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Sharon Carlson Part 1: Destined for Western

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Professor Emerita Dr. Sharon Carlson

Thursday, July 21, 2022

At the Zhang Legacy Collections Center

Cassie: Okay, so today is Thursday, July 21st, I believe. I'm here with Dr Sharon Carlson. And how do you spell your name?

Sharon: Sharon, S-H-A-R-O-N, Carlson, C-A-R-L-S-O-N.

Cassie: Okay, great. And this interviewer is Cassie Kotrch, here with John Winchell as well, at the Zhang Legacy Collection Center. And we'll just get started. You said that you were a student here and that your parents were, too.

Sharon: Mm-hm.

Cassie: So were you a student just at WMU, then?

Sharon: Gosh, I have such an interesting academic past. So, I have a bachelor's degree from Western. I have a master's degree in Public Administration from Western. I have a PhD in history from Western. I have a graduate certificate in integrative, holistic health with an emphasis on mindfulness; that was sort of my little mental health gift to myself as I was finishing up. And then I have a master's degree in library science from Wayne State. I work really well on the semester system.

Cassie: Yeah! And it sounds like you work really well being at WMU, too.

Sharon: Yeah, well, WMU has a fabulous, fabulous discount if you work for the university, and it used to be only a 75% discount. So my earlier work, when I started working at the university in 1985, I was about three years into a bachelor's program.

So the last year of my bachelor's, my master's, my PhD, that was all at 75% tuition discount. Now it's, I think, up to a certain income level, it's 100%. Now, you don't get a discount on



books or anything like that, but if you like to go to school, that was the... the integrative and holistic health, I had a fairly significant health challenge in 2018 and really changed a lot of my thinking about my health, my life, where I was going, and that's how I ended up in that holistic health program. And like I said, sort of a gift to myself. And that was a 100% tuition discount. So it was a lot of fun.

Cassie: Yeah, and so when did you start your bachelor's at WMU?

Sharon: 1981.

Cassie: 1981, okay.

Sharon: Yeah, 1981.

Cassie: But you grew up in the Kalamazoo area?

Sharon: I was born in Kalamazoo. With the exception of one year I lived in Kalamazoo, or I lived just north of Kalamazoo in Allegan County. I went to high school at Martin High School. Graduated Martin High School, class of 1981.

Cassie: Okay, so reflecting back on your time at WMU, and maybe even a little bit before that, how would you summarize your experience there?

Sharon: Well, in a weird way, because my parents were both graduates, WMU was always on the horizon, and it's kind of strange. I think there was never any question I would go to college and that I would go to Western because my parents had gone to Western and, you know, this is 1981. In the late 70s, you found out about other colleges, either by recruiters, would come to your school, or they would put the college catalogs on microfilm, or they would send hard copies to libraries.

So if you wanted to find out about another institution, you either had to hope that a rep from that institution came to your high school or you'd go to your library and you could, on microfilm or microfiche, because they film these... That sounds just so archaic, but that's how it was.

And so I'm convinced that my parents... I know this is for posterity, I should be careful what I say... I'm convinced, though, that the couple happiest periods of their life had been around the time they were at Western. Then I think maybe it was after I left the house, but later on in their married life, I think they were fairly happy.

So I just grew up hearing lots of stories about the campus, about different faculty members that they had. There was that. And then, of course, being in Allegan County, there were things that happened at the university. As a student in high school, I was really involved in choir, and I think they still have this activity, but it's the Southwest Michigan Vocal Festival. It's a huge event that... choral music that the School of Music does. And they would have high school groups from around the area come, and we would all be rehearsing these pieces ahead of time. And then you would go to Miller Auditorium.

One year, I was actually in the honors college, so I can honestly say I performed on the stage at Miller Auditorium because I was in the honors chorus one year. Western was always on the horizon. When I was really, really young, and my parents were not that far removed from being students themselves, I remember they used to have a huge festival every year, like a winter kind of carnival. And as a small kid, I remember my parents like driving me around some of the neighborhoods very close to the campus. Because one of the activities, they would do these very large snow sculptures, and there are photos in the yearbook. A lot of times it was fraternities doing this. The halls on campus, they would also do these sculptures, but these were very large snow sculptures. They would use food coloring or some kind of coloring. And some of the early color photographs of those snow sculptures are kind of cool.

