

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH MARY KELLY

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

REV

Shaun Illingworth: This begins an oral history interview with Mary Kelly, on November 3, 2022, with Shaun Illingworth for the Rutgers Oral History Archives. Thank you very much for joining me today. I appreciate it.

Mary Kelly: You're welcome.

SI: To begin, can you tell me where and when you were born?

MK: I was born at Mountainside Hospital in Montclair on March 2, 1954.

SI: What were your parents' names?

MK: My mom was Rosemary Andrews Frank, and my dad was Paul Stephen Frank.

SI: Starting with your mother's side of the family, do you know anything about the family history in general, if there is an immigration story there?

MK: Yes.

SI: Yes, just anything you might remember that came down through the family.

MK: My mother's grandparents came over from Ireland during the potato famine, and they settled in New Jersey. My mother's grandfather was from Lochee Dundee, Scotland, and he came over because he was an expert in water pumps and was hired to help start Hackensack Water Company in Bergen County. [Editor's Note: The Great Famine, also known as the Irish Potato Famine, occurred in Ireland from 1845 to 1852. Potatoes, the staple crop of the country, were infected with a mold that resulted in the destruction of the leaves and tubers of the potato plant. Due to the food shortages and resulting diseases, over one million died, and about two million emigrated from Ireland.]

My parents met during college. My mom was at Jersey City State becoming a nurse, and she got a teaching certificate also. The college organized a dance with men from Saint Peter's College, which is also in Jersey City. They met there and got married a couple years later. I came along shortly thereafter. I remember my mom saying that my dad was in class when the teacher said, "I don't often do this, but, Paul, you are excused from this class because your wife is having a baby."

SI: Your father's side was from Eastern Europe.

MK: Yes. My grandparents actually came over through Ellis Island in 1915. They had both come from Austria-Hungary. It's funny, one time, I was at my grandmother's, and for some reason, I don't remember why, I said we were Czech. She goes, "You're not Czech. You're Slovak," and I thought it was all the same thing, of course. My paternal grandmother was originally from Uzhgorod, in western Ukraine. My grandfather was also from a town on the very western side of (current day) Ukraine in Velyki Lazy. My grandparents met once they settled in the same area of Jersey City. They were very active in the Russian Orthodox Church

in Jersey City. [Editor's Note: On January 1, 1993, Czechoslovakia split into two independent states, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Czechoslovakia formed in 1918 after the dissolution of Austria-Hungary at the end of World War I.]

SI: Do you have any idea what those grandparents did for a living?

MK: My grandfather was a carpenter. When I was little, my parents bought the house in Bloomfield, and my grandfather came over and, with my father, built a porch on the back of the house. I have pictures of that, actually. He was a nice guy. My grandmother was very stern and rarely smiled. I do have a picture of her smiling once at her 50th wedding anniversary party. She did have eight children, all delivered at home, so I think she was kind of busy.

SI: Yes, that will do it. [laughter]

MK: Then, on my mother's side, my grandmother was a teacher for many years in Bloomfield. She grew up in Bloomfield in a house that was torn down to build the Garden State Parkway. When she was eighteen, she graduated from Montclair Normal School, which was the teacher's training. She initially taught in Bergen County. She rented a house with a few of her teacher friends, and she lived there until she got married. Back then, you weren't allowed to continue as a teacher if you were married. She and my grandfather bought a house in Bloomfield, and she lived there for many years, until she was in her eighties. Then, she went to an apartment and then lived with my mom for a couple years before she passed away at age ninety.

I have some old letters from my grandfather, who would write a letter to ask her for a date. He was from Oradell in Bergen County, and he would meet her to take her down the shore, which they would go to on a train back then. I never knew him because he was in World War I and contracted TB [tuberculosis] while he was in France. When my mother and her two brothers were little, he was in and out of hospitals. I have a photo of him at a sanitarium up in Saranac Lake in New York State. They used to think breathing fresh air helped patients with TB. During the Great Depression, he worked in a bank in Bloomfield. I remember my grandmother told me about hungry men coming to the back door of their house. She would make sandwiches for them. My grandfather died in 1944. [Editor's Note: In 1884, Dr. Edward Trudeau opened the Adirondack Cottage Sanitarium in Saranac Lake, New York. In 1915, after his death, it was renamed Trudeau Sanatorium.]

SI: I had heard about that, taking the cure up in the Adirondacks.

MK: Yes. I have this really great picture where he's sitting on the steps outside a cabin with my mother who was, I don't know, two or three, and a dog. It's a really cute picture.

SI: It is interesting to me, both your parents wound up going to college and you had a grandmother who went to college, so they were really getting degrees earlier than many people. Do you know what led your mother to pursue nursing?

MK: Back then, a woman would become either a teacher or a nurse. I think those were the two occupations that women were mostly in, although when I was a kid, I did have a female

pediatrician, which was considered very unusual back then. Perhaps it was because my mom's dad was so ill, and her mother had to care for the family. We were brought up knowing we would go and get a college degree and be able to support yourself. It wasn't like you were going to rely on getting married and just living with your husband. Actually, my mother's brothers were really fortunate. They were in World War II. One went to Columbia on the GI Bill, and the other one went to Penn. They were both very successful people. My father's siblings did not go to college. One of his sisters was on one of the female baseball teams during World War II, like on the movie *A League of Their Own*.

SI: It seems like your father went to school on the GI Bill or some form of veterans' benefits.

MK: Yes, he was able to go to college because of the benefits from his Army service. There definitely would not have been money for college otherwise. I remember my cousin saying about how her father used to go by the trains and steal coal to heat the house. Then, my grandmother would chase them around and try to beat him for stealing, but then she would use the coal to heat the house anyway.

SI: Do you know anything about his time in the service?

