AN INTERVIEW WITH DIANE LAZZARINO

Interviewer: Jewell Willhite

Oral History Project

Endacott Society

University of Kansas
DIANE LAZZARINO

B.A., English and Journalism, University of Wyoming, 1957

M.A., Journalism, University of Kansas, 1969

Service at the University of Kansas

First came to KU in 1967.
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Q: I am speaking with Diane Lazzarino, who retired in 2006 as instructor of journalism at the University of Kansas. We are in Lawrence, Kansas, on Nov. 7, 2006. Where were you born and in what year?

A: I was born in Laramie, Wyoming, in 1936.

Q: What were your parents’ names?

A: My mother’s name was Catherine. Her maiden name was Jackson. My father was Earl Larson.

Q: What was their educational background?

A: It was the Depression, of course. They both graduated early from high school. They were 15 and 16. My father went directly to the university, and I think he was there about two and a half years. Mother waited a year and then she went. She had about a year and a half.

Q: Do you have brothers and sisters?

A: Yes, I have one wonderful brother. His name is Lee. He is younger than I am.

Q: Did you grow up in Laramie?

A: Yes, we certainly did. We were born in the same house, and we grew up in that house all our formative years.

Q: That’s unusual these days.

A: It really is. Actually, we grew up in my grandparents’ house.

Q: Oh, had they lived in it before your family did?

A: They were still living there. My parents had an apartment in the basement.
Q: Were these your mother’s parents?
A: My father’s, Larson.

Q: Where did you go to elementary school?
A: Laramie was small at the time, about 10,000 people. We had an elementary school north, east, south, and west. But they weren’t given those names. I went to the one that would have been in the southern part of the city, White elementary.

Q: Where did you go to junior high and high school?
A: Junior high and high school were combined. It was just known as Laramie high school.

Q: Were you involved in journalism when you were in school?
A: Yes, I’ve always been interested in it. So, yes, I was on the paper. I was on the yearbook. Then we got to have a little program at the radio station for a couple of years.

Q: Oh, really? What sort of program was it? Was it music?
A: No. It was not like programs are today. It was more like a newscast about the school doings.

Q: So you were on the radio as a high school student.
A: Yes. There were a few of us and we loved it. We thought we were very important doing that.

Q: Were you involved in any other extracurricular activities?
A: Yes, I was in music, the glee club and choral, and thespians. I was class president for two years and homecoming queen princess. My best friend was queen. I was glad that she got it.

Q: Did you have influential teachers?
A: Very. We were so blessed. It think was must have been kind of like it was for everybody in those days. The teachers were a little older. A lot of them had taught our folks. Miss Cunningham taught English. Mr. Costello was a wonderful English teacher. We were just blessed with older teachers who were really interested in us. My graduating class was 136, I believe. So the high school was probably 400 to 500 tops. Then the junior high would have been a little less than that. We were small enough that everybody knew everybody. It was a wonderful way to grow up and go to school.

Q: Did you have jobs after school or in the summer?

A: You know, I really didn’t. My first official job when I started at the University of Wyoming, which is in Laramie, was a job part time in the language department. I loved that. We even had the French and Spanish typewriters. That’s how old I am. We used typewriters.

Q: Most of us did at that time.

A: It was fun working for those professors.

Q: When did you graduate from high school?

A: 1954.

Q: Was it always assumed that you would go on to college?

A: Yes, it was always assumed. My family couldn’t have sent me to very many of the private schools in that area. But even for my friends who could have, I think we all just wanted to go to the university there. And most of us did.

Q: And that was the University of Wyoming.

A: It is a small state. I mean it is large, but it has fewer than 450,000 people. It just has the one university and it is at Laramie.
Q: Did you live at home when you went to the university?
A: We had to. If you were a Laramie kid, you did because the dorms couldn’t hold everyone. They had to be reserved for the out-of-towners. After my first year I joined a sorority and then I got to live at the sorority house.

Q: Which sorority were you in?
A: Kappa Delta.

Q: What was your major at the university?
A: I went right into journalism. Actually, I had a double major, English and journalism. To major in journalism you had to take 20 extra hours. I got my first degree and then the next 20 hours went toward journalism.

