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Marilyn Lapekas: All the Old Books of Her Time at Western

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WMU Alum Marilyn Lapekas

Friday, Feb. 17, 2023 at 3:00 PM

In-Person at Heritage Hall

Cassie: But what we can do is we can talk about some of the books that you brought first, and we can look through those, and then we can get into some specific memories and stories. You might have your experience with WMU and how you came here, but we'll start out for the recording by you introducing yourself.

I'll have you spell your last name and your maiden last name, too, just so I have that right for the story. And then we can look through this (box of things on table), and if you have any memories or stories you want to share, we'll go into that. Okay? Okay. So go ahead and introduce yourself whenever you're ready.

Marilyn: Yes. I'm Marilyn Lapekas. My maiden name last name was Derhammer.

Cassie: And when did you come to WMU?

Marilyn: I came in 1960 in the fall. And just before I came here, I worked on the campus in the counseling bureau, so I was delivering mail all around the campus, so I had a little introduction to the campus before I came in the fall.

And I entered the Secretarial Science Program, which is an associate's degree and graduated in 1962. So I'm a two year Western Michigan University graduate.

Cassie: So when did you begin working at Western, was that the year before you enrolled then?

Marilyn: It was a summer before, just during the summer. So that would have been 1960.

Cassie: Okay. And were you mainly working on main campus then, or on East Campus here?

Marilyn: Back then that was called the new campus. Yes, the main campus.

Cassie: And what made you decide to go for your associates in secretarial sciences then?

Marilyn: Well, it started to interest me to join a secretarial program in high school, and I thought if I was going to get out in the working world, that I should know something that would help me with finding a job. And I figured secretarial science program would be a good start.

Cassie: Yeah. So what brought you to WMU? Are you from the Kalamazoo area?
**Marilyn:** Yeah, I was born raised in Portage. I grew up there. Went to Portage High School Central. This was before Loy Norrix was built, and before I think they have another one too. Anyway, when I started school there, it was an elementary and went all the way through.

And at the time Portage was an agriculture school. So that's how it started in my elementary years. And then when I graduated in 1960, it was a Class B school, no longer agriculture, and we had a big growth in students by then.

**Cassie:** By the time that you were finishing school there?

**Marilyn:** Yes, mm-hm. So, it was quite a change from elementary to high school.

**Cassie:** Do you think that prepared you, though, for then, the bigger school here when you came to Western?

**Marilyn:** Yes, mm-hm. We were sort of prepared for it in high school and I did take the classes that would help you get into Western. I wasn't some genius that graduated from high school. So, yeah, I was accepted and started in the fall, 1960. And, Mr. Null was a head of the secretarial science program and I don't remember his first name. I was trying to find him in our book here, but I didn't find him.

Our high school changed quite a bit when I was in high school, and the importance of going to college. That was very, very predominant when I went to high school.

**Cassie:** Okay, so was it sort of expected that you would go on to college then?

**Marilyn:** In some way, it was expected, but I don't think it was written in stone because I don't think everyone's meant to go to college. You don't have to. But I needed to.

So, that's when I decided I'd go ahead and join this program.

**Cassie:** And were you glad that you did? Do you think it did prepare you for the working world?

**Marilyn:** Yes. Yes, it did. It was good. I had shorthand in high school in typing, but got into college, there was more of it. You had to get your speed up. You had to learn business machines. There were no computers.

**Cassie:** Right, yeah.

**Marilyn:** And it was, I'm not sure if we even had electric typewriters. I don't remember if that was in the classes then. I don't think so. Yeah, the good old manual typewriter: (Both laugh). Had to have good finger muscles.

**Cassie:** You got strong fingers.

**Marilyn:** Yes. Strong hands at the end of that.

**Cassie:** And it looks like you brought some of your old textbooks today.
**Marilyn:** Yes, I did. Well, here’s my– These are my typewriting books that we had. There were treatments or lessons throughout the whole book that you followed for your typewriting.

**Cassie:** Okay, so these were textbooks that you bought then for the classes, and you would follow along in the textbook areas?