MK: Yes, he served up in Alaska. Thankfully, it was between World War II and Korea. I don't know what they were doing in Alaska. When you're a kid, you don't think to ask these questions. I remember hearing that when he was supposed to come home, he missed the ship for some reason, and the ship sank and everybody died, and, thankfully, he wasn't on it. So, that's the main story I know from his time in the service. I remember they had ropes between the buildings, because in the wintertime, with the snow, people could get lost going between the buildings in whiteouts and freeze to death if they didn't make it to the next building. There was a picture of a wolf, but that's the extent of what I knew about that.

SI: Was he in the Army or the Air Force?

MK: He was in the Army. I had his Army blanket for many years. My dad wound up with early-onset Alzheimer's. I passed how long he was alive a couple years ago, which was a little weird. My mom lived until she was eighty-two.

SI: Do you have any sense of what your parents did before they were married and starting their careers, what their early life was like, aside from your father's service?

MK: My mom had a job as a teenager as a counselor for the town parks. After they were married, there were a lot of social activities with friends that my dad worked with and my mom's nursing friends. We would regularly get together in the fall to picnic up in lower New York State and get together for dinners. Family was especially important. We spent lots of time with my grandparents and aunts and uncles. I know my dad worked a lot. He worked two full-time jobs before they bought the house. It was a real pleasant childhood. Bloomfield was a really nice place to grow up.

The county park system had lots of stuff to do. There were tennis lessons, I think it was five days a week for at least a month, and the cost of it was a can of tennis balls on the first day. It was great. We'd ride our bike to Brookdale Park, do that, come home, and jump in the pool. We always had one of those above-ground pools, and it was great. All the neighborhood kids could use it. I remember coming home one day, and it was really hot, just dropping my bike, running down the hill and diving over the side into the pool. We had tournaments down in Branch Brook Park in Newark. It was lots of fun.

It was crazy back then; there was a lot more freedom. I remember going with my friend, and I know she moved away after fifth grade. We would ride our bikes over to Brookdale Park and stop at the sweet shop and pick up all this junk food for lunch. We'd climb a tree in Brookdale Park and have our lunch. Here we are, max ten years old, riding our bikes two miles away on busy streets [laughter], but we were allowed to do it. So, that was cool. We would also ride our bikes to the Rizzuto Berra Bowling Alley in Clifton (started by the Yankees Phil Rizzuto and Yogi Berra). There were always lots of kids to play with in the neighborhood. My sister's birthday was the end of June, and my mom had a birthday party for her. It's in the backyard, and there's twenty-one kids from the neighborhood in the photo. The deal was, in the evening, when the street lights came on, you had to go home. That was everybody's rule, so it was cool. There was lots of hide and go seek and hit the bat.

SI: Were there any opportunities for girls to play sports? You mentioned tournaments.

MK: I actually was very fortunate. I had two female gym teachers in junior high--that's what they called middle school back then--and they were before their time. Their names were Miss Manahan and Miss Carol Reid. We wound up having varsity soccer and field hockey that they would get busses for, which was unheard of back then. We had a gymnastics team where we participated in AAU [Amateur Athletic Union] meets. It was great. We were really fortunate. Things changed when I got to high school. We had some intramural sports and that's it. I remember my high school yearbook had page after page after page of boys' basketball, football, and numerous other boys' sports, and there was exactly one page of girls' intramural sports. That was it.

I was really pretty good at sports. When we got to Rutgers, we were just goofing around on the basketball court, and this woman came to us and said, "Would you be at all interested in forming a girls' basketball team?" We all said, "Sure." She said, "We need to go ask the athletic director." We got together and went to talk with the athletic director, and the next thing we knew there was a girls' basketball team being formed. Then, we were practicing and I wrecked my knee. I wound up needing surgery in the middle of first semester of my sophomore year, so my very brief basketball career was cut short.

SI: Do you remember who approached you?

MK: Unfortunately, I don't remember her name. The woman who I think wound up being the coach came to visit me in the hospital. I was in the hospital for a couple of days, then on crutches for a while, and just never went back to basketball. Plus, I was in Pharmacy School and in the middle of organic chemistry, and it just wasn't going to happen. [laughter] I remember, I

knew something happened because my leg just gave out, and I heard an awful noise. I went to the infirmary, and, thankfully, the person there gave me crutches. The next morning, my knee was enormous. I had to go home for surgery because my knee was locked with torn cartilage. [Editor's Note: There are a number of women who played integral roles in establishing women's athletic programs at Rutgers in the early 1970s. Janet L. Koontz, an assistant professor of health and physical education at Douglass College, oversaw the initiation of intercollegiate athletics for women. Nancy Mitchell, an administrator at Douglass College, helped push the development of women's sports, especially women's basketball. Doris Meyer was the first woman in the Division of Physical Education and Intercollegiate Athletics at Rutgers College, after the school became coed in the fall of 1972. Rita Kay Thomas became the Assistant Athletic Director for Women's Sports in 1974. Ellen Johns served as the first head coach of the women's basketball team.]

SI: Going back to growing up in Bloomfield, what was your neighborhood like? Can you tell me a little bit about that? You mentioned how the kids would all play together, but was it a working-class neighborhood or one particular ethnicity or a mix of people? What was it like?

MK: A mix of people. Next door was an older couple. They were very kind. They had wanted to adopt and would have been wonderful parents. But they actually wound up helping a little boy on the other side of their house who was placed with very unfortunate parents. This older woman kind of helped bring him up, which was very fortunate because he needed that. We had the pool, and the mother wouldn't buy him a bathing suit, you know, crazy stuff. So, Mrs. Petrilli would just buy him things that would help him out. One of the other neighbors wound up years later calling, I think it was, the phone company, and the guy answered the phone, said his name, and it was that little boy, who wound up becoming [a professional]. He got a good job, so that was satisfying to know he made it out of that bad situation okay.

