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TB: Today is Tuesday, October 4, 2016, and I am here with Nancy Beebe Ervine, who is an alumna of Western. And our first question is: Why did you choose to come to Western?

NE: I really don't know, except that my parents are both college graduates and they expected their kids to go to college, and the time came and somebody said, you ought to look at Western. And we drove up here one day and drove around, and went home and applied, and sure enough this was where I wound up. That's really all I know. I was very quiet and shy and terrified of doing most anything.

TB: And so, I think you came up just with your parents, correct?

NE: Yes.

TB: Now, they do a lot of different summer starts and different programs to have students see campus ahead of time.

NE: I had no high school counselor. He died my freshman year, and they never replaced him. They probably have now, but not during my high school years. I had no counseling, no nothing.

TB: And where did you go to high school?

NE: Vashon Island High School.

TB: Okay. And so what were your dates of attendance at Western?

NE: I started in the fall of 1966, and I went through spring of 1970, I believe, and Gene and I got married in 1970, the summer of 1970. I got sick, it seems, and I didn't come back for a couple of quarters, and then I finished I think in 1971.

TB: What degrees or certificates did you receive from Western?

NE: I got a teaching certificate and a degree in elementary education.

TB: So everything you did was in education.

NE: No.

TB: Okay.

NE: I was very interested in math and science and art, and I had in my head I wanted to be an architect. I knew nothing about how to become an architect or where to go, and why my parents didn't encourage me to find out any of that, I do not know. It's a sadness in my life. But I came here as a math major, and I had in high school I'd taken advanced math and science. I took physics, a couple years of physics in high school, and placed high on the entrance exams, which put me with upper division boys in my math and physics classes, and I couldn't handle it. I had a -- my first advisor here was in the math department, and the one time I ever spoke to him, he said, Girls don't make good math majors. So by the end of my freshman year, I thought, I'm not going to do that anymore. And so I kind of thrashed around, took a bunch of different things, took some of the requirements. They used to have a seven credit requirement, I can't remember what it was called, humanities [Gen Ed], maybe?

TB: [Oh, okay].

NE: And I didn't take that my freshman year. It would have been probably different if I had. I took it sophomore or junior year, and that kind of opened a few new avenues for me. I liked art, took some art. By the time it was time to graduate, the fastest thing I could do was graduate in art education, so I did, student taught in high school art.

TB: And where did you do that at?

NE: That was in Deming.

TB: Oh, okay.

NE: With a Western, I believe he was a Western alum, Gary Sirguy was the art teacher there. And I really struggled. I wasn't much older than the high school kids. I was too shy. But at least I was a graduate by then.

TB: So you graduated and then you went and student taught?

NE: No, I student taught -- I think I student taught spring quarter of 1970, and I didn't graduate until a couple of quarters later.

TB: Okay. So have you received any other degrees anywhere else?

NE: I worked on my Master of Education in Alaska, at the University of Alaska.

TB: At Anchorage, then?

NE: Anchorage.

TB: And then what was your first job after leaving Western? And any distinctive memories of this experience?

NE: Well I should say that I realized that I couldn't teach high school, and I had done enough with elementary students to realize I really loved them, and I wanted to teach elementary. Gene and I came back to school in 1974, and I got my elementary certificate then and student taught in elementary in Sedro Woolley, in fifth grade. So 1974 I finished my -- I took, I think, just one quarter of classes. I must have been almost there when I graduated originally. And student taught, and it was then that I saw -- I was walking through Miller Hall one day, and I saw a little notice on the wall on a 3x5 card, typed: We need a teacher in a one-room school in a logging camp 50 air miles north of Sitka. And it told where to write, and I wrote. I went home, showed Gene this notice. I was just finishing up my student teaching. And he said, Oh, I'll help you apply. So he did. I mailed off my application. Ten days later I got a telegram.

TB: Wow!

NE: Offering me a job, for \$11,000 a year.

TB: Wow.

NE: And I thought that was all the money in the world. I'd be making more than the students who were graduating and teaching in Whatcom County. So that was my first job after finishing my elementary certificate.

TB: Okay. And then I assume that you and Gene went up there together.

