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Maureen Milicia

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ORAL HISTORY

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DATE: 3/16/95 SIGNATURE: Jessica Antoszewski
(Interviewer)
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* NO audio programming permitted.

Revised: 9/94

AN ORAL INTERVIEW WITH: Dr. Maureen Milicia

CONDUCTED BY: Jessie Antoszewski

HONORS 480

"AUTHORS OF THEIR OWN LIVES"

March 16, 1995

TYPIST/TRANSCRIPTIONIST: Gina Kehali Kates

ORIGINAL

Jessica: Today is March 16th, 1995. I am taping a life history with Dr. Maureen Milicia, the chairman of the Theater & Dance Department at Marshall University. It is 1:30 in the afternoon and we're in her office. Tell me about where you were born and your early childhood.

Maureen: Okay, basically, I was born in Cleveland, Ohio. You didn't know that. Yes, I was born in Cleveland at University Hospital. I was born on a Monday at 9:34 in the morning, July 26th, 1937. I had a mother and I had a father. And you laugh, but this is kind of unusual to have one of each that were married to each other at the time. I'm an only child. My mother had some miscarriages, I believe before and possibly even after. It was a tough pregnancy. She was quite ill. But nevertheless, I had my mom and dad with me. And we lived in Cleveland for awhile. And then we went and lived in New York City for awhile. My mother handled talent in the theater. We went there after my mother and father separated. We went there for a couple of years. And about the time I was supposed to enter school, my grandmother, who was a Russian-Jewish emigrant, Rose Campbell was her name, Winetraub's the Jewish part. My grandfather was a Scot-Irishman, said to her that New York City was no place to raise a child, who was there by herself as a single mother. And so my mom came back. From what I understand from the history of my family, it seems like my mom and dad were separating quite a bit.

And the basic problem was that my mother really decided that she had to help with her mother and her mother lived with her. And my dad wanted my mother to make a decision that they would move to Akron, Ohio to work where he went. And my mother basically chose her mother over her husband. And so I was probably forty when I found the divorce papers and found out my father divorced my mother. So I thought that was a bummer because I would have gotten rid of him. But uh...it was a good, it was a good life. I had a tremendous support system. My mother, my grandmother and I lived together. My grandmother had some brothers and sisters who were all single, they were all emigrants. My Uncle Willie owned a barber shop in Cleveland. I would go to the barber shop and he would give me a shave and a haircut for probably a quarter. And my great-grandmother was still alive and my great-grandfather [audio problems--inaudible] apple of everyone's eye and probably the only child for ten years until my cousin was born, my Uncle Sanford's daughter. So I had a tremendous amount of love. Plus the fact, my mother had quit school in about the eleventh grade; she got Scarlet Fever or something. And education is really stressed and really important in our house. We were very big sports fan because my Uncle Sanford was a football player. They loved the Cleveland Indians and the Cleveland Browns. But more than that, they had these things at the Cleveland Museum of Art on Saturday afternoons for young kids. And I don't know...maybe I was seven or eight. But they were like art classes, and

I always loved that. So my grandmother, who was this little Jewish woman about four-foot three, and I was already bigger when I was seven years old than she is, because I stand about five-six or -eight, now...we'd get on like three buses or streetcars in the old days and we'd go to the Cleveland Museum of Art where I live. She would take me there and she would go home. We would have lunch there and painting classes. I'd be there all day on Saturday. She would come back on all the buses and streetcars by herself. She would pick me up and we'd go home, on all these buses and streetcars, because my mother worked. I think I'm telling you that because she probably abused me mentally because she had lost a daughter. I'm named after her dead daughter who got killed by an automobile, it dragged her about a hundred feet then killed her when she was nine years old. I was born short-, you know, like a couple years later, so she was very protective. Don't go swimming, don't walk in front of the car. But I'm saying that because even though I didn't, you know, I was sitting there thinking of a year ago, about abuse. And since you are in pre-med and you're probably interested in this, it's interesting the way my grandmother used to spank me or beat me, she really did. She did some really bizarre things. She was a mad Russian. She'd take a knife and get ^{me} in between the refrigerator and the stove, you know, when she'd threaten me, she'd never hurt me. She thought she was doing it for my own good. As I look back, I think, "Right, but, my God, they'd lock her up in prison today". Right? All

right. But I loved her and I wanted you to know that if I mentioned some of these things later on that there was so much love and caring. I have my Aunt Ethel, who was again about the size of my grandmother, who would take me to the movies on a Saturday afternoon with all those screaming kids. She had to be about ^{the age} ~~where~~ I am now. I couldn't conceive going to the Saturday afternoon, with the kids screaming and doing things. [audio problems-inaudible] And my aunt would go and it was just kind of a aluminum kind of a gun with a pink handle, that was really kind of like a feminine gun, but it was a Gene Autry gun. They were all single, so they just really gave me a lot of things, a lot of love, a lot of time. Here's a lady who was basically probably in her '30's and '40's at the time, would go and take me places. So I never really...I guess I felt abandoned because I didn't have a father. He never did much to try and make amends. It wasn't until my mother died that he became a human being. But my step-mother was a very nice person. She would send me birthday cards and try to keep in touch. For all the years, until she died just about a year and a half ago, this woman was the reason that my ^{father} ~~mother~~ and I have a relationship today. And my mother...she had, she had a reason, too. She explained that this woman was not the reason that they separated, that I should never blame this woman. So when you talk about a dysfunctional family and the kids run wild and this, I had so much support and so much understanding from so many people, to try to make me "normal". I...I love drawing. Art was my

favorite thing to do. They would buy me oil paints when I was a kid. I had a movie projector they bought in 1947; I still have it. A sixteen millimeter movie projector, it had a real light that was the lamp. It was a *Keystone* and the date's on it. I was ten years old. I have all my old films. They bought me, as I said, oil paints, my aunt and uncle. I would have wood burning sets. It, for people who didn't go to college and some of them were foreign and some of them, not much of an education, they bought books and records...I had record players. I have to tell you, I couldn't have had a better cultural background if I'd had college parents. It seems like these people knew everything to do to, for a young person to be creative and to stretch their mind. I had a wonderful childhood. I went out and I blew this. And you're probably gonna psychoanalyze it. But I really did. I had...my mother was my best friend. My grandmother was my best friend and my worse enemy. I had a father who was absent. I remember making a remark when I was, first came to West Virginia, over thirty years ago, I was probably in my '20's, that if I died, I didn't want this man...I had already had cancer. So I said if I died, I didn't want this man coming and crying over my grave. If he couldn't be the type of person that could relate when I was alive, I didn't want him there. I remember my mother was there, my roommate, *Jenny* *Ginny* and her mother, and everybody, it's just like they stopped dead. But I really felt that way. I felt so alienated from

this man, that I didn't want him crying over my grave. If he couldn't be a person to me, I didn't want him being a person to a dead body. I probably...I don't know what the other world is like. I think you go into, personally, into a different dimension. And if he'd been standing there, I'd probably spit on his head at that time. But as I said, we've resolved a lot of differences. You grow up, you understand. And even if you don't understand, you forgive, what the hell! You only do this life once. You better do the best job you know how.

