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Interview of Barbara Millard, Ph.D.

Barbara Millard Ph.D.
La Salle University

Aviad Adlersberg
La Salle University

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Field Notes

Narrator: Dr. Barbara Millard

Interviewer: Aviad Adlersberg

Date: Interview 1, March 15, 2007 3:30 PM
Interview 2, April 12, 2007 3:45 PM

Location: Dr. Millard's office in LaSalle University, Olney Hall room 158

Language: English

Dr. Millard has been a faculty member of the English Department at LaSalle University in Philadelphia since 1972. She is also a former Dean for Art and Science and president of the faculty senate. These interviews were part of an oral history project for an oral history class at LaSalle university. The concentration was the impact faculty had on the college.

Before I made contact with Dr. Millard for the interview I gathered some research materials first. I first made contact with Brother Joseph Grabenstein, the archivist for LaSalle university on February 6, 2007 via e-mail. Brother Grabenstein was flooded with requests from all of the students in our project, and requested that I follow up with him on February 12, 2007. After several correspondences via e-mail, we agreed to meet on Monday 19, February at 9 PM to review the material he had found about Dr. Millard.

The information Brother Grabenstein found contained mostly addresses from the college newspaper during her tenure as Dean, however a few standouts should be noted. Brother Grabenstein was able to locate an article she had written about Shakespeare, an interview she gave that explained the challenges she faced as a working woman in the 70's and a letter naming her as one of four people under consideration for the position of Dean of Art and Science.

I made my first contact with Dr. Millard on February 28, 2007 via e-mail, explaining the nature of our project and asking the best time to meet. After a few more e-mails we agreed to meet for our first interview at 3:30 PM on March 15, 2007 at her office at Olney hall room 158.

Dr. Millard was wearing a blue sweater and black pants. She had just finished teaching a full day of class and she was fighting a cold. She was not sure if she would be able to go for a full hour and was visibly tired. Dr. Millard spoke in a clear voice that was filled with the confidence that could only be acquired through years of experience. Her office was surprisingly neat, with pictures of Shakespeare on her desk, and books put neatly on her bookshelf. The office contained two chairs, one by her computer, which I was seated in, and one at her desk which she was seated in. Despite her friendly and warm demeanor, Dr. Millard managed to dominate a room, having read about her work ethic, one could hardly imagine that this warm person possessed the inner strength and fortitude that she has exhibited. I was intimidated.

Before recording, I explained the nature of the project once again to Dr. Millard, and explained that she would have to sign a legal release at the end of the interview. I did not go into detail about the questions I intended to ask to ensure that the answers would remain spontaneous, but I did mention that I intended to cover her career at LaSalle as well as her views on gender issues.

Once I turned on the tape recorder, Dr. Millard answered my questions without much trouble, and began to take the interview into a direction I had intended. Whole swaths of questions were answered in mere minutes! On the whole, she provided us me with rich detail and interesting anecdotes, however she seemed very concerned that these anecdotes were not considered history. She drove the interview in the direction of gender issues, which was fine since it provided me with much of the information I was seeking.

Dr. Millard managed to last the full hour of the interview despite her cold. We were not interrupted in any way during the interview. In fact Dr. Millard had continued to share information 30 minutes after I had turned off the recorder. The information she shared with me after the recording was just as interesting as the information on the recording. She discussed the gay culture at LaSalle, the tension between the Catholic Church and LaSalle, the struggle for identity the university was going through and the growing influence of parents and alumni on the university. I made sure to note these topics and Dr. Millard did agree to discuss them again on the record at our next interview.

When I asked Dr. Millard to sign the legal release however, she became concerned about the people she had named during the interview and asked if they could be expunged from the interview. I told her I would have to check with my instructor, Dr. Barbara Allen and suggested that we wait to hear from her before we schedule our next interview. I spoke with Dr. Allen on March 19, 2007 and she suggested that we add a restriction to the legal release that would seal the interview for a certain length of time and that any transcript would not be allowed to include the names. I contacted Dr. Millard via e-mail on March 22, 2007 explaining our options. I spoke with Dr. Millard over the phone on March 27, 2007 and she agreed to a restriction that would seal the interview until all of the people named in the interview had passed away.

We agreed that the next interview would be conducted on April 12, 2007. I was concerned that our Dr. Millard would be more self conscious during the second interview, because of the issue of the legal release, however I found her much more relaxed and at ease during the second interview. Although Dr. Millard had taught a full day of classes again this time around she was no longer sick and she seemed much more energetic. The second interview was once again in her office, which looked the same as it did during our first interview with two exceptions, the first was a large unframed photograph of a young Dr. Millard and her class on the bookshelf. I did not recall seeing this picture during our first interview and it caught my eye right away. Dr. Millard would later explain that it was a picture of her and her class when at the Globe Theater in London. The second was that Dr. Millard leaned on a small metal table that pulled out of her desk, which caused a noise audible on the recording every time she touched it. She also stated that she wanted to speak about the time Elie Wiesel came on campus. He spoke at commencement and made a lengthy speech despite requests that speeches be kept at a minimum. Dr. Millard did not hide her great admiration for him.

As the interview began to wind down I realized that there were many topics that we had not covered. I scrambled to throw as many questions from as many topics as I could in the last ten minutes, unleashing a barrage of quick fire questions. I had hoped to have had more of my questions answered, but this experience had taught me that you, no matter how prepared, you

cannot predict which direction your interview will take you, nor will you be able decide the order of your questions, regardless of how you prioritize them.

Once the interview ended and I had taken out the legal releases at which point we agreed that we would write in a restriction that would prevent any names from being placed in any kind of reproduction, in any media, in any way. I then thanked her for her time and packed my recorder. We both agreed that the overall process was enjoyable, however I regret not having the time to delve much deeper into Dr. Millard's tenure as Dean, and the reasons she stepped down.