NE: We did. We went up together. He was very reluctant to. He had a close family in Mount Vernon, and even though he had helped me apply, he -- I guess he didn't expect me to get it (laughter). But, we did go up together, and he worked in the logging camp. I taught 23 students in Kindergarten through eighth grade, supervised high school kids in the evenings on their correspondence studies. And did that for two years.

TB: Awesome. And then where did you go?

NE: Then we went to Sitka, and I taught in Sitka for six years, I taught third grade. And the year before - - well during my fifth year, I had a little girl, and I wanted to quit teaching and stay home. After six years, then Gene was working full time with the National Park Service, and I was able to stay home. We moved to Skagway, where his job was.

TB: Nice.

NE: Undoubtedly you've been there.

TB: Yes; and so did you not teach again or work outside the home again?

NE: I did work outside the home again. I took fourteen years off, and then we wound up in Anchorage, and I went back to -- I started substituting. I'd let my certificate lapse, which is a really dumb thing to do,

so I had to go back to school, which I did. It was good because the education community at that time had a different philosophy. Everything was cooperative education, which fascinated me. All these new cooperative models for teaching and learning was very interesting to me. I subbed for a little while. My daughter, who was in about the third grade when I started subbing, said to me the first day I went out to substitute teach in a Kindergarten class, Mom, don't show fear. They can sense it.

TB: Wisdom from your daughter.

NE: Yes. She's a very wise young lady.

TB: Nice, nice. So did you keep substituting, or did you start getting a regular class?

NE: I substituted for a while. I was very interested in the Anchorage school district because it was so diverse. Here's a little factoid -- of the twenty most diverse elementary schools in the country, the top nineteen are in Anchorage.

TB: Wow, wow. So, what composes their diversity?

NE: Well, there is a definition. To be considered diverse, they have to have so many different cultures or native groups of people in them, so many different languages, and a percentage of the total school population has to be considered diverse. I taught in a fifth and sixth grade up there, in a special program, and then I moved to the gifted program. I studied gifted education at that point. I had moved into the gifted program and taught in the most diverse schools in the gifted program in Anchorage, which was fascinating.

TB: Nice. And then how long did you do that for? Until you retired or?

NE: I did that until I retired, which I ended up retiring early because I developed a muscle problem and I could not -- I couldn't do it, great big buildings. But I didn't want to retire. I loved it.

TB: Nice. Now we'll come back to your experiences at Western. So, where did you live, at home, in a dorm, with a local family? Any favorite memories? Looking up in the directories for the time, I know that you lived in Sigma?

NE: I started out in Sigma, as a freshman, and I liked Sigma. Like I said, I was very quiet. I did not make many friends.

TB: Because wasn't 504 called the penthouse?

NE: Yes.

TB: I lived in Sigma, too. We had the pit and the penthouse, right? Because that's one dorm that spans five floors.

NE: Yes. And the first is way down in the pit, yes. I was there when a student from Juneau set the dorm on fire.

TB: Ooh, tell me more.

NE: Well, I don't know much about it, but I do know the fire engines came and we had to get out of the building. But she threw a match in a, apparently intentionally, in a waste basket and set the curtain on fire. But the building is cement, and it did a little damage, [so] we were able to move right back in.

TB: Oh, okay.

NE: I started out on the third floor and convinced my parents that I needed to move to the fifth floor.

TB: Because those were all single rooms, right?

NE: The fifth floor had five single rooms in it, yes. A guy that was in one of my physics classes had lived in Sigma when it was a men's dorm, and he told me where to look in the dorm where he had punched a hole in the wall. It had been covered by a blank switch plate. He covered it, but he said he left a little note inside. So I found this little note inside, and put it back in, screwed it back on.

TB: Oh, a secret. So that's on the fifth floor?

NE: That was on the fifth floor.

TB: Okay. And then, so you lived in Sigma for two years?

NE: I think I moved maybe my sophomore year?

TB: Okay.

NE: I can't really remember. Toward the end of my sophomore year, I moved into an apartment on 23rd Street, directly across from the Burns' little cabin off there in the woods.

TB: Oh sure, yes.

NE: And I knew about the Burns because my sister was living on Waldron Island at the time. So I lived directly across from that. It was a two-story, old house there. My roommate and I had the top floor.

TB: And that was probably before they put in College Drive or something. Would that be right?