But uh...I remember going to plays, I remember going to movies. My mother would take her day off and we'd go see a double-feature. We would go out and eat, we'd go to the dime store, I'd get a quarter to buy a toy. She was wonderful. I was in not the Girl Scouts, Camp Fire Girls. I wanted to be a Camp Fire Girl. And I needed an outfit. I'd gotten a bicycle, I think my father bought me five things in fifty-seven years, and the bicycle's the one thing I remember, so I could kill myself. But I couldn't ride it. I had no coordination. So my mother went to work. She worked at a store downtown Cleveland. And we talked, and she said if I learned to ride the bicycle, she would bring me back my Camp Fire outfit. So I remember that day. My grandmother even came downstairs and said, "Get in the house, you're gonna kill yourself." I was falling and I was bleeding. But by the end of the day, it was a Saturday, I could ride that damn bicycle. I had no contact with my mother. She came home from work

and guess what she had? The Camp Fire outfit. I never figured out, either she was just going to bring it anyway, or whether she knew that, giving me that challenge, that I would do everything in my power to ride that bicycle. She really didn't care whether I rode it, because she didn't want me riding it being out in the street anyway. I must have been about eleven or twelve, eleven. The idea was that it was kind of like a blight. I was such a klutz. People made fun of me, that she knew was important for me to ride the bicycle. Personally I don't [audio problems in tape]...because I would have just taken the bicycle, given it to the boy on the street. Even then I had that type of philosophy. She just thought it was important to me, so she made it important for her.

I didn't know I was poor. I was poor. I didn't tell you that. We used to have a fruit bowl, like on the aluminum dining room table, and it always had money in it. You know...a quarter, a nickel, a dime, change my grandma would throw the things in there. And I would, "Mamma, can I have a nickel for a candy car? Mamma, can I have a nickel for a, a dime for a comic book?" My two favorite things in the old days, comic books and candy bars. And there was always money. And my mother at one time worked in a knitting mill, so I had all these little cute sweaters that itched me that I hated. _____ with little skirts. I was a cute little kid, little curly hair. I never knew because my mother sacrificed that I had the nicest clothes, the ~~good~~ shoes. Back in

best

those days, ^{nine} nineteen dollars for a pair of kids shoes, you're talking fifty years ago. I remember the one thing that my mother and father, I remember dissention, was that he thought that was too much to put on a kid's foot. I'll tell you the truth. My dad buys his shoes now at K-Mart. So, he's eighty-one years old. And that's what she had to deal with. But...we had good shoes, wonderful clothes. Always seemed to have enough food. For not only us, but for everybody. I mean, a stranger would come to the house, we would always have enough food in the pot. A family could sit down and eat with us. I didn't know I was poor. The only time I've ever felt really, really bad, my senior year in college at Western Reserve, I don't know if I'm going to be able to talk about this. My mother got very sick. I wanted to quit school and work. And she told me that ^{her} whole life she wanted me to have an education, and that she would die if I did this. So I worked at night at General Electric from 11 to 7 in the morning. I went and did my student teaching from 8 until 3:30. Then I went to my classes and visited with my mother, because we had to take two extra classes. And uh, no one was really there to help us. I had an uncle who was just about a multi-millionaire at that point. I'll tell you a funny story about him. My mother's friend, a friend of hers helped us, but we would ^{not} have enough money to pay the rent. You had to pay it on the first, but we didn't get our checks for disability or anything until about the third, and with my check.... But she had a friend that was so cheap

she squeaked. She used one tea bag for a whole month. Elsie would have a half-pound butter or quarter-pound butter for a whole year. She was really, you know...people made fun of her. And she'd save all this money and then she'd marry a guy and he'd take all of her money and disappear. She said, she worked for the city and she said she should work for the sanitation department because she picked up all the garbage. And I'm saying this because this woman was my mother's friend. She was the only one that would bring ~~my~~ money to my grandmother so she could pay the rent on the first. Then on the third, when our money would come in, my check and everything, she would give it back to her. So this cheap woman was the only one that saved our lives. No one else in our family really cared. But I went to graduate, and you had to have so much money to get your cap and gown. And I had sold all my books and everything I could, and I was a dollar short. A dollar short! And I was sitting there in the Student Union over at West Reserve University, trying to figure out how the hell to do this. This person came over to me and said, "My, God, Maureen, I haven't seen you. Remember you gave me that dollar a year ago and I've been trying to find...I don't even remember. I do not remember ever giving anyone a dollar. And handed me the dollar and I went and got my graduation gown. I walked home, it was a lot of miles because I had no car fare. But I had my gown. And in my student teaching, the kids that I had there, you're not allowed to take presents and stuff.... I remember they

bought me a white blouse with a lot of frilly things, and just a couple—a tennis racket. I never played tennis, but I still have it. And all these useless things. But that blouse was just great with this white skirt that I had so I could wear it underneath my graduation gown. But, then I knew I was having trouble financially. I remember when I graduated, I went and looked for a job. I ~~could~~ not not have a job. I needed a job now. And I went and I got this job. But I couldn't start for a week. It's almost like God said, "Take a week, go to sleep, get up," you know..."live". And I did. From then I never stopped working. We never went hungry.

But I never realized all of this. That so many people sacrificed for me. And...and that's my youth. That was my young life. God, I lived a long time. Okay, what else do you want to know?

Jessica: When did you move out of New York?

Maureen: When did I move out of New York. Well, we went there when I was about two, and left probably when I was four and a half. Probably two and a half years. We lived on Seventy-second Street, overlooking Central Park.

Jessica: And you moved from New York back to...?

Maureen: Cleveland (Cleveland?) Cleveland at the time when my grandmother needed us. She got together again with my dad. But my grandmother then had to live with

us. Then it just all fell apart. I guess when I was about five they separated for the last time. I don't know exactly. As I told you, I found their divorce papers, what? Ten years ago? I was forty-something before I even knew my father divorced my mother. I remember saying something to him. He said that they had split many times and that he had asked her to go with him to Akron because he was doing construction work. And she refused to go. And uh, I think he was fooling around, but that's alright, because he's eighty-one, he fools around now. But I think, it was just that he wanted his wife with him and she made a choice. She chose her mother. Personally, I'm glad she did. I have to tell you. But if I had lived in the environment of my dad's house, I would not have had a college education, I would not have been able to be what I am today. And I really like myself a lot, because he's very Italian. He comes...my mother grandparents were immigrants, too, from Italy. And now he's proud of me, of who and what I am. But you know, so much is just like get married, have kids and stuff like that. And he was, he's so oppressive. He really is. He has a horrible temper. I have one, too. I'm just like him. I hate it. But I think it would have been awful living in that environment with that man all those years. I would have never been able to like him. I now love him. Okay? I would never have been able to like him had I been raised by him, to see how he would have been verbally abusive to my mother, domineering. If you meet my dad, you think he's the greatest guy in the

world. Your dad knows my dad. He'll take the whole group out to eat and everything. But when it came to buying me a pair of shoes for nine bucks, he wouldn't have given her the money.