The man on the other side of us was very successful. That family wound up moving to Glen Ridge; that was the fancy town nearby. Another neighborhood man had a good job at Hoffman LaRoche, I think he was a chemist. That family was the only one that had two cars. One time, it was raining, and the mom in that family came to pick up her kids at the grammar school. She said whoever can fit in the car can have a ride home. I believe there were sixteen little kids crammed in there! That was one of the very few times I got a ride home from school. Another man was a postman. None of the mothers worked. Everybody had a bunch of kids though. I wouldn't say it was working class. I guess it was kind of a mixture of people. Some people wound up becoming very successful, and other people were working class. It's funny, you didn't really think about that, like who's rich or anything like that. Everybody was kind of equal.

The elderly couple next door, he had been a professional trumpet player who later in life owned a hardware store, and she had been a dancer. Apparently, that was the reason they weren't allowed to adopt children. I remember her telling me about Ethel Merman, who you're probably too young to know that name. [Editor's Note: Ethel Merman was a musical-comedy actor and singer who starred in Broadway shows, movies, radio and television for more than fifty years.]

SI: I know who she was, yes.

MK: Mrs. Petrilli told me, "That woman would climb over her own grandmother to get ahead." [laughter] So, she didn't have a very high opinion of her. For high school, Bloomfield was a great place. We had an incredibly good music department, and I played the French horn in band, wind ensemble, and orchestra. I remember going on class trips in grammar school into the city. Leonard Bernstein had programs for kids, teaching us about orchestras and what all the instruments sound like. Instrumental instruction started for me in grammar school when my parents bought a used piano from Bamberger's in Newark. It cost something crazy, like fifty dollars, delivered. I had piano lessons for several years, then in middle school started with the French horn. In high school, we were very fortunate to have Dr. William Workinger, who was a wonderful teacher for band and wind ensemble. Dr. Raymond Hartmann led the orchestra. We had a really good time with music. Essex County sponsored a summer music school, too, which I went to during high school, and it was very affordable. They provided buses to get to Hillside School in Montclair and provided instruction from eight-thirty to twelve-thirty for about a month. It was excellent. [Editor's Note: From 1958 to 1972, Leonard Bernstein, the renowned composer and conductor, hosted the Young People's Concerts with the New York Philharmonic.]

SI: What instrument did you play?

MK: I played the French horn.

SI: Okay.

MK: Yes. I was good enough that in my second year of Rutgers, I walked on and tried out for wind ensemble. I made second chair, so my practice in high school was good. That was one of the best classes I took in college, that and "Horticulture for the Residential Environment" with Doc Hamilton. In Pharmacy School, you weren't allowed a whole lot of time to do other things, other than professional classes, but I particularly enjoyed ones when I was allowed to do so.

SI: I am curious, again going back to growing up, you have Irish heritage on one side and Slovakian and Ukrainian on the other. Were there any traditions from either of those backgrounds that kept up in your household?

MK: Yes. My grandmother on my father's side cooked; that's what she did. When you came, she wanted you to eat. I loved what she called halupkis, which were stuffed cabbages. She would make it with sauerkraut and bacon in the sauce, and I just loved that. Oh, it was so good. Now, my sister has taken on the task of making halupkis occasionally, and my kids don't eat it. They call it monkey brains. That's not going to proceed past my generation, I don't think, but, yes, she was a good cook. We'd have kielbasa and sauerkraut and then those--I forget what they're called [makivnyk]. We used to be able to find them in a bakery in Clifton, this rolled kind of cake, one was poppyseed, the other was walnut.

SI: Babka?

MK: Yes, kind of like a babka but with fillings rolled in and not as tall.

SI: Did religion or faith play any role in your life growing up?

MK: For my grandparents, they were very active in the Russian Orthodox Catholic Church. St. Mary's is a gorgeous little church in Jersey City. My father, his siblings, and my grandfather were all in the choir. The church is struggling financially now that my dad's generation has passed away and the younger generations have moved out of the area. The church has a fundraiser dinner every December that all my cousins and my siblings and I go to, but I don't know how much longer it will survive.

My mother was Roman Catholic. She always went to church, but we haven't continued. My one daughter married a man who is Catholic and religion has always been important to him, so she is going to church. But my other daughter is vehemently against organized religion. I went to catechism until early high school and got married there, but have not continued.

SI: Were there activities centered around the church, such as going to feasts and festivals or even other types of activities?

MK: No, it was really just the Saint Nicholas party at my father's church in Jersey City. That's their main fundraiser for the year. They have a really good Saint Nicholas costume that the priest would wear, and there'd be a fifty-fifty and everybody would make baskets with stuff and you could put your tickets in and that kind of thing. That's about it.

We always went to catechism at church in Bloomfield, and I did get married there. My mom went to church her whole life. When she was in the hospital and I was trying to get a hold of the priest to come when we realized she was dying, he never made it. It was annoying because it was important to her. That's about it, religion-wise.

SI: As you were going through junior high and high school, were there activities you would do, more organized stuff like Girl Scouts or some other kind of club or activity?

MK: Yes, I was a Girl Scout until about eighth grade. It was fun to go camping in the summertime. I did go to Girl Scout camp when I was in grammar school but wound up having to come home because I got mumps. I went to another Girl Scout camp, I think it was after sixth grade, called Camp Madeleine Mulford. It was out near Pennsylvania, and we canoed down the Delaware, which was a lot of fun. Those were the only two times I went to camp. That was about it. [Editor's Note: Madeleine Mulford Girl Scout Camp is a camp in Sussex County, New Jersey.]

