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This interview was conducted with Dr. Carol J. Diers, alumna, and Professor Emeritus of Psychology, Western Washington University, at her home in Talent, Oregon. The interviewer is Tamara Belts.

**TB:** Today is September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2003 and I'm down here in Talent, Oregon with Dr. Carol Diers, a retired faculty member from Western. She just signed the informed consent agreement and we're going to proceed with our oral history.

I understand that you also went to the Campus School, so why don't we talk about whatever your memories are of the time span you were at the Campus School?

**CD:** I was there kindergarten, first, and second grade. I had to come in from Geneva, where we lived out on Lake Whatcom. I don't know if it was the trip in, or what, but I didn't do very well there. I'd had a very isolated childhood and there were lots of kids around and there were lots of teachers around because there were a lot of student teachers in every room. I somehow couldn't get focused on who belonged where. So, I didn't like Campus School, I didn't get along well, and I didn't do well, either. So, after second grade, I went into the local school out in Geneva and eventually did much better.

I can remember a couple teachers' names. I can remember Miss Rich was the principal. After school, the kids all sang a little song, "Miss Rich, Miss Rich, fell in a ditch and when she came out she was blacker than pitch."

**TB:** That's good! (laughter)

Okay, then, you also came back to Western as a college student. Now, had you gone somewhere else before?

**CD:** Yes, I'd been one year at Whitworth and one year at Wheaton.

**TB:** Okay.

**CD:** And then I became ill my second year at Wheaton, the beginning of my junior year, and so, I came home. We lived out in the county at the time, out at Everson, and I just picked up winter quarter and then stayed until I graduated in 1956, so I was actually at Western 1954 to 1956.

**TB:** Okay, and did you get your BA and your Bachelors in Education the same time, then?

**CD:** Yes. I think one of them was in the winter quarter and one was in the spring quarter of 1956.

**TB:** Then did you teach or did you immediately go to graduate school?

**CD:** First of all, I taught one year of public school in Bellevue -- junior high. Then I went to graduate school at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, then I came back to Bellevue and taught another year in junior high, and then went on to University of Washington.

**TB:** What was your specialty in [junior] school, because I had the idea the undergraduate degree was more in sciences?

**CD:** Yes, physical science and biological science were my majors at Western. I had already accumulated a fair amount of credits in those areas, because I was initially in pre-med. So, the simplest thing to do was stick with those, which I liked, anyway, I liked biological sciences.

**TB:** When did you switch to psychology?

**CD:** When I went to graduate school.

**TB:** At the Masters or PhD level?

**CD:** At the Masters. By then, my history as an undergraduate had been so confused by going to three different universities, so, I sort of cast about what would be the easiest for me to catch up in. I thought psychology would probably be the simplest thing for me to catch up in, in graduate school. I knew after teaching junior high -- I loved it and I liked the kids -- but it takes a lot of energy and I didn't think I would last. So, I thought I better get busy and go on to a more relaxed, presumably, more relaxed atmosphere.

**TB:** Wow. So, you also said you originally wanted to be in pre-med? So, what made you change from that?

**CD:** Well, there were a number of reasons. My health was one; lack of financial support was another one - - really a lack of support for going on in that direction.

**TB:** Now, I think other members of your family, your mother, attended Western?

**CD:** Yes, she attended and got her, I think, a teaching certificate, in about 1925 or 1926, and then in 1954 she completed the BA.

**TB:** And who is Don Diers?

**CD:** That's my father.

**TB:** Oh, okay. He went to Western, then, too?

**CD:** Maybe he did for one quarter. Then much later he went to Edison Technical, but, he might have gone one quarter, from what I can recall hearing.

**TB:** We have a book in Special Collections that has everybody who registered up to 1959.

**CD:** Oh, really?

**TB:** He was in there, as having come from Whatcom High, on 9/26/1927, but that's all you know, you just know that they came, so, the one quarter could exactly be right.

