

Psychology's Feminist Voices Oral History Project

Interview with Mary J. Wright

Interviewed by Laura Ball

London, ON

February 2nd 2011

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AK: Anastasia Korosteliov

LB: Laura Ball, Interviewer

MW: Mary Wright, Interview participant

LB: Can you please state your name, date of birth, and place of birth for the record?

MW: My name is Mary Jean Wright and I was born May 20th, 1915 in a town which [had a] population of 3,000 at the time, in Strathroy. So it was a small town where everybody knew each other.

LB: Okay.

MW: So what's the next [question]? I don't have the list anymore.

LB: Well, I think I will start off with the question that you wanted asked. Is there a question that you have always wanted someone to ask but never did?

MW: Well, I have been asked that before, but you didn't ask me and I thought maybe [it would have been concerned with] the business about feminists. I have not been a feminist. I have not regarded myself as a feminist. So this with Sandra Pyke whom I greatly admire, like and respect, I never thought we were on the same [page]. I didn't know whether they were disappointed that I didn't think of myself as a feminist.

But anyway, let me say that I was really brought up by five men. And of course, I had four older brothers and there was my father. So, mother and I were sort of the [only] two [women] in the family. So anyway, men didn't scare me. Besides that, I think my mother, when she was a young woman, she was a suffragist. Not that she walked around the world, but she wanted me to go into university. All her family on her mother's side were very talented people; they were doctors and all the rest. It was my grandfather apparently who thought that [she] should stay, learn to play the piano and sing and she had a nice voice, and so she did not get to go to university. But as I grew up it was automatic that I would go to school the way my four brothers did. So there was never any question about that. And at that time of years, [I did not encounter sexism] except when I thought that at one point I thought that I would go into medicine and my brothers said it would turn you into men if you do that.

LB: (Laughing).

MW: So that was a reflection, in a way, of the attitudes of the time. But maybe that helped me because I certainly was not scared of guys. I felt comfortable with them. And because the house was always full of guys too because they had a dance band and you know, I grew up with a lot of boys surrounding me and I was little compared to them. I was the youngest of the family and the youngest of the four brothers was five years older [than me] and the oldest of the brothers was ten years older [than me]. So when I look back on that he, [my eldest brother] was almost another father.

LB: Yeah.

MW: You know, because when I was 2 he was 12. So maybe that made [an] influence on my life but I don't know. Anyway, because I always had very good relationships with [the people in my life], at least I think I did, they had a little party for me just before my 95th birthday and they e-mailed around and people even came up from the States [to celebrate]. I said, "We are not going to have a big party." I [already] had a party on my 90th. So we just had a 95 in the one room that was left where we, [the Psychology department staff], used to drink coffee before we went to a symposium or to some lecture. I said, "Is that room still there?" and they said yes to Sue, [Dr. Susan Pepper]. So Sue Pepper thought we should do something. So it was a great party. The place was packed. And I mean I think we, [Sue Pepper and I], really had a good relationship.

When I took on the department, we worked together until I became president of the Canadian Psychological Association. That was when the department got to be around 45 [years old and] the communication [between the administrative staff of the department] was difficult. "Who is running this department?!" sort of thing. Because [of my new responsibility] they had decided to have 2 or 3 people [appointed to a] small committee [to assist with the department], because I knew I was going to be away a great deal at the time. And so that was when we started to develop a constitution for the department once the communication [began to suffer]. Some people had talked about that but I have not seen any literature about it but I have talked to a lot of people in the States, where the change [in size of an organization], as it gets bigger and bigger, [means] you can't really involve everybody in the decision making [and] how the thing begins to fall apart. And of course psychology is such a broad discipline where you are so hard science on one end and so philosophical at the other end. So, there is opportunity for all sorts of dissention and competition within the department. Anyway I don't know.

But as the chairman of the department, while I did not call myself a feminist, I was working very hard to deal with nepotism. I wanted to hire couples, married couples and Case Vanderwolf and Doreen Kimura [were married and] I hired Doreen Kimura. I couldn't hire them both for a couple of years (2 or 3 years), but I broke those nepotism rules; my influence changed the rules in the university about that. So I was on the side of [equality] and of course treating women exactly the same as men was part of the whole deal from my point of view. So I was working but the other thing about the feminist thing is I never thought, being brought up the way I was, I didn't think that girls, that women [were inferior to men]. I thought that they were as competent

as men and that they didn't need any special consideration. I was too proud! I didn't ever get any special consideration and I didn't think that any other women needed any special consideration. And that's my idea.

So I was a feminist in the sense that I was trying to change many of the attitudes that existed [about female inferiority]. But I really didn't feel that [I was a feminist]. I was not on the side of the girls, [the feminists]. I was embarrassed by them sometimes in the States, in the U.S.A, when they were parading at APA meetings for this sort of stuff, when I didn't feel like we girls needed to do that and we didn't need any special [consideration]. We were not like the black people that you were giving special consideration to. I just couldn't see myself this way. And that may go back to the way I grew up, with a family that did not differentiate between me and [my brothers].

Incidentally only now when I am grown up and [I see] my little grand nieces with their long hair and everything, I began to think, "I don't think I ever...my mother... I never had long hair." When I was a little girl I had a bob. I had it cut straight [as a] little girl. And [I wondered] why didn't my mother [let me grow my hair] because she had long hair. It was always a big problem because at night she would brush it and wind it up to get it out of the way and without driers and stuff it was always a big ceremony when she was washing her hair. So she had long hair all her life but I never had long hair. And I look back on it and I think maybe it was [because] in her lifetime, you see that women in the West became persons in this country and she was impressed with them. And she did have relatives, who one of them was a principle of one of the colleges in the state. So she was ambitious too [that] her daughter got the same treatment everybody got. And I think she probably maybe right from the start [wanted to ensure that by keeping my hair short] but I am reading into that. I never thought about it until more recently. Anyway so we dealt with the feminist business. So I am all for getting the girls over these ruts but I never felt that we needed to be [treated with special consideration]. Anyway, that said, we will leave that.