Q: I suppose then that you had practical experience. Did you work on a newspaper?
A: I worked on the school newspaper and the university’s newspaper. As a matter of fact, I graduated in three years because I had to go to summer school. I was the only woman in the department. To be an editor, and not the society editor—I was that for two years—but to be the full editor, I could only do that in the summer. So I went to summer school and was able to graduate in three years.

Q: Were women not going into journalism at that time?
A: It was a completely different time. By the time I graduated, there were two other women in the department. And there were probably 40 of us journalism majors.

Q: Did women in journalism at that time mainly do the society page, recipes, that kind of thing?
A: Oh, yes. It was very stereotyped. You just have to put yourself back in that time.

Q: I guess I didn’t realize that that was true of journalism too.
A: Oh, yes. At that time it was hot lead. In the back shop you worked with all men and with all men in the newsroom. One of my proudest achievements...To graduate you had to put together a front page. You had to write the stories, do the layout, and then put the page together in the type. Of course you did it in the old way, upside down and backwards. Now on a computer when you set your story, you know how long it is going to be. But back then it was kind of a guess because you just went across on the page and you knew that four lines would be one inch, but it still was kind of a guess. And I had this grizzly—he was a wonderful guy, but he was kind of gruff. When I put my page together, everything fit perfectly. And he couldn’t believe it. And I was so proud. I didn’t save that page. After I pulled a copy I don’t know why I didn’t, but I didn’t. It was exciting to me.

I was married right after graduation. My husband and I left Laramie and went almost straight to the University of South Carolina, where he was starting law school. My first job was at a publishers there. It was contract magazine. My first job there was the very beginning of cold type. So I never used the hot type. They were already working in cold type. And I can remember how excited I was on a magazine. It was for South Carolina Nursing, about 10,000 copies, I think, on that one. It was going to be a spring magazine. I’d seen a kind of wall paper with tulip stripes, pink and green stripes with tulips on it. And I went in to ask if somehow we could get that put in hot lead. And that’s when he said, “Diane, you don’t have to do that. You can just photocopy it.” It was just really something.

Q: Going back to college, did you have influential teachers in college?
A: Oh, sure. We just had two journalism professors. One was the head of it and the other was the vice head, I guess. But Warren Mack, who was second in command, was so bright. He was a wonderful newsman. And he had really practiced. He had been a newsman before he went into teaching. He was from Sweet Home, Oregon. He loved to tell stories about Sweet Home, Oregon. We’d laugh. He was a good friend and a mentor. And of course there were others, but he stands out in my mind.

Q: Since you were in a sorority, did you have extracurricular activities there? Were you an officer?

A: Yes. I started out right away. We had about 90 girls in our house and six cars. One belonged to the house mother. Can you imagine that today?

Q: Well, it was like that when I went to college.

A: My last two years I was president of the house.

Q: When did you graduate?

A: I graduated in August of 1957.

Q: You said you were married right after that. Was your husband a student at the University of Wyoming?

A: He had come two years earlier and stayed one year. Then his major professor retired, so he left the University of Wyoming and went to the University of South Carolina. He was actually a Latin major. His Latin major professor retired. He was also on a football scholarship. So that determined where he would go. He was able to get on at the University of South Carolina.

Q: What is his name?

A: Alex, Alexander Anthony.
Q: So after you graduated, you married and moved to South Carolina.

A: We packed up a real small U-Haul and we drove straight to Brooklyn. That’s where he grew up. His mother was dying of cancer. They wanted to have a reception for us. We were there about a week. This was the middle of August. Then we went straight down to Columbia.

Q: You said he was in law school and that you got a job with a publisher.

A: I tried to get a job in my field at a newspaper or radio station. Later I realized—you have to remember this was still the fifties and things were still segregated. It was just that time. Later friends said you wouldn’t have gotten on then because you are a Yankee. Then I’d say, “I’m not a Yankee. I’m a Westerner.” It was very much that way. But I have to say, I’ve never had better friends. They forgave me for being a Yankee. They were very good to us.

Q: So you were also interested in radio as well.

A: I would have done anything. As it turned out, his football coach got me on to a state job, which I had at first in motor vehicles. That was wonderful because it was a big, new state building that was air conditioned. That was unusual. I made a lot of good friends there. Working in motor vehicles you really learned the state very quickly. I knew where all the little towns were and the big towns. So it was a good experience for me. Our little girl was born about a year later. I stayed home for a couple months. Then I had to go back to work. That was when I got a call from a publisher who I had interviewed with earlier. So when I went back to work I went to the publishing house. It was called Ream Publications.

