AN INTERVIEW WITH PHYLLIS BRILL MUNCZEK

Interviewer: Jewell Willhite

Oral History Project

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University of Kansas
PHYLLIS BRILL MUNCZEK

B.M., Oberlin College Conservatory of Music, 1967
M.M., Voice Performance, University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, 1969

Service at the University of Kansas

First came to KU as an Instructor in 1969

Assistant professor of Voice

Associate professor of Voice
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Q: I’m speaking with Phyllis Brill Munczek, who retired in 2010 as associate professor of voice at the University of Kansas. We are in Lawrence, Kansas, on October 4, 2010. Where were you born and in what year?

A: I was born in Rochester, New York, in 1945.

Q: What were your parents’ names?

A: Annette and Herbert Brill.

Q: What was their educational background?

A: My parents were both professional musicians. They both graduated from the Eastman School of Music. My mother was a pianist and my father a violinist. They met there. She was his accompanist and they fell in love.

Q: Did you have brothers and sisters?

A: Yes, I have one sister.

Q: Is she a musician too?

A: Yes, she is. She is a pianist and a flautist and she teaches both piano and flute.

Q: Did you grow up in Rochester?

A: I did. I was in Rochester through high school.

Q: Where did you go to elementary school?

A: Elementary school. It’s hard to remember. Maybe it’s called Reuben A. Dake School in Rochester, New York, in West Irondequoit, which was the district I lived in.
Q: Since there were so many musicians in your family, did you start music early as a child?
A: Yes. I started when I was six with the piano and studied it right through my college years. I studied the violin from around 4th grade. I actually did not pursue singing until my sophomore or junior year in high school.

Q: Did your elementary school go to sixth grade or did it go to eighth grade as some did then?
A: I’m not sure. Our high school was 9 through 12. Junior high might have been sixth, seventh and eighth.

Q: What was the name of the high school you attended?
A: West Irondequoit High School.

Q: Were you involved in extracurricular activities in high school?
A: Most of my activities were music related, because that was my love. So I played in the orchestra. I did a little bit of performing, but not too much at that point. My music then was extracurricular, but now it is my life.

Q: Were you in music contests?
A: Yes. I did some competitions. Actually, in my senior year in high school I won what they called the Albright Award, which was a competition for high school seniors throughout the city. It was for a youth concert, and I won the opportunity to perform on the piano as a soloist with the Rochester Civic Orchestra on the stage of the Eastman Theater. It was a pretty exciting experience.

Q: Oh, yes.
A: It was funny because I had competed in both voice and piano. Voice had suddenly become my first love. And I made it into the finals in both. I really wanted to win in voice, but I won it in piano, so it was quite an experience.

Q: I suppose you sang in a chorus or small music groups if you were into singing in high school.

A: Yes, I sang in the high school choir and played in the high school orchestra.

Q: Any other honors in addition to this one that you won?

A: In those years?

Q: Yes.

A: I don’t really recall. I’m not sure.

Q: Academically, what subjects did you like?

A: In high school?

Q: Yes.

A: I liked my math classes a lot, algebra and calculus. I enjoyed math and I liked studying foreign languages. I had French in high school, four years of high school French. I was not much for the sciences. I didn’t take any more of that than I had to. Of course, the music courses I liked a lot and psychology was one other subject I was interested in.

Q: Did you have influential teachers from high school?

A: Very much so. Of course the orchestra director influenced me a great deal. He also made me compete. One other girl and I kept fighting for first chair in orchestra. He made us practice and audition for him like every few months to see who would get first
chair. That was fun. In addition I was influenced by my piano teachers and all the other
music teachers in school. My music training at that time was through the preparatory
department of the Eastman School of Music. It was for young students through high
school.
Q: So you went there for your music lessons.
A: Exactly. I’m trying to think of other special teachers. You know, I don’t remember a lot
of names right now. Then I was lucky because in my senior year in high school I was
able to study with one of the faculty members at the Eastman School in voice. Her name
was Anna Kaskas. She took me as a special student, which I was really excited about.
Q: Did you have jobs in the summer?
A: For a couple years I worked at a cerebral palsy camp for young children up through high
school age. I really enjoyed that and learned a lot. I found it very rewarding. I did that
for a couple summers.
Q: Were you teaching music to these children?
A: No. Just working with them at whatever they needed. We helped to feed those who
couldn’t feed themselves. We took some of them into the swimming pool. We just
interacted with them all day, whatever activities there were.
Q: When did you graduate from high school?
Q: I assume that your parents and you always expected that you would go to college.
A: Yes, I think that was always the goal. They never pushed and said you should go into music. That just kind of happened naturally for both my sister and for me. I think their focus was on our going to college.

