

Interview with
MARGARET DOBSON
29 November 2010
Recording Session 2 of 2

Portland State University Oral History
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Audited and edited by Carolee Harrison, August 2021

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MO: We are back on tape today with Margaret Dobson, continuing her oral history, and I guess we just decided that the date was November 29th, 2010.

Margaret, I wanted to sort of pick up where we left off, which was just a little bit after you actually joined the administration under [Joseph] Blumel, but before we get there, I thought maybe I might ask you just a couple of questions about the earlier period that we talked about last week and just a few people, maybe, that I'm kind of curious about, and just a couple of topics.

One was that we did talk about President Cramer, the first president of the school, and about the probably general disappointment that people felt that [Stephen] Epler didn't get that post.

MD: Yes, right.

MO: But I guess I didn't ask you at all about the length of Cramer's service. He was only, I guess, in the president's office for maybe three years?

MD: At the most. Yeah, it was not long at all.

MO: And that's sort of surprising, given how badly he wanted the position.

MD: Yes, right.

MO: Do you have any idea of why he chose to step down?

MD: No, I really don't. Some say the pressure was on him to depart, but here I am a new employee, a young freshman, as you might call me, having been hired in the first year of Cramer's service, and I wasn't really up on the politics of the university at that stage in my career.

MO: Right. You got into that a little later.

MD: Exactly.

MO: Also, I wanted to ask you about something else from roughly the same time period. Maybe we did talk about this last time, but I didn't find it in the parts of the interview that I reviewed, but you went overseas for a while...

MD: Yes.

MO: ...as an instructor, was it?

MD: Yes. I was selected as an All-American softball player to join a team that was sent to the Far East command in 1959, and we played the military men's softball teams in Korea, Japan, China, Okinawa, Guam, all over the Far East command, and entertained, more or less, the troops.

We traveled with Bob Hope and the Kim sisters, that type of thing, and it was an exciting adventure. Thirty-two

times up and down in these somewhat battered on-loan airplanes to China, and it was rather scary at times. But it was a marvelous experience.

MO: So those were probably planes maybe before they pressurized the cabins?

MD: Exactly, yeah. We sat on these seats that were just rope, rope seats along the side, and you could put your hand out these gun holes. It was that open. I don't know if they were trying to conserve on their fuel or just their technique of flying an airplane, but it seemed to me like they were going straight up and straight down for takeoff and landing. [laughing]

There were a number of the girls that got sick on those planes.

MO: But not you?

MD: No, I was lucky.

MO: Just a little jittery sometimes, eh?

MD: Exactly.

MO: Well, that must have been quite an experience. Now that you refreshed my memory, we did touch on it.

MD: Well, I was traveling, if anybody's in the military, as a G-13. That's pressing, I think, a general's rank, and so we had chauffeurs and all kinds of service. It was very nice.

MO: Okay. And then some people that maybe we didn't talk about, and some of these are folks from your early time. Brock Dixon was one.

MD: Yes.

MO: Who was he?

MD: He was one of my professors, and he is still in fact alive today, and I see him occasionally, and he attends a number of events here at the university. I saw him at the dedication recently of Lincoln Hall and other activities.

He left the university and became Vice President for Finance and Administration at the University of Las Vegas in Nevada, and in fact when I was traveling through Vegas, I visited with him and saw all of the new construction there that was under his stead as vice president. Beautiful, beautiful facilities, and of course they had a lot of money, a lot of money, and their performing arts facilities or athletic facilities are gorgeous.

He is of course retired. A very low-key gentleman. I love him dearly.¹

MO: And he spent some time here as a student and as..

MD: No, he was a professor when I met him.

MO: Okay.

MD: I can remember he smoked a pipe, and he would sit on a desk in the lecture room with his pipe and lecture. A very distinguished guy. Rather short, handsome, and of course we girls were thrilled to have him. [laughing]

MO: Well, that's another sort of side topic, I guess. So there was smoking in the classrooms back then?

MD: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

MO: When did that change, do you remember?

MD: I think it changed in the '60s, around '65, I think. I recall I was in the new building, the Stott Center, what

¹Brock Dixon served in several administrative positions at UNLV between 1971 and 1985, and relocated to Australia in 1986. He passed away in 2015.

is now the Stott Center, and it was the School of Health, Physical Education and Athletics before we named it the Stott Center, and I can recall we had been in there maybe about a year, and we had to send everybody outside to smoke, and that happened probably about '65, campus-wide. Yeah, about that time.

MO: But before that I guess both students and professors could smoke?

MD: Anyplace, anywhere. Right. I see in the news where the University of Oregon entire campus is going smoke-free in 2012.

MO: Oh, boy.

MD: Yeah, on campus, the entire campus. Even outdoors. So it says something about the energies now focused on the non-smoking elements of living better.

MO: Well, I suppose it's maybe a good thing in terms of influencing young people who are coming through.

MD: Exactly. Right.

MO: Another name was Dick Halley.

MD: He was like a father to me. In fact, he was the head of the Economics Department when I came to the university, and I can recall I played handball with him and racquetball. He was one of the guys that I played with.

He lived a few blocks from where I did here in the West Hills, and I sought his advice, "Should I buy another home that's larger, or should I remodel, Dick?"

And he says, "Well, Margaret, you have a beautiful piece of property there, and I would remodel."