**Marilyn:** Yes, mm-hm. Those are like our daily exercises.

**Cassie:** Yes, job seven, job eight. And so you would have to practice typing out basically what they had said?

**Marilyn:** Mm-hm.

**Cassie:** Were you timed on these exercises?

**Marilyn:** Yes, maybe after we learned it, then we’d be timed. But yes.

**Cassie:** So you do, like, warmups and things like that, and then be tested on your time. And you were expected to get faster then throughout the courses?

**Marilyn:** Yes.

**Cassie:** Are these your notes here? (Referring to notes in the margins of the workbooks)

**Marilyn:** Probably. Looks like I was figuring out centering. We had to figure out the center on the manual typewriters.

**Cassie:** Would you say that this was easy for you to learn, or was it somewhat difficult?

**Marilyn:** Sometimes. I could handle it. It was somewhat challenging, but it was good. I got my speed up and…

**Cassie:** Did you go on to use a lot of what you learned then?

**Marilyn:** Yes, I did. I graduated and I applied for a job at Consumers Power Company. And I was accepted there. And I worked there, I believe, three years or two years in the engineering department.
And then my husband was going to be drafted for the Vietnam War. And he ran across a program that would fit what he was doing here regularly working in the mechanics shop. So he became a CB through the Navy and worked on the military equipment. That’s what he did over there. And I decided to be with him when he was stateside. So I had left Consumers and we had our first child while he was in Vietnam. And that was interesting.

**Cassie:** Yeah, I bet.

**Marilyn:** I was a military wife. And that was the first time I’d ever been away from anybody, really. That was a grow-up time for me.

**Cassie:** Right, yes, and then becoming a new mother.

**Marilyn:** Yes.

**Cassie:** Wow, that’s a lot of change in one short amount of time, too.

**Marilyn:** Yes, it was. I lived through it.

**Cassie:** Yeah, yes, cuz now you’re here.

**Marilyn:** And being military wife, I think, was a good experience. Even though it was tough, it was good for both of us.

**Cassie:** How long did that last?

**Marilyn:** He was there for about two years. So he did two deployments over there. So he’d do one and then come back home. Well, home was Rhode Island. That’s where we were stationed. That was the base over there. And then he went back to Vietnam again. And then he was offered a school for large truck engine school.

So, he did that before his second time over in Vietnam. But he later met up with a battalion after school was done. But he was able to come home a little bit early.

**Cassie:** Nice, okay. So where did you guys go then, after he was out? After the two years?

**Marilyn:** Yeah, we came back and stayed with his folks. We were having a house built. We had bought some property to build a house on in the future. And so-

**Cassie:** In Michigan, so you came back to Michigan?

**Marilyn:** Yeah, we came back to Michigan. That’s where our folks lived. My folks still in Portage and his folks out in Comstock, Michigan, here. And stayed there for a while till we were able to move into our new house. And that was very interesting, building that house. But it was great to have that house. And we’re still in the house.

**Cassie:** Really?

**Marilyn:** After all these years.
Cassie: Wow.

Marilyn: Yes, amazing.

Cassie: So you brought a few more of your books with you. What are some of the other books that you brought?

Marilyn: We also had to do shorthand. We learned our shorthand. These were the books that we learned from and this was a shorthand dictionary. We also had to learn to file.

We don't put things on the computer back then. And we learned accounting, this was a book for accounting. We also had to take basic courses. Just like a regular–

Cassie: General education sort of courses?

Marilyn: Yes. So one of them I took was this class, it was communications. So, I also took a psychology class. We could choose some electives. We had to choose some type of phys ed. So, I chose swimming. So, I took a swimming course.

Cassie: Where was that swimming course at?

Marilyn: It was over on the new campus, well, Main Campus where they had their pool over there.

Cassie: Maybe it was in the Reed Field House?

Marilyn: Yes, I think so.

Cassie: It's now, I guess connected to the student rec center, where I think there's some too.

Marilyn: Do you want a funny story?

Cassie: Yes!

Marilyn: About swimming?

Cassie: Uh-huh.

Marilyn: Well, I knew how to swim somewhat, so I thought I'd get in the beginner's level. So I would be assured of getting a good grade. And the instructor recognized that I was not a
beginner. And she said, “You,” she pointed her finger at me. “You need to be in the second level.”