Q: What did they publish?
A: It was contract magazines. They would contract to do magazines for the South Carolina Highway Commission, Nursing, the Historical Society. I had 17 publications. Two of those came out just once a year. One was for football that went on sale for the Athletic Conference. The other was for basketball. So I did those for the whole AAC Conference. That was fun.

Q: So you were the editor of 17 magazines.

A: Yes.

Q: That was quite a job.

A: It really was. It was more than full time. It was fun. I worked with a lot of nice people. After three years, when our little girl started getting older…Especially when the monthlies would come out with the bimonthlies. Sometimes I’d be there 18 hours a day. So I saw an ad in the paper asking for teachers. They were opening two new high schools and two new junior highs, I think it was. You could apply if you even had just a junior college degree because they were hurting so for teachers. So I went in and applied and was hired. So then I got to cut my hours back a little bit. They could be more dependable hours.

Q: Were you teaching on the high school level?

A: I taught eighth and ninth grades, but, again, they were combined. That was fun because my home room group and I wanted a project, so we started a newspaper for the school. So then I did work with some high schoolers.

Q: So the school didn’t have a newspaper?

A: It didn’t have a newspaper. And I opted to go to the school that wasn’t necessarily the closest. But I went with an older school. Fort Jackson is there in Columbia. That was
the only school that took black children. They were from the Fort. I just wanted to do that.

Q: There probably weren’t very many black people in Wyoming.

A: We had maybe two families in Laramie. There were no black classmates of mine. In my brother’s class there was one black boy and then there were a couple of younger children. That was very rare.

Q: I suppose the children of the military families were different from some of the other black children in town.

A: And the locals, when they would talk about it would say, “Of course, they have to take them because they are from the Fort.” It was very segregated. The drinking fountains wouldn’t say black and white. They would say, “White only.” Or to go into the bathrooms it would say, “White only.” We were there early enough for the first sit-downs at the fountains. When we drove into Columbia the first day, I had never been to the South. I had been to the East Coast before, but I hadn’t been south on the coast. The day we drove in it was blistering hot. It was August. It is very humid there. I was so surprised. As we drove in there would be—I’ll use the word “black” rather than African American—black women walking along the side of the road to work or from work with umbrellas. And a lot of them weren’t wearing shoes. It was right about that year that the rubber thongs first became available. So then you started seeing children and especially the women wearing the thongs for protection. It was very different. Another thing about our school. It was kind of on the outskirts. So it was in an older section of town. But after the war they started building many of the larger homes outside of town and up the
mountain. So our children were drawn from the nouveau riche, the military families and those from the older part of town. So we really had a mixture in the classrooms.

Q: That must have been a challenge.
A: It was a challenge but it was fun. I loved it.

Q: How long did you teach there?
A: Two and a half years. Then my husband’s allergies started to really act up. They did all the time, but for the last year or two he was hospitalized for long periods of time with asthma and skin problems. He was in the hospital September and October. They released him for a couple of days and he had a relapse. He went back through November to the veterans’ hospital. They released him on December 18th of 1961. They said he just had to leave. They couldn’t tell us what it was. But I remember one doctor said, “It’s like looking down a railroad track. You see a train coming toward you. You don’t know exactly what kind of train it is, but you see it coming.” That was his situation. By the time he was released from the hospital I had packed up the house and put it on the market. We left from there—it was unusual for there—in a really bad ice storm. We left on the 18th and got into Laramie on maybe the 22nd.

Q: Was he finished with graduate school then?
A: Oh, yes.

Q: Had you been going to summer school to get your teaching degree? I assume they wanted you to do that.
A: Yes, but I could do that slowly. I had a four-year degree and they were accepting people with two-year degrees. Usually I would go back to Laramie and pick up my teaching hours there and spend a month or two at home.
Q: Then you and your husband went back to Laramie.