And through his wisdom, I did so and have appreciated his advice to this day.

He became Vice President for Academic Affairs when Joe [Blumel] in 1974 became president, and of course Joe was an

economist, and so he picked his mentor as his vice president.

Dick Halley was a joy to work with. In fact, I still see Dick. He's still alive, not too well, but he's now 90-some years old. Wonderful guy.²

MO: And this home that he suggested you remodel is the one you still reside in?

MD: Exactly. Right. It was a good show.

MO: And Stan Johnson, I'm not sure if we..

MD: Well, I just had a number of English classes from him, and students just loved his low-key manner, easy-going posture during his lectures. He was just one of the favorite teachers, I think, of most of the students.

As I understand it, he's still alive, but I haven't seen him recently.³

MO: Another one was Hildegard Weiss.

MD: She's also an English teacher, and they chummed together for many years, she and Stan.

Hildie is still alive and doing quite well—not too well at the moment, but she again is another one of the original Vanport teachers, and she used to do a lot of activities with the students, and we all liked her very much.⁴

MO: I just realized there was another thing I wanted to ask you about, something you said about Dick Halley, and that was that I guess you said you played handball with him?

² Dick Halley was a WWII veteran and one of the founding members of the Vanport faculty. He passed away in 2012.

³ Stan Johnson served in the Pacific during WWII and joined the Portland State faculty in 1950. He passed away in 2011.

⁴ Hildegard Weiss taught English at Portland State for more than thirty years. She passed away in 2012.

MD: Yes.

MO: I imagine that you might have been one of the few women that were on the handball court; is that correct?

MD: Oh, yeah. Right, right. There were a few of us.

MO: Who were some of the other athletic women that you remember?

MD: Oh, I really didn't know them that well. One is a judge right now, and I'm trying to think of her name, and she was a great racquetball player. Maybe one member of our faculty, Marge Hague, played. Linda Neklason, sometimes. They were faculty in the phys ed department. I taught racquetball to women. We had classes in racquetball.

MO: Okay. Another name is Joe Holland.

MD: Yeah. Well, he was the father of athletics. He was the first and only head of that program, and first and only football coach; first football coach, and later became Athletic Director.

He had a tough row to hoe. We were growing and got approval to have a new facility built, which again is the Stott Center today, and he was instructed by the administration to save as much money as possible because we didn't have a separate kitty to purchase all the new equipment we would need to facilitate that activity.

Of course the coaches didn't know that, and the coaches felt he wasn't supporting them in the way they expected in terms of their football equipment and travel and money and support. As a result, some of them spoke out and were quickly dismissed, and people remember that. But Joe was instructed to do that, or we would not have had the equipment needed to open the building and have activities. They didn't know that, but some of the coaches really had quite a tirade of unhappy coaches there, and as a result, Joe just said, "Good-bye."

I'm sure some of our alumni know who those coaches are. They were good coaches.

MO: But they were...

MD: They were outspoken against what was going on, and you don't do that.

MO: So they were out of here.

MD: Yeah, right.

MO: Now, were you implying that to some extent that also helped balance the budget, so to speak, or were they replaced when they left?

MD: Well, in fact, the football coach claimed that he was having injuries because of lack of the proper equipment, and the basketball coach—everybody knows who it was, it was Marion Pericin, and he was a great, great basketball coach from Gonzaga—and he complained because of the lack of support for scholarships and things like that, and then they turned around and brought in another football coach, DeSylvia, and he cried poor mouth, too, and they let go of him after two years.

So Joe had a tough time, but he retired I think with some distinction. He was like a lot of us: while we were teaching and administrating, we were also getting our degrees, and I can remember the day he got his doctoral degree and our celebration because we were so happy for him.

MO: So you had a little party?

MD: Yeah.

MO: And Arba Ager?

MD: He was a famous coach here in the city of Portland for years, and he was an all-around guy. He mainly coached

baseball, and some football at Vanport, and he and his brother had—I think it was called, I'm trying to remember—it's an oil company that delivered oil out of Vancouver, and so he had that business on the side when he was working at Vanport.

He left to go back into business and retired in Long Beach, Washington. I saw him there several years ago. He has since passed. Great personality.

MO: Actually, speaking of businesses on the side, that reminded me of something I also meant to ask you about Cramer. Was he the one—I believe I might be right about this—that he and his wife operated a business in Northwest Portland called Bonnie's Burgers? Did you know about that?

MD: Could be. I'm not sure about that. But many of our faculty, because of the low salaries, had to have another job. I know that most of the men in our department, like Bob Scruggs, the basketball coach, he worked at night at J.C. Penney selling shoes, you know.

MO: Oh, yeah?

MD: Oh, sure, because our salaries were not good.

MO: Did you work at any other jobs, then?

MD: I think I worked part-time for the florist, our sponsors for softball.

MO: It was a little tough to make ends meet on the salaries, eh?

MD: Exactly. Yeah.

MO: And Gary Saylers?

MD: I didn't know him too well. He was a student at Vanport, along with Robin Williams, and I think he was an engineering major, but I'm not sure.

MO: Okay. Maybe this is another Vanport student, John Hakanson?

MD: Oh, yes. He ended up being a very, very distinguished president at Clackamas Community College. He retired there. He still attends activities at Portland State. However, in recent years he has not been well enough.