SI: You mentioned your parents really emphasized the importance of education. When you were in junior high and high school, one, what did you think of those experiences? Did they prepare you well? Then, also, did any subjects or teachers stand out as your favorites?

MK: Yes. Now, remember, my grandmother was a teacher in Bloomfield, so she had a bunch of friends who were still teaching. She probably retired around 1965. She taught in South Junior High School, and I remember going with her, I was probably around eight, just to see what teaching was like. In junior high, I had Miss Dorothea Burns. She was an English teacher; it was a really good class. She was really into mythology, so it's helpful for Jeopardy today

because sometimes I'll know the answers. [laughter] She was actually [actor and comedian] George Burns' niece. Yes, she was an excellent teacher. Who else do I remember? Miss Margaret Dunn, she was a math teacher; she was tough. I think she had been in the Army. She was a friend of my grandmother's, too.

In high school, I loved my biology teacher, Mrs. Juanita Moss. She was an excellent teacher. I had a really good high school and junior high education. What's different now is that back then you were really divided all the time by capabilities. There were some very successful people in my classes. One of the founders of ESPN was in my class. We had a bunch of people make it into Juilliard for the music programs. I remember going up to the pit to say hi to a classmate during a Broadway show. We had a very rigorous education. It was a good place to grow up.

SI: Would you say that by the time you were in high school, particularly the second half of high school, that you were a consumer of news and following current events and aware of things going on beyond just your sphere of high school and your town?

MK: Not really. I know we were certainly aware of Vietnam but just what Walter Cronkite would say on the news at night. I do remember, I was pretty young whenever Woodstock occurred, and there was an older girl who lived across the street from me, and I remember being very jealous that she was going to Woodstock, but I was too young to actually go. It's not like it consumed you, like it does today with all the information coming at you from all directions. You just kind of saw what Walter Cronkite told you, that's about it. When I was in college, for the first couple years, I was a lifeguard at Glen Ridge Country Club. One of the guy lifeguards had just come back from Vietnam, and he didn't want to advertise it. He only told a couple of people, because it was like a stigma back then. [Editor's Note: Walter Cronkite served as the anchor of *CBS Evening News* from 1962 to 1981. From August 15 to August 18, 1969, the Woodstock music festival occurred in Bethel, New York with an estimated 400,000 people in attendance.]

I do remember sitting at the dining room table and my parents were talking about The Beatles were going to be on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. And I thought they were talking about insects. After watching the show, everyone was obsessed. My favorite was George.

SI: Did you do that as well, lifeguard, or did you have other jobs?

MK: I babysat a lot starting when I was around twelve, I think. That was mostly for neighbors, though through my Jewish next-door neighbor, I would babysit for their friends at their synagogue. One time, I noticed numbers tattooed on the forearm of one of the fathers. That's a sight I'll never forget. My first regular job was as a salesperson at Brookdale Pastry Shop. I was probably sixteen, because you had to have working papers. I remember getting--what was it?--a dollar twenty-five an hour, and then you'd get a quarter raise every so often. The owner would let us take six rolls home at the end of the day or a coffee cake, anything left over. My first paycheck, I went across the street to Holstein's and bought candies. It was nice to have money to buy albums. Korvettes had the best prices; I think they were like \$1.99 or \$2.99. What else did I do?

The first couple of summers in college, I lifeguarded at Glen Ridge Country Club. That was a fun job. I helped out with the swim team. One good story from the country club was when my sister (who got my job when I left) stopped back at the pool to say hello to the director and asked about the new crew. He laughed and said there was a new kid in the snack bar who was going to Hollywood and wants to be a movie star. It was Tom Cruise.

The summer after my third year at Rutgers, I had a job at Hoffmann-La Roche, which I could walk to. It was a cool internship where my group of five college students from all over the country spent a week or two in various departments of the pharmaceutical industry. The fourth summer, I worked at Martland Hospital in Newark, which is now University Hospital. My last summer of college, I had a job at Beth Israel Hospital in Passaic. I decided I really liked hospital pharmacy. After I got licensed, I worked at Hackettstown Community Hospital (a couple of years ago it changed its name to Hackettstown Medical Center after it was bought by Atlantic Health).

SI: As you were coming up on your senior year, or I guess even earlier, in junior year, what was the search for college like? What were you thinking, and where were you looking?

MK: That's funny, it never crossed my mind to even look at private schools, which I'm sure I could have gotten into, but we didn't have a lot of money and my dad had a drinking problem. My mom went back to work and was a school nurse at the girls' vocational school down in Newark. The kick in the pants is, back then, I could earn fifteen hundred dollars a summer as a lifeguard. Rutgers tuition, plus room and board, was two thousand dollars. So, I could make seventy-five percent of what I needed for college. I feel badly for people today. It's crazy with the cost of colleges. There's no way you could make most of what you need in the summer before you went to college. I remember I did get a New Jersey scholarship of 250 dollars. A girl I knew whose parents got divorced got a full scholarship, and she got a Mustang as a high school graduation present. I remember thinking, "There's something not quite right about this."

Back then, none of us had money. There was one person in my dorm that had a car. He would walk down the hall of Davidson saying, "Cheesesteak!" At the time, there was a cheesesteak food truck down on College Avenue that had a deal that if you bought nine cheesesteaks, you got one free. So, he would drive down with a bunch of orders, and he'd get his cheesesteak for free. Jeff Saviss was his name. I think his father was associated with the football team somehow, but he was a nice guy. [laughter] I can't remember what your question was again.

SI: I was just asking about what colleges you looked at.