Q: Where did you go for your undergraduate years?

A: I went to the Oberlin College Conservatory of Music in Oberlin, Ohio.

Q: Were you majoring in voice?

A: I majored in voice. My mother is a pianist. My father is a violinist. I had studied both but then I declared my independence and became a singer.

Q: Did you have influential teachers from Oberlin?

A: Oh my gosh, yes, two in particular. Helen Hodam, who I studied voice with briefly, as well as Ellen Repp, my voice teacher throughout. Hodam taught the French Vocal Literature class which had a direct influence on my teaching a similar course at KU. The biggest influence was Robert Fountain, who was the conductor of the Oberlin College Choir. I was very fortunate, in that the year that I was a freshman the Oberlin College Choir was invited to tour what was the Soviet Union at that time and give concerts. I wasn’t in the choir my first year because the choir director had said, “Why don’t you get used to school first and then audition for it in your sophomore year and do your academic work first?” I wasn’t very happy about that, but I did what he suggested. But then I decided I had to be in some kind of ensemble. So I joined the chamber orchestra as a violinist. Then he decided that he wanted to take a very small chamber group with him. The orchestra director wouldn’t let anybody out of the main orchestra because they had
their own tour in the states. So he went to the chamber orchestra to find people who could go and play and if possible double up and sing as well. Well, I was going after all. It was really quite something. And my sister was in the choir. She also attended Oberlin and majored in piano performance. She was three years ahead of me. She was a senior at the time. And she was going. Even though piano and flute were her things, she had perfect pitch.

He always made the choir about half voice majors and half just from anywhere else in the college. She was already in the choir and we both wound up going. It was a fabulous experience. Fountain influenced me so much in terms of music and the shaping of music and reaching other people, touching other people, getting in touch with your own feelings in the music. He was just a dynamic conductor. The experience was incredible. We sang 40 concerts in two months.

Q: And this was all in Russia?
A: All except the very end of it. We spent a week in Romania, primarily in Bucharest. The rest of the time was 12 different cities in the Soviet Union.

Q: What did you think of Russia at that time?
A: Gosh. That’s a hard question for me to answer. I was so young. It was certainly very different from living in the states. We had certain restrictions. We were not allowed to go to anyone’s individual homes. We met with lots of students in student groups at the conservatories in Moscow and Leningrad and different places. But we weren’t allowed to go into any homes. So we were restricted that way. I remember the country feeling
very drab to me colorwise. Everything seemed to be this strange yellow. Even if you see
the buildings now, in movies or whatever, it is that same color.

Q: Was this in the summer when you went?
A: No. We left on the 29th of February. So we were there in the winter. It was the 2nd
semester of my freshman year.

Q: It must have been very cold.
A: It was very cold. I’ll never forget the day we arrived. We all were really bundled up.

And we started in Moscow and Leningrad and we gradually worked our way south. So
we got into warmer temperatures when we were in a warmer part of the country. If I had
planned it I would have done it in reverse. The people were so incredibly warm in
Russia. They just couldn’t get enough of us. They would throw flowers on the stage at
every concert, every single concert, and applaud and applaud. Of course one of the
things that we did was toward the end of each concert we sang a few Russian folk songs.
And they just loved that, just loved that. It was a terrific experience and a very emotional
one.

Politically, I wasn’t particularly aware at that point in my life. I can’t really speak
to that. We had some interesting experiences there. I’m Jewish. There were people who
would come back stage. I remember one man in particular who came back stage and
wanted to know if anybody there spoke Yiddish. They just couldn’t be themselves there.
He was very nervous. There was one person in the choir who spoke enough to
communicate with him. And there weren’t too many of us who were Jewish in the choir.
That stayed with me for a long time, that they felt oppressed there and were looking for someone to reach out to.