Cassie: Oh no. So you got pulled up?

Marilyn: Yes. I go, dear.

Cassie: There goes the good grade that you were guaranteed.

Marilyn: And the swimming class, it was the hardest class I ever had.

Cassie: Really?

Marilyn: We had to learn the physics of swimming. We had written tests.

Cassie: Wow. That is much more advanced than beginners.

Marilyn: Yeah, and we had to learn to dive off a diving board. I really worked hard to get a C.

Cassie: Did you?

Marilyn: But I learned a lot.

Cassie: That’s good. And you finished with a C?

Marilyn: Yes. I was happy with that.

Cassie: I would be too. That does sound hard, though, learning the physics of it.

Marilyn: Yeah, she was a good. She was a really good instructor. And I think she expected you to do what you need to do when you're learning to swim.

We had to know why we did these motions and how important it was to kick your feet a certain way and different strokes.

Cassie: Wow, this short hand just… (looking over textbook again). So, this is essentially like the typewriter ones then? You’d have little lessons, warm ups?

Marilyn: It's like our textbook for lessons.

Cassie: I've never seen shorthand like this before. To me, it looks like a jumbled mess. I don't know what this is. Can you still read it, too?

Marilyn: Yeah, I think so. It's amazing.

Cassie: Like some of these?
Marilyn: Let me see. Let me see. Okay, it says, “To all administration heads. During the first two weeks of February, we have the added jobs of balancing our tax records and of typing about eight tax forms for Distribution to all members. Some plazas begin calling forms before the 1st of February, so that they may put a tax and submit their read before the end of February. We get one brack by writing the monthly parole payroll, the middle of January.”

Yeah, they pounded it in us, that’s for sure.

Cassie: Apparently, cuz you can still read it today, too.

Marilyn: And they have shortcuts that you learn like this, that figure right there. That’s all. That’s all you have to do when you take down that word “all”. That’s memo. This is M and that’s O.

Cassie: Okay. Wow.

Marilyn: Yeah.

Cassie: It’s like deciphering another language.

Marilyn: Yes. And these tell you word beginnings. Shortcut way of doing word beginnings.

Cassie: So like prefixes.

Marilyn: Prefixes.

Cassie: Wow. Looks like this is one of your notes in here.

Marilyn: Yes. Probably something we had to do. I don’t remember. It does look like maybe it was an exercise, cuz this has one of those grids to. We did a lot of that.

Cassie: Would you say that you mastered it at the end of the two years?

Marilyn: Yes, I did. I wasn’t really super fast, but I could do it.

And when I went to work for consumers, the bosses there would have me come in the office and I would do the shorthand while he issued a letter.

Cassie: So you did use it then?

Marilyn: Yes, I did. Yes, and it was handy, especially telephone messages. A lot of times message goes really fast.
And we all had a Steno book. This is kind of beat up and it's got some empty pages, but that's the kinda book we practiced in.

**Cassie:** Okay. So this is where this was like your workbook almost.

**Marilyn:** So that was always in our supply of textbooks and exercises.

**Cassie:** Wow, that's cool. So where were most of your classes at?

**Marilyn:** I think you call it the North Hall. Yeah that's where Mr. Null's office was. And that's where we did our typing, our shorthand business machines, I believe that was all I took there. And then I took a class here, like I said, one of the basic ones, communications. And then swimming over at the field house. I also took an art class.

We had to select electives we could choose, but they had to be within, like, or art. So it was like a category, and then you pick the course in that category. And I really liked that class. It was very good.

**Cassie:** The art class?

**Marilyn:** Yeah. We learned how to print letters. Not a whole letter, but one letter. Like the alphabet or something with ink. Ink, not ballpoint. It was ink. Kind like calligraphy, only it was…

**Cassie:** Yeah It does sound like that.

**Marilyn:** Printing. So we did that.

**Cassie:** So the class was printing.

**Marilyn:** Yes. And a lot of it was designs. We had to do designs according to the theme that the instructor wanted. So we had different themes. We had to design a yeah. One of them was a mood. You had to portray a mood by these pictures that we made.

But they weren't pictures. They were forms to create these themes. Yeah. And they were different moods. Sad. One was you had to show motion in your forms that you made. And I was so proud cuz I got an A on that one.