MK: I just was looking at the state schools, and then when Rutgers accepted me, I knew I would go there. I went down with my grandmother to look at dorms to see where I'd want to live. Davidson [Hall] was the only dorm on that side of the river [on University Heights, now Busch Campus], and I figured, "Oh, I should live here because there's the Pharmacy School," not realizing that the first two years, all of my classes were going to be on the main campus. I walked into the lounge in Davidson and talked to this guy, saying, "I'm just trying to figure out if I want to live in this dorm." He said, "You can see my room." I went to look at his room, and my husband now was in bed at eleven-thirty in the morning in this guy's room. He was his

roommate, so I met my husband that day. When I moved into the dorm, there was a little note on the bulletin board in my hallway that somebody was selling freshman pharmacy books. It said, "Contact ..." whatever the room number was. So, I went over to buy books, and it was the same guy. That day, he said, "Why don't you get a couple of girls in the dorm and come on over tonight and we'll have a party?" That's how that started.

SI: I am interested, how did your grandmother react to this?

MK: She didn't come in with me, thankfully.

SI: Oh, all right.

MK: No, she waited in the car.

SI: When did you start gravitating towards pharmacy as something you wanted to study?

MK: Well, I always liked math and science. Those were always my favorite classes. I had an uncle who was a pharmacist, and he told me, "You can always get a job anywhere you are, and if you want to have children and still work, pharmacy is a good field to be in because you can always get a part-time job," and that kind of did it. We used to take these tests in high school where they would tell you what to lead you toward as a career, and I remember it saying physical therapy, which, frankly, I kind of wished I had gone into because the working hours are a lot nicer. With pharmacy, you're working nights, weekends and holidays all the time, particularly in a hospital, which is where I wound up. But I think physical therapy would have been a good career for me also.

SI: You entered Rutgers College of Pharmacy in '72. I am curious, had it been all male at one point?

MK: No, the College of Pharmacy had been admitting women at least since the 1960s. [Editor's Note: In 1971, the Rutgers Board of Governors voted to make Rutgers College coeducational. In the fall of 1972, Rutgers College broke their all-male tradition and admitted women for the first time.]

SI: You were in the first class of women.

MK: Yes. I could have come in through Douglass or Rutgers or Livingston and Cook, but I don't think anybody in the Pharmacy School was on Cook. I was in the first class of girls affiliated with Rutgers College.

SI: You enrolled in Rutgers College and then at some point you transferred over to the Pharmacy School?

MK: Actually ...

SI: Or is it simultaneous?

MK: It was simultaneous, yes, but you had to choose a home college. So, it was Rutgers. I wasn't the Douglass type. You could always tell a Douglass girl and a Rutgers girl. The Rutgers girl had jeans and flannel shirts on, and the Douglass girls had dresses, back then, anyway.

SI: Were you aware of that, that you were part of the first coed class?

MK: Yes. I think it was four hundred women and six thousand guys, and I liked the idea of that. I'm still friends with some of the kids from my dorm. [Editor's Note: Rutgers College admitted 475 women (four hundred freshmen and seventy-five transfer students) in the fall of 1972.]

SI: When you first got here, from some of the women I have been interviewing from your class, it seems obvious that Rutgers, even though they had moved towards coeducation, were not necessarily prepared for women, sometimes in the classroom, but even more frequently in living conditions. Does anything stand out about your first year or two years at Rutgers that are along those lines?

MK: No, not at all. There was the women's side of Davidson; one wing would be women and one wing was men. No, I didn't think there was anything that was not prepared for us. No, we had our women's bathroom. I don't know, there was nothing that was unprepared that I can think of.

SI: What about your classes, particularly early on? Was it an easy adjustment to college? The professors, were they particularly helpful, or maybe they were not quite on board yet with coeducation?

MK: There was no problem at all. I'm just thinking, first year, we had English comp [composition], bio [biology], chemistry. No, I don't think there was any problem at all. It was kind of a smooth transition. I didn't find it particularly hard until we got to organic in the second year.

SI: Each person has their own experience. You were obviously taking a lot of science courses. Do you feel like the facilities and the instruction was adequate?

MK: Yes. I mean, there were, of course, some classes that were huge, but we would have recitations so that it was a small group, and if you had any trouble, that was the best place to ask. I remember, I guess it was second year was economics, which I didn't care for at all. That was a huge auditorium. Then, when we got to Pharmacy School, everything was all small, so it was fine. I didn't really have a problem with anything, although there was--what was it? I guess it was first year, I was in this class, and back then, I don't know that I had ever met someone from India before, and he was the instructor. He taught a math class, and I remember I couldn't understand a word he was saying. So, I wound up not going to class very often and just finding out when the tests were and going in. I did fine, but I couldn't understand the man. That was the only time there was a problem with any of the instructors.

SI: Were there other activities that you got involved in on campus, in particular those first two years?

MK: Okay, now, wait a minute, what year was it? I did join the wind ensemble, but I think that was later on. I mean, it was mostly fooling around with the people in the dorm, going to football games. What else? I remember going down to visit my roommate who lived in South Jersey in Moorestown. It was the summer between our freshman and sophomore years. There was a peach orchard next door to her house, and I remember it smelled like ambrosia. The owner had told my roommate's mother that we could pick some peaches. So, I came home with a bushel basket of beautifully fresh peaches. My mother woke up, looked at all these peaches, and called my grandmother and said, "Mom, what do I do with a bushel basket of peaches?" My grandmother said, "I'll be right there." So, we made jam. My grandma was good for that.

What did we do besides going to school? I mean, we did study occasionally, but just football and basketball games and playing around. We did have a great time when the Rutgers Men's Basketball Team made it to the Final Four in the NCAA basketball tournament. I remember being in lines trying to get tickets to the games. Oh, this was not good, but there was Squamish, which was a fraternity on the far side of my husband's dorm. I forget what exactly happened, but the residential advisor, RA, had insulted women in some way. I remember we were very upset. So, we went and bought pink paint, and we went over in the middle of the night and painted all the urinals pink in there and wrote, "Girls will be girls" in toothpaste on the mirrors, which we probably shouldn't have done, but we did go back the next night and scraped it all off. That was quite the outrage. Yes, that's one of the things we did. Then, one of the girls in my dorm burned her room down. She had one of those things, an electrical coil, that you put in a mug and it will boil water.