LB: Alright, well you mentioned earlier when we were talking that there were some differences between the environments in the Canadian universities versus the U.S. universities. Can you speak a bit about that?

MW: Well, that, in terms of Toronto there is another thing. When I went down to Toronto there were other gals. There was Mary Ainsworth and we were friends from the start. And Nora Loeb Weckler. Nora Loeb was a great gal and we had lots of fun and we used to be at somebody's house for parties and the guys and the girls seemed to be comfortable but I think everybody felt that way. It wasn't just me being comfortable [and] being used to being with guys all the time. I think that we all were like that. And Mary Ainsworth was quite bright. She was in graduate school when she was sixteen or something and she was always probably a little brighter than Carl Williams and Gord Turner maybe. But anyway we all got along. And we had no money [because those] were the depression years when I went down there and we could get lunches at one restaurant for 25 cents. You could get quite a decent little soup and sandwich lunch. And we

would go down there and eat at P.B. or Wellesley. You could have ice-cream for another 10 cents or something.

Anyway, so we were in the cellar at those old houses there where we made our own tea and instant coffee or whatever we wanted and they had a lot. So I never felt any discrimination [among the sexes] and I think these other people say that too. Then the war came along and then of course they looked for people that could teach courses, so that helped them. The only one who felt discrimination and then expressed it was Magda Arnold. But Magda Arnold was different. She was a very ambitious woman, and of course that paid off when she got down in the States. But she had a style up, well I don't know, but anyway she didn't feel she would express some of these feelings. But anyway, by and large it is not just me saying that the other people have said that too in U of T at that time. But we were all so poor maybe that's one of the reasons why we had good esprit de corps. Anyway so is that answer okay? Leave that one alone?

LB: Yes definitely. Yes so you have mentioned the war years. During that time you made the trip to Britain to do the nursery...

MW: I did. Well by this time, I went to Toronto in [1939] and I got my masters the next year. I did manage to get a thesis for my masters. And then there was nothing [after I graduated]. What do you do? You couldn't get a job. So I stayed on. I thought I'd quit then. You could get a clinical job in those days. But anyway, so I had to hang around and there was nothing for girls to do in the war so I went over to the Institute of Child Study and they gave me [an opportunity]. I was Bernhardt's assistant really. And he undertook to talk to me about courses that I should have for a doctoral degree. And so I puttered around with them and played the piano and took courses and did all that kind of stuff. I started into a doctoral program. I was still interested in clinical though because I would go down with a friend of mine, Leola Neal had come to Toronto, and we would go down to the Toronto psychiatric and sit in on their conferences for mental illness situations like that.

But anyway I was around the Institute for Child Study and played the piano for them and got to know those people well. And then that was when this talk was going on about a group from Toronto going to help talk to the people in England about various things. They were looking at [the] army. Bill Blatz was talking about what to do with patients who were shocked by the war. What do we call them now?

{10:10}

LB: Shell shock

MW: Yeah, and he would just talk to them about accepting your fear feeling, that it was normal to be scared and everything. He did stuff like that. And then he advised the education people that [there] were the kids there [that needed tending to during the war]. Everything was marshaled during the war and the women, if they were able bodied, they either worked in the factories or on the land. Everybody was called up and the kids had to be looked after. But he was saying where

you are setting up war time day nurseries (they didn't call them that but they did in a lot of different ways), be sure you don't have custodial care. He was preaching the idea of educating proper kind of conditions for the kids. And so we were invited to go over and teach people how to work with kids in the Midlands area and that's how it was that we went to [Britain].

We organized this. We had a demonstration day care and we had observation rooms and we had about 40 people come in for two weeks at a time. We had them taking lectures in the afternoon and being involved in the school during the day, either observing or actually hands on with the kids, with the supervision of our people. And so when that was set up Bill went over and they got an all bombed out school and he got it set up. And then they recruited, so the people that were going to go were [all] well enough to go. This article tells you the details of that [recruitment process]; I just published [it]. So Blatz was the director and he took with [him] Dore Millichamp who had been in charge of training, Margaret Fletcher who was in charge of the principle of the school, and Ann Harris who eventually became his second wife. And then we recruited, we had to get some locals in and that was quite a challenge until a second group was scheduled to come over and join us, but [that was] not until August [of that year]. We opened this school on the first of July.

Anyway so they took me and another gal who had been out in the field [to assist at the school]. They took me because Margie Fletcher liked the way I played the piano for the kids. You know you have to be quite sensitive when you are doing that with kids or the piano can just take over. So that was why [they chose me] and I am sure that had something to do with it because she loved all that kind of stuff. And the other thing though, I had a couple of intern[ships], 2 or 3 intern[ships]. I interned in London. [It] was my plan to be a clinical person and then I was in Whitby for a year, or a long summer, and that was a more residential place. I worked with old parietic [individuals] there, where required you to do a bit of research but during that period [there] was a lot of traveling. Anyway so I'd had done a lot of testing. Actually the other thing was [that] I was the one who did all their testing with the kids when we were trying to find out the effects of the program. And then when they left they made me make speeches all over the place.