Q: Did this college you attended have dorms like KU does?
A: Yes, I lived in a dorm all four years.

Q: Then you took other courses besides music, I suppose, the usual things that undergraduates take.
A: Right. It was geared more toward music. The conservatory is part of Oberlin College. It is a very highly reputed liberal arts college. And it is one of the top three conservatories in the country. So the focus is really on the courses that are for music. But I took languages and I took English, psychology, etc.

Q: What did you have in mind that you might do when you graduated?
A: That’s an interesting question. My original desire was to be a cantor in a synagogue. That’s what I really wanted to do. But at that time it was almost impossible for women to be hired as cantors. So after investigating it a certain amount, I decided not to go that way. I also looked at music therapy as a possibility. Of course we have a strong program here at KU in music therapy, first in the country.

Q: Oh, really?
A: The first music therapy program in the country developed here. It’s quite strong. It is working with all kinds of people using music as a means to heal or communicate or whatever the need is of the individual person. So those were the first two things I thought about doing. Then I decided to focus on performing. I never had a desire to get out and
be a great performer. I loved music. I knew I wanted to teach. I grew up in a house where my mother taught piano, taught people from age four right through adults. I was greatly influenced by that. I knew I wanted to teach. Then when I went to graduate school and had a teaching assistantship, I was positive I wanted to teach.

Q: Did you have jobs during the summer?
A: One summer I was an apprentice in Chautauqua, New York, with the Chautauqua Opera Company. We learned and performed 8 operas in one summer. Another summer in the middle of my undergraduate degree, I studied at the Mozarteum in Salzburg, Austria. That was a fabulous experience.

Q: When did you graduate from Oberlin?

Q: What did you do after you graduated?
A: I went right on to graduate school. I applied to graduate school and went to the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana. I received my master of music degree there in voice performance, which is what you needed at that time to be able to teach at the university level. I was interested in doing that and was there for a couple years, teaching and earning my MM degree.

Q: Did you say you taught there?
A: I had an assistantship my second year there, a teaching assistantship. I taught music ed majors and performance majors and other who wanted to study voice. That was where I got my feet wet. That’s where I fell in love with it.
Q: I suppose you had influential teachers from this time too.

A: Oh, my. My voice teacher at the University of Illinois was Grace Wilson. She was a wonderful human being to begin with. She was a fine pianist and singer. She and I just clicked from day one. You know, it’s very personal. Having the right voice teacher is very personal. What works for one person doesn’t always work for another. But she was somebody that everybody just adored. She greatly influenced me and my desire to teach. I was very lucky. One other person who was very important at the graduate level was John Wustman, who was a coach accompanist at the university. He has since become very well known. He has been the pianist for people like Pavarotti and many well-known singers. He’s done a lot of that. So I was very fortunate to work with him.

Q: When did you graduate with a master’s?

A: In the spring of 1969.

Q: Did you have to give a special performance? How does that work with voice majors?

A: As an undergraduate you have to give a senior recital, which is a full-length solo recital. At the master’s level you have to do something similar with more difficult, challenging literature. We had to write—not a dissertation or a thesis but a research paper. That was part of the degree program. But not like the other degree programs have to. I had to practice all the time. You know, you spend a lot of time outside of your academic work just practicing.

Q: I suppose they have special rooms for that.
A: Practice rooms with pianos. We practically lived in the practice rooms. I sang in the opera there and at Oberlin as well. You know, they did productions so I had some roles.

Q: Do you remember any that you especially liked?

A: I loved the role of Lauretta in Gianni Schichi by Puccini. That’s a one-act opera but a wonderful one. Actually, we just did it here last year. I also sang the role of Adina in the Elixir of Love by Donizetti and the role of Pamina in Mozart's The Magic Flute. We performed The Magic Flute for the opening of the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts.

Q: Were you primarily studying to be an opera singer?