No, I love him, but I would not have chosen to like him. I would not choose him for a father. But uh...he's fine. You know...there's worse. But that, we just...we just lived there for a very short period of time. And she continued doing some of the talent work and going to work and coming back. But my grandmother was there, I was there, she just settled down to a mundane job making like a buck-ten an hour, just enough for us to starve to death on. Never, never fulfilled her dreams except through me. Wanted to be a journalist, wanted to be in the show business thing, you know, and to manage stuff. And she had to end up managing a Red Robin's dress shop, or working in the garment department at Higby's. Or you know what I'm saying? Or Lane Bryant, she had to work at these shit jobs.

Jessica: Why didn't she go into journalism?

Maureen: Because she had a mother and a daughter to support. She couldn't go back to school. She wasn't, she was a wonderful woman and very strong and raised me, and you know, we never wanted. But she didn't have the strength to stand up to her mother. She needed somebody. She needed a good...by the time I was old enough to support her in doing what she was, the one thing that I

hate is she died before I could give her more. She died very young. I gave her a lot. But I...I didn't have time to pay her back.

Jessica: Why did you leave Cleveland?

Maureen: Oh, why did I leave Cleveland...because I met a young man who came to teach at a high school I was teaching at. He brought me to visit his family in West Virginia. I fell in love with West Virginia. We never got married. I was his sister's roommate for about twenty, twenty-five years. We saw each other all that time, but we never married. His mother loved me and she said, "I love you so much I want to tell you, do not marry my son. It'll be the worst mistake you'll ever make." And she was right. He never got married. I could tell you horror stories when.... He is so much for himself that it's not that the world revolves around him. It's just there's no one else in his world. Big example.... New Year's Eve, his sister and I and everyone, were invited to a party. Now, mind you, I'm not ten years old-I'm a woman now. I'm probably twenty-five years old, twenty-six years old. I'm down here and uh...he never really said he was going to go to this party. But I just knew he would come down. So we were sitting there and his sister says to me, "You going to sit here until midnight? This is New Year's Eve, why in the hell don't you go over there? He'll find you over there. Leave a note on the door." No, no, I'll wait.

I say this to you because I say it out of uh...an idea that you should take a lesson here. But nevertheless, we left and we went over there to this party. A lot of people, nice people having fun. At about ten minutes to midnight, it was over in Ohio across from Huntington, [audio problems]...door and everybody's really happy because guess who walks in? Bill. And he comes in and he looks at me and he said, "I thought we were going to spend New Year's together and you're not there. And I left the party. Today, he would have left the party. And that's the whole thing. What the hell. You had ten minutes, nine minutes to New Year's. You could have stayed. Now I don't drink. But he did. You could have had a drink, you could have had a coke or something. You could have been nice to the people. I wasn't there waiting for him. How absolutely absurd. I shouldn't even have thought about waiting for him. And it was always things like that. It's just like...I had, first of all, I was an intelligent adult woman. Why would I be sitting around waiting for someone. But it's just that he never thought I wouldn't be there. I mean, he was just, not outraged. I mean, he didn't abuse me. But he was like hurt! I was sitting there. He finally got there at 11:30 and I wasn't there. He never said he was coming. I just knew he was going to be there. So...so, we're still friends. I mean, not, I mean just friends. But it was because of him. He came to teach in Cleveland at the same high school. I, when I got out of college, instead of going into teaching or into the

theater or television or anything, I did do some of the work part-time. I went into retailing like my mom. I was a buying assistant in a department store, making \$52,000 a year, doing good money. I had an accident. I have an artificial bone in my left leg. I fell down fifty steps at the Rapid Transit. So I had a lot of problems and I still worked the job. But when I finished, I realized I couldn't physically do a lot of the things forever. So I went to find a job. I had a secondary teaching certificate. While I was sitting, no, they sent me to this high school. While I was sitting in the principal's office, I was going to teach the English classes, the speech, radio, theater teacher called and quit. And the man looked at it, it started with a K, a little old man, God, he must have been ninety. Said, "Well, Ms. Milicia, it looks like you are more qualified to teach speech and theater and everything, than you are English." And I said, "Well..." He said, "How would you like that job?" And I said, "Oh, boy, would I." And I taught at John Adams High School during the day, and John...John Adams during the day and John Hay at night, adult education. I always, always had two jobs. I was bored if I had to sit. And Bill came to teach. He'd graduated from Marshall. He was an English teacher. We got to be really good friends. And as I said, I came down here and I just...just like the speed and everything. I liked not going at you know, a hundred and ten miles an hour, ninety was good enough. There was just...when I first came down here, my mother said

something to me. Because we always lived in the fast lane. She said, "Oh, my God, after you go down third and up fifth, what do you do? Or down fifth and up third?" And I said, "Well, maybe you grow up." Before she died, she was trying to get herself in a position, financially, to come down here and live with my stepfather and everything. Because she really learned to love it.

But you know, it's so different. I mean, you know, look at New York City, Cleveland, Ohio...Huntington, West Virginia? But there's so much to be said.... And I mean, you really do grow up. You put your priorities in the right place. And I came to get a graduate degree. And they hired me before I graduated and I never left. So I like the job. And poor Bill wasn't here. He was still up there and he wanted to come back here. He couldn't come back here because they didn't hire husbands and wives, and we were headed in that direction. I told him to do it anyway. But he didn't. [interruption to answer telephone]

Jessica: You mentioned you never married Bill. Why did you never marry at all?

Maureen: Oh, boy, I don't really know. Yes, I do. When I was twenty-one years old, I was diagnosed with cancer. And I total and complete hysterectomy. At that time, I was just about coming out of college. I was working at the store. I had a couple of really, really bad years. I mentioned the accident with the leg. But I had like

cancer surgery, a complete hysterectomy. I had gallstones removal. And the accident was all in a period of like three to four years. I want you to know I never missed a day of teaching. It would be like in the summer. Now I did, the job, when I had the job with the lake, see, I was already.... Yeah, I first had the accident and then other things happened. I really liked kids. And I have to tell you the truth. I don't...I say this, but I don't really know the answer to that. Maybe the reason is that since I couldn't have children, I didn't want to put up with a husband. I don't know. I love my independence, I love who and what I am. I...I...I relate to men well. I always have. It's not that. I could have. Today, my friends who were up from Florida, they made a crack to someone, we were sitting around, that he would marry me at any moment at any time. And he's eligible. Uh...as you grow older, you grow more independent. I had a good life and I have enough money. I don't know. To me marriage meant family. And if you can't have a family, what the Hell do I need with all the aggravation for. No, you know what I'm saying. I think that's it. I don't know. I don't know. But I didn't. But his mother was right. Bill was not the one.

Jessica: You mentioned a stepfather. Did your mother remarry?