**CD:** That's probably all there is to know about my father's attendance at Western. I'm sure he had to try to make a living, and then the depression hit, so I'm sure he was taking any job he could get.

**TB:** Where did you live most of the time, while you were at Western?

**CD:** I lived with the Taylor's. First I came to the dorms, at Eden's Hall, then I went to the Taylor's as a live-in babysitter/housecleaner, *au pair*.

**TB:** Did you enjoy going to Western?

**CD:** I enjoyed it, because faculty and students had coffee together, it was small; you got to know various people, at various levels.

**TB:** Okay, that's good; it was still a small school.

Who were your favorite, or most influential teachers, and why?

**CD:** The two I remember, and I'm sure there were others, are, Paul Woodring and Herb Taylor. Their styles were extremely different.

**TB:** What was Paul Woodring like?

**CD:** Very laid back, thoughtful, and I couldn't tell you one thing -- I could tell you one thing I learned in this class, it was *Introductory Psychology*, and one day he walked in and said, "I suppose you should know something about a neuron" and he drew it on the blackboard. I was very interested in that, but that's about the extent of his interest. And so, we went on to other things.

**TB:** Was he there the whole time that you were there?

**CD:** Yes, I think so, well, he might have been away at the Ford Foundation.

**TB:** I got the idea that he came back and forth at Western, and he'd be off doing other things for awhile and would always come back.

**CD:** He might have, part of the time, but I took at least three classes from him.

**TB:** You said he was laid back, did he lecture, or did he expect you guys to read and kind of discuss things?

**CD:** No, he just sort of rambled on, it seemed like, and it was all very interesting, and very learned, and...

**TB:** Did he sit down?

**CD:** No, not usually; in a seminar style yes, but in the other two classes, no, it was a formal lecture. And then, Herb Taylor was very energetic, very involved, always very involved in whatever lecture he was giving, and very organized.

**TB:** Now, did you take Anthropology or was he teaching some other things back then?

**CD:** I think Sociology is what I took from him, first, and then, at least one, maybe two, Anthropology classes.

**TB:** Then your main course of study was in the natural sciences?

**CD:** And physical sciences.

**TB:** Okay, then did you happen to know the women scientist, because we had several women science teachers?

**CD:** Yes, and I didn't appreciate them as much as I should have because I had already by then come to share the belief that women couldn't do things as well as men.

**TB:** Really?

**CD:** Yes. Probably still some long antagonism with my mother, and it wasn't until years later that I realized these people were really good. And I just, at the time, I just sort of sneered at them.

**TB:** Wow, that's interesting.

What other activities did you most enjoy? Everyone who was a woman was considered to be part of the Associated Women Students. I found you were also on the Kappa Delta Phi Honor Society?

**CD:** Yes, I didn't do much for that, or pay much attention to it.

**TB:** And Valkrie?

**CD:** Valkrie.

**TB:** And you were a Valkrie?

**CD:** Yes, a friend of mine who was already in Valkrie supported my election to Valkrie, because I had no idea what it was. Valkrie was supposed to be Scandinavian, Viking type women.

**TB:** And they were kind of a service organization?

**CD:** They were, although, the only service I can remember doing is carrying the flag, must have been the graduation before mine, or carrying a flag or carrying something in the graduation line.

**TB:** Okay.

**CD:** I don't know what other service they did.

**TB:** I think that was mainly it, helping at graduation and stuff. Any other outstanding memories of your college days?

**CD:** I can't think of any right now.

**TB:** How about your faculty days? I have that you came from Western in 1963 from Olympic Community College. You must have been there a year?

**CD:** Right. Two years.

**TB:** And then, so you already had your PhD completed when you came?

**CD:** Right.

**TB:** You actually did that really quickly, got your masters and your PhD?

**CD:** From UW it was. I so enjoyed graduate school at University of British Columbia, it was more in the British style. I got back to University of Washington and it was on the quarter system again, and it seemed Mickey Mouse, like I was going backwards in terms of being involved in the subject. And, so, I wanted to get out of there as fast as I could. So, that's what I did. When I got to UW, my officemate, for example had been there about nine years. UW had a reputation for having a very delayed graduation.