Now, they had a few years, maybe this was a harbinger of global warming, I don't know, but it's hard to have a big festival or carnival when you don't have snow. So that's a tradition that I think by the early 70s had gone the wayside. But that's another Western memory that I have.

And then going into Waldo library. My dad was a grad student when I was really young, and I have some memories of going into Waldo Library. He was a student at Michigan State. He got his bachelor's at Western but then actually he completed a master's degree at Western, too, but then he got a PhD from Michigan State.

So, in a real roundabout way, Western Michigan University, it was always something that I knew about and was there.

Cassie: Yeah, you answered my next question, too, which was about your earliest experiences. But, when about were those memories that you just mentioned, the Winter Carnival and going to Waldo Library... How old were you?

Sharon: The Winter Carnival, I had to have been five, six, seven years old. And I have a vivid memory of being in Waldo Library. I was in third grade, and I did a history by this point, we'd moved out to Allegan County.

We were in a very large old circa 1873 house, and my dad took me into Waldo Library, and we were looking at county histories, and I think we may have been looking at some newspapers on microfilm.

Cassie: So what did the buildings around campus, especially East Campus, look like around that time?

Sharon: Well, it's interesting because East Campus, that was a campus my parents were familiar with. But when they were here on campus it was... it was a campus that was definitely starting to grow westward, but my parents both had classes in the building that would be known as Heritage Hall because my dad's undergraduate degree was in education.

And so they had classes there. When I came to Waldo library, the Vocal Festival, that was all, of course, the new campus. But when I started as a student in 1981, I started as a pre-business student. I laugh... and so I had a lot of classes on that campus, 1981, '82, '83, and the very first class on my very first day was a writing class in West Hall.

And it was, I think, at that point, it was BEAS 142. It's now, I think, Business Information System 142, but it was their basic kind of intro writing class that everybody had to take. I had a professor, her name was Dr. Marcia Masculini. Didn't have her after that.

But then I took the second phase of that class that was also in East Hall, or not East Hall, West Hall. I think I had a third writing class that was actually a class that was taught by a woman named Eileen Evans. And when she retired, she retired... oh gosh. She was in the provost office and she was working with the Accreditation and Higher Learning Commission and such. So I had several writing classes, communication type classes over in West Hall. I had, I think, two accounting classes, and they were in the building that I knew as East Hall. You would know it today, of course, as Heritage Hall.

And the West Hall classrooms were dated, but they seemed like classrooms. Now, the classrooms that were in East Hall at that time... I remember having like, a business statistics course, and we met in some... it was down on the lowest level. I don't even remember if there were windows in that room.

We met like, at 8 o'clock in the morning. I don't think anybody wanted to be there, including the person who was teaching the class. And then I think finally, the last class I took for business must have been somewhere like, around the summer of, I don't know, maybe 1983, '84, somewhere in there.

And it was in a very large lecture hall on the second floor of Heritage Hall, it's now a ballroom. And of course, that building had absolutely no air conditioning at the time, and they would have the windows open. And I got into a habit where I would get into that classroom as early as was, I guess, bearable from a standpoint of the summer heat, but I would always try and get a chair next to the windows and the windows for that classroom. You basically would look out and you'd see the columns for East Hall and you could look out over the vine neighborhood below. And I think that may have been an accounting class, I don't know. I remember just trying to get a chair that I wanted and these seats were the kind that were... this was a classroom... I still don't know if it was original. It may have been even reconfigured because that building went through so many configurations, but it had different tiers. And these chairs and these desks were sort of affixed to the floor, nothing moved. You'd have to kinda get in, and I guess maybe the chair had a little bit of wiggle room.

But yeah, I have vivid memories of trying to find that space and hoping there'd be something interesting to look at out the window and there'd be some breeze coming in that would provide a little bit of relief. So the other memory I have of that campus and one actually, they had another library over there.