A: We went back to Laramie. They said we needed to go some place cold where things weren’t growing. There is no place colder than Laramie in the winter. We went back there. They said he would need about a year to recuperate. But he did so well that by after Christmas he was feeling well enough. They were advertising for a teacher, but they also wanted a football coach. So he started teaching at the end of January and coaching. We were there three years in Laramie. He met Tim Ailey, who was president of Casper Junior College, and he offered him a position there teaching business and law and to be the school attorney. So we moved to Casper and we were there two years.

Q: While you were in Laramie, were you employed?

A: Yes, I think I went back to teaching that January, but it might have been in the fall. I taught two years in junior high there. I was teaching with so many of the teachers who had taught me.

Q: So you were in the same building you went to school in. You probably had in your classes children of people you knew.

A: Oh, yes, a lot of them.

Q: Were you teaching English or journalism?

A: English. I advised on the paper. They already had a paper.

Q: You mentioned a daughter. Did you have other children?

A: Yes. Our daughter, Evelyn, was born in South Carolina. After we had been in Laramie two or two and a half years, our son Chris was born.

Q: Then your husband got a job in Casper, you moved there and were there two years. Were employed there?
A: I didn’t work there. Chris was a baby. He’d had a rough time. We didn’t know it when I became pregnant, even the first time, but the second time that I was RH negative. So we had a rough time toward the end and had to induce labor six weeks early. He just needed a lot of attention at the beginning. So I stayed home those two years, actually three years. The third year President Ailey wanted him to be closer to the legislature. They were going to rewrite the junior college laws for the state. Cheyenne is just 50 miles from Laramie. Casper is in the middle of the state. So we got to move back to Laramie and Alex could commute to Cheyenne when the legislature was in session. He rewrote the junior college laws for the state. Then he met Howard Walker, who was dean of continuing education here at a conference. Howard offered him a job here to be in independent study. So Alex came home and said, “How would you like to move to Kansas?” I said, “Nobody moves to Kansas. You move out of Kansas.” We came on Labor Day weekend of 1967 to look for a house. It was raining like crazy. I was familiar with western Kansas. I just hadn’t been in the green part, the hilly part. Once we drove into Lawrence, I just loved it.

Q: When did you become employed here?

A: They had a master’s program in the Journalism School here. So I went up to enroll. I just thought I’d take a class or two at a time. I was directed to Calder Pickett to interview. He said, “Would you be interested in a graduate assistantship?” There was a long-time librarian in the School. Her name will come to me. She was wonderful. She was getting ready to retire. But it would be a couple of months before they hired the new librarian. So he wanted me to come in and work four hours a day, work with her and learn the library. Then when the new librarian came on, there wouldn’t be a void there.
I’d be familiar with it. So that’s what I did. I ended up graduating in two years instead of one.

Q: So you also began graduate school in journalism. At that time I think journalism was divided into several different parts. There was news-editorial and…

A: Advertising and radio.

Q: Which one were you in?

A: I was in news-editorial.

Q: Who was your major professor? Was it Calder?

A: Calder would have been at that time. He directed my thesis.

Q: What was your thesis about?

A: It was on Orwell. I wanted to do something on H. L Menken. A biography had just come out on Orwell and Calder thought that I should do something with it, so I did it on Orwell.

Q: When did you graduate?

A: I graduated in the spring of 1969. I believe Lee Young at that time was acting dean. He asked me if I wanted to teach a class. So I ended up teaching two reporting classes and just stayed.

Q: This was the time when there was a lot going on here at the university.

A: We called it unrest.

Q: Did that affect you or your students?

A: Very much so.

Q: What do you remember?
A: There were two things going on around the country. But we really felt it in Lawrence. For one thing, the high school was just down at the bottom of the hill. So we had the black community agitating, for all the right reasons, and then Vietnam. So those two things were going on. I know one time there was going to be a march down Jayhawk Boulevard. It would be during our class time. The feeling, at least in our School, was do whatever you want, if you feel that they can get something out of it. What I did was I assigned them to cover it like a reporter and then do a story on it. But I had a young man come up to me later, and you have to learn to see both sides of things. This young man came up to me later and asked if I would give him another assignment. He said, “If I’m there, it’s going to look like I might be supporting it.” He was a veteran. He had just come back. He said, “I don’t want it to look as if I’m giving my support.” So just when you think all the students are agitating for the end of Vietnam—not that he wasn’t for ending Vietnam, but he was still supporting his President. You learned a lot of things. There were several days when you couldn’t go out at night. What is the word?