Maureen: Yes, when I was twenty-one years old, or twenty-two. She didn't remarry until then. Because she

didn't want me to have a stepfather. She didn't want anyone telling me what to do and maybe bringing strife into our situation. So she dated. She was an attractive woman, heavy set, but attractive. Always had boyfriends and everything, you know, men friends, who were very nice to me. But she really never.... And when she

trash. But, well, he was already put up with my grandmother I guess. That's okay. But basically, she really didn't marry until I was out of college and working. It wasn't until just before I guess...I was still living at home. And I'm trying to think the cancer surgery, and then I moved out after my cancer surgery. Because my mother and grandmother, every time I would get a cold or if something would hurt, they would think, "Oh..." And I couldn't live, I said I couldn't live with this. I have to forget and go on with my life. So you have to understand. My grandmother threw a fit, because she wanted all her little chicks right there. But my mother help me set up an apartment, not because she didn't want me there, and didn't love me. But she knew I had to get away from my grandmother, otherwise, I'd end up the same way she did.

So, she was very bright. So I got an apartment. Yeah, he was all right. He drank, and I believe he was an alcoholic. He was never abusive. But, I taught him how to drive, I bought them their first car. I remember a lecture I gave when they bought their really new, new car. The thing looked like a wreck and he kept having

wrecks. He would back into a tree with nobody else in the car. And I told him one day, "If you kill my mother in an accident when you're drinking and driving..." my mother held her breath because it was the only time I ever talked back to anybody, I said, "you'll never take another breath on this earth if you injure my mother." And that's the only bad word I ever said to the man. But it was getting kind of bad. I could see...he did have an accident that injured her, in a sense, her back, she already had cancer, which was already in pieces. And that wasn't very nice. Plus the fact, he had a girlfriend on the side. I found that out afterwards. I remember after my mother died, we were there and a phone call came in at about 3 o'clock in the morning, when the bars closed, 3:30. And I picked up the phone in one room and he picked up the phone in the other, and I heard a woman's voice. So I hung up. And he told me that, he got dressed and he was going out. And I said, "What's this?" "Oh, they're calling me into work." And so he walked out the door and I was going out the door after him with my roommate who was there, because we were there about my mother's stuff. And she said, "You're like the dog who chases the car. What are you going to do when you catch the car?" My mother was already dead.

I didn't know my mother knew about it. My aunt was kind enough to tell me that she thought my mother knew this was happening. I hope not. She was a very proud woman. But this guy turned out to be a jerk. He was bleeding me for money and bleeding my uncle for money,

saying you know, my mother needed this, my mother needed that. He was really supporting another woman on our money.

And then my mother bought some stock. And she didn't put her name and his name on it. Because she was trying to get herself.... She put my name and his name on this illuminating stock where he worked. So that when she died, he had to come to me to sign it. And everyone said, "You are such a fool!" But I just signed everything over to him. It wasn't my money, it was their money. And I didn't want anything from him. I just wanted rid of him. I wanted rid of him. I didn't want to become responsible for him in my life. So I haven't heard from him. He had a son that started bleeding me for cash, too, and I said, "Hey, guy, your father married my mother. I didn't choose you to raise." He was a marine, he was working, he had a wife. And he needed my money, too? Forget that, David. I did send him money once and my roommate said [inaudible] And so then he would always call collect and finally one day she said, "David, if you can't pay for the call, we can't listen."

Jessica: Was it Bonnie?

Maureen: No, no, Ginny Plumley (Bill's sister). Dr. Plumley. She's still teaching here. She was a student, too. We were students together. But yeah, yeah....

Jessica: Okay, tell me about being at teenager and your years at college.

Maureen: Now, see, you're asking me about a period of my life that I really don't have any thought about. (okay) Maybe I wasn't a real happy teenager. And even in college. Theater was my whole life. And so I always had my theater friends. We did plays. And I guess I was just so focused on the stuff I don't remember having much of a life in college. I belong...well, I didn't belong to a sorority because I thought they were too.... So I joined this independent women's group, Alpha Dextioma. And then they went national. They joined the So I ended up in a sorority anyway. And then kind of...I went to Southern Baptist University my first year. Stetson, I won an art scholarship there. And the point was, they didn't take any Jewish members. So I said, "I better get out because..." you know. And they said no. So I was probably the first Jewish woman to be in a Christian sorority or something. But I ended up...I never...it was never important to me. And I remember when I went Western Reserve they, the Jewish girls had a group or sorority. I just never [audio problems]...types. I just don't remember a lot about my teenage years. I remember liking books and drawing and painting, and liking being around adults more than kids. I didn't like people my own age. I always liked to relate to adults. I don't have much.

I'll tell you an incident, though. [interruption-

audio difficulties] ...as I am now, fat. I lost about fifty or sixty pounds and I was a looker. I looked like Sophia Loren, I have some pictures I'll show you. Or Gina Lolarbridgida. And I really looked good. I was a model. And the girls that really didn't want to be my friends when I was fat, when the girls starting hanging around me, they would invite me to parties so the guys would come. And I always thought that I stayed heavy after that because I thought people liked me better for who I was when I was heavy, that they just wanted my body and what I could bring them. I don't know that that's true. That might be a justification. But I always thought about that. You know...I can start and stop anything. I don't smoke, I don't drink, you know, so what the hell. I could do not other things, too. But that happened a couple times in my life. Once when I was very young, there again I had an accident. And I was dying. And the doctor thought, I didn't get hurt, but psychology [audio problems]...Vitamin B-12 shots and liver shots and all this stuff. And one day, he was my doctor, he called me and I was about twelve or thirteen. We were at an amusement park. And the heat from the sheet metal brought, it was called the Dippy-Whip, brought the sheet metal up and cut my car in half and the handle bars. But I released my hands and I scooted to the side so I was not injured at all. The car was in half, and the handle bars were gone. And everyone was, "Oh, my God, you're so lucky. You should have died." I was there with the neighbor and her children.

You know, we didn't have, I didn't have my father or mother. So the kids, their mothers and fathers took me. They said that all the time. I think I internalized, "Oh, my God, you're so lucky. You should have died." I lost about fifty pounds in a month. And that's about the time, no, I was twelve or thirteen. I looked like I was sixteen. And the doctor just said, "If you want to die, Maureen, you go ahead, because I'm not going to give you anything else. There's absolutely nothing wrong with you. Except, you think you should have died, and so you're willing yourself to die." It was hard for me to believe that you could do that. And he gave me that speech not to come back any more. And of course, I went back. He took care of my family, my grandmother, my mother and myself. He was my doctor my whole life.

But after that, I turned my whole life around. And then that was when I was thin and looked good. The people liked me. I was about twelve or thirteen. The whole thing really made an impression on me. That I wanted people to like me for who I was and my mind and everything, not for what I looked like. But that's such a shallow thing. You know...your beauty fades. You're beautiful when you're young, and then you get older and this and that. So if you don't have anything to offer as a human being and your body is the only thing people are relating to, how scary is that? And, and I'm surprised I thought about it when I was young, but I did.

