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This interview was conducted with Elaine (Matsushita) Jamieson on May 15th, 2010, in the Western Washington University Libraries Special Collections Research Room.

TB: Today is Sunday, May 15th, 2010. My name is Tamara Belts and I'm here with Elaine Jamieson who is here as part of the Back 2 Bellingham Reunion, and we're going to do an oral history with her. Our first question is: How did you happen to come to Western?

EJ: Dr. Walter from the music department went to teach at the University of Hawaii for a year. My brother was a music student there and he encouraged my brother to come to Western for a Master's degree. Dr. Walter also came to my high school on Maui

and adjudicated our band and offered me a music scholarship. Not having ever been away from the islands it was an opportunity that I couldn't refuse.

TB: Excellent. And then your brother did also attend Western?

EJ: Yes.

TB: So did you come over at the same time together?

EJ: No, he came in June and I came in the Fall.

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

EJ: I [came] here Fall of 1958 and finished my Bachelor's in March of 1962, then started on my Master's immediately after. I finished two quarters then went out to teach and came back during summers to finish my Master's. I finished in 1965.

TB: Okay, and what were your degrees in?

EJ: My Bachelor's was in education with a math major and a special education major. My Master's was in counseling psychology.

TB: So what happened to music? Did you just give it up or you just did it on the side?

EJ: I continued to play in Western's band and orchestra and received a small stipend.

TB: Okay.

EJ: Yes, and during those years my major source of income was working in the library in periodicals with Kay Crocker.

TB: Excellent. So can you tell me a little more about what the library was like during that time? And also Mrs. Crocker.

EJ: Mrs. Crocker was the sweetest lady you could ever work for. She was very patient, very soft-spoken. I was a very timid, seventeen year-old, fresh from the islands. And she really helped me a lot. The periodical room was to the left just as you entered the first floor of the library. It was a great big room fronted with tables of Readers Guide to Periodical Literature and Education Index. Without computers, it was necessary to search each volume by subject. To the right were the stacks. The periodicals were all shelved alphabetically by title and by date chronologically. The students would fill out little pieces of paper saying they wanted maybe American Heritage, January 1932 or whatever. And we'd have to go to the stacks, pull the magazine, and file their little slips. They'd take the magazine and when they brought it back, materials were checked in then restacked. I also did the evening shift where I had to count and record the circulation for that day. So it was little cards, magazine by magazine, noting how many copies you issued during the day. A never ending job was reading shelves, checking that each periodical was in its proper place and cataloged.

TB: So you did the circulation just for the periodicals?

EJ: Just the periodicals, right.

TB: Who was the director at that time? Did you know Miss Herrick?

EJ: I recognized her. Mr. Hearsey was also here. And I know Mrs. Mathes was in the children's library. I took kiddy lit from her, which was a fun class. I can't remember the rest of the personnel. I was required to read and take notes on 3 x 5 index cards for 200 books – a great resource for teachers.

TB: What was your first job after leaving Western? And please also provide a brief employment history.

EJ: My first job after Western was at Federal Way High School teaching math and psychology. Then, let's see. Since I was also working on my Master's in Bellingham, I needed to commute to Bellingham once a week with my Master's advisor. I left Federal Way and took a job in Everett. The opening that they had at that time was at a junior high; I taught for four years. I left my job to have my family, and moved on to Mariner High School in Mukilteo District. This is where, again, I taught mathematics and psychology until 1982 at which time I had finished my PhD in educational psychology through University of Washington. I was very disappointed that I couldn't come back to Western, but they didn't have a program. So I remained at Mukilteo, Mariner High School, until 1987 then moved to Cascade High School as a counselor. In addition to working with teens, I focused on college information and served on the board of Washington Council for High School College Relations and University of Washington Undergraduate Admissions Counselor Advisory Board. I retired in 1999.

TB: Wow. So where did you live most of the time while you were at Western?

EJ: As a freshman I lived in old Edens Hall on the first floor. We did have a room mother and a proctor. We had bed checks every night after 'lights out.' We had to sign out of the dorms to go anywhere and sign back in when you returned. A violation meant being confined all weekend. There was a sink in each room, but bathroom and showers were down the hall. One phone in the hall was available. In-coming calls and visitors went through the desk attendant and the recipient was paged. Man in the hall warranted an all-call. Open steam radiators were in each room and they got hot. Window coverings were pull-down shades. Quiet hours were enforced. Electrical appliances were discouraged.

TB: Where were you your sophomore year?

EJ: I moved to Edens North because those were newer rooms and stayed there for two years. During my senior year, we moved over to Higginson Hall because that was the new facility with only two rooms, you

know, four girls sharing a central bathroom--dressing room. So we felt so liberated then, even if we still did have a house mother. Outdoor halls provided increased privacy, but we walked to the commons for meals.

TB: So tell me about that. Tell me what the dress code was like for women back then.

EJ: Oh my goodness, yes. Slacks or pants were not allowed on campus until after four o'clock. You had to always wear a skirt to the dining room, which was on the lower floor of Edens at the time. If I remember right, we had two choices of entrée during the dinner meal. It seems to me that it was regimented so that you had a certain meal on Monday night, another on Tuesday, and it was repeated over the week. We were also periodically assigned to sit at the house mother's table to be sure that we used good manners. It was quite a different experience. We were far from liberated.

TB: Okay. Who were favorite or most influential teachers and why?

EJ: Well, Dr. Walter, for one, because he kept me in the music program though I didn't major in music. I played with the Everett Symphony Orchestra for several years and now serve on the board of the Everett Philharmonic Orchestra. Dr. Skeen, she had a very warm personality. And I must admit I think she took me under her wing a bit too because I was so shy. She was a proponent of equal opportunities in education. Let's see, Dr. Francis Hanson was wonderful.

