw anything like it; they just had a tradition of everybody did every assignment. They all...as I remember, they all did as well as they could possibly.

Hmmm, but in the campus school they would always say things like, "How long do you think you're going to last?" And, "You should see what we did to our last student teacher." And was generally great guffaws, and jokes, and...and that kind of threats, you know. They were...they were good, nobody ever did anything bad, but they...I suppose they were a little annoyed by this series of student teachers over and over again, changing every few...every ten weeks. And so...and I suppose every once in a while they got hold of a real interesting one that could be scared to death. [Chuckles] I didn't have that problem myself. Hmmm. I enjoyed it a bit. I do remember from my student teaching days that I taught a unit on American humor, and I...as I remember, I didn't crack a smile the entire time. I was frightened. That was my first one. Nobody laughed. [Laughs]

**RD:** [Laughs] Alright. Ah...you graduated in 1947.

**LCS:** Yes.

**RD:** The teacher shortage was still very real, wasn't it?

**LCS:** Oh, yes. There were many people who wanted me. You know, one didn't apply for any jobs; they came to *look* for you. I had lots of job offers. There was *no* problem getting a job. Nobody went without a job, and early, really. Didn't pay very well. I decided to live in Glenwood; that appealed to me, and I think paid a little more money. And I got twenty-two hundred that year.

**RD:** You came back to Moorhead State when?

**LCS:** I came back in 1960.

**RD:** You really hadn't been gone very long then, thirteen years.

**LCS:** Yeah, it seemed like forever then. But now, from this point of view, it doesn't seem very...but a great deal had happened in that time. See, I was the end of the old era, and Dr. Snarr

was still president and all...When Dr. Neumaier was president, I think things had changed a good deal, an awful lot. There was a very dramatic change.

**RD:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**LCS:** And the buildings were...

**RD:** Dr. Snarr was president until what...1956, I guess, 1955 or 1956.

**LCS:** I think so. Yes. Uh huh. Right.

**RD:** Mmmm-hmmm. So what were the differences?

**LCS:** Well, it was much bigger, and the influence of...there were all kinds of...well, of course, I saw it...I saw it from a teacher's point of view, but there were all kinds of academic...lively, academic types in English and so on, and...many more things happening among the faculty. Ah...I don't think when I was here, except for a few people, we had a very lively faculty as far as doing inter-faculty things. I mean, I don't...I wasn't aware that they thought much about their disciplines, that kind of thing. Hmmm. It seemed big to me when I came back. Hmmm. I liked it a lot.

**RD:** But you talked about 1960, suggesting the changes were improvements to anyone really committed to academic standards.

**LCS:** Yes. [Chuckles] Yeah.

**RD:** And yet you look back on fifteen years before, nineteen years before, with a good deal of...it seems to me something more than sentiment.

**LCS:** Yes, I think so. I...I...I...

**RD:** So how come? [Chuckles] How could a school like that be so important to someone?

**LCS:** I don't know. I wonder if it doesn't happen that...that you meet just a few of the right people, maybe that...ten people or fewer...and that...and it changes your whole life. But it seems like it's the whole school. Maybe that's it. Hmmm. Though...though the contrast with Moorhead High and Moorhead State to me was just of the interest in things of the mind, I guess, interest in ideas, that kind of thing. And that probably came from, you know, a few students that I was lucky enough to meet, and a few faculty members. It seemed that way, but the whole atmosphere was different. Oh, it's the difference between a high school and a college, you know. It was a college, no matter how small it was, and how depleted of its faculty and resources it was, it was still a college; it was still given to that. And I took to it like a duck to water.

But I think...I always felt I'd been...that I'd been deprived then in high school, and I resented that for years. It seemed to me there wasn't anything offered to somebody like me at all, that...even a

crumb. Hmm...so I know it really felt as though I bloomed at Moorhead State, but maybe many people did. And of course that now happens today all the time, too, I am sure, just the age where you're ready to grab onto something. Hmm. But I'd often wonder how it could be...why it...why it was that good? It seems like it was a good college. [Chuckles] It seemed like wonderful things happened to me. And yet when I think of a lot of classes, hmm, they were not...not wonderful by any means.