But anyway, the story of that is told in this [for a reason]. I did that because I am talking about Blatz and his security theory and how that related to Mary Ainsworth's attachment theory. But I wanted to say how I knew what that trio was all about because they actually trained me. I had been in the school, I got kids from that for my thesis, and Margie Fletcher was telling me a lot because any student that went in there got told by Margie Fletcher how to deal with the kids. But it was fun! And [we threw] parties where I played the piano in those days, and I was playing the piano for them [and] singing too. That certainly was [a good opportunity]. I got to know them and I think they liked me [and] thought of me as a good team person and I had that background of experience that was useful to them. So I did that too. And in the book I go over all of that kind of stuff because at the time there was great debate whether you could really [influence a child

through] early education. Could you really change the way they were? Was it the nature-nurture idea too? Because [*back then*] people had been claiming that they could do these things, this was part of the literature that, at the time, people were interested in. They still are [too. For example], their whole new interpretation the other night on that whole business using a different set of language. But anyway you are going to get the real story on that because I talk about the theory and I went back to [Blatz's] literature to stuff that I had not really paid attention to before. Then I say how that was translated into what we did with the kids.

So that's what's in that paper. And then I go on to say accidentally what Mary Ainsworth has done had proven what Blatz said and there is nothing mysterious about it, the [Bowlby] stuff. And you know that really went crazy. While I was in England, I saw the evidence of it and it's here [as well], the idea that it has to be the maternal mother [who nurtures the child] and so adoption practices [reflected that]. When I was over there making one of these speeches in _____, I said that in Canada we encourage the teenage people to put their children up for adoption for all sorts of reasons. Well, Gwen Chesters was one of the highly regarded people in England at that time. I was up on the stage, she was walking up the thing, "Oh! How awful! What a dreadful thing they are doing in Canada" because they had concluded that it had to be the biological mother and this has affected us here too. I mean they have marvelous programs for the teenagers that have children out of wedlock and I am amazed at what they can do for them. But I had a lot of them for the project over here, the preschool project and as long as they keep having babies they get more money and then all of a sudden they don't have any they are not eligible anymore for mothers-whatever-they-call-it and then they have nothing to go on. And a lot of the teenagers have the baby [and] they are darling when they are little and they are independent but then they suddenly become challeng[ing] and the girls turn them up. That's why Children's Aid is loaded with kids who had been rejected by the girls who have had babies as teenagers because they don't want the responsibilities. They are not grown up. We got way off onto a new subject.

LB: It's very interesting!

MW: But anyway, so I am just saying, we are talking about attachment theory [and] I am saying in my paper that it's really what happens with the kids and fathers can do it as well as mothers. That might be a shocking thing to say. I think that would be great for these guys that want to have babies. I think they can use this as evidence that these dual whatever gay people [can nurture children].

LB: I am pretty sure that [Bowlby's] later research that didn't really get picked up...or was it [Bowlby] or Harlow who was doing the animal research?

MW: Well, that's where it started.

LB: Yeah.

MW: Well they do an attachment. We had a beautiful experience of that in Strathroy. My oldest brother always wanted [to] raise [horses]. He was in business in advertising in Chatham for a long time. But, finally they persuaded him to come back to Strathroy when my dad [decided to let him] run the business. It was a big, big business, and [he was to] be the president of the thing. And so then he had a farm that my mom owned and she was ready to give it up. She died not very long after [passing it on to him]. So he started to raise horses. He wanted to breed and he eventually did. And brought a brood mare over from Germany and did all that stuff. But he started with one horse that he got from Lady Eaton and in fall. And so she was with her all the time because he was waiting for this first little baby. And he smoked and he would always stock up his hat and everything. So he was there when this little foal was born and he was right down there with her and she attached to him. And she would just because of the smell and he was with her and was trying to see her as much as possible. This was a middle-aged man that had been wanting to do this all his life and suddenly was in the position to do that. So she was a beautiful example because she walked around behind him as soon as he would arrive like a little dog.

{21:41}

So that's what they were talking [about]. That's where these ideas [about animals and attachment theories] come from. And the biological mother, she does the right thing by the baby more often than not because it's comfortable to do that. Neither of you had children yet and of course I haven't, but you nurse them because you are not comfortable if you don't nurse them. So Mother Nature creates the conditions that make the mother do what is good for the baby. But that does not last forever. So we are kind of getting away off...anyway we have covered a little ground there somewhere along the way.

LB: So can you tell me what it was actually like working in the Institute for Child Study?

MW: The Institute, what it was like?

LB: Yeah.

MW: When I first went there I wasn't.... I was in [a more] clinical [mindset]. I was [thinking] about being in the hospital and having done a couple of internships in mental hospitals, [I was more geared towards that route]. And then my first summer when I went to Whitby, Roger Myers wanted me to go up where the retarded kids were. He was enamored with them. He was in charge of everybody out in the clinics at that time. So then I... no...what did you ask me again? My mind is wondering around.

LB: It's okay. What it was like actually working in the Institute?

MW: Oh! Working at the Institute! Well so I wasn't on their staff then at all. So I was impressed because I thought these kids [were] much more sensible. There was a _____ it think at that time, they had them all sitting around at tables and things like that. I think there was a little bit more [structure]. I think Margie had them better under control, maybe later they did. I don't know. I have said in my article that really what we did here [at the Institute of Child Study] is my

interpretation [of my experiences in England]. I admit that and I said maybe people will say I am wrong. But what we did [at the Institute] was not a replica of either what I knew at the Institute when I first saw it was there and [neither the Institute] after the war. I was there for a year.

