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Interview of Ruth Jenkinson

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An Interview with Mrs. Ruth Jenkinson: Field Notes

Interviewee: Ruth Jenkinson

Interviewer: Kevin Lynch

Interview dates: March 24th, 2015 and March 26th, 2015

Interview location: 2nd Floor Office Connelly Library, La Salle University, 1900 W Olney Ave, Phila. PA

Field notes written on April 21st, 2015

The Interviewee:

Ruth Jenkinson was born in West Philadelphia, one of eight siblings, four boys and four girls. Her family moved to Roxborough in 1952, and she and her siblings were soon enrolled in Catholic Schools, the boys going to Roman and the girls attending Hallahan. After graduating High School in 1964, Mrs. Jenkinson worked briefly in electronics, building and testing circuit boards before marrying in 1968. She has two children. In 1981 she accepted a position as Cataloguing Library Technician at La Salle University. After working briefly as a Payroll Clerk in the Human Resources Department she became Secretary to the Director of the Lawrence Library in 1986. In 1988 La Salle University's current library opened, bearing the name of John Connelly whose foundation was instrumental in its financing. Mrs. Jenkinson's new role in the Connelly Library was that of Administrative Assistant which was later retitled Office Manager, a position she held until retiring from full-time work after 33 years in February 6, 2015. She continues to work at the Connelly Library on a part-time basis until her position is filled. Both of her children have graduated from La Salle University in 1991 and 1994 respectively. In retirement, Mrs. Jenkinson plans travel with her sister and perhaps volunteer at a local school or hospital.

The Interviewer:

I, Kevin William Lynch, was born February 4th 1990 and grew up in Audubon, New Jersey. I graduated from Washington College with a B.A. in History in 2012 and am currently working on an M.A. in History at La Salle University. I work as the Museum Assistant at the Stenton House, as well as in the Museum Programs Department at the National Constitution Center. I have worked previously as an education intern at George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate and Gardens and intend to pursue a career in American History.

Background:

I had not met Mrs. Jenkinson prior to late February of this year when I approached her about the possibility of conducting an Oral History Interview. For the class HIS 650: Oral History Theory and Practice, Dr. Barbara Allen had prepared a list of people associated with the La Salle community that would be ideal to interview. It was then that I was told about Mrs. Jenkinson and that she had recently retired after 33 years of work at La Salle University. Prior to beginning this class I had done some research on La Salle in preparation for incorporating the University's Art Museum and Bellfield House into a local youth reporter program called *History Hunters*. I was very intrigued to learn about some of the special collections that are housed in the Connelly Library, which include Imaginative Representations of the Vietnam War, Imaginative Representations of the Holocaust, The Life and Work of Bob Dylan, and the Susan Dunleavy Collection of Biblical Literature. So I felt that Mrs. Jenkinson would be an ideal person to interview, not only for the wealth of knowledge that she could give me how La Salle University has changed in the last 33 years but specifically about the works and collections in the Connelly Library. Furthermore, I was told that while she had already retired from her full-time position, she was still working part-time at the school a few days a week so it would be much easier to meet and arrange an interview than if she was no longer on campus.

I first contacted Mrs. Jenkinson on February 18th, via email to arrange a meeting so I could explain the purpose of the oral history interview and as I had not yet met her before, to give her some background information about myself. She replied by email the next day and informed me that she would be on campus the following Tuesday, Feb. 24th and suggested that we could meet then. Her office is located on the 2nd floor of the Connelly Library, and there is a conference room right next to it. She was very generous in agreeing to do the interview and we agreed that the majority of its content would be about her professional career at La Salle with an emphasis on the holdings and collections of the Library. I promised her I would send a rough copy of a questionnaire, outlining the topics that I hoped to discuss in our interview, which I emailed to her on March 3rd. We then agreed to meet again, to go over the questionnaire, and set the dates for the interview. We met the following Monday, March 16th. Mrs. Jenkinson said that the topics I had suggested would work and cleared up some questions I had. We agreed to conduct the interview the following Tuesday and Thursday, March 24th and 26th, and that we would conduct the interview in the same office where we had been meeting, at 8:00am.

Description of the Interview:

I arrived on La Salle Campus on Tuesday, March 24th shortly before 8:00am. I stopped by the union building to purchase some bottled water for the both of us, even though we were only scheduled for an hour I thought it might be useful. The Connelly Library opens to non-employees at 8:00 so arrived at Mrs. Jenkinson office approximately at 8:01am. We got right to work, I explained that I would be recording the content of the interview on multiple recording devices and asked her if that was ok, and that for the record I would ask her again once the recording started. She said it was ok. We sat down in the conference room next to her office. It was a fairly sizable room with a large table in the middle, probably big enough for ten or twelve people. We sat on opposite sides of the table and placed both of my recording devices on the middle of it. The recording began at 8:04am

The location and the time of the interview ended up being ideal for interviewing conditions. We were secluded from any students or faculty/staff that were in the library at the time, and nobody was due to come into the office until about 9:00am. The focus of the first session was background information on Mrs. Jenkinson's childhood, schooling, family life and early career. The interruptions were minimal. In each of the sessions there was one time where the phone rang, the first time we paused the recording at Mrs. Jenkinson answered the call, the second time she allowed it ring but continued with her narrative. At the end of the first session Library Director John Baky entered the room, however we were about to conclude the first session anyway so this had little effect on the interview. The length of the first interview was 55:40.

At the end of the session I produced the legal release form, reaffirmed that my intentions for the content of the interview were strictly for the oral history class's project, and explained to her that if she wished to restrict any portion of the interview she had every right to do so. She stated that she had no restrictions and signed the document.

The second session occurred in much the same way, I arrived on campus about 7:45am, proceeded to the Union Building to purchase some bottled water, was at the library when it opened at 8:00am, and our second session began shortly after 8:00. During the first session, when talking about the plans and building of the Library Mrs. Jenkinson had said that there were some specific facts and details that she couldn't recall offhand but that that information was available on file and that she would get that material in the time between our recording sessions. She did so and in the first twenty minutes or so of our second session she was able to elaborate in great detail about the timeline of the building of the Connelly Library and the construction and management firms that were involved.

The next part of our interview focused on the special collections within the library, Mrs. Jenkinson explained how they came about and that such collection had not existed in the previous Lawrence Library and that room was set aside in the new building in anticipation of housing some special collections. She discussed in great detail the collection on the Vietnam War, as well as a collection on the Holocaust, the work of Bob Dylan, and the memorial collection on Biblical Literature in honor of Susan Dunleavy.

The last portion of the interview focused back on Mrs. Jenkinson, summing up her career and her future plans and goals. The length of the second interview was 1:08:43, for a total interview duration of 2:04:23

Notes on Recording:

I used two devices for recording during the interview a Phillips LFH9380 model Dictaphone and an iPhone 4s. I had used the same two devices for my practice interview earlier in the year, for fear that one device might fail during the duration of the interview. The iPhone 4s in fact, failed to completely record either session because I had not fully deleted all the existing video files and exceeded the amount of video storage. Fortunately the Phillips Dictaphone successfully recorded both sessions and the audio was clear. I downloaded a Switch Sound File Converter and was able to change my sound files into an MP3 format. I was then able to transcribe the interview from listening to the MP3 files on my laptop.

Editing the Transcript:

I made the following edits before submitting my final transcript:

- Provided background information on certain people and places using footnotes.
- Inserted time stamps at the end of each page of the transcript. For the 2nd session, the first time stamp indicated the time on the 2nd audio file, the time on the right is the total interview time.
- Eliminated pauses, stuttering, or hesitations
- Used quotation marks for quotes within the transcript text