He was one of our more outstanding graduates, and he had played a major role in speaking in front of the legislature, along with Barbara Roberts, sister of Betty Roberts, the Justice, on getting us college status, from extension center to college status in 1955.⁵

MO: That's right, I remember that now. He was involved in drafting the legislation.

MD: Yes, exactly. Right.

MO: That's right. It's interesting that you mentioned the Roberts' because that's who I was going to go to next. I guess you must have known both Barbara and Frank?

MD: Oh, yes. Barbara and Frank were dear, dear, dear friends, yeah, and I still visit with Barbara frequently.

MO: What kind of interactions did you have with them? Were they just friends, or did you actually work with either Barbara or Frank on issues?

MD: Oh, my heavens, yes. Oh, my goodness, yes. We don't talk about those things, but you always try to use your influence where you can with the people that have powerful seats, and you bet when we believed in something we'd ask for their support.

⁵ Barbara Roberts and Betty Roberts are not related. They share the last name of Frank Roberts, who was married to Betty from 1960-1965 and to Barbara from 1974 until his death in 1993.

Frank Roberts and Ron Cease, who was one the legislators, was head of one of our urban studies departments. They helped a lot. Marko Haggard was assistant to [Mark] Hatfield, and he was our famous professor in... I want to say history, and he was famous of course with his students. He was quite a character. Held his classes at the Cheerful Tortoise.

MO: Oh yeah! [laughing] That would be an interesting venue for a class.

MD: Exactly. In those days, professors—I guess they do nowadays, I don't know—had a lot of freedom. If the students agreed, they could do it.

MO: Sure. Can you remember any of the sort of legislative issues or things that you got help on from some of these people?

MD: Oh, a lot of them had to do with appointments to various committees, where the power was going to go, who would be the next member of the Board of Higher Education, for instance. We'd try to work hard to try to get somebody that felt we were worthy of their attention.

MO: Another political figure... well, actually, before I go there, I guess you knew Frank also as a faculty member?

MD: Yes, indeed.

MO: What was he like as a teacher?

MD: Well-liked and very much respected by the students. Oh, yeah.

MO: And were you aware at the time of the courtship of Barbara by Frank when she was lobbying, I think, for special ed, I believe?

MD: Oh, golly, I didn't follow that. I know about it, read about it in Barbara's book. She was always working on very humanistic issues, and not unusual for her to spend a lot of her energies for the good of people.

MO: And did you go to her for any issues... ?

MD: Oh, I certainly did, right to the day she stepped out of her governorship.

MO: Well, I was going to say when she was in the governor's office?

MD: You'd better believe it. I wasn't there every week, but I frequented her guest chair on occasion, when things were really difficult.

MO: And you got her ear on some issues, I guess?

MD: Yeah. People will recall the departure of President [Natale] Sicuro. I was his vice president, provost, for two years, and he was not a favorite candidate of the faculty for his appointment to the presidency. In fact, he was a negative recommendation, but Bud Davis, Chancellor, appointed him. He was at that time president at Southern Oregon College.

I'd known Sicuro for many years prior to that time. During his presidency there, we had become friends.

So this man did not at all meet the expectations of the faculty. So I went through a couple years of real harassment for me to play a role in getting him dismissed. I ended up resigning.

MO: You resigned your post as provost?

MD: I resigned; said I retired, and I resigned, but I said nothing to the press. But it wasn't until Barbara Roberts leveled with me and said, "Get the hell out of there, Margaret. You've been there for 34 years. You don't need to take all that. Get out." And so I resigned.

MO: So it was Barbara Roberts, then, that counseled you on that?

MD: You better believe it. It was the best thing I ever did, and you will note that he was let go six months after I resigned, and I don't go into the problems. The faculty will shout them out to you anytime, but not me. I've never talked anything bad about him.

MO: Were you sorry to see him go? Not really, huh?

MD: No way. The departments would invite me to come visit and listen to why they wanted him out, and you know, the pressure was something else. Oh, well, we all go through these trials and tribulations, I guess.

MO: But you don't want to comment on...

MD: Oh, no.

MO: ...what his failings were?

MD: No.

MO: Okay. Then another one that I note you had some interaction with, another political figure, is Mildred Schwab?

MD: Oh, yes.

MO: And did you know her?

MD: Very well. Very well. Yeah, we were just good friends. She was quite a university supporter, and she would join us on the buses going to and from games. She was just a dear friend of the university, and I did a lot of things socially with her and always admired her energy, and I admired her brilliance and leadership abilities, and worked with her with a group of women helping other women, as I

mentioned earlier, as a mentor for them in terms of advancement in their professions, and we became very good friends.

MO: Oh, yeah. And just a couple other names here, I guess. Bill Walker?

MD: Oh, yes. His father was the first student to be admitted to the Extension Center.

MO: Way back when, eh?

MD: Way back when. First student. And there's a picture of him, I believe, in the student center building on campus receiving his notice of admission from Steve Epler, President Epler. And his son has remained very active in support of the university: Bill, Junior.

MO: Okay. One thing that I also wanted to talk about a little bit was that you formed the women's club Pi Epsilon?

MD: Yeah. We just made up that name, Pi Epsilon Kappa... something like that, or Pi Epsilon Pi, that's what it was. We thought it sounded distinguished, but it was just a group of us, about six or seven, and we decided to try to create a women's athletic interest group, and that's how most of those sororities and clubs got organized, just through student effort.