A: No. If you are going to be a voice major, you have to study it all. You have to learn opera. I studied and performed art song in German, French, English and Italian, as well as some folk songs and musical theater. Of course your opportunities to perform included those performances, the graduation degree recital, choirs and the operas. Everybody did it.

Q: Then what did you do after you graduated?

A: I came here, right out of my master’s. It was really amazing. I came to KU in the fall of '69.

Q: How did you happen to come here?

A: Well, I was looking for a university job, a college teaching job, and this opened up at a rather opportune time, actually. It was a strange experience because I had a job offer at Central Missouri State and I was leaving one afternoon for that audition (you had to go
and audition in person). A friend of mine, a colleague from graduate school, came running into my studio and said, “There’s a message for you in your mail box from the University of Kansas.” (We all shared the same mail box). “Whatever you do, don’t take a job at Central Missouri State if they want to offer you a job, without seeing KU.” She said, “My parents live in Lawrence. It is really a great program.” These were the days when they could hire you on the spot. And I did go to Central Missouri State and I did get offered a job that day. And I asked them if they could please give me 10 days because I had another job interview. They had no choice but to say yes, so they did. I fell in love with this place, I really did. I was 24 years old when I took my teaching job here. I always thought it was going to be a stepping stone to someplace else, but the more I was here the more I appreciated what was here. I tried once to change jobs. I applied for one job at a reputable state university. I came back from that interview and said, “I don’t care if they offer me the job. There is no way I am going to take it. I am in a wonderful place and I’m not going to leave.”

Q: Was that both Lawrence and the music program here?

A: It was more the music program. When I first moved to Lawrence, it was not a great place for single women. If you were a student, that was fine. But at the age of 24 and you are single, you relate more to the students than you do to the faculty. I was in a very awkward stage of my life. I had to transition into being and thinking like a faculty member. It was very hard to meet people.

Q: What year was this when you came?

Q: There was so much going on here then.

A: Oh my. My first year was the year the student union burned.

Q: What do you remember about that time?

A: I remember how it affected me personally that year because of what I just told you.

There is a certain mode that students get into. I don’t know if mode is the right word.

You know, we all protested this and protested that. And all of a sudden I’m sitting on the other side of the fence. I’m a faculty member and I can’t do those things. I hadn’t really adjusted to being a faculty member yet, but I didn’t protest.

Q: But you would have liked to.

A: I would have liked to have been involved in some of those things because I was still very young. That is what I remember most about that year because there was so much turmoil.

That was the year of Kent State and the ongoing war in Vietnam.

Q: We came that year too.

A: Then you know what was going on.

Q: Oh, yes.

A: There were many people hired at KU in ’69 and ’70. It was kind of a good time for lots of new people. I’ve met so many faculty members who came in those two years.

Q: I know that they have changed things from time to time but when you came, what was music a part of?
A: Music was part of the School of Fine Arts. It was until last year. It included the visual arts. I liked that the School was structured the way it was, except for the theatre department. We were really trying to get theatre to come into the School of Fine Arts with us because it just made sense. They were very happy in the College and didn’t want to move.

Q: About how big was the music program at that time? About how many faculty members did you have in your department?

A: At the beginning I’m not really sure. The voice area has grown a lot. It became more visible and we did a lot more recruiting and brought in a significant number of students and faculty. We just worked very hard to have a fine voice program and it really grew into something very special.

Q: What did you teach while you were here?

A: I taught applied voice on a one to one with students, music students of all types. Music ed. had their own emphasis but many of them chose voice. I was teaching on a one to one basis with undergrads and grads who were interested in majoring in voice, some interested in musical theater and some interested in opera, some interested in teaching, some not knowing. I also taught French diction for singers and French vocal literature. We did this in Italian, French, German, and English. There were diction classes in the foreign languages and literature classes. French was my emphasis. I had a wonderful teacher at Oberlin who taught an inspiring French vocal literature class. I wanted to do the same, to pass it on.
Q: Did you also perform while you were here?

