

Misericordia University Faculty Oral History Project
Interview with Mary Carden, Business Department - Excerpts
09/30/2006

Harrison Wick: What year did you graduate and what was your major?

Mary Carden: I graduated in 1962 and my major was Home Economics with a minor in Finance.

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Harrison Wick: What are some memorable moments you had at Misericordia?

Mary Carden: As a student? All the activities that took place you had to dress in academic attire. Every week we would have Convocation; so at least once a week you would wear your academic attire. And of course, they were very strict; you had to have black heels and white gloves. But it was very impressive, that's when you get together in the auditorium with assigned seats.

Harrison Wick: You had assigned seating? How did they assign them?

Mary Carden: The Freshmen were up front on the right, the seniors were up front on the left, the sophomores were in back of us, then the juniors. So everyone had their seats.

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Harrison Wick: Who do you remember on campus as far as the Sisters or the Administration?

Mary Carden: Sister Celestine McHale was the President. She was not visible in the way that the President is today. But we knew her and she was revered in the community. If you mentioned Sister Celestine McHale, everybody in the community was familiar with her. She would come before us in the auditorium maybe about two or three times a year. But she wasn't visible as they are now; she was a good fundraiser, very well liked. She had a wonderful sense of humor and was respected. Sister Marianna Gildea was the Academic Dean; she was the one that you interacted with.

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Harrison Wick: When did you start teaching at Misericordia?

Mary Carden: I started teaching here in the fall of 1967. Sister Marion Joseph Walsh was chair of our department. She was here the four years that I was here as a student and then she contacted me and wanted to know if I would be interested in being interviewed and coming back and teaching.

Harrison Wick: In Home Economics?

Mary Carden: I would be in Home Economics, but by that point I had gone into a specialty area of Fashion Merchandise.

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Harrison Wick: What happened when the program was removed; how did that transition?

Mary Carden: When they decided to do away with Home Economics, since my area was Fashion Merchandising, it was business related because I had taught Principles of Retailing. Basically, I transitioned over to the Business Department.

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Harrison Wick: Were any aspects of the 1960s noticed on campus?

Mary Carden: Yes, I started teaching here in the late 1960s. There was a great deal happening having to do with boys in the dorms, because back then Misericordia was all women. Greater freedom, with the doors being open, because before that you had almost like a mother who would be in charge of the dorm with deadlines of when you could come in and where you could go. The girls wanted to have greater freedom and open the dorms up and have boys in their rooms. Not necessarily in their dorms, but in their rooms. Also the dress code changed.

Harrison Wick: That changed?

Mary Carden: That's what they were going for. Before that you always wore a blazer from October to April, and you wore stockings. You could wear socks over it, but you had to wear stockings. No pants on campus. What they were going for was freedom in the dorms and dress code.

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Harrison Wick: Religion was never a major?

Mary Carden: No, you took a religion course every semester when I was a student. Every semester for four years, and now its only 6 credits, so that has changed dramatically.

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Harrison Wick: Do you have children?

Mary Carden: I have four children, and at that time there wasn't maternity leave. I had two children over Easter break and two children over summer break. One was born on a Wednesday before we got off Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday and I was back in school the next Wednesday. And one child was born in March and the other in April, so fortunately Easter break changes.

Harrison Wick: You were back right away.

Mary Carden: In a week, but the sisters were very good. Sister Eloise McGinty, as the Registrar, did not give me real early morning classes. I have to admit they were very helpful, and as soon as my children got old enough they went to Mercy Center for nursery school and kindergarten. I was able to bring them here on campus and they stayed there, and then they went to nursery school in the morning. Sister Herbert would watch them in the afternoon; she had a cot set up in her office so that they could take a nap. That's why I'm saying it was an ideal situation.

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Harrison Wick: Has it [Misericordia] changed?

Mary Carden: The only thing I would note is that the changes were all gradual, there was no major upheaval and there weren't a lot of people at odds with the campus. We moved along, recognized change and tried to grow along with it.