It was like a spinning wheel. I could bring that if you want. I don't know if that's important or not.

**Cassie:** You still have it?

**Marilyn:** Yes.

**Cassie:** Wow. That's cool. Yeah, I'd like to see it.
Marilyn: Actually I have quite a few of them from that art class. Yeah, I'll bring that in. Somebody might as well have them. And another design we had to do was balanced design, which was really hard for me with just, like, squares, to have a design that was balanced. It's kinda abstract. Yeah, I mean, I did all right with it, but it was hard.

And my other elective was sewing, I took a sewing class here at Western. That's way back when. I learned quite a bit in that class, too. I liked to sew, did sewing at home, too, and my mom did. But one thing I remember is the instructor told us that sewing patterns are written on a fourth grade or fifth grade reading level, which made you, like, “what?!"

Cassie: Yeah, if you didn't understand it, you kinda felt, like you weren't up to the standard.

Marilyn: Yeah, Like 18, 19 years old, and you have to look at these patterns, and they're on a fifth grade level. But they had to make it simple. Yeah, it's hard to believe they had sewing at Western Michigan University.

Cassie: At least a specific sewing class, too, rather than more rounded, like Home Ec or something like that.

Marilyn: Also in art class, we had to do some perspective drawing which involved well, what I did was, I think it was the administration building on new campus. I drew that, I have that, too. So you had to make sure what you see the closest, shows up closest on your perspective picture and how it looks way at the end of this perspective you're doing. So that was interesting.

Yeah, we were told, I think it's part of the secretarial's science program and the university to become a well rounded individual and we were even checked for our posture.

Cassie: Really?

Marilyn: Yes.

Cassie: Was that in classes, or was it--?

Marilyn: I think it might have just been something extra. I remember going to a gym, and we all had our posture checked and what we needed to improve at our posture.

Cassie: Really? Who would give you that feedback? Who would check your posture?

Marilyn: Right there when they checked you. They would let you know what you need to work- 

Cassie: So it was like a teacher, a professor?

Marilyn: I don't remember, it was an instructor. I don't know who it was.

Cassie: Do you remember what they told you?
Marilyn: It was a woman, I think. I don’t believe she said anything. Maybe she did tell me to pull my shoulders back, cuz I might have slumped over.

Cassie: Wow, yeah, you don’t get that today. Although I might actually need it, I feel like every time somebody mentions posture, I’m like, yeah...

Marilyn: Well, we do so much with our heads bent over. So it’s kinda normal.

Cassie: Yeah, especially in secretarial work you think hunched over the keyboard or I guess typewriter.

Marilyn: Yeah, this is one more book that, as you can see, I used it a lot.


Marilyn: It has to do with proper English, how to set up a letter, addresses, how to do an address.

Cassie: So like formatting, grammar?

Marilyn: Formatting.

Cassie: Okay, I see you have your notes right here, too.

Marilyn: I hope it’s not incriminating.

Cassie: It doesn't look like it. Measurements, spelling, hyphen before nouns. This one just says “listen to what she says.” Yeah, it looks like note taking and stuff.

Marilyn: Yes, how to do a salutation and closing out a letter. How to set it up, Different ways, and proper titles for people.

Cassie: I see, Western Union. Telegram.

Marilyn: I’m sure things have changed since then about.

Cassie: Right. And you don't really send telegrams anymore either.

Marilyn: No, not usually, not like they did. And you’re welcome to have all that.

Cassie: Wow, thank you.
Marilyn: I'm not sure if there's been very many people that have come to you about the secretarial science program here.

Cassie: I only had one more.

Marilyn: Did you?

Cassie: But yeah, so I have heard a few things about it, also that they used to check your stockings or something.

Marilyn: Yes, we had seams in our stockings. They had to be straight up the back of your leg. You can't be crooked.

Cassie: Really? So they'd make sure that you looked all proper.

Marilyn: And nylons were all crooked in the back.

Cassie: So they checked your nylons and your posture?

Marilyn: Yeah, I guess they did. I think that was just kind of assumed, because I think that was generally the case anywhere. We had to have straight seams.