Q: Curfew?

A: Curfew. So after dark you couldn’t go out, not unless your job required it, you were a nurse at the hospital, that kind of thing. And you couldn’t get gasoline in small red cans. You had to fill up the tank. All the buildings were patrolled for a while. Again, I was the only woman on the staff at the Journalism School. So I didn’t have to. But the men all had to take turns staying in the building all night.

Q: My husband did too. Did they think someone was going to do something to the journalism building?
A: All the buildings. Of course the February Sisters did eventually take over at Strong. I’m guessing we probably put that in place after the Union burned. I don’t remember for sure.

Q: Then you were teaching reporting classes here. Was that Reporting I?

A: Yes. I had Reporting I students.

Q: So your students would not have been working on the Kansan. That comes with Reporting II doesn’t it?

A: Yes. Sometimes if I got a particularly good story I could send it down to the Kansan and hope that they might use it. Remember, we were using manual typewriters. Each semester when they would enroll for the next semester, they would come upstairs to the reporting room and take a typing test. It was always so fun. One day a girl was sitting right in front. I said, “You have five minutes. Start.” She was looking and looking. I went over and said, “What’s wrong?” She said, “I don’t know how to turn the damn thing on.” They were already using selectrics in high schools. So I went into the dean and said, “We better think about this.” He made it happen.

Q: You got electric typewriters?

A: Yes, in the big lab.

Q: And before long it was computers.

A: When I started in the library we had a mimeograph machine. Our first photocopy machine, they would bring the paper in, in a big roll with a rod through it, a wooden dowel. The two of us would lift it up onto the machine. Then you would thread the paper through.

Q: I’m not familiar with anything like that.
A: You are not old enough. Then you took your pictures and the machine cut the paper into pages. It was very exciting when we got the new machine and we could just put a sheaf of paper in.

Q: That’s changed journalism a lot. Of course you still have to know how to type to use a computer.

A: What is really interesting to me is that most of our students when they were coming in with the manual and even the electric typewriters were not as good typists as they are now. But now they are learning it second nature.

Q: Because they start learning computers so early and they didn’t start typing until high school usually.

A: So once computers really established themselves, we were able to eliminate the typing test.

Q: I read somewhere that your students worked with groups out in the community. Was this a different class?

A: No. We had to have some kind of special project each semester that they would work on and do research. We kind of quickly ran out of those. So I started, probably in the early seventies, we would go down to the Senior Center. Seniors could sign up to have their life story written. This was at the very beginning of doing that kind of thing. Then I would pair one of my students with a senior. So throughout the semester I had certain requirements. They had to meet a minimum of four or six times. They could meet at the senior’s home, but they had to meet at least one time out, at McDonald’s or something. Then they would type up the story, a copy for them and a copy for me and design a cover.
Early on it was just very basic. But as technology increased, the kids were starting to do just great things with the material.

Q: Did they use tape recorders or just a notebook?

A: I encouraged them to use a tape recorder because at that time that was the way it was being done. I would say that most of them did. There were some funny things. I had a girl call me once. It was a beautiful fall Sunday afternoon. She said she had a problem. She’d had a call from her senior and the woman wanted her to come over a couple of hours earlier so that she could rake the lawn. My student said, “I have a big test tomorrow.” I said, “No, no. I’ll call the senior and tell her that you can’t rake the lawn.” Another time a boy came in and said, “I don’t know if I can do this.” I said, “Why.” He said, “Well, what if she just falls down dead on me?” I said, “She’s not going to.” Another boy came in and I asked him how it was going. He said, “Well, it took me awhile to get used to her teeth in a glass on the table.” But they had wonderful experiences. I know a lot of them continued to correspond, even after the students graduated. So there were good friendships made.

Maybe my favorite project was my class of 2000. In the summer sometime there was a picture in the Topeka paper. I think it was the summer of 1987. There was a picture of kindergarten roundup. There was a picture of eight little kids in a row. They had on tee shirts that said, “Class of 2000.” Do you remember when we thought 2000 would never get here? I left the senior project. Both of our children had gone to Hillcrest. So I went to Hillcrest. It was conveniently located to the campus. I talked first with Bob Lominska, who had the kindergarten group. Fortunately, he had a morning and an afternoon class. Fortunately, there were two of all the grades in the school. So I could
take one class and one class. Again, I would pair one of my students with one of their students. Then they would do virtually the same thing with the little ones as we did with the seniors. At the end of the semester the student would produce a book on that child. So we did that all through sixth grade.