Right now, we have two libraries. We have the main Waldo library, and of course, the Zhang Legacy Collection Center. But there was a dedicated business library, and so I found myself going in there quite a bit. And when I left the business program, I guess at that point, all I knew was I didn't wanna be in business.

So I switched over to a program in political science, and it was political science with an emphasis in public administration and a lot of the same kinds of journals that dealt with management, personnel... A lot of those were in the business library, so I continued to use that library for many, many years after that.

In the meantime, I guess in 1985, I was running low on funds, and my personal life was kind of a chaotic mess, and I decided that my life's problems would be solved if I got full time employment. I'd been working as a student at an office on campus called the Center for Women's Services. We actually had a women's center on our campus, and I liked the office work, I liked being on campus. And I'd found out about this great discount that if you were an employee, that's what you would get. And I wanted to finish my degree, but I wasn't feeling, like, a super sense of urgency.

And it's like, well, why don't I get a full time job? I can work at the university, I can take advantage of that tuition discount. Maybe my chaotic personal life will get resolved and I'll get some cheap education. And so, for the first six years I worked, some of the buildings I worked in, I was actually hired in as a secretary for a unit in the College of Education.

So I worked in Sangren Hall; not the Sangren Hall that's there now, but the Sangren Hall that it replaced. I spent a year in the graduate college, and that was in the administration building. And then I did four years working for a grant project over in the College of Health and Human Services.

But it was very interesting because ultimately my working life at Western led me back to the East Campus I was hired in, actually, my first job in the Archives. I had the job that John Winchell now holds. I was the University Archives Curator, and I started that in 1991 and I would be working in East Hall until 2013, when the new Zhang Legacy Collection Center was built.

Cassie: Wow, and so when you first started at WMU, were you living off campus or on campus in one of the residence halls?

Sharon: I was living off campus. The first year I lived at home, and I commuted. And then after that, I got an apartment in the Vine neighborhood, and I lived in the Vine neighborhood. And part of my chaotic personal life, I got married at age 20. (laughs) Silly, silly, silly thing to do. So my chaotic personal life, well, if you have more money, it's going to make... And so after we got married, we were actually living in a house over on the east side of Kalamazoo. So I never lived in the residence hall. Now, the man I married, actually, he lived in Valley 2. So there was a point where I was spending quite a bit of time in Valley 2, but...No, I didn't live in the residence halls.

Cassie: Okay, so you were living off campus.

Sharon: Mhm.

Cassie: So during that time what was the relationship like with the surrounding Kalamazoo community and Western?

Sharon: That was probably a low point, and I think at that time, Kalamazoo in the late 70s/early 80s into the 1980s, Western was a regional institution that wasn't getting its market share.

The enrollment wasn't what it should be. The campus really looked pretty bleak. It wasn't until after about 1985 or 86 that the campus... there were a lot of things that happened that I can't get into and Western was undergoing, in the early 80s... You hear about the Great Depression of the 1930s and of course, the dot com boom of 2008.

But one of the other little economic blips that was pretty serious and it hurt Western was the economic decline of the early 1980s, and that was the last time we had inflation that was running what it's running like it is today. But Western actually cut a number of programs. They cut a number of sports. They moved a lot of people around. There was a professor in the History Department, John Hodak. At that point, we still had an Agriculture Program. He ended up in agriculture. I was taking some classes in religion, and one of the professors who had been in the Religion Department, David Eid, he got moved over to international students, which would now be the Haenicke Institute for International and Global Affairs.

So Western was kind of down on its luck. However, a lot of students lived off-campus. The other thing I'll say about that era, there's a period in the late 70s and early 80s that... college students party, they just do that. But I think we had more of it going on at that time, because there was a period of time for a couple of years where Michigan's drinking age got lowered to 18.