**TB:** Oh, wow, okay.

**CD:** I just set out to get through in the two years. I came in with a Masters, and it was two years plus summers for me to get out of there (laughter).

**TB:** Did you originally plan on coming back to Western, or coming back to the area, or did that just happen to fall into place?

**CD:** I actually hadn't made a lot of plans. When I graduated, it was just before the big hiring period started, so I interviewed at two or three different places then went to Olympic College for two years, and then decided I wanted to go to a four year college. Right at that point there were openings, lots of openings.

**TB:** Did you have any thoughts coming back, having been a student there, then coming back, was it awkward to fit into your department, or did you feel a little bit like a student yourself? Or was it easy to make that transition?

**CD:** I don't think I had any trouble making that transition. I had never thought I would come back, because I'd always thought I would get out of town and stay out of town. But, then, I liked my experience at Western in terms of enjoying the faculty and enjoying the atmosphere, and of course it changed fairly rapidly, and the job just opened.

**TB:** Were you feeling the energy at the time, I mean, there were a lot of new hires, was everybody fitting in, were people excited, or was there a lot of competition?

**CD:** There was a lot of energy. There were a lot of classes to teach. I got four different classes in a quarter -- which was too much for me because I didn't know enough to do that. But, there was that kind of pressure, but exciting. Every year there were more allocations, the state gave more money, I felt like we kept going ahead. It was an exciting time.

**TB:** What was it like? You were a single woman, did you feel accepted?

**CD:** At that time, I thought I was treated very well. I was asked to be on committees, I was asked to be the chairman of committees, I was...I didn't think I was feeling any kind of discrimination.

**TB:** There wasn't any gender discrimination -- you didn't feel any gender discrimination?

**CD:** No, not at that time, although, much later, when there was a lot of women's lib activity, and when Mary Robinson was made Dean of...what was she Dean of?

**TB:** I think she was the Dean of Women.

**CD:** No, I don't... Well, maybe she was.

**TB:** She was definitely human resources, but...

**CD:** Yes, because, then there was money put into trying to search out women who had been discriminated against. And, I'm not just sure when this was, but I resented that -- that somebody was being paid more than I was to come in at this date and say, *if you need any help in terms of your position in the department, then contact me*. And I thought, this is only thirty or forty years too late, as far as [I'm concerned]. And I wrote her a nasty memo, I'm sorry, I did, in a way. It had to do with, "if I do feel discriminated against, I'll hire a lawyer." I was really pissed off at the whole thing (laughter). And then, somebody could make me chairman of some search committee, or something or other, and say he was doing it in part because there was concern for women not having these positions. Well, I'd already had those positions. I was chairman of the search committee for a new librarian, the Tenure and Promotion Committee, and other things. I had

already done it! Now, you come and say you're going to do it *because* I'm a woman. I thought I had the positions because I was capable of doing it, not because I was a woman. So, there were lots of feelings about that.

**TB:** They almost created what they were trying to stop. I mean it created more the sense of discrimination, or that you weren't the same as a man, because now it was the popular thing ...

**CD:** Yes, it didn't work right for me (laughter).

**TB:** Did you hear how the other women felt? I mean, at the time that you came there were actually three women in your department, Evelyn Mason, and another person also.

**CD:** Barbara Etzel, and she left shortly after that, I think. And Pete Mason was there. Pete Mason was in clinical, and to me, that's different than being in experimental or academic. But, she, I believe she had had a practice, but she was very quickly was absorbed into the main stream academic.

**TB:** Why don't you tell me a little bit more about what kind of work you did at Western, both your teaching and your research? You just described it as being experimental, but...?