A: Oh, yes. I gave faculty recitals here every year. I did a number of concerts with the orchestra and combined choirs in Hoch Auditorium as a soloist. I was the soprano soloist with Robert Shaw and other KU faculty in Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony in Independence, Missouri, at the RLDS Auditorium. We did Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony with the Kansas City Symphony and the KU choirs. I also was a soloist with William Warfield at KU. I gave solo recitals in other states, not just here. I spent one summer at the Tanglewood Music Festival in Massachusetts working with fabulous musicians and singing in the Tanglewood Festival Chorus under Seigi Ozawa. I didn’t do any opera once I finished college. It was not my first love. It really wasn’t. My voice was good but not big enough for the size stages they were growing into. They used to be a little smaller. Go to the opera houses in Europe, with the exception of the really, really, big ones in each major city. Lots of the opera houses are much smaller than what you will see in the states.

Q: I didn’t know that.

A: Little people like me could perform in them.

Q: Did you originate any courses while you were here?

A: What do you mean by originate?

Q: Well, maybe that really doesn’t apply in music. I mean that the course hadn’t been taught or was taught differently.
A: Well, the French vocal literature class had not been taught. There was one overview of vocal literature that covered two semesters. But it was a smattering of different languages. You couldn’t get too deeply into it. When we changed the curriculum and wanted a whole semester of each, I incorporated the poets and the painters of the period with the composers, which I don’t think had been done before. I enjoyed researching that, not just teaching it. I also taught a vocal performance class. All freshmen majors from our voice studios—because there were five voice teachers at the time (all of us had majors coming in as freshmen) took the course. All of the freshmen had a combined class which I taught. It was a great class to teach and a real challenge.

It was strictly performance. It was getting them up on their feet when they were young. Each was coming in as the star of their high school and all of a sudden they realized that there was all this other competition around and that everybody in the program was talented. So that was fun. It was a class that I taught in a rather open format where I would critique and then I would let them critique each other, verbally, not written. It was just so rewarding to watch them grow and to watch them become supportive of each other. I loved that because it is a very competitive field. It’s nice to see them encouraging each other instead of competing against.

Q: You said that you were chairperson of the department for a while.

A: We changed the structure. You had asked about the structure earlier. We were all small departments. There was a department of voice, a department of piano, a department of strings, etc. At one point the administration decided that it would be much better and
healthier if we could combine budgets, because nobody had much money because we were in our little nucleus. But by combining all of it, some areas could grow one year and some could grow another year. So they created the Department of Music Performance. It was all of the applied instruments. Along with that there was the Department of Ensembles, which was the band, orchestra and choirs and a Department of Theory and Composition and a Department of Musicology. So there were four departments. The other departments had three or four faculty each. Mine had 50. So the balance was crazy, just crazy. Kenneth Smith, who was really my mentor here, was the chairman of that department for the first two years. Then he didn’t want to do it any more. He was getting close to retirement at that point. My father was a violinist with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra for 40 years, my mother, an accomplished pianist. I spent a lot of my childhood going to concerts. I was fortunate. Very frequently singers are labeled separate from musicians. It’s always a musician’s joke. I had all that background. So I really felt like a complete musician and knowledgeable about more than just voice. I felt I could use all that background in a positive way so I applied for the job. It was a terrible structure. It was just incredible. I don’t remember what the question was that led into this.

Q: Well, I was just asking about administrative responsibilities, what was going on in the department at that time.

A: I was dealing with everything from purchasing equipment for the School, including pianos, to salaries and evaluations and advising students, faculty issues and research. I
was just in charge of a lot of people. And all the graduate teaching assistants were also under my jurisdiction. It was a very challenging experience for me, a real learning experience. I did it for four years. At the end of the fourth year I talked to the dean and said, “The structure is all wrong.” Several people had said that before. And it was at that point that the faculty and the administration decided to make it one complete Department of Music, with everybody under one head, which was really what it needed to be. So I did my four years and Ken did his two years and then we developed that new structure. Then I went back to teaching full time. I was not teaching full time when I was in administration, but I was still teaching. Then we became the division of voice within the department and each division had a director. What we had then was back to the old divisions, but under one huge budget. I didn’t have to evaluate people any more. And I did that job for about nine years.

Q: You were chairman of this division?