And that was not my era. But when I've talked to students who were here like only a year or two ahead of me, they have really interesting stories talking about some of the things that happened in the Residence Halls, and that it was a pretty wild atmosphere. Of course, you can have more fun when you move off-campus. And some of those fun seekers, they moved into the neighborhood of Lafayette. And so there was a period of time from the late 70s through the early to mid 80s where there would be... the first weekend of the semester, and oftentimes it coincided with the Labor Day weekend, they had a Humongous party, the Lafayette Street Party, and there's a fair amount of documentation... how it sort of started, and it was sort of a traveling party. But during the 80s, it had gotten so large that the police were regularly called in to break it up. They took measures like you had to show an ID to prove you lived in that neighborhood. And there was a couple of years the University tried to take, along with, I think, WIDR and a couple of other entities, they tried to take sponsorship of the party and then soon realized that, no, this is not something... so they squashed it out. Now it bubbles up every now and again, but people were kind of I think they didn't like that.

So I would say it was not one of Western's finer periods as far as town and gown relationships go.

It wasn't one of Western's finer periods as far as just the beauty of the campus. A lot would change after 1985, and in 1985, they hired a president. His name was Diether Haenicke, and he was unlike any president we'd ever had prior to that. He was a real scholar.

A lot of our graduate programs that we have on our campus today, a lot of those have their origins, because I think President Haenicke really wanted to be the president of a major research institution. And you can speculate which one. He had ties with Ohio State, he had ties with Wayne State, but if you're not at a major research institution, you can make a major research institution or you can try.

And he also was a man who was very much interested in how things looked and I think realized that our campus just looked horrible. We hadn't had any new buildings in years, and he didn't get a lot of new buildings during his time because the economy was so poor. But he put a great amount of effort into just the beautification of the campus like flowers and just making the place look a whole lot better.

Cassie: So with the town and gown relationship, like you mentioned, starting out kind of poorly in the 80s and then once the new president took over around 85, getting a little bit better after that, how do you think that impacted some of the more social events or culture at Western, or did it at all?

Sharon: Well, I think there was a lot more emphasis on the town and the university coming together. This started under President Haenicke, and that's kind of the big football kickoff, so that's good for sports people. Another thing that happened, and I think this... I don't remember if this happened before President Haenicke was here, but there used to be something in this community called Corporate Olympics.

And they would have people from Western, from a lot of area businesses, and they would come together and they would compete. And the idea would be you'd be practicing and you'd be doing all of this stuff in anticipation of coming together. And President Haenicke was very good. He really loved the arts, he loved libraries. So he was at a lot of cultural events in the community. You would never go to a symphony concert and not run into President Haenicke and his wife. And his wife Carol, she was a librarian out at the Portage District Library too.

Yeah, and I don't mean to paint the Bernhardt presidency... but he had some real, he had some forces that were beyond his control. And he'd come after a president... He followed President Miller and President Miller well, the state economy was doing great when Miller was president and college enrollments were going up. I mean, all of these kids that had been born during the baby boom, they were going to college and the number of new buildings that Miller got...

But, yeah, I think in a lot of ways, I think Bernhard, there were just a lot of things stacked against him. And to some degree, he was the first president that I would say maybe was an outsider president too, because our first two presidents, Waldo, had been president at Northern, Sangren, he was brought on in 1923 as a faculty member, and then he soon rose through the ranks, and he had a very solid background in education around the state. And Miller had been involved in state government, and so he was a known entity. Bernhard was an outsider in that he was born in New York City. He'd spent a lot of his adult life in Utah. He'd actually been, I think, a member of the State House of Representatives in Utah. He was Mormon and that was definitely, I think it was different in a lot of people's minds. I've heard a lot of people tell great stories about pondering once Bernhard became president, would they still allow wine and coffee at events. And they did, in fact, in the 1970s and into the 80s I think. I think alcohol was flowing more freely on this campus than it does now.

Cassie: Interesting, and then moving more towards your personal experience a little bit. Did you have any memories or recollections of any events that you attended, or sports events or maybe dances, any other cultural events on campus?

Sharon: Well, I only go to a football game when somebody gives me the ticket and they're going to feed me. I'm not a huge sports fan. And by the time I came along, I think that campus dances are primarily a lot of the fraternities and sororities and student organizations.