Q: So this was a continuing project. Did they get the book in sixth grade?
A: No, they got a book each semester.

Q: They would have different students doing the interviewing.
A: In the fall we could go to the pumpkin patch. In the winter there was Christmas stuff. You had your stuff in the spring. So there were always different topics they could do. Again, one of my requirements was they were to take the child out away from the family—I always cleared it with the family first—so they could not be influenced. They would get to know them by playing in their back yard or something. Then when they got to know them, they would take them on a trip to Wendy’s or something. I didn’t want to prearrange them. One time we walked in and there were balloons all around. My student would pick a balloon and pop it and the name of a student would be in it. So the pairing was very fair. Then about fourth grade, I had a call from a mother. She said that she would prefer that her daughter was paired with a female student. So we were starting to inch into, they were no longer little kids. You have to respect that, of course. Then the Hillcrest students were split up for junior high. So I couldn’t figure a way through junior high on how to get my students with them. And also by then our curriculum had changed enough that we had a core course with its own final project. I wanted to follow them in junior high, but I couldn’t. Then when they all went back to high school, as juniors we met with them once and as seniors we met with them a couple of times and then had a big
party at the end of their senior year. Of course by then I think a couple of them were
dating each other after meeting. Because they were now eighteen or nineteen years old.
So it was fun seeing that project.

Q: The kids must have enjoyed that too.
A: They did. My students are gone. But I’ll have a student who is still in Lawrence come
up to me and say, “You don’t remember me.” I might not know them now that they are
grown, but I always remember their names. They just say their names and I know who
they are.

Q: You students worked with some of the nonprofits in town too, didn’t they?
A: Yes. We did a big project for the League of Women Voters on their big anniversary. We
worked with Haskell Indian Junior College on its big anniversary.

Q: Did your students cover these events?
A: We put together promotional materials, flyers, brochures, news releases, whatever they
wanted. We did it for the Lawrence Community School over on 7th Street for their fall
festival. We did it for the Ryan Gray playground. That’s the playground for children
with disabilities. We put together promotional materials for that. We’ve done things for
the Humane Society several times. We did a penny walk downtown and a K run. The
penny walk was funny. The students had made the head of a jayhawk. In its beak was a
Lincoln penny. So those were our nametags for identification. Then we cut the large
gallon milk jugs and put that logo on a stick and tied it to the top. The students went
around downtown on a K-State game day. We made quite a bit of money for the Humane
Society. But I got a call from the people who say whether you can use the jayhawk or
not. He said, “I saw some of the students downtown. We did not give you permission to
use the jayhawk.” Doing it for the Humane Society, I just didn’t dream that we would have to. But I was very careful from then on. And he forgave us.

Q: And you worked with Jesse Branson for a car safety seat law.

A: I think it was her first term. We did the research on child safety seats. We had a hookup with the Med Center, twice, especially in pediatrics, to interview doctors and staff on seat safety. We put together a promotional event at one of the car dealerships. I think it was Jim Clark. You could come in and get the child’s picture taken sitting in a seat. Then they had so much off on the purchase of a seat that day. And her bill passed the first time through. I’m saying her bill but I’m sure others were on it. But I worked with Jesse. These were safety seats for infants. They were expensive. The students then did some research on that. There were communities who were recycling them, you know, like through a school or something. You could bring in your old one. So we did some work in that way too. I thought that was pretty important. First, you are trying to get them started to just buy the seats. Now you are at a position where you can recycle them.

Q: It is amazing that our kids survived without all these things.

A: Every once in a while they will yell at me, “Mother, how could you…” I say, “There weren’t any seats to buy.”

Q: There weren’t even seat belts in cars.

A: No.

Q: We talked about some of the changes in journalism. There have been changes in the journalism building in the years you have been here too.