SI: Oh, yes.

MK: It burned her room down. It seriously destroyed her room, so that wasn't good. Her name was Barbara Bush.

SI: Do any professors stand out, particularly as you got deeper into your studies?

MK: Drs. Spoerlein and Vanderwende were pharmacology. They were good teachers. I remember Drs. Cross and Shinkai was medicinal chemistry, and Dr. Shinkai would be writing on the chalkboard with one hand and erasing with the other. So, you had to get things really quickly with him. Dr. D.B. Denny, he taught organic chemistry. He was miserable, and I remember him saying, "You'd better bring a big eraser to your exam because you're going to make lots of mistakes." [laughter]

SI: I think you are pulling out some great stories. I appreciate that. Particularly in the Pharmacy School, I went to Rutgers too, in the late '90s and early 2000s, and I knew a lot of pharmacy students and you are just studying, it seems, non-stop.

MK: Yes.

SI: You mentioned organic chemistry. I think that's always one of the make-or-break courses that filters people out.

MK: Right. I remember, oh my goodness, wait a minute, I heard that Dr. Denny had been put on probation a year or two before us because he flunked some ridiculous percentage of the Pharmacy School, and all these guys had to go down to Ole Miss to take organic over the summer in order to proceed. He was forced to curve the grades when I was there. I remember, I think I got a "48" on an exam and it was a "C." He was tough. You'd think you'd know the stuff, but the tests were brutal. You've heard of his name before?

SI: No, not specifically Denny, but organic chemistry was always a tough one for pharmacy majors and people looking to go to medical school.

MK: Yes. It definitely weeded people out. Then, Dr. Medwick was tough in third year. He taught inorganic and analytical pharmaceutical chemistry. That was a tough class. It was five credits. I had two friends who would come over to my apartment. They were both commuters, and they'd come over at least an hour before class and we'd make sure we knew everything about what the class was going to be on, because if you got anything wrong, he was brutal. We knew that stuff inside and out. I could always hear my friend Kim Bildstein coming over because he had a VW Bug. I would hear that sound of a Bug and I knew he was almost there. [Editor's Note: VW Bug refers to the Volkswagen Beetle, or Type 1, nicknamed the "Bug."]

SI: As you got further along, were there opportunities to kind of specialize or get into different areas of pharmacy, or was it more like an assembly line going to one natural conclusion?

MK: Our education there, I think, really was suited to go into pharmaceutical industry, but I did a summer program at Roche where we would go to different areas of the industry and we'd spend a week or two in each place, and it just didn't seem like something I really wanted to do for a living. I mean, it was a great experience, but I thought I really wouldn't be using what I liked that I did in school. I'm glad I never went into retail because retail just sucks. I remember being so insulted; Rite-Aid cold-called me, when we were done with school, and they wanted you to take a lie detector test, "Did you ever steal?" or something. I was just so insulted. I said, "I'll never work for you." I had gotten a job at--which was first? I worked at what was called Martland [Medical Center] back then. Now, it's University Hospital in Newark. The next year, I worked at Beth Israel Hospital in Passaic. I just really liked hospitals, so that's what I wound up going into. I'd use a variety of things that I had learned in school, so that's what I liked the best. But, then, you have to work nights, weekends and holidays, so that's the downside of it.

SI: Did you wind up doing an internship?

MK: After you graduated, you did a six-month internship before you could take your boards. It was in that six months that you were kind of working as a pharmacist really, but you weren't registered yet. I did that in Passaic. When I was looking for a job, Ed and I were going to be married, and he was working out in Randolph. So, we were looking out more towards Western Jersey, and that's how I wound up at Hackettstown.

SI: Tell me a little bit more about what is interesting or attractive about hospital-based pharmacy.

MK: Well, you're talking to other professionals. I like talking to doctors. You got to know all the doctors in the hospital. It's not just a doctor calling from an office and saying, "Hey, Amoxicillin for so and so patient." They would call us for advice and information. We would also make sure all their orders were appropriate. I really liked it actually. You got to know nurses; you're going around to the floors, finding out what's going on, helping out at codes.

There was one time, right when I first started, too, there was a circus, one of these traveling little dinky circuses that took place in Mount Olive, and they had some sort of cat, I don't remember what, on a chain. They made an announcement for everyone to please stay in their seats. There was this little boy who had been in the bathroom and was walking back to his seat, and this panther, leopard, whatever it was, he walked too close and he wound up having the back of his neck bitten by this cat. He came to Hackettstown, and it was awful. He died. Then, the next year, somebody called me at home, asking me to donate for this Hoxie Brothers Circus, and I gave them an earful about how I don't think that this is appropriate and what happened and I don't think they should be happening at all. It was awful. It was a little, I don't know, six-year-old kid.

Then, there's the happy things. There was one guy who had a stroke, and this was more recently, once there was a drug that they'd administer called a clot buster, and there was this man who was in the hospital for some other issue when he had a stroke. He was transferred to the ICU [intensive care unit], and we had to prepare TPA [tissue plasminogen activator]. One of the hospitalists said to me, "Please show me how to do this." So, I showed him how prepare it. We gave it to the gentleman. He was flown out to Overlook, which is a neurological center, and the guy wound up completely okay. So, stuff like that was really satisfying.

SI: Going back, what was it like taking the boards then? Does that stand out in your memory?