But campus wide dances, not so much. So I was involved in the Association for Women Students for a while. Basically, we sponsored programs on campus. I always liked to go to the theater, I still do. So I did some of that as an undergraduate. Probably some of my better memories are off campus.

I remember we had an interesting series of events on campus around again, it's like 1982, '83, where... this can all be edited (laughs) how to say this? I went to my first demonstration as an undergrad in Bronson Park, and it was a result of things that had happened on campus.

And the things that had happened on campus. There was this interesting man from Three Rivers, and he was the Reverend Varner. And I don't even know if his ministerial credentials, you know... I don't know the authenticity of them. But he had a real issue with gay and lesbian students, and going back to the 1970s, we've had different organizations on campus.

And it was in the 1980s that I think the gay and lesbian students and at that point, it was gay, lesbian, bisexual, they hadn't really even thought about trans or anything. But they used to do a series of events, the Gay Lesbian Awareness Days, GLAD Week. And there would be speakers, there'd be movies, and this guy would just show up.

I was never at an event where he showed up, but it was frequently making the Western Herald. And at that point, the Herald was published three to four times a week, we had a real student newspaper. And it all kinda came to a head, he wanted to speak about his issues. The public library downtown, they were going to host him. So he comes into Kalamazoo and he

has the Nazis with him. I think they had closed off South Street between Bronson Park and between City Hall. But I remember all of the Nazis were there in riot gear and people just started throwing, like, vegetables at them.

And then they kind of scurried him off up into the public library and he did his talk and I think some of the demonstrators went up there. I didn't follow into the library. And in the end they had to scoot him out the back door of the library and I think the Nazis went with him and that whole thing kind of simmered down.

But that was an interesting event. Because I think at that point in the early 80s, people were still talking about things that had happened on campus in the 60s and the 70s it's like, "there's gonna be a demonstration at Bronson Park! I've never been to a demonstration and I wanna go to a demonstration and see what it's all about."

And I think this was 1982, but I'm sure the Kalamazoo Gazette clip files, I'm sure there's a file on the Reverend Varner, and there's probably a file, and if you were to look at the Western Herald archives. But that was definitely a memorable event from my undergraduate days at Western.

Cassie: Yeah, I bet, yeah. That sounds like it was a big thing.

Sharon: Yeah.

Cassie: And you touched on this a little bit, but sort of like moving into that. What were your friends like while you were at Western? And what did you guys do, like on a typical day? Were there any places around campus you like to hang out or anywhere you like to eat?

Sharon: Well, I hung out a lot with the man that I ended up marrying. He started his college career at Central, but then he transferred, like, mid-year, and he was living in Valley 2.

So, the places... there was a Hardee's hamburger in the lower level of the Bernhard Center, that's like a chain. But it's a weird thing to think about Hardee's being in, I think let me get my facts here straight. It was Hardee's and then I think it became I think somebody else took it over and they called it Pleasers.

And I remember we both had the refillable coffee mugs that you could go in and you could continue to get your coffee filled. So we spent a fair amount of time there. I didn't become more of a party girl until after I got divorced and I was well into my late 20s.

And by that point I was going to school and going to school all the time and working all the time, it seemed like. We went to concerts out at Wing Stadium. We saw Hall and Oates at Wing Stadium. We saw Lover Boy at Wing Stadium. I'm just trying to think who else we saw, Rush.

So Wing Stadium was still doing a lot of concerts at that time. There was a breakfast place downtown called Holly's. There's a fireplace and grill shop in there now, but it's across the street from the church. We spent a fair amount of time in there, breakfast, just having coffee.

And then, I don't know, my late coffee hangout place was... there was a Big Boys on Westnedge. And it was in the location that is approximately where it was an Outback Steakhouse. And now I think there's a crab restaurant in there. But that was one of the earliest Big Boys in Kalamazoo.

And that was a frequent place where we'd go in for coffee, like late at night. And back in the days when I could drink coffee after three or four in the afternoon and not stay awake, I mean, we'd be there 8, 9, 10 o'clock at night drinking coffee.