NE: They didn't call it College Drive.

TB: [Maybe] they called it 23rd then or something.

NE: There's 21st and 23rd. Oh, I know. My first home off campus was in the old Quaker meeting hall.

TB: Which was?

NE: On 21st Street, in an old white house just immediately below campus, where campus was at the time. Howard Harris, a sociology professor and his wife [Rosemary], they owned the building, they

called it the Center for Learning [Ed. Note: 438 21st Street]. They had a little school there. And I helped out in the school, and I lived upstairs in their building.

TB: Okay. Did you do any babysitting for them? They had quite a few children.

NE: They had six children. Their children were all in the school. I did not babysit. Their kids came every day to school there, and I helped out in the school. I taught math and art, and I was taught about how math and art are integrated. That fascinated me.

TB: Are you skilled at music? Because music fits in there oftentimes too.

NE: No.

TB: Okay. So who were your favorite or most influential teachers, and why?

NE: My teacher I remember the most was my math education teacher, who just opened my eyes to teaching math through projects, and she'd written the textbook we used. And her last name was Kelley, I believe. Margaret Kelley? Something Kelley. [Ed. Note: Sara Jeanne Kelley].

TB: Okay.

NE: The book was called *Math activities for young children*. I'm sure I still have the book.

TB: So that was kind of a good experience since you had a real heart for math, to then have a positive experience, having your freshman year not having been so positive.

NE: I think that yes, yes, absolutely, and I realized at that point that I wanted to be an elementary teacher. And I tried to take more classes like that, but I couldn't find them.

TB: And do you have any other favorite or influential teachers?

NE: Oh golly, I hate to say, I can't remember. I do remember some of my art teachers.

TB: Go for it.

NE: Mr. [Dahlen] did a sculpture class, and I did very mathematical, precise sculptures. That was kind of fun.

TB: Did you have Ms. Kelsey, Ruth Kelsey? She would have been drawing. I think Hazel Breakey was probably was retired by then.

NE: I took weaving from Mary McIntyre. Wonderful teacher, I really liked her. And that encouraged me to get a loom and a spinning wheel which I recently sold. I kind of felt like I was on my own a lot.

TB: So my next question is: What was your main course of study? And it would have been elementary education, art, a little bit of math education too?

NE: Mm-hmm.

TB: Okay. Try to get a little bit more, I think we've kind of got this, but what classes did you like the best or learn the most from?

NE: Well I probably learned the most from elementary reading because I had no idea how to teach reading, and that was one of the classes I came back and took in 1974.

TB: So who did you have for that? Did you have Dr. Mork? I'm not sure if that's what he did.

NE: Boy, I don't know. I'm sorry, I just –

TB: It's just fine. What extracurricular activities did you enjoy the most?

NE: Sailing.

TB: Nice! So did you take a sailing class at Western, or just because you're from Vashon Island –

NE: I grew up sailing. We always had sailboats. I'd sailed a lot. And that was one area where I as a freshman, I was willing to seek out the sailing club. Sailing is very mathematical. I did a lot of sailing out at the lake, Lake Whatcom, the Lakewood property. I raced.

TB: Okay. Is that on the International 420s? Or was there an earlier version?

NE: No we had Penguins. And at that point, I was a crew member because the only skippers were males, so I crewed and the guys liked me as a crew member because I was very cool and precise.

TB: And so that was out at the lake or?

NE: Out at the lake. And we raced. We went to Vancouver and raced. We raced on Lake Washington, Puget Sound, Tacoma, wherever the team needed to go.

TB: And so that was a coed team?

NE: That was a coed team.

TB: Okay. Now did you ever race on Bellingham Bay? Any of the Wednesday night series or Thursday night?

NE: No.

TB: So do you have any other special memories of the sailing, like where else that you might've went that were really cool or?

NE: Sailing, going with the sailing team up to Vancouver was really fun. We capsized once on Lake Whatcom. The skipper was John Clark, and he was at the helm when we capsized. He always liked me because he said I was so cool, cool under pressure.

TB: Well, you would've been really confident having grown up on a boat, like, or down on Vashon.

NE: That was one of the few things I was confident about.

TB: Interesting.

NE: I also skied. I don't know if the school had a ski team or not.

TB: It probably did. I would think so.