A: We had major renovations in 1985, and then we moved back into the building in 1986. The third floor used to be just storage. So that was one of the things that they did. They
put in…well, it is not being used as a classroom now. But they put in some offices and a classroom up on the third floor. Then, really, they almost reversed it. Where we had a big lecture hall on the second floor, they put it downstairs. Downstairs where the reading room was, that became the lecture hall. That was very nice, and Stauffer money made it even nicer. The Stauffer family gave like point something million. The thing that was beautiful about it, I’m told, is it was unrestricted. So we were able to get some art and some little nicer things that state money didn’t allow us to do. That was when the name was changed, of course. It used to be just Flint Hall.

Q: What is it now?

A: Stauffer-Flint. There were a lot of alums who weren’t happy with the change because Leon Flint was the first dean and he was the one who pushed…It had been a department until World War II. He was the one who pushed for it to be a School.

Q: Has the Journalism School been growing through the years?

A: Oh, my yes. It has at least doubled since I started and maybe close to tripling. And another wonderful thing that happened recently is that we’re able now to admit, with certain guidelines, freshmen. They can start taking our classes. Whereas before if they had to get their required courses out of the way they might be juniors before they could become a major.

Q: I know that is the way it used to be.

A: Now they can go into our 101 and 103 their freshman year. So we get them much sooner, and they are able to get on staff much sooner.

Q: And they would get a lot more experience.

A: Oh, yes, and much more time to work outside and work for companies and that.
Q: There is a program where your students work for companies during the winter break, isn’t there?

A: Yes. We have a clearing office for that. So a company can call in and say, “We’d like somebody…” Now what we started running into some years ago was the companies wanted to look at it as free, but even worse would be if they just wanted someone to go for coffee and not really do real work. So the guidelines have been changed enough now so that the students are going in and they are getting very practical experience. If they want to work somewhere and just get credit, they can. But that is only during winter break and summer. But otherwise we encourage them to work for pay.

Q: Have you had publications?

A: No, I have not published anything. I am going to write up some of the projects later.

Q: Were you on University committees?

A: Not really. No.

Q: Are there outstanding former students who have gone on to greater things that you remember?

A: Let’s go back to that.

Q: Since you have lived here in Lawrence all this time, did your children go to KU?

A: Yes, both graduated from the School of Journalism. I wasn’t surprised with our daughter because she was always a writer. She was on the Lawrence High Budget and she was always writing things. But our son is so much like my brother, very good at math. My brother is an engineer. There wasn’t a lot of talk about it. I think we both just thought that would be his area of interest. So he was here for one year and he was getting ready
to enroll in the fall. We were sitting down to dinner one night and he said, “I think I am going into journalism.” You could have knocked us over.

Q: Did you ever teach your children?
A: I taught him one class.

Q: Do you belong to professional organizations?
A: Well, there is AEJ, American Journalism and that. Alex traveled a lot. I missed some of that to be at home more. There are times I regret it, but I don’t regret being with the family.

Q: Were you involved in community activities?
A: Yes. I was with Evie Senecal and Marilyn Bluebaugh at the time. They were working with the Visiting Nurses Association. They called me and asked if I would help in publicity and do that kind of thing and be the history person for Meals on Wheels. So I was with Meals on Wheels for 12 years. Very active, then I dropped back a little bit.

Q: You did the publicity for them.
A: All the publicity and any of the written materials that they needed.

Q: What do you plan to do in retirement?
A: Well, you can be busy just—and busy is a dumb word to use there. I’ve found an author, a writer 10 or 12 years ago. She was an American born in 18…..She was old enough to remember in Boston the men leaving for the Civil War. She became a journalist. She was with the Boston Globe. Then they sent her to Paris. She covered arts in Paris for 20 years and decided to stay there. She retired at 60. She wrote in one of her letters that America is no place for a poor woman and I can live very well here. So she stayed and moved out of Paris. She moved to what she called a hut. I’ve seen pictures of it. It was
very nice, serviceable. She moved in toward the end of May in 1914. The point of this is that her house was on a hill overlooking the Marne. There are six bridges going across from the other side into France. Within a couple of months the Germans came across.