So we decided we'd be a legitimate part of student body so maybe we could get a little bit of the student fee money to help us go play other schools in sports! And that was at the old shipyard in Vanport.

MO: Oh, so this was way back when.

MD: Oh, yeah. Right. People don't realize that we had women's athletic activities in those days, but we did. It wasn't any structured league or anything; it was just playing for fun.

MO: Okay. Well, in terms of the early days that may be... well, who knows, we might discover even more things to talk about about the early days.

MD: Right.

MO: But let's jump over a little bit to... we talked a little bit about Title IX last time, and that was right at the point when you joined the administration, too... ?

MD: Right.

MO: ...and you mentioned in our interview last week that you testified at Western Oregon.

MD: Yeah, I testified on behalf of Portland State.

MO: And I guess one of the things that was important here at Portland State was the fact that at that time, when Title IX became law, there were quite a few women that were not being paid...

MD: Not only women, but men. It was interesting, women and men that had been discriminated against.

MO: Well, that's interesting.

MD: Yeah, it's interesting, yeah. Right.

MO: And then all of a sudden the university had to...

MD: Well, the State Board of Higher Education allocated so much money for all the universities to bring themselves into compliance with Title IX, mainly to make salaries equitable from their positions and activities, and there was nothing hidden about it in the past where the committees would allocate more money to men than to women because they felt the men were the people to provide the most support for raising the family, and so they automatically gave more money and promotions to men. I

lived through that, and we accepted it, but women never did catch up with them.

MO: But it wasn't a budgetary problem for Portland State, then?

MD: Oh, no. No, no. There was an allocation of money to be given to every university, and I don't even think we had a limit placed upon us in terms of dollars.

MO: Just whatever it took?

MD: Just so we could... and it took me a year to analyze the faculty. I think at that time we had about 800 faculty, and I thought I did a reasonable job.

MO: Well, another sort of—I'm not sure how important it was, but the House Un-American Activities Committee, I guess, was—well, earlier there was an investigation at Reed College in the early '50s, but I guess in 1967 they came to Portland State and identified some people on campus that they thought were communists?

MD: Right.

MO: Were you aware much of that situation?

MD: I was aware, but I was merely a faculty member at that time. When I inherited my position, we had a locked file with all that information, and I had it hidden behind my desk. So I was quite aware of what was going on, but had no role in it.

MO: How did people feel about that? It must have been...

MD: Controversial, very controversial.

MO: So people on both sides of the issue?

MD: Exactly. Exactly. Typical, I think, of universities.

MO: And did that cause any real serious dissension among the faculty?

MD: I heard that it did in some departments, but I was not involved.

MO: What was the university's official stance on it? They just cooperated with the Committee or what?

MD: Oh, yes. Yeah.

MO: Okay. Well, I was trying to remember if we talked about... we must have talked about President Millar last time.

MD: And again, I was a faculty member under him.

MO: Right.

MD: I think I did mention Earl Blumenauer was one of his assistants in the Office of the President. Kay Corbett of the famous Corbett family here in Portland was another one of his assistants in terms of university activity. She arranged all the activities associated with graduation and university events and was a very outstanding person in that capacity.

MO: Then of course there was Blumel, who got you into the administration.

MD: Right.

MO: And I know we talked a little bit about him. Did we talk about Wolfe? I guess he was just before Blumel.

MD: Yeah, I don't have much to say about him.

MO: Okay. All right. Oh, and then the other I guess pretty controversial issue here on campus was when Frank Giese was

convicted of conspiracy activity with respect to his efforts against the Vietnam war.

MD: Yes.

MO: What did you know of that situation?

MD: Again, being a faculty member in another department, it didn't have any effect on us or the faculty as a whole.

I think that the university handled all those situations like that very carefully, very astutely, and with kid gloves. I think the administration tried to low-key it as much as possible, and I'm just a bystander listening to what the faculty are saying, you know, and there isn't too much uproar on campus over this, as I recall.

MO: Did you know Frank?

MD: Yes. Oh, yeah.

MO: What would say about him? What was he like?

MD: He was a very dynamic, outgoing individual that was not afraid to express himself.

MO: Well, that makes sense.

MD: That's right.

MO: Well, what did you think about his being convicted on these charges?

MD: Well, I'm all for justice and what's right, and I think most of us said it's too bad, but if it was justified, it was justified. That's the way it goes. There were other people, many other people investigated that never got the headlines.

MO: But probably they didn't go to jail, either?

MD: No, they didn't go to jail.

MO: Well, if I remember correctly... I probably should have take a look at the details of Frank's case, but I believe that some of the evidence was a little bit flimsy considering he was a university professor.

MD: Yes. Right.

MO: [indiscernible].

MD: Yeah, right. It was controversial, there's no doubt.

MO: Okay. Well, I guess the other thing that you were really involved in, in fact we talked about it a little bit last time, was the first graduate degree in urban studies?

MD: Yeah. In the '80s, late '70s and '80s, was a period of most rapid growth in the academic structure of the university, under the 12-year leadership of President Blumel, and all of the degrees that were awarded were strategically planned in terms of meeting certain goals we set.

At that time I recall a planning committee where we wanted to become a center of excellence in certain disciplines and to put our energies into those disciplines, and by that I mean money, faculty, courses, degrees. We wanted to be a center of excellence in international studies. We wanted to become a center of excellence in teacher education. We wanted to be a center of excellence in urban studies.