Cassie: Wow, and you said you took most of your classes in North Hall, correct?

Marilyn: Yes.

Cassie: Do you remember anything about North Hall at the time? Since it's no longer really there it’s just the facade now.

Marilyn: I remember it being well traveled. The steps were wore down, and I don’t think they were wooden, they were some kinda stone. Or cement maybe. I think they were more like stone. But it was a well used building when I started there. So I imagine it was pretty bad.

Yeah. I’m glad that they decided to keep some of this over here. This is where Western started.

Cassie: Mm-hmm. This was the first building.

Marilyn: Yeah, I know this building was an old building too. Yeah.

Cassie: When you were here did you stay on campus, or did you stay with your family then and travel?

Marilyn: Yeah, I commuted. Yeah, back and forth from home to here, and that was a real hassle.

Cassie: Was it?

Marilyn: There never was parking, enough parking. It probably still is true today.
Cassie: For sure. Yeah. That’s a complaint that students have had. I've interviewed students from like the 50's and they say that, and then all the way to now. I was just a student, and I was complaining about parking.

Marilyn: Yes. It hasn't changed. Yeah.

Cassie: And where did you have to park then?

Marilyn: Wherever I could. I never could get up near these buildings. Yeah, and there was a shuttle bus between the new campus and the old campus, because that’s what I did. I went back and forth. Because some of my classes were on the main campus and some of them were here. And I’d have to go back and forth.

I did walk up the hill here. Even if you got the shuttle bus, you still have to walk up the hill, is at the spot where the shuttle bus stops. Excuse me. I wanted to tell you, Mr: Null was the head of the secretarial science program and we were called the Nully girls. (Both chuckle) That was what we were called, is the Nully girls. Which is funny.

Because well, mostly I don’t believe there were any guys in classes, it was all women. He got noted for being the head of the Nully girls. It’s funny.

Cassie: So did you join that fraternity as well? I forget the name of it. What was the name of it?

Marilyn: Sigma Tau Chi.

Cassie: Did you join that right away when you got to Western?

Marilyn: Yeah, I’m not sure if I did right away or if it was the second year. There were three levels you could reach in Sigma Tau Chi. Sigma, Tau, and Chi they each have a meaning. Sigma is like average level in your studies. Tau is like a B average. That was how far I got. And the Chi is four points. Chi was the class A’s. Yeah. And we had a little pin. I was trying to find that pin, I thought I had it somewhere. If I find it I'll bring it in.

Cassie: Do you think there's a picture of it in this one then?

Cassie: The fraternity.

Marilyn: Yeah. (Looking through yearbooks)

Cassie: That one was ‘62, I think, yeah.

Marilyn: How about that there? That’s me right there.

Cassie: On the end?

Marilyn: Yeah, in front row on the end.
Cassie: And how old were you when this picture was taken?

Marilyn: ’62 I was, Probably 18 or 19. I graduated from high school. I was a young, I was 17. So that was probably 19. I was probably 19 in that picture.

And, I know her. (Points to other woman in the photo). She married my next door neighbor. She went to Kalamazoo Central. And my husband graduated from Kalamazoo Central. Yeah. And I think there’s a picture of the choir that they had.

It was huge choir. It was an elective people could take. Not just secretarial science people.

Cassie: Right. It was like a student organization anyone could join you just had to be a student?

Marilyn: Right.

Cassie: And how long were you in the choir for?

Marilyn: A year, I think I was this year, this ’62. (Flipping through pages) Look at that.

Cassie: Is that the Mayflower Festival?

Marilyn: I think they achieved something. What did it? I forgot what they call it. I guess they graduated. So they achieved their goal, and they had this kind of celebration. And it was, they called it, I can’t remember. This is almost like high school.

Yes, the processional begins from President Miller’s home and winds its way to the student center. I see. They going to get their diploma. Here they are here.

Cassie: So it was like a graduation procession.

Marilyn: Yeah, really. (Flips page) This is the choir I was in. That’s the choir.

Cassie: Yeah that is big. That’s the Christmas concert?