**RD:** Mmmm-hmmm. Alright. We've talked about a number of things. What have we left out?

**LCS:** Let me see. Hmm. Our general subject is...hmmm...

**RD:** Life in those years.

**LCS:** [Sighs] Life in those years. Now one thing about the college is that I really...that was very impressive to me. And I happened to be talking about this the other night, was that, hmm, the whole...for instance, the whole area of religion. Now that was in 1943. Hmm...in college, those questions about God, and about evolution, and about religion, and about what is life about were very real, at least to me, and to many of us were real in...especially in biology classes where we learned about evolution. I mean, those questions were brought up, and we were expected to deal with them in some way. There was no avoiding them.

Hmmm. So the whole question about the very meaning of life was brought very dramatically to my attention, and I'd presume to the attention of many other people. I remember spending a few nights crying because I lost my...some of my different kinds of faith, you know, where it had to be changed fundamentally, or some assumptions I'd made were obviously not true. I learned that in class that they weren't, and I had to absorb this, and then so that...the kind of thing, I'm sure that it is a typical college experience, but that was happening then, happened to me, and it was a fundamental mental...mental change as a result of my classes. Hmm, so the most important things were there.

Hmmm. Do you...would you...well, do you have any interest in knowing what we wore, and looked like, or anything?

**RD:** Oh, I don't see why not, yes. Ah, let's...let's say that whole...that whole...hmmm...oh, youth culture thing. What did you...what did you wear, what did you sing? When you'd listen to the radio? Hmm, something about that might be useful.

**LCS:** Well, the war...the war, of course, was...the war songs, with that sort of thing. Ah...but...[chuckles] we still as girls dressed then...oh, fixed our hair, and tried to look glamorous, just as though there were a whole lot of men there. I don't think that made any difference to that. We were all...and I...that's kind of interesting, you know. You would think one would just not go to much trouble about how you looked in the conventional way, whether your hair was curled. And well, I had to, of course, curl my hair, and it was long, and that took time, and I worked hard at it. That was just as...seemed to be just as important to...[chuckles] as it's ever been in my life. Though there was not anyone there except other women to see it, then

everybody was that way, it was important. Hmmm. Ah...what we...must have had radios, and sang those popular songs we heard on the radio.

**RD:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**LCS:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**RD:** No blue jeans, I take it?

**LCS:** We danced occasionally.

**RD:** Mmmm-hmmm.

**LCS:** Now we'd have a sorority dance, there were no men. We had a couple of them when I was a senior. We danced with each other, the girls. We had a formal dance. We had a formal dance in school, so I think it was the Flora Frick Gym. We danced with each other, and we were wearing long dresses. It was a thing the sorority did, and that's the way we did it, because there weren't any men. [Laughs] We didn't wear any blue jeans. We'd...we were not...we had no dress code, but we didn't wear pants very often. I think for the cold, but there wouldn't...you didn't wear slacks a lot, although we must have started to, because one wore slacks, of course, in war jobs and stuff, so...But you know, we didn't wear them very...all the time or anything. No blue jeans, nothing like that.

**RD:** Did many students have cars?

**LCS:** Okay. No...really, very few. Very few. I happened to have a friend who had a car. She had her parents' car, and so we could always drive in that, yes. But there were maybe...we parked in the mall, you know, in the center, center of the mall, and you could park anywhere you wanted to. But very few cars were parked there, I think. And I'm sure when the men came back from service, they had...they had cars.

**RD:** Mmmm-hmmm. We've run out of questions, I do believe.

**LCS:** Ran out of questions. Okay. It is now 3:03, so that's almost a full hour's...

**RD:** Full hour of questions, yes.

**LCS:** That okay?

**RD:** So, let's break it off. Life at Moorhead State Teacher's College during the Second World War.

[End of interview]

Transcription by Marilyn Olson-Trembl  
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