I probably have forgotten some, and I'll get criticized for that, but anyway, we targeted areas to make us what we are today, and redefined, but if you go back and look at the years we awarded undergraduate, master's and doctoral degrees, it was all strategically done, piecemeal by piecemeal, adding on, making it different, building the university into the types of academic units we have today. The different schools and colleges are much different than

they used to be as a result of our targeting certain areas of the development.

MO: In terms of targeting these areas, were these strengths that Portland State thought they already had?

MD: Well, some of them were; we just thought we had the potential, and even though in the sciences and computer science, for instance, Oregon State has always been a leader in engineering and the computer science area. But we believed that the metropolitan area needed us. With much of the leadership in terms of the industry in Beaverton, Tektronix and whatever, we had their support to have more classes for their students, and as a result of their support we were able to get the mechanical engineering degree, the computer science degree, the electrical engineering Ph.D. But it took years of politicking, years of building courses, at least four or five.

MO: Did you interact much with some of the beneficiaries of these programs?

MD: Of course. We had to. We had a council, composed of the number one CEOs of Hewlett Packard, and you could name them, you know, Intel, Tek, all those, and we'd meet as a council. We created it for them, and we got a lot of feedback from them on what they needed, and we would offer, sometimes, classes on their campuses and attune our degrees to their needs, and we do to this day.

MO: And did some of these corporations then also help the university out financially?

MD: Oh, my, yes. Many of them have hired our professors and supported their salaries, in addition to what the state can afford to pay them, would put them on their payroll as a research scientist, and in fact they've done some great research for them. To attract these top scientists, you pay a lot of money, and they found it beneficial to support that hire, as well as we did, and it worked out very well.

MO: I guess another... was it the Oregon Graduate... ?

MD: Center.

MO: Yeah. They were trying to supply some of the same opportunities.

MD: They were part of it. We helped create that center.

MO: Okay.

MD: Oh, yeah. We're one and the same. Oh, yes.

MO: So that's a partnership, then?

MD: Exactly, yeah. Oh, my, yes. I worked very closely with Cliff Smith, the head of that council and that program, and in fact recommended him, and he did get the presidency at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee. One of my dear friends.

MO: Okay. Did we talk about Orcilia Forbes last time?

MD: Orcilia? No, we didn't.

MO: Yeah. I guess she was the first female dean?

MD: Yes. When I first came to the university, she was a nurse in our counseling department, in our health services, and then she became the head of that department, and then we created the position of head of the student body and made it a deanship, and eventually a vice president. She was a beautiful lady, very poised. As an aside, she was very well dressed. Shopped in Paris for her wardrobe.

Nevertheless, she was well-known for her leadership in the City Club of Portland, was president of that organization, which says something about her leadership capabilities.

She had always wanted to be in the field of finance and administration, or development, and she left Portland State to go to New Mexico, where she used to go to school, and the president there made her head of development.

He left there and became president of Oregon State, Reser, and she was then the Finance Administration Vice President when she retired at Oregon State.

MO: And were you friends with her, then?

MD: Oh, my heavens, yes. We shared many problems together, and many good things, and many things we sought each other's counsel.

MO: This is maybe slightly jumping ahead in terms of chronology, I'm not sure, but you mentioned Orcilia became the president of the City Club?

MD: Yes.

MO: And you were also a member?

MD: A member, sure, yeah.

MO: Were you a member at that time, then?

MD: Yes. And Joe Blumel, yeah.

MO: And when did you first join the City Club?

MD: I can't remember. My gosh, it goes back years. I know I chaired several committees. One was whether to continue having Glendoveer a golf course or do away with it, and I chaired that committee, and we saved Glendoveer. There was some politicking in that county to do some other things with it, but people thanked us profusely because it's so well-used, not only for golf, but for walking trails and other activities in that location. I remember that was a big assignment I had and a controversial one for the City Club, and we won it.

MO: Any other things to say about the City Club or your activities?

MD: Oh, I just think it's very, very stimulating because they do take on some very difficult issues, not always popular with people, their outcome and their recommendations, and sometimes their recommendations are ignored, but at other times they're listened to, too. So it's a very invigorating, academically-oriented club, and you meet some very, very intelligent and key people of the city in leadership roles by associating with those members, and you learn a lot.

MO: This possibly could be in the City Club context, but it also could be in the context of your work with the Oregon high-tech sector and the graduate center. Were there any CEOs or leaders, business leaders that you came to know well?

MD: Yeah, Winningstad, Norm, who just recently passed away.

MO: That's right. Very recently.

MD: Just last week. He used to lend us his helicopter.

MO: Oh, yeah?

MD: Oh, yeah.

MO: For what purpose?

MD: Well, one was with Pokey Allen to do a commercial for football right out here in the park blocks. See, that's the kind of a guy he was. Of course, I think his obituary mentions his loan of the helicopter for a number of political and professional fun-type activities. Anyway, yeah, he let us use that.

MO: So did he ever take you for a ride in his helicopter?

MD: Not me. I didn't go.

MO: Because you didn't want to or... ?

MD: Oh, I was never asked. I probably would have gone.

MO: I imagine if you could handle that plane ride back in 1959, you could handle a helicopter ride.

MD: Right.