END OF SIDE 1

Jessica: You've got a couple of long-term roommates.

Maureen: And I've had a couple of long-term not living with roommates, too. I've lived a long time by myself. When I came down to West Virginia, I was going for my master's degree. Bill's sister was here and she was going for her bachelor's, even though she's older. She just turned sixty, as a matter of fact. She hates me for saying that. And so the two of us were looking for a place to live together. We found a wonderful house on Miller Road for like seventy-five dollars a month, which was wonderful. This man found it for us, this guy, Shorty, who's dead now. And so we just kind of lived together. I got my master's and she finally got her master's. I got my Ph.D. And then finally one day, and we bought some properties together at different places. One day it just dawned on me, "My, God, I went from like my mother's house to an apartment, then I came down here." I really just needed to grow up and be able to stand on my own two feet. I didn't need anyone there around. So I took one of the houses, she took one of the houses, and that's the way it was. Then I went to live in Charleston. Bonnie's roommate worked for the telephone company. She got a transfer to the Maryland area, and Bonnie wanted someone to share expenses. So I said, "What the heck". So I bought into her house. That's really how it happened. And you know, it's kind of you live together independently. But it's not bad. It's not bad having, you know, being an only child,

having brothers and sisters to fall back on, because Ginny had, she was one of seven. Ginny and Bill were one of seven. And I still have all those people are still my friends. I mean, just because you don't room with someone, it doesn't mean you're not friendly any more. And the same thing, Bonnie has, well, she has a vegetable for a sister and a jerk for a brother, who's really, well, I won't tell you that. The older sister had a baby and her parents adopted it, so her brother's her nephew. The younger sister, the one who's the hypochondriac, who's still here with us, trying to take care of her mother. I will say this for Betty. She's really trying to help now that the mother's almost close to death. She really is. So, she's her own worse enemy. But it's nice having this family to bitch about.

So, I don't see it as any problem.

Jessica: Tell me about how you got involved in theater.

Maureen: Well, my mother. From the time...I was born, I really wasn't born in a trunk. But she was always handling singers and stuff. I never wanted to act, but I always hung around and I looked. I participated in the Cleveland Playhouse, McKinley Players, music carnival, Carimou Theater, a lot in junior and senior high school. It's just that I never remembered not being interested in theater. Even though I did art work, theater was my main love. Not acting, but working backstage and just being around. And then when I went to college I took a lot of

subjects and worked on a lot of plays.

Jessica: How did you end up here? In the position that you are in now.

Maureen: Well, because I came here with Bill. They hired me before I graduated. And they hired me, I was producer/director of educational radio and television. And while I was doing that, and trying to work around all those incompetent males, the guy in the speech department, George Harpold, he just loved me. He said, "Oh, hell, come and teach for me full time." And I did. I taught broadcasting. And then they were going to move into a College of Fine Art, School of Fine Art, first. There was a man by the name of Bill Kearns. And Dorothy Johnson...I'll tell you this. Dorothy Johnson was the chairman. And Bill and Elaine and N.B. were supposed to move, the three of them. And Bill was close to wanting to retire. We, you probably met him with Elaine. They still are good friends. And he didn't want to go. Whether he thought that this whole idea would fail, or I don't know why. But Bill wasn't a risk taker. And I thought, in my mind, that Dorothy said if you don't go, you don't have a job. And I thought that was awful. Of course, I opened my big mouth and then I said, "That is really not nice." So she said, "Well, you have somewhat of a theater background. Why don't you put your money where your mouth is?" And I said, "Well, if they'll take me, I'll go." And I went. The first semester I

taught two theater courses and two speech broadcasting courses. And the deal was for three years, if I didn't like them here, then I could go back to speech. Or if they didn't like me, you know, if I didn't fulfill a need, then they could send me back. And that was written. Well, the first semester I taught two classes, the second I already taught four, six classes. By the first summer I was directing. And I uh, I had, I had some rough times. And I kept thinking about going back, and it was still like in the third year. I was going to go back, but Dorothy didn't answer her phone when I was hot. And by the time she called me back, I had cooled off. And so then the time period ended. A couple of times I went to the deans and stuff and I, I was offered the chairmanship of the speech/communications department. And I, for whatever reason, didn't accept that, at that point. I mean, because they wanted someone from the inside. And the dean then, Daryl Leaming, wanted someone from the outside, not in the department. I didn't, I knew all these people and I didn't want to impose myself, although they would have liked me. But I knew what they wanted. So I just told them I wouldn't do it. What he did is he hired a guy from WVU that lasted exactly one year. That was a mess. But he said he didn't care what they wanted--he was going to do this. But I didn't want to be a party to it. So I just stayed put. And uh, then one day I finally took my first summer off, my first vacation in about fifty-five years. They called me back and offered me the interim chairmanship and here I are.

That's how it happened. It's not, it's...it's not been hard, it's not been easy. It's hard because the man that was chair is still there. Think about someone who for ten or twelve years kept putting your thumb down on this person and making it an oppressive situation and then you wake up one morning and that person now is your superior. I imagine that's a horrible position to be in. But I also recognize it's a horrible it puts me in because no matter what I do, it looks like you're punishing someone when I really don't. So you bend over backwards not to do anything, and you become a doormat in that particular instance. Although I've stood up a little bit more. It's kind of a hard thing. I don't want to hurt the man. I don't want to do to the man what he did to me. And yet he continues to do things to me. And I shouldn't take it. And I...do.

Jessica: You mentioned some health problems that you had in your past, and your diabetes now. How is that?

Maureen: Yes. Well, yes, yes. I have more than just that. I have diverticulosis and I'm on pain medication for different things, deterioration of the knees and hips, of that nature. I have diabetic neuropathy. I do not feel my feet, but I feel pain, and it's hard to balance. If I have no shoes, I can't balance. Excuse me. [interruption to answer telephone]

Jessica: We were talking about your health.

Maureen: Oh, my health. I have a lot of health problems. I really do. But I don't perceive them as being a negative. It seems like all my life I've had things, all the way from you know, like cancer, which really didn't affect me, to an artificial bone in my leg to having an appendix operation, to having my gall bladder taken out, to having a polyp removed from my intestines. You know what I'm saying? It seems like I've always had to cope with something like that. And I just take it, it's just there. And you handle it. As I get older, I'm more tired. The diabetes with diabetic neuropathy, is a real problem. But not enough I behave myself. The deterioration, the pain, I go to pain management. There's just a lot of health problems. But if you hear me moan and groan, and your dad moans and groans, too, I just have to say, if there's nothing we can medically do about it, you have to learn to live with it and you have to play the hand that God deals you. So, to me, uh...this is okay. They're there. What can I tell you. Every day, you know, you get an abscess here, they take your teeth out, and now after six or seven months they're gonna put something in. I got the thing in my neck, my vertebrae, my fourth and fifth vertebrae's squashed. I don't know why the hell it's squashed, but the pain, I had to go to therapy. I did this for a couple of months. You live through it. And uh, I don't know. I don't think that my things disable me so that I'm not functioning. It would be so much easier not to have to work through moans and groans and aches and pains

and not being able to feel my feet. But that's okay. My mind is still good. And the most important thing, as you knew about the body, I don't care what happens to the shell, as long as my mind stays sharp, I can maintain an easy personality with people and be productive. That's all. If I can be productive, I don't care what happens to this body. Well, God, not too much. But you know, yeah, I have a lot of health problems.