I came back from overseas and it was late in the fall and I took a job. I got a job out at the Hamilton clinic there. It was a traveling clinic and they were so short of people they grabbed me. And so I worked there and then went back to the Institute for a year before I came to Western. I guess I was more critical because I had been over there in England. Anyway I just say that it is not a replica of what we did in England or what I saw at the institute before I went overseas or after I came back after I was there. I just couldn't, I don't think I wrapped myself in it, in the way I wrapped this.... I created this one. And I beat them; I was meeting with them every week about what you were doing with the kids. And one of the girls said, the girl who came on the second year, the first year I had her in my classes so she was better prepared. Oh she said "You pounded it into us and pounded it into us day after day, week after week". So anyway this is my interpretation of what Blatz was trying to say.

LB: Okay. Yeah and it took you several years to get that off the ground while you were at Western.

MW: Well, nobody was going to do that. The Institute was falling apart, well I shouldn't say it was falling apart, but it changed tremendously and they were really just a part of teaching people. They had some things going on but when I visited I didn't feel at home with it. I didn't know what they were doing. So part of my argument for this was that the Institute was producing people that could give leadership in this field and they needed them for the community colleges. The community colleges started to do this training of early childhood educators in the '60s, towards the end, and they were using as a model, what the early childhood education, now they keep changing the names, what we were [called] then had created; a 4 part training program that people that were out in the field [could use].

We go back to the Day Nurseries' Act that was in 1946, the first one in the North American continent and that was when they had wartime day nurseries and they were run by Dore Millichamp. And of course they were good people because they had [been] the Institute of Child Study graduates. Elsie Stapleford was one, they had AMAs out of there. And so when they set up daytime war nurseries here in Ontario they had good people and they were really carefully supervised. After the war when they were going to close them down because the Feds pulled out from under it. Yes the Feds, it was a joined Federal-Provincial [effort] financing the war daytime nurseries. And so when the Feds pulled out the Ontario people had it and so they [asked] if we are going to support it? So the women paraded because they wanted it. They set up a program where if a municipality would pick up the Feds part, they would continue it, but if they were going to continue it they wanted standards. And so they decided they had to have a law, a Day Nurseries' Act, that would say what was required and the Institute of Child Study was asked to write the Day Nurseries' Act and they did.

Now how did I get to that? From where did we start? But anyway that is an important start. And then they hired Elsie Stapleford to be the Director of the day nurseries. They created a day nurseries branch, but that was always under health or eventually it was under social services. And this is why we have all this difficulty in Ontario forever between teachers who are trained in the educational thing and these early childhood educators who are always thinking more in terms of mental health and the child developing in wholesome ways. Whereas the teachers are teaching them "A B C you know A B C D" and all that stuff, their numeracy and literacy and they are educating them, and the others started with Bill Blatz's mental health ideas.

LB: Yeah, yeah.

MW: So anyway you are getting some snatches of a lot of different things. Anyway I don't know where we started with that but I like to tell that tale. But Elsie did write some. There are some published things about it. You could find out I am sure through administrative...yeah, so I don't know what the question was that got that going. But it is important history in the field.

LB: It was why you only started doing the...opening up the...at the end of 1973?

MW: Oh, well the first thing I had to do was to develop...I mean I was made the chairman, that was a first. That was a ground breaking thing because they had to hire a woman [and] they had never put a woman in charge of a major department. Well actually I wasn't put in charge of the big whole department to begin with. At the time the president, Ed Hall, had an idea. I think he thought he could get more money that way, but to have a college system sort of. Think about Great Britain where all the different colleges [are established]. And so he got money for Talbot College and there was Middlesex college and University college. Well they didn't get to do Talbot right away but they did Middlesex and then they had to staff it. And so they split 6 departments and that's when I first [got acquainted with the department].

I went over there to take the one half of the department over, to be the chairman (chairman not head), chairman of the department at Middlesex college along with the language group and Geography. Who else? English. Anyway there were six of us departments who were split that way. So when I got that job, I started right away to tell the university what they needed if they wanted a modern department of psychology. And of course at the time, everyone in psychology was withdrawn from even Piaget [who] was buried and we were trying to develop a hard science. People at that time in the United States, their funding bodies weren't very sure whether psychology was fortune tellers or anything, so there was a lot of insecurity. And I consulted with Don Hebb, along with Roger Myers, Those are my two people that I talked to about all of this and Don Hebb said, "The first thing you have to do is to prove, demonstrate to your university that you are scientists and if you can do that, then you can do almost everything." So I set out to do that and.

I got Gordon Logenson. I looked for hard science research oriented people and struggled to get them and we did bring in a couple from Harvard. I had to support it, they said. I thought that I would be in trouble with all of this. The guys that I had with me to work, they weren't scientists but they worked with me and we produced a 10 page brief of what we needed. When I think of it I should read that again because I would laugh at some of the things. But anyway they said that they have been waiting for somebody to tell them that. Gord Turner was a humanist and he was opposed to the whole thing. He thought that it was all for the birds. He was not happy of course with what I was doing. I mean we didn't talk about it much but in terms of selecting the people that we got, [he was not happy]. We did bring a couple from Harvard and they were a husband and wife team. We accommodated the guy (Ted Sunian his name was) [because of] nepotism and we had to find her, [his wife], a job outside [outside of the university]. So anyway, they eventually left at the end of the year. [They] left me high and dry. And so that was what the thing you mentioned, the _____ thing.

So one of our people, Marsh Nora, he knew [someone] at McGill and he said, "There is a guy that I think would have been great for us. Why don't you see whether you can do anything with that?" So this is a friend, a colleague, telling me this and I had had him as an undergraduate student. He was an immigrant from a Scandinavian country [and] couldn't speak English but he had gotten a PhD from McGill he had an MA from us and a PhD from [McGill]. And so I went down to talk to Al and we did get him to come and then _____ was nice. I'd helped a great deal because the president of the University of New Brunswick wrote to Ed Hall, our president, complaining about "big universities stealing their staff" and all that stuff. Dr. Ed Hall phoned me on the phone and he was happy as a lark. He was delighted because he wanted somebody [with the] guts to [be recruiting new staff]. Anyway so that was a break for me and of course Al turned out to be very talented. But anyway that's the story. So we got Al, you asked that question so that's how that came about. And of course he is still here with us in his '80s. He is still giving papers here and there and traveling and handwriting just got a book published. Anyway so what's next?