MD: Well, a lot of people don't know, talking about the City Club and activities, I personally started the dance program here at Portland State and hired a director of dance, Nancy Matschek, and she built the department to the point where we offered a certificate in dance, and then a degree in dance. We no longer have it today, but we also started a ballet company here at Portland State. People don't know, but Oregon Ballet today started here at Portland State University.

MO: Really?

MD: Yes, because we started Portland State University Ballet, and then that went to Portland Ballet and then got a board of directors, and now it's Oregon Ballet, and it was originally out of us doing that.

A lot of people don't know the role the university has played in many areas, and a lot of that was political, and Mrs. Winningstad, Dolores Winningstad helped and supported our ballet growth and development, and she served, as I recall, on our board for some time. She was in the arts, as you know, and she helped us out.

MO: So you knew Dolores, then, too.

MD: Yeah.

MO: And you were on the board of this ballet company, then?

MD: No. Well, I did at first, sure, to get going.

MO: Well, tell me about starting it up here at Portland State. How did you recruit talent?

MD: Well, through the efforts of Nancy Matschek; she got some National Endowment grants to give us some money to do the productions and to recruit faculty, and that's how it got done.

MO: And where were the productions staged?

MD: Right here in Lincoln Hall.

MO: Okay.

MD: To begin with. And at Shattuck School; at one time they had a facility.

MO: Oh, really?

MD: Yeah.

MO: And I guess Lincoln also has just been upgraded.

MD: Oh, it's beautiful.

MO: That was just, what, a couple months ago, wasn't it?

MD: Yes. Right.

MO: Did you have a hand in that?

MD: Not really.

MO: Okay.

MD: I had a hand in it over the years, pushing to get it done.

MO: Okay. And it finally got done.

MD: Yeah, right.

MO: Okay. The other thing that happened I guess right around the time that you joined the administration was that the faculty voted for a collective bargaining unit...

MD: Yes.

MO: ...and I guess went with the American Association of University Professors.

MD: Right.

MO: Can you tell me how the administration...

MD: I sat at the table.

MO: Tell me more.

MD: Yeah, tell me more. Well, if I were a faculty member, I would not have supported it. I believe that university professors are professional and don't need a union, but nevertheless, the bargaining was quite amenable, I think, to both parties. I sat on that table for at least three times doing contract negotiations.

MO: And what would you say about the AAUP?

MD: Oh, I think it's a fine organization.

MO: But you wouldn't have supported unionizing?

MD: No, I don't think so because I believed we were a profession, not a common labor job. We were strong enough to earn our way. Like lawyers, I don't think they should

have unions, and doctors, I don't think they should have unions. But this is a different day and age.

MO: So you didn't feel that the faculty necessarily needed representation or collective bargaining, then, to obtain... ?

MD: Oh, I'm sure that it's played a role, particularly when most campuses went to collective bargaining. So I think today it's helped.

Bill Lemman, by the way, as a result of his Vice Chancellorship, not when he was Chancellor, but when he was Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration, sat on every university campus board to negotiate those contracts, and a lot of us of course had a lot of faith in Bill and his knowledge.

He was the type of negotiator that kept the negotiations going—not always on a friendly basis—but at least he'd keep them going, and I think the negotiations went very well most of the time as a result of his leadership and his personality, and his knowledge to negotiate. I appreciated working with him in that capacity.

MO: Who were the faculty members that were... ?

MD: Oh, they would vote them in, you know. They would vote in who went to the table, and it changes all the time. Regular faculty people.

MO: And were there particular people on the faculty that were advocating or agitating for the collective bargaining?

MD: Oh, of course.

MO: Who were some of the leaders?

MD: I don't know. I don't know if they'd want me to mention it. You become very cautious when you're an administrator.

MO: But you're no longer an administrator.

MD: Yeah, but that doesn't make any difference, in my opinion.

MO: Okay. All right. A general question I guess I might ask you is once you made the leap from being a teacher here... well, of course you'd already been in some leadership positions when you were a teacher...

MD: Right.

MO: ...but once you got in to the administration, how did that change affect you? You mentioned that being an administrator is sometimes lonely. That must have been a real shift of gears for you to all of a sudden be sitting in the administrative role rather than the teaching role. So what was that transition like for you?

MD: It was not easy. You mature a lot. As I told you, one of the major points of advice President Blumel gave me when he appointed me as vice president, he says, "Margaret, you need to listen more."

MO: Yeah, you did tell me that.

MD: And that was probably the best advice anyone could have given me.

I think my athletic background prepared me for the leadership roles that I played here at the university. I learned quickly in working with members of the Council of Academic Deans, who head all the schools and colleges, that they're all different, and you work differently with each one.

That is key, I think, with any good leader, you work with the individuals, and there's no standard answer that works with everyone in terms of resolving problems.

I can recall a difficult time I had with a dean of engineering... [tape change; MD resumes] ...I think it's a good thing that I like people. And you quickly learn, as I said, that you work differently with each person because they are

different. That's the same thing when you're coaching; you don't use the same techniques to energize one player, and the same one to energize this player. You work with the individual.

I can recall one dean who, because of his nationality, liked always to bargain. Just normal for him. And the first time I handed him his new budget for the academic year, I learned quickly he liked to bargain. He came back to me, I don't know, fifteen times to try to get more money, and you can believe me, the next time when I presented his budget, I presented it much lower than I was willing to give him, so I let him think he'd won because I let him bargain me up.