Jessica: Since you mentioned, you told me your grandmother was a Russian Jew.

Maureen: I am Jewish. I was confirmed. I showed you some pictures. My father was a Roman-Catholic Italian. He still is a practicing Catholic. He just went back to it lately. I guess if I have to relate to anything, I relate to a universal God and not just Jesus Christ as God. So I guess that kind of makes me Jewish. But I don't, you know, I don't adhere like to the real religious Jews, like you don't eat ham and stuff like that. Or the kosher laws. I look at religion as a common sense operation. The things that we're, like the kosher laws like back five thousand, six thousand years ago, there was a reason for it. You had wooden dishes and you had your plumbing so that when you would cook beef, the grease would get down and when you would have milk, the milk and the grease would mix. So they had separate bowls. And to me, that was necessary at that time. Today, they're just kosher laws which mean clean

laws. They're not laws of God. They're laws of man to preserve themselves. God's laws, maybe the Ten Commandments. I...I...the Christians, the Jews and a lot of other, you know, religions believe in the Ten Commandments. And if in truth, Moses brought these down in the Old Testament, they're good, even there isn't a God. Whoever thought of them it was really good.

I happen to believe there is a God. I believe there is a master plan. I see so many things happening. Just recently...oh, my roommate's mother is dying and we've been coping with this now for too long. But what happened, our friends came in from Florida and we hired this girl to come on Wednesday and we were gonna go and we ran around and everything like that. Well, her mother, that was the day that she got very bad, slipped into a coma, we had to be there. So what happens that morning? There's this horrendous snow storm, we, the girl couldn't get in, we couldn't basically get out, who wants to go running around. It's just like God kept us there, and then all these things started happening. We were there during the crisis to make the decision and not a stranger sitting there. And if you don't think that I thought after we had eighty degrees on Tuesday and we have twenty-one inches in my backyard basically on Wednesday, that there was a reason for that. Now, maybe there is. Maybe there's a, what do you call it? A weather reasons. I, personally, there's so many things that have happened in my life, I personally know that there's someone there that guides us. And things happen,

many times for a reason. They're all been, in my cases, something that's help me make a decision a nice thing.

So, everyday I could relate so many stories, so many God stories, to you. I don't know if there's a God. I believe that, or a supreme being. But I believe that there has to be something greater than myself in this universe. And if I want to call them God, that's okay. If you want to him them Jesus, that's okay. Mohammed, you know, whatever a person.... The only thing that bothers me is someone once said it was religion that kept the masses in check. That if you were not afraid of punishment for the things that you would do in this life, or do, it's like the law. If, I guess I would go rob a bank if I did, if I didn't mind spending the rest of my life in jail. It's the punishment aspect. And religion is like that. It gives you some rules and it says if you break these rules, things will happen. So even if they don't happen, and we don't know about it, it does keep the masses in check. Even at that, it doesn't, men, man I heard, is the only living organism that doesn't kill like for food or for protection, that just kills to kill. Animals when they kill, it's either out of fear for themselves or if they're hungary or something like that. Man can have no reason to blow the head off another person. Isn't that exciting to know that we are the superior organisms and we kill for no reason.

So, I do believe that there is a God or something, out there. Yeah, yeah. They indoctrinated me when I was kid to go to temple with my great-grandfather, who's

really nice. Like we had a Christmas tree. So my grandfather used to call it a Hanukkah bush, my great-grandfather. What's the difference? A tree is a tree. He never got, my great-grandfather never got upset. He thought all people had a reason for being. My great-grandmother, like an African-American guy would come because he was hungary in the neighborhood or someone would come, she would feed them. One guy didn't have shoes. My uncle was a real spiffy dresser, Willie, we called him Acey-Ducey. He looked like Edgar G. Robinson. And he had a pair of spectator shoes and they were new. And he went to the closet, he was getting dressed to go play his pinochle or something, he couldn't find his shoes. And he looked all over. He asked my great-aunt, his sisters, my great-grandmother. She gave, some guy came, he old shoes, she gave him his new shoes. So my family's always been like that, very giving. That's how we do. And it didn't make any difference, even though she couldn't speak English. When my great-grandfather died, a lot of the Italian people in our neighborhood and you know, when we were sitting Shiva in remembrance. My grandmother would bring a sweater to Tony,

was sitting out on the porch and she said, "Tony, Tony, it's cold, it's cold," gave him a sweater. She always made herself understood. Love and kindness is always understood, regardless of the language. My family was always very kind.

But my grandfather, here we were in temple, and all

the religious Orthodox Jews, the women would sit upstairs and the men would sit downstairs because you know, we're all second class citizens. And I, it was like it's a thing where the little kids put like an apple in and a candle on this paper flag and they march around, see. And they march with the five books of Moses. They have these real beautiful color covers with velvet and things. The men in the congregation carry and the kids you know, carry their little flag. But then the little boy sit downstairs and the little girls go upstairs with their mother, see. But my great-grandfather, I was the only thing I had, I was the apple of his eye, so he let me sit right next to him. And they would say to him, "Herschel, what is this girl doing this?" in Jewish and Hebrew. He says, "None of your business. She sits wherever she wants to sit." He was about four-foot three. And they those men. And I usually just sit there with my grandpa. I was as big as he was. I was five years old.

But those are my memories. I have some bad memories of religion. I went to Sunday School and I got confirmed. I won the honor of being the highest grade and everything. I gave the address. And I won a scholarship to go to a very wealthy synagogue in the Heights, you know, really wealthy. And I went there and all my life people would say, "Milicia, what kind of name's Milicia? It's not very Jewish sounding." And I would say, "It's my father's name." And they would say, "Well, what's your father's first name?" And I would say,

"Rocco." And that was like reverse discrimination. They didn't like that I didn't have a Jewish sounding name. And I heard that all my life. And then I went to this hotsy-totsy temple. I didn't know then the Rabbi's daughter, was her last name. I walked in and they were calling names and she says, "Milicia, what kind of name is Milicia?" It was a bad day. And I explained it was just as good as a name like Miller or Steine or any, Levine or anything like that, perhaps a little better. So much better that I didn't belong there. And I started walking out and the Rabbi stopped me, "Where are you going?" And I said, "You know, you have to take your people and your prejudice and keep them." I said, "I cannot live in an environment with so much negativism and so much hate." I said, "All my life I heard that Jews were discriminated against. We certainly do a hell of a lot of discriminating." And I walked out, and I never went back. So I never taught Sunday School. But I do teach at Leatherwood Methodist Church, at Bonnie's mother's church, I used to teach Sunday School. Because I know the pretty well.