A: I was director of the Division of Voice, in the Department of Music in the School of Fine Arts. I liked that because it was much more focused on my main interest, which was voice. And I had wonderful colleagues to work with, which makes a difference.

Q: Do people in music take sabbaticals?

A: Yes, I took one sabbatical. I was married. I had met my husband here.

Q: What is his name?
A: Herman Munczek. He was a professor on the physics faculty. He retired 12 or 13 years ago. I met him here at KU. We both had a sabbatical the same semester, which was great.

Q: When were you married?

A: We were married in ’82. I had been single until then. We went to New York City in ’84 where he was working in physics research at NYU with a person there. I studied voice with a teacher in NYC for the first time in many years. I needed a little refresher for myself. It was nice being on the other side of the piano for a while. I also studied the Alexander technique.

Q: What does that mean?

A: It’s a way of movement, of standing and breathing that is extremely valuable for performers, not just singers. It’s a specific technique, which I couldn’t possibly go into. I studied that and also did research on Israeli vocal literature. I was interested in Israeli composers. New York was a good place to do this. That’s where all the resources were, unless I went to Israel, which I didn’t do. That was a wonderful semester.

Q: You were talking about researching these people. Does that mean that you also did writing for publication?

A: No. I studied the music and learned a significant amount of the literature for performing for myself and for teaching. When I came back I did some recitals that incorporated some of this song literature that people just don’t hear regularly.

Q: Have you been on University committees, I suppose? Any you particularly remember?
A: I was in the middle of my tenure here when they were putting women on every committee. I like to think that I was chosen to be on some of these committees because I was worthy of it but after several years of being the token female on many committees, one of my colleagues, who is also female, used to say, “Are we getting this because we deserve it or are we just the token female?” I was on many search committees in music and served on search committees in theatre, academic affairs and others at the university. I was on the promotion and tenure committee, the sabbatical committee and numerous internal committees within the Department of Music and the School of Fine Arts.

Q: Have you had honors at KU?

A: My biggest honor came about two and a half years ago. I had already stopped teaching by then. I am retired now but I had been on leave because of health reasons before that. I was no longer teaching. One of my former doctoral students, Sue Wilke Snyder, established a $100,000 endowment at KU for the Music Department. It is the Phyllis Brill Munczek Graduate Voice Scholarship. I can’t think of a greater honor than that. I was just floored when she did it. It is an ongoing scholarship in my name for the graduate voice program. There’s nothing more exciting than that. I said, “Why don’t you put it in your name, Sue? It’s your money.” She said, “No, I want it to be in your name.” So she did it.

Q: What sort of jobs do your students get?

A: I’ll give you an example.

Q: And any outstanding former students who you remember?
A: I can’t say “my students” because they were all of our students and we all taught them different things. They did everything from going on in opera to teaching and everything in between. I have one who sang at a number of places in Europe and then became the lead soprano with the St. Gallen opera company in Switzerland. I had another who sang with the New York City Opera and throughout Europe. I had one who has fulfilled my desire in life and became a cantor in a synagogue. That really surprised me. That was in my later teaching years. I have a number of them who have gone on to become teachers, some in colleges and universities and some privately. I have some who have gone into musical theatre and one who formed a trio and has toured all over the world in recent years, entertaining the troupes. Another formed a group which recorded and performed early music. She has several CDs out. I can’t remember a lot of the earlier ones and what they’ve done. But that should give you an idea.

Q: Do you belong to professional organizations?

A: I did. I was a member of NATS, the National Association of Teachers of Singing and am a member of Pi Kappa Lambda, the national music fraternity for academic and music achievements. I was also a member of MTNA, the Music Teachers National Association.

Q: You were saying you did some judging. Was that in other places in addition to KU?

A: Yes. I judged for the Kansas and Missouri All State Music Festivals, which are high school competitions. I was a judge for the National Association of Teachers of Singing, both district-wide and regionally. Then I was asked to judge what I guess is the equivalent of our Kansas All-State, which is the Texas Interscholastic League. This was
also high schools and they invited me back every other year to judge. That was wonderful. There was so much talent. Then I was a Metropolitan Opera district judge for the auditions. The winners go from districts to regionals and on to the Nationals. I did it at the district level, which covered a number of states in that district. You couldn’t judge in your own area. You had to judge someplace else.