**CD:** Right. In terms of publication, I did some publication, but I hadn't come in with the idea that I would need to rack up stacks of articles. And, of course, eventually that was necessary so the Tenure and Promotion Committee could count the number of articles when they were reviewing you for Tenure and Promotion. Research became much more important, and my research tended to fall on what a graduate student might want to do. Or, I was just slow at it. Although, I preferred that setting to the community college setting, where it was just about impossible to do research. I certainly, preferred the research pressure.

**TB:** Did you work a lot with graduate students, then, kind of, doing...?

**CD:** Several, yes. Several graduate students. We worked with them and their thesis in whatever area they were interested in. The one, animal research study, the armadillos, turned out to be a flaming disaster (laughter)! Actually, after the fire, the next year, we got some more. The real disaster was we would get these pregnant females and they would eat their young. So, we finally tried to take them away. With one litter, Flora and I shared caring for them, getting up in the night and feeding four little armadillos, and trying to keep them alive. But, they got pneumonia -- the way I got pneumonia -- they got pneumonia in Bellingham. It wasn't for them. The reason we wanted them was because they have four identical young. They're genetically identical. What a great research animal for Psychology. You've got heredity controlled.

**TB:** And then, you were trying to see the kind of behavior that could be trained -- fascinating.

What about, I guess I'm thinking collectively about faculty. How did the faculty work in your department? Did they get along really well, or how did that go? And also, then, campus life, in terms of attitude about faculty governance, and who runs the university, stuff like that? In the sixties when you came came, were the faculty directing things, or did the president have a stronger role...do you know what I'm trying to say?

**CD:** Partly, I don't know. It seems to me the faculty had a lot to say and a lot of power to determine policy. Certainly, the nature of courses, what was taught, that kind of thing. And the faculty seemed very enthusiastic. I think much later I had an impression that the faculty became more removed. As things get larger, it's more difficult to have a large body of beings dictating, you almost inevitably start focusing on one or two: a dean, a president, some individuals who have to be responsible to make decisions. But, when I was first there, too, the Psychology Department, for example, would meet together as a group, have parties, do things together, which made a very pleasant working atmosphere. And, the last few years, you couldn't get that department together. Half of them would go off somewhere else, it just didn't work anymore.

**TB:** Were there any bad feelings, was it cliquish or was it just because it had gotten bigger?

**CD:** Individuals, I think, had grudges against others, and so on. But part of it was just size – a different atmosphere – a university atmosphere rather than a small college atmosphere.

**TB:** Any other thoughts about, when you came? Was Jarrett still president or was Bunke?

**CD:** Jarrett.

**TB:** Any thoughts about Jarrett?

**CD:** I'm in email contact with him.

**TB:** So, you obviously personally liked him?

**CD:** Yes. He represented something. I don't think he was very effective in getting things done, somebody else had to do that, but he represented a change, to a focus on humanities and general education -- the college was no longer being run by the Education Department, but by academics who were interested in broader arts and sciences. But, I don't think he enjoyed being an administrator, and indeed, at Berkley he went back to philosophy and he's been doing a lot of Jungian philosophy.

**TB:** So, back for a minute, do you have any thoughts about Haggard as a student? Were you aware of him very much, did he have some a strong presence, or...?

**CD:** Yes, he had great powers in some ways; he did such things as announcing no one would walk on the lawn. And no one did. It's true, he could do that, and later presidents couldn't ever do that.

**TB:** Would he still have school assemblies when you were a student?

**CD:** There could have been, but I just ignored them.

**TB:** And what about Bunke?

**CD:** I can't remember a lot about Bunke. Well, the feeling I have is not extremely positive, but I just can't remember.

**TB:** And then, it must have been Flora, after Bunke?

**CD:** Yes, is that right?

**TB:** He was interim for a while, and then he becomes the regular.

**CD:** He was president during a very difficult time. He was a great biology lecturer.

**TB:** You wouldn't have had him as a student, right?

**CD:** No, but he was really a good lecturer. And, then, when he became president, he was in for a lot of trouble. I think a lot of stress and strain, and he stuck it out.