You know, you have to learn those things, how to work with different people. In fact, I was talking about that topic not too long ago, and I picked out some prose that kind of exemplifies what I was saying: Some people are like wheelbarrows. They have to be pushed. Some are like trailers that have to be pulled. Some are like kites; if you don't keep a string on them, they fly away. Some are like footballs; you can't tell which way they will bounce. Some are like balloons, full of wind and likely to blow up unless carefully handled.

And let me tell you, I learned that fast, and I think it helped in my relationships with the deans in all of the very difficult decisions we had to make throughout the years.

I learned also never to put an item on the agenda for the council meeting unless I knew where the deans were on the topic in terms of pro and con. I spent a lot of time getting up early in the morning and having coffee and going to lunch and having people for dinner to negotiate the votes I needed to get things passed in that council meeting, and then I'd put it on the agenda.

MO: So you'd line up the votes... ?

MD: Most of the time, yeah. Most of the time I knew I had it won. You don't go in there cold, not with the powerful personnel. They're all men, and I'm the only woman.

MO: Yeah, so you made sure you had your ducks in a row.

MD: I had my ducks in a row. You've got to do that. But it's fun.

The other thing I think a lot of women don't know is that if you ask a favor, you do a favor back. I've talked to so many women in leadership positions who are always begging, but not thinking about, "Well, what can I do for them?"

And that's wrong. Men are good about this. "Hey, if you do this for me, I'll do that for you."

I always had something in my back pocket to offer. You don't just beg. A lot of women don't know that.

MO: So it's something that comes more naturally to men, maybe?

MD: Yeah. Right.

MO: Is there a particular example of something you had in the back pocket that you...

MD: No, it just depends on the situation. It could be a budget item. Most of the time it was.

MO: I guess you were learning how to bargain with that. You were talking about that there were many, many difficult problems that you had to deal with over the years. Are there particular ones that you can offer as examples of some of the more serious problems you had to face?

MD: I think they're all serious because they all affect people. You know, a promotion, a ten-year decision could mean a college education for one of their children, could mean a new house. Budgetary decisions are very, very key to people. They're all tough.

The most stressful time I went through was in '72 when the university went into a state of financial exigency, and we had to terminate professors with tenure and let go of

people, and that was my job, to recommend to the president where the cuts would be, and that was very difficult.

It's all tough as an administrator, I think. You either like to play chess or you don't like to play chess.
[laughing]

MO: Yeah. But I guess PSU came through that all right.

MD: Yeah, fortunately Joe was very brilliant in restructuring the university, doing away with certain schools and colleges and creating one instead of two, and shifting departments, and it all worked out very positive. Yeah.

MO: I imagine that was because your money from the state declined? Was it just the slump in the economy at that time that caused it?

MD: Yeah. Our enrollment went down and for some reason the economy, and budget reductions by the board, legislature.

MO: Right after Sicuro, I guess Roger Edgington..

MD: He was the acting [president].

MO: Who was he?

MD: He was Vice President for Finance and Administration. I'd already left the university.

MO: Oh, you were already gone by then?

MD: Yeah.

MO: Okay. And then just shortly after that Judith Ramaley became president of Portland State. But you were still in touch with the organization, weren't you?

MD: Oh, sure. Of course. I still am.

MO: Yeah, I know. Well, actually before we go there, did you have much to do with fundraising for the university when you were still employed here?

MD: Did I have much to do with what?

MO: Fundraising, raising money?

MD: Some, but that was not my primary job, no.

MO: Okay.

MD: Everybody fundraises.

MO: So you left in 1990?

MD: Yeah, '90. You see, I stayed on teaching graduate courses for three years.

MO: After that?

MD: Yeah.

MO: And what were the courses you taught then?

MD: Administration in the School of Ed, and business.

MO: And what prompted you to retire at that time? Was it just time?

MD: I believe I already covered that when I said I resigned under Sicuro.

MO: Oh, right. Right. Okay, that's right. But you must have been somewhat ready at that point?

MD: Yes, of course.

MO: Okay. Well, you're still involved with the university. You told me you come in a few times every week, or one or two times?

MD: Right.

MO: What's the nature of your involvement, then, since you left in 1990?

MD: Oh, it just depends on what's going on at any certain time. I've played a role and been on a number of committees in the selection of the athletic personnel, interviewing candidates. I've been active in terms of promotions for certain events that are fundraisers for athletics, like the women's golf tournament and things of that sort.

MO: Do people call you from Portland State when they need help on a particular issue?

MD: Oh, sure.

MO: What are some of the projects you've worked on since leaving?

MD: Oh, golly. Mainly in the Department of Athletics in terms of...

MO: Yeah, that's what you just...

MD: Yeah, mainly on those issues. We're working on some things right now which are very controversial and very private in terms of expansion of the athletic programs. I can't talk about them right now.

MO: Okay.

MD: You know, and I worked with Judith Ramaley in terms of introducing her to a number of contacts in the community when she was president, and things of that sort.

MO: Some of your political contacts, like Barbara Roberts, in that category?

MD: Yes, exactly. Yeah.

MO: And what would you say about her?

MD: Judith was a good hand-shaker.

MO: A good hand-shaker, eh?

MD: Yeah.

MO: Anything else?

MD: No.