Q: Were you involved in community activities in Lawrence?
A: I am a member of the Jewish Community Center and did some volunteer work during some political campaigns but not much else. I didn’t get too involved. You have to know how involved teaching voice is or any of the applied areas. You come back night after night to go to recitals. You go to performances and rehearsals of your students on the weekends. You attend concerts of your colleagues as well. I found that I had so little free time. You know, teaching on a one to one is teaching all day. It’s not teaching two or three hours a week. It’s very different.

Q: What do you plan to do now that you are retired?
A: I’m enjoying my grandchildren.

Q: Do you have children?
A: I have two step-children, my husband’s children. I’ve been around since before the grandchildren were born. We have a wonderful relationship all of us.

Q: How many grandchildren do you have?
A: Two. One is 23 and the other one is 12. They are brothers and they are just terrific kids. They are growing up in New York City. Well, the older one is teaching right now. He
graduated from Amherst College in Massachusetts with a degree in Sociology and is now working on a master’s and teaching in the Mississippi Teacher Corps, which is a very prestigious program from what I’ve learned. So he’s getting his master’s in education. We’re very proud of him. What else? I’ve been reading, which is nice, and trying to stay healthy, which isn’t always easy for me. Traveling a little bit. We don’t have any family here. All the family is everywhere else, so we do a lot of traveling. I’m fortunate in that my father is still living and in pretty good health. He’s 93 and lives in Florida. My parents moved to Florida after he retired, as did many of their friends. They got out of the snow belt and moved to the warmer climate. I try to get there to see him as much as possible. My mother passed away a few years ago.

Q: To kind of finish up, what is your assessment of KU, of the department you were in, past, present, hopes for the future, that kind of thing?

A: Well, as I said earlier, the program, the voice area has just grown and grown. I left it in good hands when I retired and it continues to grow. I hope that it doesn’t get cut by all the financial cutbacks because we’ve taken so long to build it up to being a really top notch program. I was very skeptical at first about the administration breaking up the School of Fine Arts last year. But I realize that having a School of Music is really the right way to go. So I see lots of positive things about that. I just hope the budget doesn’t keep getting cut at the university because we have spent so many years building it up, fighting for money. And finally little by little you get it and then all of a sudden one year it is slashed, which is happening all over the country right now. I hope that we will
recover from that. There are so many new administrative positions right now. It’s hard to know where it’s going. What was it they said last year, “We don’t have a chancellor. We don’t have a provost.” This was when everybody was leaving. “We don’t have a dean for the new School of Music,” referring to our program, “and we just lost our governor.” I see things settling down more this year, but I am not as involved as I was 10 years ago. It can only get better because there are wonderful people here. And the town, the city of Lawrence, has grown so much since you and I came here in ’69.

Q: Oh, yes.

A: It’s very attractive. People have said to me, including my family, “Why don’t you move to Florida now that you are retired? Why don’t you get out of the winters?” We love it here. We really do. Lots of arts going on and other things.

Q: Is there anything I’ve missed that you would like to add?

A: I’d like to look at this for a minute by myself.

Q: You were saying….

A: One of the things I did go through here was the demise of Hoch Auditorium and the building of the Lied Center. I remember when James Moeser, who was our dean at the time, fought and fought to get that Lied Center built. It was really the doing of the people in music and then Dean Peter Thompson to get it to fruition. I hope, now that it is in the hands of the provost, as opposed to the hands of the dean, I hope that it will continue to be used for all the things that it was intended for in the beginning. But it has been a wonderful addition to the community, I think. It was exciting. Because we were all
involved in the music department, we would walk into it while it was being built. They would show us around. Just watching it go up was a real thrill. I wanted to add that because I think it was a big change in the whole arts scene in Lawrence and bringing in so many different artists from all walks of life. Have you been there?

Q: Yes, I’ve seen performances there.

A: So I don’t think I’ve left anything out.

Q: Thank you very much.

A: You’re welcome.