LB: Alright, well...

MW: Oh so I was building a department, a strong department, and as we went along they began to attract the students. And at the time with Roger Myers, he was a help to me in my connection with a lot of people in the American APA. Because we would go to those meetings, he was doing citation counts and he was looking [for and] spotting people and he was recruiting. We were both recruiting and I guess our friendship [developed] because we were trying to stay out of competition [with each other]. We would go down to APA meetings and listen to some of these people and also he introduced me to the chairman because he was quite well known in APA circles. And he introduced me to a lot of chairmen of the departments, so it got so I could phone them. I knew them well enough so I could phone them and talk about people that we were interested in. So I don't think I ever hired anyone who applied for a job. We went out to find

them and to get them. And if you wanted something in an area we talked to the people who had them as students and say, "Who have you got and what are they like?" We found out from the horse's neck, or whatever, trying to find out about these people when we were bringing them in. And of course we made some mistakes too, but by and large, [we made good hiring decisions].

As we got good people, then of course students came and the grant money came in and the administration was impressed. So that's what I do say in this paper, that after 7 years of trying to accommodate or hiring these people [and] providing them with [a] laboratory, we were in 7 different places, in that, we redid the _____ lab (you probably heard of him) and they built a staging area for us because this is all emergency accommodation. We were all over the campus. For all the animal work, [we used] two buildings. This was what they called the staging area but it was put together in a big hurry you know, not properly [with] like bricks or stone like we [would use to] build everything over there, so that was it. So by the end of that period we were planning a new building, but what happened at Western is that we had an uprising at the end of the '60s of both faculty and students. It was happening all over the place at the end of the '60s and it was happening here and actually they were trying to get rid of the president. By that time, the president was ready to build a psychology building so it was the politics on campus that prevented that because everything was held up for two years. It was the political condition, because then it was [postponed], we were stuck, we were so disappointed, we were so upset about the whole thing.

We had to wait for other people, so we were put in social science where we had asked to be in the life sciences and the biological sciences. See how far I got? A lot of the clinical people couldn't believe it, especially Roger Myers. They did the same thing in Toronto. They felt that he had abandoned them somehow or the other. They were very unhappy. They didn't care so much about what I did here, but as I said, Don Hebb said, "You have got to break this! You have got to show the world that you are a science, that psychology is a science." And of course that's so. By that time, by the end of the decade I was able to persuade them to let me do this, this preschool thing. But I did have some help, [such as] Carl Williams [who] was a Toronto [resident]. He was a great friend of Bill Blatz and he knew all of those people and the academic dean at the time too was a nice [man], _____ was his name. And the two of them I remember [were very helpful].

But it got stopped. Grant River, who was the dean, he was just trying to think of all sorts of reasons why we couldn't go ahead with it: security, safety, children being brought in and then taken out and all that kind of stuff. And I remember when Bill McLaughlin by this time, he and I walked over there to talk [to him and address these issues]. He was going to be my successor as chairman and we walked over and talked to those two guys about this whole thing. [I can] just see us sitting there trying to think [and I remember thinking] I guess [everything is] going to be canceled at the last minute. But it wasn't. So they agreed to go ahead with it. But it wasn't until March and by that time I did not know where I was going to get the kids for it because by this time anybody that... well I was okay with the Children's Aid because I worked with the

Children's Aid when I was first in London. I had been their consultant for baby stuff. They have asked me and I had done that and got to know a lot of them. It was a great help. So they were working with me to get the children from the low-income families. But anyway, so I thought, "I am going to fill that school for the number of kids we want if it kills me". So I thought of everybody of influence that I knew in London.

You know this is a snobbish town anyway, everybody talks about how snobbish it was. There is a book on John Robarts who was a prime minister [premier?] at that time, and it does describe it. So I went to the May Court Club and talked to all these people that probably already had their kids signed up at Kate Turner's school. But anyway I did get the kids and we opened and we got it all worked out and done. But anyway that was it. We hired the people the year before we opened. The young fellow [whom I met with] and I had the boy who was going to be the supervisor. I was the director, with a full load of graduate students and everything. I taught a course in early education that year and hired the guy who was at the Institute of Child Study. But again he didn't come to us [with staff]. I hoped he would come to us with his staff but he didn't. But I had him as my assistant in the course that I gave that year. [I also had] Noam Greenberg and he was great and he got his PhD eventually from Western and he was working on that while he was there and he ran the place for 2 or 3 years. So, we got on the front burner with him and another girl.

I was looking for the people from Guelph because I thought they'd had [experience in what I required] but it turned out that they didn't know any of this stuff either. But Carol Wag [and] these girls that I was trying to hire [were] people with this kind of background...but they were doing a good thing at Guelph. So we hired the head teacher, the supervisor and the head teacher the supervisor was with me and then fortunately the other girl that I picked up that very first year was also in my class. But at the time I did not know that she was going to be our teacher because I picked her up (she was working in a day care thing). I picked her up [because] she was recommended. But she caught to it right away and she was really wonderful and she stayed on until last year. In an earlier version of this, I had given her credit for keeping the program going over all those years. But I hurt somebody's feelings so I had to cut down. Actually I got into the politics with this paper like that in the last year when I didn't know what they were thinking about at all. And I spent a lot of time with the teachers over there trying to get a feel. You know they never heard of Bill Blatz.