MK: Oh, yes, I'll never forget it. I had to go down to the Robert Treat Hotel in Newark, and it was a two-day thing, seven or eight hours a day. I just remember walking out afterward and thinking, "This is what they mean when they say a natural high." It was just such a relief, and then you had to wait so long. So, that was the second week in October, I think, that we took it, and I remember finding out, I think it was December 1st. I was down at my grandmother's on the other side of Bloomfield. My father called me, and he said, "Mary, the mail came and it says, 'New Jersey Board of Pharmacy' on it." I said, "Open it up!" I passed, so that was good. Yes, it was a brutal two days, just brutal.

SI: When you first entered the profession, do you have any sense if women were in the minority or if it was anywhere close to fifty-fifty, what the status of women in the field was?

MK: Well, there were other women, because there was an older woman when I first started at Hackettstown. I'm just trying to think who was there. It was almost half and half, I think, because it was her, me, and two other guys--maybe it was three men and two women for my first job in Hackettstown. I think, you know what, I never counted, but I think my graduating class

was about fifty-fifty. I might have been the only woman in Newark and also in Passaic. You're right. All the pharmacists that I knew, there were more men. It's different today, certainly.

SI: Before we talk about your career, do any other memories from Rutgers stand out? We talked a little bit about the basketball experience. Did you do a full year playing basketball?

MK: We were only practicing when I wrecked my knee. Games hadn't even started yet. I think it was in October that I had to go have surgery. So, I never really played on the team. We were just starting to organize it. My boyfriend, now husband, was in a fraternity, DST [Delta Sigma Theta], so we had parties there.

SI: Sometimes, people remember notable figures that came to campus to talk or performances by artists. Does any of that stand out?

MK: There were fabulous concerts. We saw Billy Joel, Judy Collins, Arlo Guthrie, Jerry Jeff Walker and I'm sure many others that I can't remember at the moment. Rumor was that Bruce Springsteen performed at the commuter's lounge. I forget the name of it [Student Activities Center/The Ledge], but I've since heard that wasn't true. At the Billy Joel concert, Bruce Springsteen was in the crowd and got on stage and they sang, "Twist and Shout" together. So, that was kind of cool. We saw lots of bands. It was great, and it would cost like five bucks. It was something that you could actually afford. My niece is at Alabama right now. They have to pay to go to football games, and it's a lot of money. At Rutgers now, do the kids have to pay? We used to get in for free.

SI: Yes, there is a student fee, and then I think they get free tickets out of that.

MK: Oh, okay.

SI: But there is an activity fee.

MK: Is Patti's still there?

SI: There is a bar there. It is not called Patti's anymore.

MK: Oh, okay, because that would be a big treat. Once a semester, we'd go to Patti's for pizza. Yes, it's different today. Kids spend money like crazy. But we were all in the same boat, so it really didn't matter. We would also occasionally take the train into New York City and eat in Chinatown because it was really inexpensive. I'll probably think of a thousand things to say to you after this. [laughter]

SI: Yes. You were at Hackettstown for most of your career.

MK: Yes.

SI: What stands out as some of the big changes in hospital-based pharmacy or things that stand out as challenges over the years?

MK: Control of controlled substances changed dramatically. Any C-5, Xanax-type drugs used to be thrown in the patient's drawer. Now, there's Pyxis; I don't know if you know what that is. There's a continual inventory, so there's no fooling around with things. [Editor's Note: Pyxis is a corporation that produces medication management software and medication dispensing machines.]

I remember one awful night, a good nurse who I really respected had gotten hooked on Demerol, which of course no one knew. She was very fortunate that the pharmacist on call got called in that night, because the pharmacist found her passed out in a snowbank. She probably would have died. It was a really cold night. She had been screaming at my technician, who had gone up to refill the narcotics, saying she needed more. I thought, "This is weird. That should be enough to get her through the night." My tech came down in tears, and I wound up--the only time I ever called the nursing supervisor about a nurse. It was that night that the woman passed out in the snowbank. We really didn't have a whole lot of trouble with the controlled substances. Now, it's very, very tightly controlled.

One thing that's changed is the making of IVs [intravenous therapy] and chemo. It used to be that we had this laminar flow hood, they called it, and filtered air would come down from the ceiling of the unit, hit the product that we're mixing, and it was open and it would come up and hit my face. If you've ever had surgery, they always give you a pre-op [pre-operation] antibiotic. It used to be, it would come in a bottle and it was powder in the bottom, and then you'd fill it with saline, and in order to fill it, you'd put a needle in to create a vacuum with a vacuum pump, pumping air out and saline would go in. When you'd pull the needle out, a little poof of powder would come out, which I would breathe it in. It was practically always a cephalosporin. I wound up getting sick one time, and they gave me a cephalosporin. I had this massive allergic reaction. I wound up in the hospital for three weeks, so it was crazy. It really negatively impacted my life, because I wound up with lupus and rheumatoid arthritis after that. Now, everything is totally enclosed, with the gloves that go in. The pharmacist is a lot more protected now from having things like that happen.

What else has changed? It's a lot busier. My hospital had been run by the Adventists [Healthcare] for many years and then it got bought by Atlantic Health, which ran Morristown. Now, there's far fewer pharmacists doing the same job. I'm just not so sure it's as safe, and it's certainly a lot more hectic. I was talking to a pharmacist at the Wegmans where I shop. He used to work at CVS and left because he felt it was so busy it was not safe.

SI: You left Hackettstown for a few years to go to Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation.

MK: Yes.

SI: Why did you make that move?

MK: Why did I make the move? The job at Kessler had no weekends, no nights, and no holidays. They had someone who wanted all those other hours. [laughter] That's why I made

that move. So, I figured having the opportunity to have a better schedule and it was three days a week and that was enough for us money-wise, so it was just the better schedule.

