

Spring 2013

Interview of Mary Butler


Mary Butler

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Recommended Citation

Butler, Mary and Bower, Zach, "Interview of Mary Butler" (2013). *All Oral Histories*. 47.
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Field Notes

Interviewee: Mary Butler

Interviewer: Zach Bower

Interview Dates: The interview was conducted at 1:30pm on April 1, 2013.

Interview Location: Olney Hall (1st floor classroom) on the campus of La Salle University, Philadelphia, PA.

The Interviewee:

Mary (King) Butler was born on February 17, 1942 in King and Queen County, Virginia. Her parents are Hayes and Blanche King. Her father's parents were Archie King, Sr. and Rossie King. Her mother's parents were Joshua and Peggie Whiting. Mary is the oldest of four children. Her two brothers were born in 1943 and 1951, and her sister was born in 1961. Her nuclear family lived close to her father's parent's farm in Plainview, VA. Her family was active in both Union Prospect Baptist Church and First Baptist Church.

Butler worked often on her grandparent's farm as a child. Butler and her siblings would walk eight to nine miles to school until busses began to pick them up in the town of Plainview, which was still three miles from their house. A few years later they began to be picked up by bus at their house. Butler's family did not have electricity until she was twelve years old. Her mother taught her and her brothers how to cook, wash, and clean.

When Butler was thirteen years old she moved to Philadelphia to live with her father's uncle and his wife. They lived on 13th St. and Norris St. She attended Kensington High School for Girls and graduated in 1960. After graduation she was employed at The Blum Store on the corner of 13th St. and Chestnut St. She was later employed for the state and worked with mentally handicapped children, and then later at The Ivy-League School. She married her husband in 1963 and moved to West Philadelphia. Her and her husband had twin daughters born in 1965 and another daughter in 1974. In 1966 Butler and her husband purchased and moved to a house a few blocks northwest of La Salle University, close to what today is The Shoppes at La Salle shopping center.

Butler began working as an office assistant in the History and Foreign Languages Departments in 1978. During this time she assisted John Rossi, George Stow, and other faculty in the History Department. She then accepted a position as Administrative Assistant and Office Manager in the University Communications Department in the early 1980s and remained in this role until she retired in 2007. During this time Butler assisted both Robert Lyons and Joseph Donovan. When President Clinton visited La Salle University in October, 1999, she handled many of the phone calls made to the University Communications Department to protest.

Butler and her husband continue to live in their home that is located in the neighborhood of La Salle University. All of their daughters are married and they have five grandchildren. The oldest grandchild is twenty-eight years old and the youngest is five. She stays very connected to her daughters and grandchildren. Butler obviously cares deeply for her family and people around her and expresses her care and love in very tangible ways to them.

The Interviewer:

I, Zach Bower, (b. 1984 in Sellersville, PA) grew up in Franconia, PA, which is located about thirty miles northwest of Philadelphia. I was raised with most of my extended family living within a twenty minute drive of my home, and I worked on my aunt and uncle's farm for most of my middle school and high school years. I graduated from Christopher Dock Mennonite High School (Lansdale, PA) in 2002, and received my B.S. in History and Secondary Education from Eastern Mennonite University (Harrisonburg, VA) in 2006. I volunteered and worked as a Resident Assistant at Black Forest Academy (Kandern, Germany) during the 2006-2007 school year. I moved back to Franconia, PA in 2007. My first year teaching was at Penn View Christian Middle School, and I have been employed in the Social Studies department at Christopher Dock Mennonite High School since fall of 2008. I am currently working on my M.A. in History for Educators at La Salle University and intend to graduate in the fall of 2014.

Background:

I first contacted Brother Joseph Grabenstein in the La Salle Archives for information about Mary Butler. Brother Grabenstein was very willing to assist me in any way that he could, but made it clear that he did not have much information about Butler in the Archives, due to the nature of her jobs at La Salle University. He did direct me to contact both Robert Lyons and Rosalie Lombardo for information about Butler.

I conducted a phone interview with Robert Lyons on March 6, 2013. Lyons was the Assistant Director of the University Communications Department for ten years. Lyons provided helpful information on what Butler did for her position in the office and also her character. Lyons had very positive remarks and described Butler as, "ran a great office," "kept things running smoothly," and "made him look good." He also commented that Butler was very close to her family.

I conducted a phone interview with Rosalie Lombardo on March 7, 2013. Lombardo worked closely with Butler in the University Communications Department. Although at the time of the interview Lombardo had not talked to Butler in about seventeen years, she had much information to share about her job in the University Communications Department and also her background and character. Lombardo described Butler as a "ball of energy" and that she "would smile at everyone." She also described her as being kind, open, loving and never complained about her job.

I contacted Mary Butler by phone in the beginning of March and she agreed to be interviewed for this assignment. I called again a couple weeks later and we scheduled an appointment to conduct an interview in one session on April 1, 2013.

Description of Interview:

We agreed that we would meet in Olney Hall on April 1, 2013 at 1:30pm because it was a location that we were both familiar with and also because we could utilize one of the empty classrooms. The campus was empty on that day because of La Salle students still being on Easter break. This allowed for the two and a half hour interview to proceed with no interruptions.

I consulted the *PaulThompson Life Story Interview Guide* and the *Baylor University Oral History Manuel* in combination with the information gathered from Lyons and Lombardo. The format of my prepared questions followed the *Paul Thompson* in outline but specific and personalized questions were formed based on the information from Lyons and Lombardo. Dr. Barbara Allen was also consulted before the interview and was able to offer suggestions for additional questions. Meeting for the interview was the first time Mary Butler and I had talked together in person. Mary Butler was wonderful to interview. It became clear very quickly why Robert Lyons and Rosalie Lombardo had so many good words to say about her.

I intended to use an ipad for the recording of the interview, and I made a test recording at my home the night before, to check for the effectiveness of the microphone. I downloaded an application called "Recorder" to use for my test recording and the interview. I also tested how to transfer the audio file from the ipad to my computer to back up, as well as made sure the ipad was fully charged.

Notes on Recording:

For the recording, I used my ipad on battery power. I used the application called "Recorder" to record the voices. The application recorded the interview into a WAV audio file. I was able to export the WAV file to Dropbox, where I then transferred this file to my computer. I had my iphone available as a backup recording device in case my ipad malfunctioned.