Cassie: Wow.

Sharon: Yeah.

Cassie: Yeah you also touched on this one a little bit, but do you remember any of the professors or faculty back when you first started at Western?

Sharon: That's the great thing, I remember them so well, because at that time, you were more likely to get a full time faculty member.

In fact, in my undergraduate days, I had a statistics class that was taught by a grad student, he was great. I had a business statistics class that was taught by a part timer, and actually a woman who eventually became the registrar, I think her name was Treadwell when I had her, I think when she was registrar, it was McKinney.

But even for a lot of my introductory classes, they were full time tenured professors, and I have an undergraduate women's studies minor. And I think that was an area of particular influence for me, because my mother is definitely, she's deceased now, she's not a feminist, wasn't a feminist, I don't think, believed in anything that feminists believed in, and if I'd done everything that my mother wanted me to do, I probably would have finished my undergraduate degree. I would have married a really nice man who made good money and had a couple of kids, and she would have been great with that. So she wasn't upset when I got married at age 20, I think she just thought all of this stuff was going to come a little bit sooner than maybe what she expected, and of course, none of it did.

But I had women like Nancy Falk, I had her for a couple of religion classes, and her area was eastern religions, a woman named Penny Davis in women's studies classes. And I'd never met women who talked about... they talked about careers. They talked about balancing careers and family. They talked about birth control, they talked about abortion, they talked about a lot of things I'd never talked about with my own mother. And so I would say as an undergraduate meeting feminists and working in that women's center, too, it's really an odd thing that I gravitated toward it, but I was fortunate.

I had work study at the time, and probably any job hiring work study, at least traditionally, how we handled it here in the archives. If you have work study, we're pretty much going to hire you unless we find out that you have a horrible work background or that you have a horrible reference, and I just... "Oh, they're hiring at the Center for Women's Services. That

sounds really interesting, I'll go in there" and I got hired. And of course, in that capacity, Aileen Dietrich, she was the director, and there was a woman named Jane Vanderwyden. She was like their program director. And the other interesting thing, too, was they were two feminists, but two feminists, who... I remember the day that Jane Vanderwyden and Aileen Dietrich kind of got into it, "Should women and should feminists wear makeup?"

And I think Aileen, who was probably closer to my mother's age, she wore makeup. She enhanced herself a bit, and Jane thought, no, that was not such a good thing, Jane didn't believe in makeup. The other thing that happened in the Center for Women's Services, and I think this probably happened to every person who worked there, you would never go back either to Jane or to Aileen, and say, "there are a couple of ladies in the front office and they want to talk to you." You'd get the lecture on "We call them women, don't call them ladies." And the whole, ladies can be connotated with very positive things, very negative things. So, my job as an undergraduate work study, working in the Center for Women's Services, that was very important, too, in my development.

As far as some of my other classes that I had... loved, Peter Schmidt, he taught in history, he was great, I did not have him initially. I did have one undergraduate class with him, but he taught regularly in Dunbar, and he taught a class called Art and Architecture. I never took the class, but I would get to my class that met in that same room beforehand and I started making a point of getting there earlier and earlier, because he'd usually keep the door propped open and you could hear the lecture, and of course, at that point, he'd be using slides in a carousel. And so years later, when I had him for, I think, a 500 level class on historic preservation, and then I had a couple of grad classes with him, I said, "Well, I took your art and architecture class, except I was never enrolled. I just showed up early."

But that was the thing, too, my husband at the time, he was a dual major, he ended up with a major in religion and a major in environmental studies. And he had a lot of classes with a guy named Rudy Siebert, who's still around. He may have just retired, but he's been on the faculty, like, since 1964 or '65, and he had for several years in the 80s, he taught a program called, I think it was called Future Studies, and it was a lot of philosophy in that. And I would just tag along with Mark and just sit in on the class, and that didn't seem to be a problem or an issue. And I don't know, I know when I taught the archive administration class a couple of times, people would have other people tag along, but I just got the sense it was all a little more fluid at that time.

So anyway...

Cassie: Did you have a favorite professor or faculty member?