Then, I went back to Hackettstown mainly because Kessler was bought by a for-profit, and it wound up being that my boss would call me and she'd say, "Mary, I'm really sorry, but they're saying the census isn't high enough for you to come in to work today." So, I was working like one or two days a week, and I thought, "I can't deal with this." So, I wound up going back to Hackettstown. It was fine. I left on good terms, and I just needed a more consistent paycheck. By that point, I had two kids in college, so that was why I went back.

Atlantic Health took over, and then they changed the hours. We were open until eleven o'clock at night and open at seven in the morning. There were times where people were on vacation, I would be working until eleven o'clock at night and then have to open the next morning. We had moved from Hackettstown to Montville at that point. I fell asleep at the wheel coming home from work a day after I had worked the night before, and thank God for the safety features on my car, where it started beeping as I left the lane and it woke me up. That was enough. I was done, so I gave notice and that was it.

SI: One of the overall things that affected healthcare in this region was the consolidation into chains, which changed the system. It sounds like that had an impact on at least working conditions where you worked.

MK: Yes. It just wasn't worth it anymore. We had saved enough for retirement, and we figured we were going to be getting health benefits from my husband, who worked for Pfizer. I was not getting health benefits from Hackettstown. So, he was going to work a couple more years to get that health benefit, and I was done.

SI: Beyond where you worked, did you have any other involvement in the field? Did you get involved in professional associations or anything like that?

MK: Yes, I joined NJSHP [New Jersey Society of Health-System Pharmacists]. They sponsored continuing education programs. I'd occasionally see people that I went to school with, but that was about it.

SI: Looking at your community and activities in other areas of your life, I think you wrote on your survey that you were a part of the Warren County Committee.

MK: We wanted to get a park in Hackettstown, and we wound up getting that. That was the purpose of that. I'm not particularly into politics at all, but we did get our park.

SI: You were involved in the library as well.

MK: Yes. A lawyer friend of ours, who was mayor, asked me to be on the library board, that they needed someone. I was glad to do that. We wound up bringing it into this century. We did a renovation and changed the director. I never did anything like that before, but it was good. It was fulfilling. We wound up with a better library in Hackettstown for it.

SI: Did the area change much over your time there, specifically Hackettstown but other areas? You lived in the same region, more or less. Is that right?

MK: It was really kind of fully developed, the town itself, because it's a very old town. If you look back at really old maps, you'll see Hackettstown, it's been there a long time. It's quite a small footprint, so it had already been very developed. The surrounding towns became a lot more populated. It was a nice place for my kids to grow up. I think the education wasn't quite what I had had in Bloomfield, but they did okay. My one daughter went to The College of New Jersey and the other went to JMU [James Madison University], and they're both successful, so I'm glad.

SI: Did your one daughter go into pharmacy as well?

MK: No.

SI: Okay.

MK: My husband was a pharmacist also, so they grew up thinking that pharmacy was not something they wanted to do. My one daughter did her coursework for a Ph.D. in early modern English, but she didn't write her thesis, which I wasn't very happy about. Now, she's a middle school English teacher. My other daughter went into business, and she's a marketing director at Fidelity. They're both doing well.

SI: Given your experience, were there things that you wanted to pass down to your kids from your family heritage that we talked about, particularly from the Eastern European Slovak, Ukrainian traditions or just values, like the value of education?

MK: The value of education certainly. My one daughter is not at all interested in religion, and they both don't like the food. No, there's really not a lot that is being passed down, actually. I think that will end with my generation really, the appreciation of the food. I used to love to go to my father's church if only for the singing; the music was beautiful. But I think that's kind of dying out now, unfortunately. From my mother's side of the family, it's mostly cooking that we do. I do it with my grandsons. I'll do it with my granddaughters, once they get a little bigger. We cook and we bake. With the pandemic, my husband and I wound up getting into baking, actually. [laughter] We'd watch *The Great British Baking Show* and we'd do all sorts of stuff. We're very proficient at baguettes now. It was fun. It was a fun thing to do while we were stuck inside.

SI: You had retired by then, before the pandemic started, right?

MK: Yes.

SI: Okay.

MK: I stopped in '17.

SI: Okay.

MK: My husband retired in '19. Pfizer offered him a voluntary early retirement program which added five years to his years of service, and he was able to get retirement health benefits. So, he said, "Okay, I'm done."

SI: Were there other ways that the pandemic affected you?

MK: I have a bunch of autoimmune problems, and so I had to be really careful, because the drugs that I'm on really tamp down my immunity. I had to be really careful during the beginning. I got the vaccines as soon as I could. As soon as the Pfizer drug [Paxlovid] became available, then it was like, "Okay, now I can relax." I wound up getting it, and I was fine. But, at the beginning, I was pretty scared.

SI: Is there anything that we missed or anything you want to share that my questions did not draw out?

MK: I did have a side business, which was a lot of fun, when my kids were little, doing craft shows, of all things. I would take a roofing slate, created stencils of my own and painted them. It was actually quite successful. I would put welcome on it and then put the people's name and the year that they were married. It was a lot of fun. It was very satisfying to make money like that for something that you made. I'd run into a lot of cool people, real characters. Yes, it was fun.

SI: Thank you so much for answering all of my questions. I really appreciate it. Like you said, you will probably think of things. I always encourage people to make a note and they can either add that to the transcript, or if you want to do a brief follow up, we can do that as well, whatever is easiest, depending on how much comes to mind.

MK: Okay.

SI: I always compare this to digging up stuff where you are going down one lair and then it just keeps coming up, so that it does not stop once we finish the interview. Again, we can always add addendums and that sort of thing.

MK: Okay.

SI: Thank you very much. I really appreciate it.

MK: Okay. Well, thanks.

-----END OF TRANSCRIPT-----

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