Marilyn: Yeah, and they must have had orchestra then too. I know they have a small group now that performs all over

Cassie: Yes, mm-hm. Yeah, and a lot of the events too. They sing at the graduations now. Yeah, and I’ve seen them, they’re good. So you also said your mother-in-law, then, went here as well?

Marilyn: She went to the teachers program.
Cassie: Teachers College, yeah?

Marilyn: Yeah, in 1937, I believe. Then she became a teacher. This is her credit book. (Pulling it out to show)

Cassie: Wow.

Marilyn: Yes, and she graduated, and she became a rural teacher in a one-room school in Decatur. She also took some classes pertaining to teaching in Ohio.

Cassie: Yeah, it looks like Ohio State University, I saw there was 13 credits from there.

Marilyn: So she had all ages to teach in one room.

Cassie: Wow. Did you ever hear about her time at WMU, at the time Western State, I think, Teachers College?

Marilyn: I'm sorry, what did you say?

Cassie: Did you ever hear about her time at WMU?

Marilyn: I have a diary that she wrote. I almost brought it, but I thought I'd better hang on to that. I think she lived with somebody here in Kalmazoo, cuz she lived in Decatur.

Cassie: That's where she was originally from?

Marilyn: Yes, she grew up in Decatur on a farm. So she was in Kalmazoo here, she lived with somebody close to the college, I guess. Went to the college here, then she'd go home, she was back and forth between Decatur and Kalamazoo. And then, In Ohio she must have stayed with somebody there too. And my father-in-law, her boyfriend, is from Decatur too, and she got some transportation with her boyfriend, Luke.

Cassie: So what grade would she would been in, what age, this was 1936.

Marilyn: That's probably her senior year, or maybe the beginning. Her last name was Lake. So they're alphabetical. (Looking through her yearbook).

Cassie: These are Hs. Here's some Ls, I don't see her. Maybe she was a senior, these are the juniors.

Marilyn: That's why, yeah.

Cassie: Seniors, maybe a sophomore or two.

Marilyn: That could be. These are teachers, aren't they?
**Cassie:** This is the president of the senior class, vice president. Let’s see. Those are Bs, Gs, Hs. Okay.

**Marilyn:** She might not have been a senior.

**Cassie:** I don’t see her in there. Maybe we’ll try sophomores. A lot more signatures here, so she might have been a sophomore.

**Marilyn:** There she is.

**Cassie:** Wow, lots of signatures in here too.

**Marilyn:** Yes. I’m sure back then there weren’t so many people to– It probably was a small class and you knew everybody.

I think my mother-in-law would be very happy that this is in your archives. They still have the sororities and fraternities, don’t they, in Western? Yes, I felt like I missed a little bit by not living on campus, but- Yeah I was so busy, it didn’t matter. And I had a steady boyfriend.

I met him in my senior year of high school, So we were doing stuff too. And I went to the Methodist church in Portage, that’s where we got married. I’m the oldest of four girls, so, I enjoyed being home with all my sisters. And we lived out in the country, now you would not believe that it was the country.

West Center Street. We lived on a portion of my grandpa’s property, and he had a dairy farm. We had lots of room to roam on his property. We had a swimming hole in the crick, portage crick. He sold his property to a developer, and it became Brookwood estates. So there’s homes built there now, which we were, like, sad about, but at least they’re nice homes.

And, yeah. I used to be able to walk over to my aunt and uncles, and they had three boys. They had a set of twins. I used to babysit. Four girls and then three boys. Yeah. I used to babysit the twins. They were characters. Walk over to Grandpa’s. Two of my aunts lived there also, so, that was always a place I could go and walk over and hang out.

And I always listened to Aunt Betty’s records and looked at books. I think I developed reading books by going to Grandpa’s with all the books over there. My aunt also taught Sunday school, so, when I went to church, she was the teacher in Sunday school. I was surrounded with, you don’t have that much now. It’s really, in some ways, kinda sad. But.

**Cassie:** Did you meet friends while you were here?

**Marilyn:** Yes, I did. Yes. Coming here, you could meet people from different areas. And I met girls that were in the secretarial program, and they were from Comstock, where I live now.
And, one of the girls ended up a bridesmaid in my wedding, along with my sisters. Yeah, there were a few of people that I met while I was here. She became a really good friend. We'd have big discussions during our time between classes. She was a 7th day Adventist person. No, not 7th Day, she was Jehovah Witness, I'm sorry. Yeah. We'd have quite discussions about that.