MO: Okay. Well, is there anything that we haven't talked about yet that you'd like to say a few words about?

MD: I think that my main contribution is the building of the university in terms of the academic programs during the Blumel reign, in those twelve years. It's amazing how many courses, new courses, how many new degrees we got, and through a lot of hard work by students, faculty, staff, community members, building those programs one at a time. And I think that is my main academic contribution to this university, and it was due to the leadership of Blumel.

Joseph Blumel was not an external president at all, and that was one of the complaints the faculty had. They wanted him to be more outgoing and be more of a hand-shaker and bring in some outside money. He did not like that role, and he never did it.

He was a very conservative economist. It took me weeks sometimes to get a decision from him, weeks and months. He would not make a decision because he was very calculative, very astute in terms of his decision-making. He wanted to be sure he had every bit of information before he made a decision, and as a result I think he was the builder that

put the cornerstone to the academic life of this institution.

Now we're building on it, and we're lucky to have a president who has that urban background, who will now bring us into a more distinguished position in terms of urban growth and development in the state of Oregon. We will become the leader, and as our commercial does say on television today, "Portland State is Oregon," and that's what we're all about.

Even to this day, I think if you were to look at the student organizations here, you will find that they're very active in what goes on on campus, both socially and academically, and that's wonderful. The very cornerstone of this institution is the lowest stone on the ground, and that's the students, and that's what makes the university: the students.

I'm a believer in that—you might think it's just faculty—the students. And I think our optimism all of the years, through very, very difficult times, we've always had the can-do spirit.

I've given so many speeches that are entitled "Can-Do Spirit," because that's what I believe. If we decide—and when I'm saying "we," I'm talking about all these people involved—what we want to focus on, that we can do it, and we can do it, and we will do it.

In fact, I talked recently to a group of our alums who attended a meeting, and shared with them this piece of prose, and I'll say it right now: Begin with a vision and hold it fast. Reality passes, but great dreams last. In time, wit and work will open the doors to give form and body to that dream of yours. Begin with a vision and follow it through, for that is the way great dreams come true.

And I know our alums believe that, that I was talking to; I know our students do. You talk to them now, they have a different attitude than they did years ago. They're satisfied with what they're doing here. They're more satisfied with their education. They're more proud of this institution than they were years ago, deservedly so, and so I think we have nothing but to be grateful for, and it's taken a lot of team effort to do it.

MO: Looking back on it now, what would you say being a member of the team meant to you personally?

MD: Oh, thrilling. I've been blessed, and I enjoyed every minute of it.

MO: Okay. Well, I think we're just about at the end here, but before we totally ramp it down, what you were just saying now made me think of a couple other little follow-up questions.

MD: Sure.

MO: You had a lot of interaction with alumni. How does Portland State stay in touch with their alums?

MD: It's difficult, and I think we have to begin at the ground root level, and that is to get the departments to follow up on their graduate students, the ones that graduate. The departments are the ones that are closest to them, know them well. Rather than stay up here, university relations are going to send out a notice to give money, you know, I think it's going to have to start down there in all the little different departments and say, "Hey, we helped you; how about helping us?"

We're just now... we're just growing. You know, I keep saying, and I'll say it today to a new hire, "Hey, try it; don't be afraid to try things at this university because it hasn't been done before. You know, it might work. So be creative."

So we've never really had the organization and structure to follow up on our alums, and I think our president will admit that, and our new director of public relations. It just has not been done.

I think the Athletic Department's done a pretty good job, but not the job it could be doing. They certainly have more women's athletics, and I know a lot of women that are out there working that are in athletics that could give a lot of money [but] haven't been contacted. Same thing with

some of our men, superstar players. They could give millions. We haven't wined and dined them.

So like I'm saying, we're very young. We need to... well, it takes money. It takes energy building. Just beginning.

MO: So the alumni relations is definitely an area where there's potential for improvement?

MD: Oh, heavens, yes. Oh, my, yes. And let's see, if you look at the maturity of our students, they are just now—in terms of when they graduated—are just now reaching a point in their careers to be in a position to help us. We never had those kind of alums that are in the legislature, in the political environment. Now we do, like the Peter Stott that helped build and renovate the physical education building. They're grads.

The fellow [Norm] Daniels that had G.I. Joe's for many years helped us a lot in athletics; one of our grads.

We've got a lot of them out there, but we just simply haven't done the job. But we're young. Have a lot of hope.

MO: And you think that part of this job should be relegated to the faculty, that people that are...

MD: Oh, they're the ones that know the students.

MO: Right.

MD: Sure. I think every new president has tried to twist my arm to come back to do some of that work. But no, I'm tired. I'd be working 24 hours a day if I took on something like that.

MO: I imagine the university could probably set up a program maybe to help faculty reach out to graduates.

MD: Oh, yes. I think we're getting a start. We used to have Friends of the Library, and it was a strong organization, and they did a lot for the library. It

disappeared. People didn't keep it active. Things like that.

But this president will get things going. I'm optimistic.

MO: Any other areas that you see where Portland State could grow or improve?

MD: Oh, every area. We're just a youngster.

MO: Okay. Well, I want to thank you very much, Margaret, for a really great interview.

MD: Thank you.

MO: It's been a very interesting conversation for me.

MD: My pleasure. My pleasure.

[End of recording session 2; total time 01:20:47]