I hate prejudice, wherever I see it. And it's like with the African-Americans. They say that people are prejudice against them. Well, there's a lot of reverse discrimination, where they're prejudiced against the white people that I honestly believe that. There's so much hate in this world. You know, brother against brother, people against people. That must be for a

reason. It must be for a reason. I wish I would know it.

Jessica: You talk about hitting prejudice, was it hard as a woman to go to college when a lot of women weren't...?

Maureen: No, no. I was in a field of broadcasting where I was the only woman that would sit in a class, the technical classes, camera classes. There was one other woman in the theater field in the t.v. field. She was like a real frail thing with real long nails. She would wear purple all the time and black and had really, she was really weird. And she was in some of the classes. But the guys seemingly never...I never asked them to carry the camera, if it was my turn I could carry it. I was a big girl. The one thing I learned is that if they felt a little reticent.... And even in shop in theater...[audio problems]...women, that if you do your job, that they would respect you. No, no problem.

Jessica: You have a reputation for being able to handle everyone and everything. Is there anything you're intimidated by? Or afraid of?

Maureen: No, but I have a tremendous lot of insecurities that aren't obvious. I...I...if I think I'm not wanted or something...abandonment...I don't' know. Sometimes I get really frightened, yeah, I have my moments. Yeah,

I'm really an insecure person. It's not that I don't think I know what I'm doing and everything. It's just that sometimes you look around and go, "Whew! it's going awfully fast." But I'd rather...when I was younger I wouldn't try as much. My philosophy was if you weren't going to be successful, don't do it. Because I never wanted to fail. Now my philosophy is the only failure is not trying. It came with age. It came with the security of knowing that I just have a few...what are they gonna do? Fire me? I have a few more years left. Obviously, I have people in high places that kind of still like me. I try to give them rational reasons for what I would like to do. If they say yes and they say yes a lot around here for me, that's good. And if they say no, I respect them. I always ask them if I can go and ask somebody else. But I know, I know a no. If I had not gotten a raise in you know, maybe a dime or a nickel or something, or no raise at all, I would understand that this means now the kids have a raise, too. And I hate that. I'm going to try to make the money so that we don't have to do that anymore. But I really do need the money. I was fifty thousand dollars over budget. You have to understand that's a tremendous lot, amount of money. But you know why I am. Because you say to me, "Could I have twenty instead of ten hours?" And I say, "Yeah." But you're not the only one. There are a lot of kids we're helping. And they help us. So the money goes back to the kids. If you pay a buck extra, rest assured in this department you make your buck back.

Jessica: You have accomplished so much. What do you see as left for your to do? What...do you want to accomplish in the future?

Maureen: I never, I never...I never thought about this. Uh...I really kind of let the guys push me around here. Your dad comes in with projects...[audio problems]...and James comes in with dreams more than projects. And Susie, I just kind of let the people tell me what they think they need. And if I can help them make it reality, I do. I...don't really have any ambitions. I guess I would like to go to Florida. I would like to move into the condo and decorate it the way I want to. Maybe work a little bit at the Performing Arts Center, see what the hell's going on down there. Or maybe not. I don't know. Do I have to have any? (no) I always said if you don't have any, then you're dead. Sometimes just getting up in the morning is enough to make me realize I have my whole day ahead of me.

No, you know what I said, if I...I can't die because I'm so far behind. I told the dean this, I'm so far behind, it'll take me until I'm ninety to catch up. And that's just on what I'm not doing. I mean, your dad's handing me stuff and he said, "I handed this in already." I'm going, oh, God, I have a thirty-two page vita and I don't know what the hell I'm doing. It was due yesterday. They'll maybe get it Monday. I have two proposals that were due the first. Maybe they'll get 'em next week, maybe they won't. Maybe I don't need the five

thousand dollars, that I have to do so much work. I try to tell this committee, we do so much all the time that what the heck's special in my department is everyday life here is special. We are growing in such a way, it's so exciting to see what's happening. We have children's theater, we have dinner theater, we cooperate here, we...what the heck do I have to do to show that we're a little bit better than everything else that's happening? I don't know. I think we're doing alright. I don't need the five.... And I may just say that on next Friday, I don't need your five thousand dollars. I don't need any grant, I don't want to do this. I might just say that. We work in strange ways. Theater people just work in strange ways. And I like what I do. But I don't like to be beholdng to anyone for a lousy five thousand dollars. I'd pay 'em five thousand dollars to get off my back.

Jessica: Is there anything we haven't touched on you would like to be included?

Maureen: No, no. No, I had a great childhood, though. It seems like everything ended when my mother died, but it didn't. Really good love, a lot of support. A lot of handling problems in a reasonable way. Not letting the illness.... Being a doctor, an important thing that you have to learn about your patients, is that you should not let the illness take over their lives to the point that it disables them in many ways. And this happens, sometimes people are sick for so long that they have kind

of an attitude that they'll never get well. They'll never be able to...I think the thing is that you have to do what you can do now and not worry about whether you're gonna get well or not. If you get well, that's fine. And if you don't, why can't you be productive within the realm that you're there? And that's so important, to give your patients a positive attitude. I'm still alive, I can accomplish things. That's it.

Jessica: Well, I'll let you get back to work. Thanks for making the time for me.

END OF INTERVIEW

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DATE: 3/16/95

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Revised: 9/94

AN ORAL INTERVIEW WITH: Dr. Maureen Milicia

CONDUCTED BY: Jessie Antoszewshi

HONORS 480

"AUTHORS OF THEIR OWN LIVES"

March 16, 1995

TYPIST/TRANSCRIPTIONIST: Gina Kehali Kates

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Jessica: Today is March 16th, 1995. I am taping a life history with Dr. Maureen Milicia, the chairman of the Theater & Dance Department at Marshall University. It is 1:30 in the afternoon and we're in her office. Tell me about where you were born and your early childhood.

Maureen: Okay, basically, I was born in Cleveland, Ohio. You didn't know that. Yes, I was born in Cleveland at University Hospital. I was born on a Monday at 9:34 in the morning, July 26th, 1937. I had a mother and I had a father. And you laugh, but this is kind of unusual to have one of each that were married to each other at the time. I'm an only child. My mother had some miscarriages, I believe before and possibly even after. It was a tough pregnancy. She was quite ill. But nevertheless, I had my mom and dad with me. And we lived in Cleveland for awhile. And then we went and lived in New York City for awhile. My mother handled talent in the theater. We went there after my mother and father separated. We went there for a couple of years. And about the time I was supposed to enter school, my grandmother, who was a Russian-Jewish emigrant, Rose Campbell was her name, Winetraub's the Jewish part. My grandfather was a Scot-Irishman, said to her that New York City was no place to raise a child, who was there by herself as a single mother. And so my mom came back. From what I understand from the history of my family, it seems like my mom and dad were separating quite a bit.