Cassie: Yes, religion debates.

Marilyn: Yes. I didn't quite agree with all the… all they believed, but it was okay. That's their belief.

Another thing we did, is we'd all go over to Walwood Union for our lunch, so there would be people we'd hang out with there. They had the best hamburgers.

Cassie: I've heard that before, yeah, that they had really good burgers.

Marilyn: Yes. So, that's where we had our lunch.

Cassie: And did I read it right, that's where your fraternity met as well?

Marilyn: I'm not sure where we met. I don't remember. Did you read that somewhere? You might be right. Yeah. I think I was really too busy to be real active in that.

Cassie: Right, yes. And go to all the meetings, right?

Marilyn: Yes, yeah. So, it was a good experience. And, I'm glad that I did this.

It helped. Then when I, my husband was discharged and we came back here to Kalamazoo Comstock, I had two more children, and then I decided to get back in the workforce.

Cassie: So how many years was that after you graduated then?

Marilyn: That was, probably 1970, I think I got back in the workforce in 1978 or '79.

Cassie: Okay. And had things changed much?

Marilyn: It was overwhelming. Did you ever see the movie 9 to 5?

Cassie: Yes, yeah! With Dolly Parton and Jane Fonda, that one?

Marilyn: I could relate really well to that movie, cuz our copy machines that they had then, which was a whole new thing for me. It was just like that in the movie. This huge piece of machinery to make copies was my gosh, it was kinda scary. And, I learned how to use that huge machine.

And, then I was faced with word processors. I mean, the most up to date typewriter I'd ever typed on was the IBM with the ball letters on it. That was up to date for me. But not now. And instead of shorthand, we listen to tapes now. So, I listened to dictation and typed from that, not my notes was shorthand. Except for consumers when I worked there. Big change.
Like, my gosh, a word processor, but I loved it cuz it could do so much and, it was a lot simpler than a computer as a word processor.

But then I had to start learning the computer. And, at that time, when I went back to work, I had temporary assignments through the Kelly Girls. And Wise, it’s another temporary service. Wise, they had different assignments, which worked out well cuz I had kids.

And while I was, I believe it was Borgess, where I had to go. I remember where I worked then, wherever I was working, they sat me down to a computer and said, you can learn this, and left me. I had to figure it out myself with a book. And if I got stuck, I didn’t know what to do.

Cassie: Yeah, you just had to comb through the manual and try and find out what was wrong?

Marilyn: Yeah.

Cassie: Wow.

Marilyn: But then I had several temp services which were really nice. And most of them were at the hospitals Borgess and Bronson. And then I became an employee at Borgess in their outpatient substance abuse department. Which was really nice cuz it was just down the street from our house.

I worked there till Borgess decided that part time employees was not cost effective. So they got rid of all their part time people and one of them was me. So then I was off for a while. Then I went to work for a surgeon for about a year. Most of these were part time things.

Then I decided to get a full time job. I worked for Rehabilitation Works was a physical therapy and occupational therapy and speech therapy facility. And I worked there till I retired. So I worked there 20 years.

And that’s where all this secretarial science program went. That’s how it affected me.

Cassie: Yeah. Well, I just have a few more questions while we’re getting to the end of our time for you.

Marilyn: Sure.

Cassie: I wanted to ask what do you think impacted you the most during your two years at Western, whether it be a person, a place, an event, something that happened?
**Marilyn:** I was able to work little jobs while I was at school, which was part of the program. And I think that they were simple jobs, but it did help me prepare for Consumer's Power Company. I think that and one of the, this sounds crazy, but Walwood Hall for lunch was a great impact. Cuz we were just friends hanging out, having lunch.

And the instructors were good. I learned a lot through the instructors and I also realized how much I didn’t know. Which we all became aware of and improved. Yeah, it was a good program.

**Cassie:** Do you remember what Walwood Hall was like at the time? Like the setup and how that looked?

**Marilyn:** Yes, Walwood Hall mostly what I remember is the cafeteria, of course. It was a big room and the kitchen was right there. It looked like a little German building, German style, kind of quaint looking.