NE: But I went up to Mt. Baker and skied. I wanted to teach up there. Franz Goebel ran the ski school. He said I didn't fit the image of a ski instructor.

TB: Were they all men?

NE: Mostly, but they were very flashy too, and I wasn't flashy at all, and I had my old wool baggy pants I wore, and my old parka, and I think that he sold equipment too.

TB: Oh, and you weren't buying it.

NE: I wasn't buying it (laughter).

TB: That's kind of cute. Well I have to ask this, so how did you meet Gene?



NE: Well, Phil -- Dr. Kennedy out there, was dating a roommate of mine when I lived on 23rd, across from Fairhaven. My roommate was Phyllis. She had also been in Sigma, and we wound up in this little apartment together, I think my junior year. Gene had started out at Whitworth, and he was transferring over here. Gene's very good friend, Dale Zeretzke, was going to school here, and he knew Phil because he was in the dorm with Phil, and Phil played the pipes, and Gene loved bagpipes. So Dale would take Phil home, I guess, he lived in Mount Vernon also, and took them up to the Ervine place, which was up in the hills. Gene grew up in just a little house up there without electricity or indoor plumbing when he was young. Phil would go up there and play his pipes for Gene's dad, who was Canadian and loved the pipes. And Phil said to Phyllis, Well, my friend Gene Ervine, who's kind of a weird guy, is coming here next year and, Phyllis, I want you and Nancy to look in on him and make sure he's okay. And Phyllis said, Okay, okay, okay.

So Gene's first day on campus was a couple of days before classes started. So Phyllis and I were walking across campus, across Red Square. We were going into the library, and here comes this tall, string bean of a guy coming out of the library, and we met on the steps of the Mabel Zoe Wilson Library. And Phyllis said, Oh there's that guy we're supposed to look after. So she introduced me to Gene, and she said to Gene, Well we'll have to invite you over for dinner someday. So we talked for a minute, and

Phyllis and I walked on and Gene went on his way. And I said, Hey, Phyllis, when are you going to invite him over (laughter)?

And she said, Oh, Nancy, don't be silly, I'm not going to, that's just something you say to be polite. And I've never forgotten that because I didn't know that. I didn't know that was one of those greetings, you know, kind of an elevator type greeting. Anyway, I bugged her enough that finally she said, Okay, I'll invite him over. So she did. He came over and read poetry, and we hit it off, so spent time together. The rest is history, two years later we were married, that was 46 years ago.

TB: Nice, nice. Wow, nice. But you must have a real appreciation for poetry too.

NE: Well, I learned to have an appreciation for it. My mother was also an English major and is a writer, and my dad had an appreciation for poetry and gave me a couple of nice poetry books when I was in high school.

TB: Do you have any other outstanding memories of your college days?

NE: I just remember feeling independent, and I spent a lot of time by myself. I walked a lot. I covered Bellingham on foot. I remember sitting and reading outside, and sitting in Red Square. I remember I could get a cup of coffee for five cents (\$.05), or seven cents (\$.07), and then ten cents (\$.10) for a big cup, seven cents (\$.07) for just a small ceramic cup, ten cents (\$.10) for a mug. Does that sound right?

TB: Could be. I didn't drink coffee back in those days, but it seems to me I remember a pop being about ten cents, like a can of pop. I definitely when I was little bought a bottle of pop with a dime, so coffee is usually kind of close to pop, so.

Is there anything else you want to say? I guess I'm fascinated about what life was like. Any other special memories you have of maybe of the logging camp life? I mean, that's really interesting to me, having spent a summer up there. Is there anything else you can [add]?

NE: Well, it was very interesting. It was interesting partly because I was the only person in camp who was not paid by the camp. So I had some independence from the rest of the crew, and I think that was kind of hard on Gene at times because he was the school teacher's husband. He was not considered a logger. He was considered the school teacher's husband, who happened to be logging. It was a real education for me in having so many kids of different ages. It was very difficult. I was not prepared at all. Not that it was Western's fault. My teaching certificate, I guess, was Kindergarten through eighth grade, which they sure don't do now. Now it's divided more early childhood and intermediate on. But I learned a lot, learned a lot about life and a logging camp. And then in Sitka, I learned a lot about teaching.