The book the way I found it...It is just one of those small, dear, green volumes, that you know it is an old book. It was at the library book sale. In line I had a couple of books. I don’t remember what they were. I looked down. I was leaning against the cookbook table. And here was this precious little volume. There was a picture on the front of the house. And I just picked that baby up. It was her letters that she had sent to people back home announcing her retirement and her thinking on why she was going to stay. And then the war started. It tells of the British and French soldiers who would come up her lane with donkeys pulling cannons, that kind of thing. Because she was the only English-speaking person, the British would often ask to bivouac. She had quite a bit of land around her home. Of course she enjoyed the company. In her little house she had her salon. You walk right into a salon. Then you go upstairs. In back is her bedroom and then you go up a short flight of stairs and there is her guest bedroom. That’s where she would put the officers when they would spend the night. And they loved the spot because they could see the maneuvers. They could see what was happening. I haven’t reread it now in a while but you know some of the big battles were fought just meters from her home. Then they would often go out in a little donkey-pulled carriage and see if they could help or help bury the dead. The French peasants were in the area. She had one young woman who worked for her, who was married to an older man, which is important in the story. They decided they were going to hide their belongings in a cave. They wanted to hide her belongings but she wouldn’t let them. She said no. She had a
library in the house. Often the English officers would ask to borrow a volume. Then on
their way back they would return it to her. Then one year—remember, the war went on
for the better part of three years. She kept saying in her letters—two more volumes were
published. She was talking about America will get into the war. America will get into
the war. Then she really got discouraged when they didn’t. She wants to know, “Where
are you? Where are you?” Because she knows the suffering that is going on around her.
Food was very dear. It was hard going, really hard going. We forget that. One fourth of
July she had a picket fence in front and she put up an American flag. It was kind of a tall
fence. One of the British officers came by and he advised her to take it down because
feelings were running high that we had not come over to help. He was afraid something
would happen. She talks about an air balloon that goes over. They are spying on each
other. There are two balloons that are passing. She’s out in her yard having morning
coffee.

Q: So you are doing some kind of research on this woman?

A: I’m doing the research. What I’d love to do is get over there. About 10 years ago Evie,
our daughter, had a friend going to Paris and asked if she could find this little village and
see if the house was still standing. And it was. And she brought back a picture to me. It
is exactly the same house only in my picture there are just some bushes around it and just
some very young trees growing up. Now there are lots and lots of trees around it. But
the woman did say it is not very far from Euro Disney. If I was going to do something I
should get over there soon and do it. So that is kind of at the top of my list.

Q: Do you want to write a book about this woman?

A: I want to write about her. I want to introduce her. I think she’s just wonderful.
Q: What is your assessment of the KU Journalism School or KU itself, past, present, hopes for the future, that kind of thing?

A: Well, really nothing but praise. There are the odd decisions that are made at times. I’m not privy to some of the discussions that decisions come from. I didn’t think it was fair when the swim team was dropped the way it was so fast. We never went to basketball games. When we first came we went to football because it was a family thing. But getting out at night for basketball with the family, we just never got into it but loved it. I wouldn’t miss a game now on TV for anything. I just love the Jayhawks. But we just didn’t go to the basketball games. But I thought…I know it is a money thing. I understand all of that. But couldn’t they somehow have handled that a little more gracefully than throwing people out or demanding big sums of money. One of them said, “We didn’t need four tickets. But why couldn’t we have kept our two?” Someone can come in with the big basketball name that we have now. And they can yes us and say, “Yes, I understand what it used to be like to support it when it wasn’t very good.” But I think they really don’t. And for the fans who supported them for so many years, it seemed unfair. But that is a little bit nitpicking in the big scheme of things because I’m not even touching on academics yet. And academically I just think KU is outstanding. Maybe some areas are a little stronger than others. I understand that. We have a wonderful theatre program, language program. I can’t even go into sciences and what’s being done there. And engineering, for heaven sakes, the law school.

Q: Is there anything else you’d like to add?

A: Well, I’m so appreciative of my years here and the many good friends and colleagues that I was blessed with. I couldn’t talk at my retirement luncheon. That’s as much as I can
say. Our family has been blessed to be here. Our children did so well through the Journalism School. Our son Chris is an associate editor with the alumni magazine. He loves his work and has been given a wonderful opportunity here. Our daughter is director of public relations for Claremont-McKenna College in California. So they got a wonderful education. There is nothing but pluses. Thank you for having me.

Q: Thank you very much.