**TB:** What did you think of students in the sixties, the student action?

**CD:** I loved it. The students were so confrontational that classes were exciting, because students were involved. They didn't mind objecting to something you said or asking for more evidence, or that kind of

thing, which really makes a classroom effective. And then, later, it seems to me students got much more interested in grades and became apathetic in a way, compared to the late sixties, early seventies.

**TB:** Did you find the students in the sixties, were they well prepared for classes, I mean, had they done their reading and done the things that were expected, and then asking questions? Or were they asking questions before they had...

**CD:** I think they prepared, a number of them prepared. There were of course those who were eating mushrooms and smoking marijuana and they never quite got it together (laughter).

When I directed the Honors Program, it was a time when students were very involved and there were more students on the Board than faculty. And we didn't emphasize grade point average. Of course, you would expect an honors student to have a decent grade point average, but honors students would be encouraged to take classes out of their area, for example, and not have to worry about lowering their grade point average so that they would be dropped from the program. And I think there's now much more emphasis on grade point, which I don't like.

**TB:** Tell me a little bit more about the Honors Program. Did you start the Honors program, or had it already started, and then you became director?

**CD:** Oh, no, it was well going when I was directing it. Henry Adams and Sam Kelly both had a lot to do with that.

**TB:** Then, as director, did you have an influence on the directions that it took, or was it kind of set, or what was the role? I don't know how that really works.

**CD:** Well, I of course chaired the Board. There was a Board of faculty and students who would review suggestions for requirements for the Honors Program. Individual students would propose majors for themselves, that would likely be a combination from several departments, and this Board would review that and okay them or not. If the Board okayed them, that was fine. Then they went ahead and fulfilled their proposal. One quarter, the students themselves conducted a class and didn't want any faculty involved at all. That passed, and they invited me one time. I couldn't believe the amount of work they were requiring each other to do. It was a lot of work.

**TB:** Really, then, they were grading each other?

**CD:** Yes.

**TB:** Wow.

**CD:** I'm sure they did more work than they would have if any faculty member had been teaching that same course. So, there were those kinds of things that were exciting, and working -- working out well.

**TB:** Yes. Well, any other thoughts on...gender? I think that I picked up that when you first came, you were just treated like a regular person, I don't know how else to define it, and actually, when the women's movement came, it changed things.

**CD:** Right, and I was treated more like a woman than a faculty member, by some.

**TB:** Any other thoughts on campus politics?

**CD:** I was never very involved in...as a student I was somewhat involved in campus politics and as a faculty member, of course, you're inevitably involved in some, but I never wanted to be very involved in politics or power exchanges. Occasionally I was.



**TB:** Well, how about telling us a little bit about Herb Taylor, now, he was very involved in campus politics.

**CD:** Well, he was involved in campus politics, and since he was very involved when Jarrett came, he was very involved in getting the Humanities Program, through. A lot of it was academically oriented in the sense of academic structure. He came in '51 from the University of Chicago. He would have come to a place that was, my impression, pretty much run by the Education Department.

**TB:** That's interesting that he came from the University of Chicago, because University of Chicago is also the Great Books place where Jarrett had served, so he and Jarrett probably did hit it off.

**CD:** I've retained my membership in the American Psychological Society, and there's a newsletter, which is about all I read of psychology these days. My first graduate student, Tony Tinsley, was listed in there, and I contacted him by email because I had directed his thesis, and it was the first Master's degree in the Psychology Department (which, I didn't really pay attention to at the time, but somebody pointed that out to me later). He responded by saying how much he had enjoyed Western and where he had been, various academic positions and what he had been doing, very briefly. For most of the letter, he talked about Herb Taylor's lecturing abilities. He said, no matter where he had been, all the places he had been, all the positions he'd had, all the experiences he had in higher education, he had never had a better lecturer.

**TB:** I've heard other stories about Herb Taylor going out, right out into the classroom, and he'd grab somebody's head...

