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Interview Sue Williams Spurlock: Collegiate Oral History Interview

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Western Kentucky University

From the Selected Works of Christy L Spurlock

2014

Interview Sue Williams Spurlock. Collegiate Oral History Interview.

Christy L Spurlock, *Western Kentucky University*



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Sue Williams Spurlock Collegiate Oral History Interview
At her home 537 L.C. Carr Rd., Bowling Green, KY, 42101
1/26/14 Interview conducted by Christy Spurlock

Why did you choose to attend college?

I did not make that decision. I wanted to join the women's military. I was going to be a WAC. My mother said I was going to Western. It was known as a good school. She and Daddy had decided that teaching was a 'Depression proof job,' quote and end quote. Because they had lived through the Depression and my mother was always employable because she had gone to Western and studied teaching. Anyway they decided this was something I needed to do, but all the time I knew if there was any way I could escape the profession I would.

They (parents) kind of choose my major too.

What was the world like when you attended college?

We were at peace.

Had any of the big protests started, nationally?

Yes, well see my high school had been integrated since my sophomore year. And we only had one young black man who had been reared by his aunts who were teachers in all black schools.

Were there any black students at Western, like in your classes?

There were either 3 or 5. I think 5. Like three girls and two boys. They were always together. They hung out in front of the library which the white was building Gordon Wilson. They were always seated out on the concrete steps there.

What were the significant events going on?

Well Kennedy was running for the presidency in 1960. I started the fall of 59 and when the school year turned over, he was running for office. And that was a big thing, especially in this part of the country. Because he was a Catholic. He was coming to Bowling Green, now that was in the fall of 1960. And the fact that I think Eisenhower was the oldest person at that time to serve, and you know everyone respected Eisenhower, the only thing we knew about him was his war years and anyway Kennedy was what? 42 or 43? It just seemed like someone we could identify with. And the way he could word things we could identify with. He would joke around more instead of being so deadly serious. When JFK would say things like he didn't think Bobby was ready for office, or just joking around. He made you feel like you were part of their family or part of their group therefore everyone, most college kids were real excited about it.

Elvis was still an item. The Everly Brothers- rock n roll was the thing. I happened to have a hi fi in my room but I was one of the few who did. Otherwise jukeboxes were still around.

At the parties' people danced. People still danced to rock N roll music. No one ever did the waltz or did the beautiful dances of the day. By the time of my junior year, we were into the twist. That was about the dumbest dance to ever come down the pike.

Do you remember what you were thinking about?

Mainly John Spurlock or how soon I could get out of college I think.

What was your major and minor?

It was selected by my parents it was Home Economics. There was no minor they required so many hours of Home Economics. You had to take a lot of chemistry, biology, sociology, psychology. A lot of people think Home Economics is a dumb major, but you have to study all aspects of family life. Economics, you have to learn how to manage the family money, the family budget. I did learn a lot in spite of myself and I made fair grades in spite of myself.

What extracurricular activities were you involved in and why?

I did join a sorority, Phi Sigma Epsilon. We called ourselves Phi Sigs. My older sister had helped found it. She wasn't in on it the very first semester, but was the second. Probably one of the initial 20 members of the sorority. And again it is family influence. She wanted me to join, the girls were her friends. It was kind of like I was drafted into it.

Do you recall Western's institutional mission?

I would say it was still very much to train teachers because you still had a number in this area teaching elementary and high school who did not have a degree. They probably had two years college. At that time a lot of these teachers would drive to Western on Saturdays trying to complete their degree and they would go to school every summer. A car load of them would drive in here from Glasgow, Butler County, and Logan County.

Did they have to get their masters?

No, if you had one degree back then you had a job for life.

What do you remember about your faculty members? Did you have any personal relationships with any? Who was your favorite? Least favorite?

I felt comfortable with most any of them, my mother was a teacher at the time. My least favorite one was a chauvinist. It was known that women were not to wear slacks to class, especially to some people's class. One day, I had this real pretty suede pants suit and for reason I decided I was going to wear it. I had this coat that came to right above my knees. I thought he won't even notice this, but unfortunately he did. I heard later, I had missed a day or two or after that he talked about in class. Said a young lady

had come to class. . . . how low down . . . how bad this was . Honest to goodness I wish I had that pantsuit. It was beautiful.

Did you live in the dorm?

The first two years. Lived in an overflow house at UK. I think there was 13 or 14 girls in the overflow house. I lived in the dining room, others in the kitchen. The house mother lived upstairs, so all of us on the first floor . . . no one really knew what was going on. For the most part everyone behaved. I only know of one time someone acted up. It was during homecoming. BJ ended up in the backyard drunk with a male TN cheerleader, so I heard about. I wasn't there. I had gone home.

Did many of your friends have cars?

No

Did you go to school every day? Or did you skip class?

I pretty much went to class. It was easier to just go instead of catch up.

What did you wear to class?

Dresses hose little flat dress shoes. Sweater skirt was the most popular thing.

What effect did the college experience have on you for the rest of your life?

I think everyone needs to go to college. It simply broadens you to know what is out there. You take all the introductory courses and it makes you appreciate that major. Even though you realize I just got an introduction to it. Ok someone says I am a psychologist. You know what that is and you kinda know what they have been through to obtain the credentials to do that and I know I will hear someone say they are "a chef." Well, after I have been to college I know my interpretation of what a chef is and their' s is very different. You realize you only know your field. You realize how little you do know as opposed to some people who do not go to college who think they know it all.

Girls had curfew?

I think it was 9 on week nights and possible 11 on weekends. You could check a handbook.

Could you smoke?

No. Well, maybe in your room.

Did Western have a printed dress code?

The probably had one . . .

Was there anything else "special" for girls?

It was pretty much what you had been raised with. What your parents had been raised with. No one had started really breaking the social norms yet.

We had to go chapel one day a week. It wasn't religious. Sometimes the music department. Often the president would address us. I've told you about the time Kelly Thompson was getting us whipped up for the Murray game. And someone had thrown paint all over Cherry's statue. Who knows who did it, but he opened chapel with, "the most despicable thing has happened" And started in on what a great man Dr. Cherry was and everything and he started crying. And before he got through he had us all whipped into lather. We all turned out of the game. It was probably Homecoming, I can't recall. But they carried off three Murray players on stretchers, but we all stood up and cheered. We didn't care. We thought they had put paint on our founder's statue.

Do you guys think your generation had more school spirit?

Yes, definitely. More people turned out for the ballgames.

Where did that come from?

I think Western consciously worked to cultivate school spirit. I think Diddle did. He'd walk around campus and he would not allow you to wear your high school letter. He would be in the cafeteria around 12 around every day; just walking around talking asking if you are coming to the game.