LB: Oh wow!

MW: Well they hadn't because I didn't talk about it that way. I deliberately didn't talk about it because I thought everybody would think that it was all out of date. Well you can see how this came about. I say, "Why didn't I do this when I published the book? Because I didn't want to do it." In the early '50s, there was lots of criticism of his stuff. You would have to read the paper before and then you would have the answers to some of those questions. But anyways they recognized [a lot of the theories] because they knew a lot of the stuff because it is in the book but

I didn't attribute it to the Institute of Child Study. I am waiting to hear what the Institute of Child Study thinks about it because we are describing a program of their leader. But they fell away from it. Obviously they fell away from it. Anyway, what else? What next do you want to know? What are the other questions?

LB: I am sorry I just kind of got lost there for a second. Okay so you have had many, many, many accomplishments but which ones do you value the most yourself personally?

MW: What do I value the most of what I did all these years?

LB: Of all your accomplishments in all of these years. Yeah!

MW: Oh I think the most important thing was building that department.

LB: Yeah, and it really grew under your leadership.

MW: Because we brought it up into the top 4 within that period of time [among Canadian universities along with] McGill, and Toronto, and Queens. Waterloo had not got started then they were just beginning to get ahead. So that was important to me I wanted it to be [the top in the country]. Oh, I tried to steal people from McMaster, the whole bunch of them, some of their people.

LB: Okay well we are going to take a quick pause for a second. We have to switch over the tape.

CD2

MW: Well we didn't have a lot of big powerful women in Canada. They did! There is some, I could mention some names. But I think you could use some examples of that, I am just not thinking very well about whom to give you as an example. But there are a lot of them that I think you could pursue as and take [as] an illustration of one or two outstanding people where they continued their whole life career as some kind of a label that is not academic. And in Canada we didn't have that kind of stuff. There wasn't money for senior research assistants or associates or whatever. If they were good you were in the professorial ranks. But I think a lot of people have not recognized that. But it is certainly true. I am sure you can find evidence of it. I was aware of it. And I thought we were lucky but there weren't a lot of us [women as professors in Canada]. And so, I am only guessing that it had something to do with money because these big shots in the States could get lots of money and they could get girls that were good that would do most of the work for them and even write the stuff and yet they never gave them professorial appointments.

LB: Yeah. Well actually, one of the themes that seem to keep coming up in what you have been talking about is about funding. So I know that you were on the, I think, the CPA committee for scientific affairs, or something like that at some point when Canada was

MW: I don't know...start over. Maybe I should just put my hearing aid on. I don't know. I didn't hear what you asked me there.

LB: Oh! Sorry. That a big theme in what you have been talking about has been about funding for research in Canada. And I know that you were working on the CPA committee for scientific affairs or something like that, when Canada was restructuring their funding programs...

MW: Well, we did...Yes! Well I went down to Ottawa one time to talk to the Canada's [funding agencies]...oh gee these things are just popping up. Who was in charge of the [grant funding in] Canada? We didn't have granting bodies [at the time]. Well we did, at first it was all NRC [National Research Council of Canada, that was more affiliated with] medical or the military [research funding]. I wanted to get a good social psychologist here and there was no money for research there. And I went down and talked to the head of the Canada council personally to talk to him about that. And who was he at the time? Because we didn't have the SSHRC and then, of course, there was always [discussion about] where did psychology fit. [Was it] into the medical research or the scientific thing or the social [stream]? Then SSHRC was more of a social thing.

Well, we were all very much involved. But in terms of me being wildly desperate, that was the craziest thing [I had done]. Because he, [the head of SSHRC], didn't know what we were talking about. They were going to be supporting the arts. They were not interested in doing anything for psychology. But all of the things that people like myself did, did in the end make them recognize that we had to have a body that would support that kind of work. So I did do that and I remember having the nerve of a canal horse to go and make an appointment with that organization and trying to argue [the importance of funding for research in psychology].

Then there was a committee, the government, and I was on that committee and we did write a brief for that and went down to Ottawa. But they were trying to evaluate, there is printed material on that. I don't know where it is. Probably I can dig it out, dig something out there. But you can probably find ways to get to that, the Canadian Psychological Association; you know that in Ottawa, CPA does have its file. And there is an oral history in there. There might be even my [interview], something that I think Roger did [including my oral recollection]. Did he do me? I did him one time.

LB: Yep! Yeah. I actually have a copy of that in my bag!

MW: Oh do you?

LB: Yeah. (Laughs)

MW: I can't remember what we talked about. I think we were in a meeting somewhere in the States and did it in a hotel room. Anyway so...yes! I can remember doing that and they would take us to lunch and all this kind of stuff. And later on somebody else took it over. So I think there were more than once. I was involved in that but I remember that we were not as happy

about the way it ended. But, we did a lot of work on it. I think I repressed... Well I think I [went] ahead and went on to other things. We did the best we could and left it at that.

But anyway, you got that kind of documentation [but] that's not definite. And then Alexander puts me in as [a sponsor], as having sponsored that thing about women, the year of the women. I remember they [included information as to how] I got to be the chair of that. But anyway, that was an international thing. But that did have some impact because of the behavior of the Canadian Psychological Association. They began to pay attention to that women's caucus and to the business in publishing and making sure that the gender factor was not prominently [ignored and] was recognized. That had an impact on the CPA. And over the years you can see [that has had a positive impact].