**CD:** Some of the stories just were bogus stories, obviously some fantastic kind of stories that never happened. I suppose it means -- he certainly had an ability to grip an audience, and they thought wild things were happening, whether they were or not.

**TB:** That's probably true. Then, how did you guys, well, obviously, you had known him when you were a college student, and then, you went off to school, then how did get back together?

**CD:** I came back to Western, to teach. I came back in '63, and '73 we got married. He divorced '72, seventy something anyway. I was back ten years.

**TB:** So it was just by being on campus?

**CD:** Not entirely. We had maintained contact following my graduation in 1956.

**TB:** We talked about this a little bit, but, did you feel bad at all -- well, you didn't really ever feel that you were not treated well as a single woman. That's kind of what you said.

**CD:** Right.

**TB:** So, actually marrying him wouldn't have changed anything, necessarily?

**CD:** No, I don't think in that regard it did. No, it was later when I felt discriminated against was when people announced, "We're offering you this because you're a woman."

**TB:** That's true, you were one of the beginning pioneers, and this is what you get.

Do you have any thoughts about your teaching days that you would like on the record, anything that you consider to be special achievements, or anything about your career?

**CD:** I can't think of anything in particular right now.

**TB:** What are your best memories of Western, then?

**CD:** The fellowship with faculty and students. I love teaching, I like preparing lectures. It's fun to organize material and I enjoyed teaching *Introductory Psychology* because I like keeping in touch with all areas to some extent, as much as you can, which is not a lot, but you can, it was stimulating for me to teach *Introductory Psychology*.

**TB:** You were a really dynamic teacher, also.

**CD:** Sometimes. Sometimes I had really good teacher ratings and sometimes I didn't. I got tired, I guess.

**TB:** What are your worst memories, or do you have any worst memories?

**CD:** I don't know.

**TB:** That's okay if you don't have any. What do you think Western's strengths were when you were there teaching?

**CD:** The enthusiasm of the faculty, and the competence -- very competent faculty.

**TB:** Do you have any thoughts of what the weaknesses were of Western during that time?

**CD:** No, I don't.

**TB:** Okay, well, how about your retirement? You retired, I think, in 1991?

**CD:** Yes. I retired, the same year my husband died. Actually, we were starting on a trip, in 1991, and I had already put in for retirement, because we wanted to travel more than we had been. Then, we got a start for Hawaii, we'd been going around the world, and he died. And, so I came back, and Elich said I didn't have to retire if I didn't want to, I could keep teaching, but I just did. I didn't think I'd be able to...I did teach another quarter, in a fog. Then, after I retired, I taught for two more quarters. I could have taught more, but I didn't. I was finding I liked retirement, then.

**TB:** What kind of things did you pursue, maybe, that you hadn't had a chance to pursue before?

**CD:** Well, I traveled a fair amount, and, for about four years I had a place in southern California, in the desert, that I would go to in the winter. Here, there's all kind of reading groups and plays and performances to go to, and there's just a lot going on.

**TB:** How'd you pick Talent?

**CD:** I picked Ashland, actually -- I'm five miles from Ashland -- because of the climate, and because of all the activities. And, it's turned out to be a good choice.

**TB:** When did you move here?

**CD:** In 1998. I've been here five years.

**TB:** Had you maintained a place in Bellingham, then, until 1998?

**CD:** Yes, I lived in the same house in Bellingham for about 32 years.

**TB:** Oh, okay. And then, it sounds like you have kind of stayed connected with your academic interests, your reading the newsletter ...

**CD:** Some, not a lot, but some.

**TB:** And some of your students?

**CD:** Occasionally, even down here, occasionally I run into a student.

**TB:** Nice, and then former faculty if you're keeping in touch with Jarrett?

**CD:** Right, and Evelyn Mason and the Lippman's, and Henry Adams.

**TB:** And, he's in Bellingham, isn't he?

**CD:** Yes, he's in Bellingham.

**TB:** Oh, okay.

**TB:** All right, well, thank you very much.