TB: One more quick question about the logging camp: Did you work the traditional September through June? Because in the wintertime, doesn't the logging camp close down a lot and people leave?

NE: Some camps more than others. Our camp did -- well, the first thing that happened was Gene's father passed away after we'd been there two months, and we left camp and were gone a week or so. I was gone a week, I think, and I had to make up that time. There were no substitute teachers. So if I was sick, we would make it up. And we made up those days when his dad passed away by going to school on

Saturdays. And usually I tried to make Saturday different. We'd go for a hike, although all the paranoid parents in camp made sure that I had somebody with me carrying a gun.

TB: Oh, for the bears, yes.

NE: And that was kind of fun, but different than I had ever expected. I think that first year we did go out a little later in the year. A bunch of kids left in the winter, but not all of them that first year, because it was a brand new camp and people would come up from Oregon to run the camp, and they brought their Oregon loggers with them, who had no place to go. They didn't have homes elsewhere. However, I had a couple of kids who lived in the bunkhouse with their dads.

TB: Wow.

NE: And I remember one time, Gene and I were going into town, and we didn't go very often. The weather was bad or we couldn't fly or whatever. But it was sometime in the middle of winter, maybe January we were going in to get groceries or take a break, whatever. This father handed us a 20-dollar bill and said -- oh, he was on the plane with us with his little boy, who was one of my students -- who said, You're a teacher, you take care of Billy while we're in town. I guess we were there for the weekend, and he was leaving town with his son for a while. He said, You take care of Billy. So he handed us \$20 and said, He needs shoes and pants. So we went and bought Billy shoes and pants and fed him and went for walks, and then we gave him back to his dad. But that wasn't unusual. Other times, the following year, a parent left camp, both parents left camp for two weeks and said, Can my kids stay with you?

TB: Oh, wow.

NE: There were two kids. I said, Sure. Well, when you live right there next to the school and all the families live right there too, it's a very close community, and I got to know the kids quite well, got to know their parents quite well, which was a very tough environment for kids, very tough living, not just the environment but the home environment of loggers and the mothers who complained to each other all the time because there was no TV or radio reception. They didn't care about radio, no TV reception, they missed their soap operas. The first year the camp, the school froze early in the year, by the end of October, and it didn't thaw out until spring, so we had no bathrooms at school. And the kids, of course, immediately wanted to take advantage of that. I need to go to the bathroom, I need to go to the bathroom. That's great, go home. That took care of itself really easily because those mothers didn't want those kids coming in their house. And I knew that would take care of itself. After that, then it was just lunchtime or maybe an emergency, recess or something, they had to run [to] their house to use the bathroom. And I did the same.

TB: You know, my summer, I just remember everybody would like have coffee at 9 am or 10 am or something. They were like always going to everybody's trailer to have morning coffee, and yes, I think when I got there they were real interested in what was happening on some of the soap operas that I'd been watching when I came up there, and it was kind of cute.

Anything else that I haven't asked you that you would like to share?

NE: One thing I'd like to share is that I'm very impressed, not just with Western, the teachers they're turning out, but I think all teachers are coming out of college far better prepared than I ever was. I've had

student teachers from the University of Alaska in my room, and I am so impressed. I talked to some young people in the teacher's program here, and they talk about the experience they get in the classroom and what they're learning in their classes, and it is so much more than I ever learned.

I had a teacher here named Bill Heid. An interesting guy. He lived out on Lummi Island. His -- I don't know, I was going to say his sister was a good friend of mine. His wife? It doesn't matter. Anyway, I took an education class from him, and we all went out to the lawn, I think right here in front of the arts building, and he said, Okay, we're just going to sit in a big circle and get in touch with our feelings. That was an education class.

TB: So did you enjoy that or?

NE: Not particularly. It was –

TB: You're shy.

NE: I was shy, and I didn't think I needed to express my feelings (laughter). It seemed like a waste of time, and then we had to write about it or something. And that was pretty much the whole class. Well, I think they're better prepared now. I think their student teaching experiences are a lot better. They take more time. In Alaska, they have to student teach in two different classes, two different age groups. So, I think that's good.

TB: Nice. If you don't have anything else, I don't have any more questions. I will say, Thank you.

NE: Okay, well, thank you.