I remember talking about the way the women who were involved in the psychological associations [came about] as leaders. Leola Neal was the first OPA [President]. She was a great friend of mine! She taught me when I was an undergraduate. And then we used to go down to the hospital together. In 1940 she started her graduate work in Toronto. So you know these slight differences. And then I was the president of OPA too quite early. The shortest business meeting they ever had somebody told me afterwards. (laughs) Oh dear! Anyway, that was that was that. But anyway, so I was involved in a lot of those things with the girls.

LB: Yeah. It seems like you were...

MW: They used to...so I did do things for women, but as I say, that's why I wanted to talk about the feminist business. Because here too, locally... Karl Williams was our president but a contemporary more or less. He was still finishing his language requirements when I went to Toronto and we had fun at the piano together. So when he became president here, you know, he came right after all the getting rid of Ed Hall and the formation of the union, not the union but the _____ association and so on. And so...now I have lost track again. What was I [talking about]? Where was I when I got into that stuff?

AK: You wanted to talk about the feminists, the feminism.

MW: Huh?

LB: The feminism, yes.

MW: Oh! Oh yes! Karl was over in my office one day, I can't remember why, and we were talking about the women because I was on committees here. We sat to see who had been discriminated against. We would look at career patterns for men and women and I served on that committee. So there was a group in the law school here that was quite vocal and quite active and there was a woman's caucus too here. And I went to some of the meetings but I didn't get involved in feminism. He said to me, Karl said, "Well the girls tell me that you think like a man!

That's the trouble with you, you think like a man." I said, "How do you think like a man? I don't know"

LB: (Laughs)

MW: So I don't know, maybe I shouldn't be confessing this kind of thing. But I felt as if I was doing all the things that needed to be done to put women [on the professional map]. But the one thing I didn't think was that we needed to be treated like black people or somebody or whatever, the minority groups. That we were as good as the guys! And that we could do just as well. I think that has been proven by now. And most of my young colleagues seem to think that way about me. They are full professors and everything and nobody stood in their way, around Western anyway. Although they say, "A lot of that had to do with you, you know!" So in a way I was a bit of a mentor for them; they felt comfortable.

There are some very talented girls in the department [but] you couldn't hire them in my day. It wasn't easy because they hadn't...there weren't available really qualified people. We did have _____ like _____, but there weren't a lot [then]. Of course there are now. In the last decade or two there has been many [female professors in psychology]. In fact, at one conference where I did something on women, I think I gave you that paper because I don't know whether it was published or not I think it was delivered, but there was somebody giving a paper that day that was worried about it becoming a feminine profession in psychology. That so many of the people that were graduating were women as opposed to men that pretty soon we were going to be like the medical in Russia, where its mostly women. The doctors are mostly women there. Psychology was going to be identified as a feminine [profession] and then we would be like the nurses. We would be getting less money than the guys! You know?

LB: Yes. That's true.

MW: And that paper, that little paper was about that. So anyway, the result is that they are very talented girls so there was never [discrimination]. They had been able to acquire [professorial positions given their expertise]. And they were nice. [I knew this] because I was there. A couple of the people like Susan Pepper, she is there in her sixties now. But there were still a couple that I had hired way back when. But as these girls at first, they needed [support from one another].

Here I am talking about Western where there were about a dozen or so. They would have lunch once a month and they invited me (that's how I knew [about these meet-ups]). They would get together for lunch and I was fascinated because so many of them were having kids and were finding out different ways of balancing families along with their professional [life]. But I got to know them that way and I didn't go [to those lunch meetings]. But I think they needed [that support from one another], probably in the early days when they first were new there. Some of the ones that [went to those lunches] are full professors now. Talented girls, whether they felt that they were a minority group I don't know.

But anyway, it was a good thing because they got to know each other well. And I had them here to show them this old place because they used to hear about the parties I had. A couple of years ago I just said, "Well come on over and see this very funny old place!" And they did. So I have appreciated that with them. But I thought maybe at first it was good for them to feel more secure when there was a group. I don't think they even think about it now. They were all there at that party they had for me for my ninety-fifth and they were [having a good time]. Everybody was quite relaxed. I don't know what it is in other departments, but certainly it is here [in the psychology department], I think that everybody feels quite [included]. I don't think the girls feel any different from the way the guys feel, very certainly. I think we have come a long way. But I don't know whether the feminist movement has been responsible for it. I don't think it's here. My impression with these girls is that they don't feel [sexism]. I don't know if they are feminist or not. But they are successful women and they never needed to get any special advantage and I don't think they ever wanted [it]. The ones I know, they just feel they are equal to anybody and so they don't need any special help. And the emphasis in the feminism has been to do that and that's embarrassed me. But I said that before when they did that because I thought that the girls are as good as the guys, just as capable.

LB: And you have been in a lot of administrative and presidential and chairman type roles in your career. Was mentoring ever a big thing for you?

MW: Was what?

LB: Mentoring.

MW: Mentoring people. Oh!

LB: Yes. Yeah.

MW: Oh! Oh I see. Well I guess I have, you know, when you are chairman its amazing what happens to you. Then people come and talk to you about their [experiences and issues]. They are worried about their finances and they want to talk to somebody. If you are in that position and certainly with people that [are in relationships] because sometimes their marriages [may not provide that listening ear], I have seen that happen. They just need somebody to talk to. I think that in that point of view I have certainly played [a mentor type role]. You are really [just listening]. Roger's nondirective therapy [emphasizes the importance of empathetic listening]. A lot of it is just listening and being there. But when you are advising anybody, of course people do ask you, I mean they do ask you. But I have not set out to do that sort of stuff, if that is what you mean?

LB: Yeah. Did you have any significant mentors of your own when you were a student or [when you were] starting out on your career?

MW: Well I had professors that I admired!

LB: Okay.

MW: You have a question in there “how did I get into psychology?”

LB: Yes.