TB: Oh could you tell me a little bit more about her?

EJ: I had a course in gifted education from her. She was, again, another very warm personality. And very matter-of-fact in the way that she presented information. There was none of this, "Oh because they're gifted, they need to be better than everybody else." You know, she really emphasized the human part of dealing with giftedness. And I thought that was very special.

TB: Do you know what happened to her at all?

EJ: No, I don't. I know she came from Montana. Because somewhere or other she told us about that. But I don't know what happened to her.

TB: Because she briefly taught or was the director in the campus school and then left. She disappeared and we were always wondering what happened to her. Did you have any experience in the campus school?

EJ: No, I didn't. We had to do two student teachings, the first was half-day and the second was full-day. My half-day experience was at Parkview Elementary in primary special education. And my second full-day experience was at Bellingham High School in math. The interesting experience for me there was my special education math class came right before my pre-calculus class.

TB: Oh my.

EJ: That was also a very fine experience. Be flexible.

TB: Now did we finish all of your favorite teachers? Was there anybody else?

EJ: I liked Dr. Hildebrand in math. I can't remember all the courses I had from him. I think I had the original Math 151, which was the required course for perspective teachers. I came in intending to go into primary education with a music minor; and after taking Math 151, I decided on a math major, so he was pretty influential, I would say.

TB: Yes, I guess so. What classes did you like the best or learn the most from?

EJ: You know, I liked Dr. Blood's class in—I think they called it Testing and Measurements. He was a little hyper, but he knew what he was doing and he was sincere about his subject. I appreciated that. I think

you can almost feel it when a professor really is committed to his subject. And yes, I felt that from him. Dr. Skeen, again, was my supervisor for my primary special education student teaching, so she remains a prominent personality, as was Dr. Watrous, my supervisor in secondary education. Her son was in my pre-calculus class so I'm sure she got a full report from him!

TB: Could you tell me a little bit about what it felt like when you left Hawaii, you came to Bellingham, you were a Japanese-American, which probably, there weren't too many others in Bellingham. There weren't too many colored people in Bellingham. So what was that experience like?

EJ: It was a shock. I had never seen so many white people. And they were all so large and so loud. I felt like a little dwarf, trying to keep out of the way. I was totally intimidated by it all. I should also back-track a little bit. My first job was at the Bellingham Public Library. That was quite an experience. It was my first experience with racial bigotry, I should say, or prejudice if you want to be a little milder about it. But I'd be working in the library and I'd see people who were looking like they needed some assistance, so I would approach them. These were particularly older women and I'd say, "May I help you?" And they just looked down their noses at me and walked away. I thought, "Oh wow. What did I do wrong?" So it took me a while to gain confidence and realize that it was not me personally but it was just the way I looked. I learned that the best way to distract starrers was to smile. It worked.

TB: And then you went down to—your first job, I think, was Federal Way, right?

EJ: Yes.

TB: Was the area down there friendlier towards you?

EJ: Well I didn't feel the prejudice there, and I think the difference came in my having gone there as a teacher. Back then, women in mathematics were not common. In my calculus series, I can remember two other girls and in Engineering Problems, I think I was the only girl. Education breaks barriers.

TB: Oh, okay. Wow. So are there any other things—like what other kinds of activities were you involved in? You were so busy working, but were there some other social activities that you engaged in at Western?

EJ: I didn't do anything in the social arena. I took my classes, the toughest of which, of course for me were PE.

TB: Really?

EJ: And we had to take six classes in PE. Oh, that was torture. But anyway, I got through them. Let's see, I got side-tracked now. What was the question?

TB: Well, just other activities that you were in at Western.

EJ: Oh, okay. Well my major activities were in the music program where I played in the band and the orchestra. I mainly went to classes, studied, and worked.

TB: Okay, going back to PE then, did you have Margaret Aiken or Chappelle Arnett?

EJ: Margaret Aiken was my swimming teacher and she scared the daylights out of me. Because, I would have to say, she was a little bit gruff. She told you what she wanted and it was like *boom* you had to be able to do it and I'd be just quaking. Not having had P.E. since grade 8, it was tough!

TB: So what about—you came when Haggard was president but he was almost gone, he retired in 1959. So you came at a time when the Western community was ready to make a lot of changes. [James] Jarrett comes and there are a lot of changes associated with that. Did you pick up on that kind of experience? And

weren't there mass—like humanities classes? Oh and was there still assembly or something? Did all the student body assemble together still?

EJ: Not to my knowledge. I don't remember that. I remember Dr. Haggard was there, but he was a figure. Again, I was too shy to interact with anybody. All I remember was we were not allowed to walk on the grass. The school was Western Washington College of Education when we started. Maybe the change came with the name change to Western Washington State College, before becoming Western Washington University.

TB: Okay, the other thing was—at some point, and I'm not sure when it ended so it was probably over by the Fifties. But the faculty used to have a certain group of students that they would invite to dinner. At least at the beginning of the year to kind of [welcome students]—it probably ended by the time you came.

EJ: Dr. Skeen had a group of us to her home – students interested in special education. I don't know whether that meeting was a part of the same program.

TB: Okay, well let's back up one little bit and talk about the classroom because you were left-handed and all the desks were right-handed.

EJ: All the desks were right-handed, yes. I'd turn my body and set my notebook on the desk. My hand was positioned above my writing. Ball point pens were a problem because ink smeared under my hand. An extra piece of paper under my hand helped. And of course I didn't think anything of it because we didn't know any better. We were thankful for what we had.

TB: Okay. Anything else we haven't talked about?

EJ: I think that's it for now, thank you.

TB: Okay, thank you very much.