Sharon: That's hard, I really like Peter Schmidt, really enjoyed him, so he definitely ranks right up there. I'll let that one swim around. If it comes back, I'll try and bring it back up.

Cassie: Okay, sounds good.

Sharon: Yeah.

Cassie: And then I was going to ask, what event do you think or memory at WMU impacted you the most during your time here as a student?

Sharon: That's a really great question and obviously memories of that demonstration down in Bronson Park, but I have a really vivid memory too of walking down Oakland Drive and I was a commuter student, so I was always trying to find places and I had a parking space... would that have been on Austin Street? Might have been on Austin Street. I managed to find parking places and I did not do particularly well my first semester here.

I did a lot, it was very similar to what I had done in high school, where things that I was interested in, I did well, things I wasn't so interested in, I didn't do so well. And I remember finishing up, I must have had my last class on the east campus, December 1981, finished the semester, and then walking back to my car, I was done for the semester and realizing that even though things hadn't gone great, I had one class I'd actually gotten a D in, that was Russian. That was a silly thing. I took Russian because my boyfriend/future husband, he was taking it up at Central. I'd done reasonably well and everything else, but realizing I had done okay, but I needed to apply myself more and that things were going to move forward in a positive direction. In high school, my last year of high school, I actually managed to go to high school full time. Well, I had my last hour of the day off, but I'd gotten a job working in a restaurant, and I was working 40 hours a week my last year of high school too. And I think I somehow thought I was going to be able to do that at college. And one semester I realized, no, got to take fewer classes, got to work less, got to study more. And another year or so in, I really did cut my work schedule way back and then buckled down. So I don't know. It's something, though, I come back to time and time again.

My peer group in high school... the high school I went to, it was a very small high school. There were 63 in my graduating class, and of those 63, I don't even know if 20 of us went to college. And my closest friends, I had a group of, like, about four or five people I ran with. None of them went to college. The economics, other factors. And so, yeah, just, I guess the realization that if I wanted to do something, I was going to have to do things very differently in order to make it work.

Cassie: And I just had one more question, really, which was basically, were there any last thoughts or memories that you wanted to mention? Or maybe something that I didn't ask that you wanted to touch on with your experience at WMU or even with east campus or anything?

Sharon: We could probably do a whole other interview on my work in East Hall. Because having worked there from 1991 to 2013, I really, really got to know that building very well and kind of just strange things in that building and the quirkiness of that building. And I enjoyed working in that building. It was a very difficult building to work in. Have you been to Heritage Hall?

Cassie: Yes, but just outside of it, not inside.

Sharon: Well, on the inside, the staircase isn't the same and that very large second floor classroom, that's a ballroom. But otherwise they basically worked with the facade, the walls of the building, and maintain that. But that was an interesting work environment. And then, of course, the other piece of it is later on, probably starting around, there was a group called the Friends of Historic East Campus FOHEC, and I applauded what they were trying to do. I was always very suspicious that the group was actually getting or would get anything that they wanted. And I had a good relationship with them in the end, but at times, I had my own differing of opinion. And, for example, they thought that East Hall (Heritage Hall) could be modified at a very minimal amount of money, and that would be a great place for us to be.

And I agree. The other possible building they had talked about was a building called North Hall. And that was where the business library was. And the facade of North Hall still, that's that piece, that odd piece on the hill. And that probably would have made a better home, but it would have cost more than the \$8 million than it cost to build the building that the archives eventually found itself in.

So there was years and years of, and this was during my employment, but years and years of trying to separate the buildings from the archives because I really thought the buildings had some value, but it was pretty clear that they had been demolition by neglect for a long, long time.

And it was always interesting when somebody who had been a student in the 1950s or 60s would come back into the building and they'd say, "Oh it hasn't changed at all!" It was just as rundown back then as it is now. So, yeah.

Cassie: Yeah, okay.

Sharon: How long have we been going?

Cassie: It looks like 45 minutes.

Sharon: Okay.

Cassie: So if there's nothing else, I can just stop the recording.

Sharon: Sure.

Cassie: Okay.