MW: How did that ever happen? Well I actually wasn't very sure what I was going to do when it came time to go to university. So I went into English and History because I thought at the time that I [was interested in that field]. I didn't know. The only thing I was bad in was Latin while I was in high school and I didn't like it, although I had to get [that as a pre-requisite]; you had to take it for university. So any way I like it there because we read Pliny letters and things like that. I didn't have to do _____ you know Caesar's wars; I didn't have to study that. So Pliny's letters were fun.

Anyway, so I was kind of dissuaded from the medicine. So I started off with English and history and I took psychology as an extra subject. My brother, my oldest brother, as a side line, he was in the military and he had been in Ottawa on equestrian training because, you know, he had loved horses. And he had talked to some people at Western that were in that thing about psychology and how testing and how all that [was interesting]. So he came home and I think he was trying to help me find something that was not medicine, maybe, when I look back on it. But, anyway he was talking to me about that he says, “Why don't you see, you know, see what it is all about.”

So I took [the psychology course]. There was an 8:30 class and by the end of a month or two I said this is for me! And of course when you are a teenager too you have people, adults, that do things that you don't understand. And I remember thinking, “Maybe I will find out why this perfect person does these weird and wonderful things?” So I think a lot of young people go into it because of that! They think they are going to get to understand people better. And the man that taught that introductory course was Dr. [Leonard, Roy Leonard]; the one that had established the department, because he believed that the best people should teach the introductory courses. I guess they were seducing people into the discipline. But anyway, he was a beautiful, beautiful [lecturer]. Language, he had great command [over language], so I found those [to be] very wonderful lectures.

So at the end of the year I thought I would like to transfer to full on psychology, psych and [philosophy]. I went and talked to him about it and he said that I would have to pick up a couple of other social science[s]. And so I had to take economics and something else, I don't know, maybe sociology. But I did, [and] then I transferred into the psych and [philosophy] thing. And in the third and fourth year, you are sort of more psychology than philosophy but it was still a joint department. So that's how I got into it.

LB: Well, I guess [we've covered a lot].

MW: We are pretty well covered!

LB: Yeah. I think so. Is there anything that you would like to add that we haven't talked about yet that you feel is important to talk about?

MW: I don't know. We really have covered a lot of ground!

LB: (laughs) Yeah. I know.

MW: Well we talked about the department and then [we mentioned] the preschool, [which was] a really rewarding thing for me to do and I hope it will survive. A little bit of the incentive for this is to give it a little publicity again. When they moved it out of where [it was], I was upset that [the university] moved it. I say that end to the motivation for this was when they moved it out, because I designed the place and part of running the preschool [in a] successful [manner] is the design of your physical facilities. And so they were moving everything around over there and when they wanted that space, they moved the preschool over to the remote area. They camped in a building that had been a student residence, which is a lousy [area]. Actually, [they are] full of guilt. They have spent a fortune on it but still there are problems [with them moving the preschool to that area] that they couldn't resolve. So part of what I say in this paper applies to the [setting] that I designed and [how] they can't bring some of the things over there that [were in the old setting]. But I have said what they should be doing anyway. But anyway the thing that kept it going was the two teachers, the one that they had brought in the first year and the new [teacher that was hired a little later]. And they had been in my classes and [so was] the one that was brought in the second year. And they stayed and stayed and so they knew exactly and they influenced everybody; they trained everybody that came on and they cared.

LB: Yes, I remember. I worked there in 2003

MW: Did you? Were you an undergraduate there?

LB: Yes! yeah.

MW: Well, then you knew [Sandy Athen] then? Oh! Well she was beautiful!

LB: I know. And I remember I actually got the run down, like "This is how you do things with the students". You know, and later [when] I saw some of your writings I was like, "Wow! This is pretty similar to what I was told!" (Laughs)

MW: Well then, you are going to find that article [interesting] then because it is talking about the whole background idea of what we are trying to do with the kids.

LB: Yeah. Now I am very excited to read it.

{21:01}

MW: Well, I didn't know that! You didn't tell me that! So where did you graduate? Did you graduate from here then too? You have a B.A. from Western?

LB: Yes. 2004

MW: When?

LB: 2004. Yep.

MW: Oh yeah. Well they were going for [Marlene Berman] and she has changed the name to school. Although she doesn't do a part of that at least she has one class. She was really trained as a teacher, you know. She was at Berkeley. When I went around [Berkeley], I was trying to find out what was going on in the States before [the preschool was] open [here]. I had a sabbatical in there and there was a lot of stuff going on that we would never have done. But of all the places I visited I thought Berkeley was about the best. Their preschool there, their nursery school there, the way they were running it [was influential]. But I don't think they had written it up either.

So I don't know what will happen I can send a copy of this over to _____. And I will be interested in knowing whether you think this is a contribution to ECE and to the child development literature and what they will say. But of course they might have published it had I sent it to them. But I didn't know what to do with it. I would rather have Mary Ainsworth's people read it because that is the guts of the thing from a theoretical point of view. But I put it because of the historical [context]. The whole thing about it was so applied and so Canadian history that we put it in the Canadian thing. So, I don't know. And it is supposed to be available to everybody. But you know the CPA has got sort of a hole down it so not anybody can get into it. But they can get it from me if they want now because I have got it in my own computer and I can give it away. Anyway, so I guess we have gotten through all those questions.

LB: Yes. And I think our battery just died! (Laughs)

AK: (laughs) Yeah. Almost, it is almost done.

MW: Oh well that's not too bad. It's only about half...what are you? It's a half past three.

LB: Yes. So I would like to thank you for participating in our oral history project.

MW: Yea, well I am going to be interested so...

LB: It was a lot of fun. (Laughs)