But that’s all I remember. That’s mostly where I was at Walwood Hall. Unless that fraternity meeting was there, I don’t remember that, actually.

**Cassie:** And I have another question. How do you feel looking back on all this? How do you feel about WMU now versus when you were a student going there.

**Marilyn:** I think Western at the time I went to school was not as big as it is now and maybe not as up to date on some things, but that's the way it was then. But it was a good program, and I saw how Western became bigger, all the new programs.

And it was very much just a little bit level higher than high school because we had activities that we could get involved with on a lot more dorms now, a lot more students. And there were plenty when I went.

And we used to go sliding on the hills over at the main campus before there were buildings. Yeah, sledding. Had some neat hills over there. And a lot of the girls that did stay on campus, some of my friends were in the campus or the dorm right over across the street. I can’t remember the name of it. They used to get there.

**Cassie:** Was it Draper?

**Marilyn:** Maybe. They would get their cafeteria trays, sit on them and slide downhill. They used them for sleds. They had a neat hill there.

Yeah, and I think more and more married couples came on board, too. I don’t think there were a whole lot at the time, but I thought that was really cool that they had places for married couples. I think they still do. And probably more so, maybe. Yeah, it was a good experience, yeah.

**Cassie:** And did you have any last memories you’d like to share? Any topics that we didn’t touch on that you wanted to talk about?
**Marilyn:** There was one thing that was kind of… well, the Secretarial program was a two year program, and most of people at college were four year. And our graduation was the same time the four year people graduated.

The four year people were angry because the two year people were graduating at the same time with the same group. They didn't like that because we worked hard just like you did, but we only went two years. But they didn't like it. So it probably would have been a good idea if a program like that would have their own separate graduation. But mostly with the two combined, I think it was more the kids that were graduating, some of them just didn't like it.

**Cassie:** I see. Yeah.

**Marilyn:** Even though we did take basic classes like they did. Like the four year people did.

My psychology class that I took was interesting because we had to pick a person and study them and do some psychological notes on them. I picked a friend of mine.

**Cassie:** A friend of yours here?

**Marilyn:** Yeah, she was from here, too. She was in this school, too. But I also knew her from high school, and we had to get in front of the class and talk to the whole group. There must have been 30 people or no, there were more than that in the class and discuss our psychological findings on this person.

**Cassie:** Wow. Do you remember what your findings were of her?

**Marilyn:** Yes. She was a tomboy. Not that it was awful. It’s just she was more of like kind of like a tomboy. It's what we used to call people.

But I guess her father wanted to have a son, and the son that he wanted was Carol.

**Cassie:** That rubbed off on her was what you had found?

**Marilyn:** She was kind of angry. I think that had something to do with it. She was very smart. She went on to be some kind of a legal secretary. She was married and divorced. I haven’t seen her in years.

Last I knew, she was in Florida. But yeah, I don’t remember all my notes on her, but that basically was what it was about. Yeah.

**Cassie:** Do you remember what grade you got?

**Marilyn:** No, I don’t. I also had a class on learning to study for classes. We had an actual class, and this was… talk about an impact. That was a very good thing to learn for me. This one instructor said, you follow this routine that I have for you to study. And he says, “I'll guarantee you'll get an A in that class.” He said, “pick one of your classes and use this method.” I did, I got an A.
It was business. It's a business class. It wasn't any of the typing or anything like that. But we had to take and go through a chapter that we were reading and put questions on three by five cards. And so we accumulate three by five cards and go through them like flash. Write it down. Sort of. And so I did it in the business class, and it worked. I'm not so sure how it would work in some kind of math.

One of the things in business class I remember, which I thought was weird, he said, someday we're gonna have televisions that we have to pay for. We're gonna have to pay for television. I thought, you got to be kidding. No, that came true. They knew back then that that was coming. It was an interesting class. Sounds like it would be boring, but it wasn't.

**Cassie:** No, it sounds like they were all pretty interesting. Especially in today's context, now that we know where we are right now. Yeah. Well, thank you so much for sitting down with me today and sharing memories going through these (books).

**Marilyn:** I'm glad that you're able to do something with them.