And the basic problem was that my mother really...
that she had to help with her mother and her mother lived
with her. And my dad wanted my mother to make a decision
that they would move to Akron, Ohio to work where he went.
And my mother basically chose her mother over her
husband. And so I was probably forty when I found the
divorce papers and found out my father divorced my
mother. / So I thought that was a bummer because I would
have gotten rid of him. But uh...it was a good, it was
a good life. I had a tremendous support system. My
mother, my grandmother and I lived together. My
grandmother had some brothers and sisters who were all
single, they were all emigrants. My Uncle Willie owned
a barber shop in Cleveland. I would go to the barber
shop and he would give me a shave and a haircut for
probably a quarter. And my great-grandmother was still
alive and my great-grandfather [audio problems-inaudible]
apple of everyone's eye and probably the only child for
ten years until my cousin was born, my Uncle Sanford's
daughter. So I had a tremendous amount of love. Plus
the fact, my mother had quit school in about the eleventh
grade; she got Scarlet Fever or something. And education
is really stressed and really important in our house. We
were very big sports fan because my Uncle Sanford was a
football player. They loved the Cleveland Indians and
the Cleveland Browns. But more than that, they had these
things at the Cleveland Museum of Art on Saturday
afternoons for young kids. And I don't know...maybe I
was seven or eight. But they were like art classes, and

I always loved that. So my grandmother, who was this little Jewish woman about four-foot three, and I was already bigger when I was seven years old than she is, because I stand about five-six or -eight, now...we'd get on like three buses or streetcars in the old days and we'd go to the Cleveland Museum of Art where I live. She would take me there and she would go home. We would have lunch there and painting classes. I'd be there all day on Saturday. She would come back on all the buses and streetcars by herself. She would pick me up and we'd go home, on all these buses and streetcars, because my mother worked. I think I'm telling you that because she probably abused me mentally because she had lost a daughter. I'm named after her dead daughter who got killed by an automobile, it dragged her about a hundred feet then killed her when she was nine years old. I was born short-, you know, like a couple years later, so she was very protective. Don't go swimming, don't walk in front of the car. But I'm saying that because even though I didn't, you know, I was sitting there thinking of a year ago, about abuse. And since you are in pre-med and you're probably interested in this, it's interesting the way my grandmother used to spank me or beat me, she really did. She did some really bizarre things. She was a mad Russian. She'd take a knife and get ^{me} in between the refrigerator and the stove, you know, when she'd threaten me, she'd never hurt me. She thought she was doing it for my own good. As I look back, I think, "Right, but, my God, they'd lock her up in prison today". Right? All

right. But I loved her and I wanted you to know that if I mentioned some of these things later on that there was so much love and caring. I have my Aunt Ethel, who was again about the size of my grandmother, who would take me to the movies on a Saturday afternoon with all those screaming kids. She had to be about ^{the age of} where I am now. I couldn't conceive going to the Saturday afternoon, with the kids screaming and doing things. [audio problems-inaudible] And my aunt would go and it was just kind of a aluminum kind of a gun with a pink handle, that was really kind of like a feminine gun, but it was a Gene Autry gun. They were all single, so they just really gave me a lot of things, a lot of love, a lot of time. Here's a lady who was basically probably in her '30's and '40's at the time, would go and take me places. So I never really...I guess I felt abandoned because I didn't have a father. He never did much to try and make amends. It wasn't until my mother died that he became a human being. But my step-mother was a very nice person. She would send me birthday cards and try to keep in touch. For all the years, until she died just about a year and a half ago, this woman was the reason that my ^{father} mother and I have a relationship today. And my mother...she had, she had a reason, too. She explained that this woman was not the reason that they separated, that I should never blame this woman. So when you talk about a dysfunctional family and the kids run wild and this, I had so much support and so much understanding from so many people, to try to make me "normal". I...I love drawing. Art was my

favorite thing to do. They would buy me oil paints when I was a kid. I had a movie projector they bought in 1947; I still have it. A sixteen millimeter movie projector, it had a real light that was the lamp. It was a *Keystone* and the date's on it. I was ten years old. I have all my old films. They bought me, as I said, oil paints, my aunt and uncle. I would have wood burning sets. It, for people who didn't go to college and some of them were foreign and some of them, not much of an education, they bought books and records...I had record players. I have to tell you, I couldn't have had a better cultural background if I'd had college parents. It seems like these people knew everything to do to, for a young person to be creative and to stretch their mind. I had a wonderful childhood. I went out and I blew this. And you're probably gonna psychoanalyze it. But I really did. I had...my mother was my best friend. My grandmother was my best friend and my worse enemy. I had a father who was absent. I remember making a remark when I was, first came to West Virginia, over thirty years ago, I was probably in my '20's, that if I died, I didn't want this man...I had already had cancer. So I said if I died, I didn't want this man coming and crying over my grave. If he couldn't be the type of person that could relate when I was alive, I didn't want him there. I remember my mother was there, my roommate, *Jenny* *Ginny* and her mother, and everybody, it's just like they stopped dead. But I really felt that way. I felt so alienated from

this man, that I didn't want him crying over my grave. If he couldn't be a person to me, I didn't want him being a person to a dead body. I probably...I don't know what the other world is like. I think you go into, personally, into a different dimension. And if he'd been standing there, I'd probably spit on his head at that time. But as I said, we've resolved a lot of differences. You grow up, you understand. And even if you don't understand, you forgive, what the hell! You only do this life once. You better do the best job you know how.

But uh...I remember going to plays, I remember going to movies. My mother would take her day off and we'd go see a double-feature. We would go out and eat, we'd go to the dime store, I'd get a quarter to buy a toy. She was wonderful. I was in not the Girl Scouts, Camp Fire Girls. I wanted to be a Camp Fire Girl. And I needed an outfit. I'd gotten a bicycle, I think my father bought me five things in fifty-seven years, and the bicycle's the one thing I remember, so I could kill myself. But I couldn't ride it. I had no coordination. So my mother went to work. She worked at a store downtown Cleveland. And we talked, and she said if I learned to ride the bicycle, she would bring me back my Camp Fire outfit. So I remember that day. My grandmother even came downstairs and said, "Get in the house, you're gonna kill yourself." I was falling and I was bleeding. But by the end of the day, it was a Saturday, I could ride that damn bicycle. I had no contact with my mother. She came home form work

and guess what she had? The Camp Fire outfit. I never figured out, either she was just going to bring it anyway, or whether she knew that, giving me that challenge, that I would do everything in my power to ride that bicycle. She really didn't care whether I rode it, because she didn't want me riding it being out in the street anyway. I must have been about eleven or twelve, eleven. The idea was that it was kind of like a blight. I was such a klutz. People made fun of me, that she knew was important for me to ride the bicycle. Personally I don't [audio problems in tape]...because I would have just taken the bicycle, given it to the boy on the street. Even then I had that type of philosophy. She just thought it was important to me, so she made it important for her.

I didn't know I was poor. I was poor. I didn't tell you that. We used to have a fruit bowl, like on the aluminum dining room table, and it always had money in it. You know...a quarter, a nickel, a dime, change my grandma would throw the things in there. And I would, "Mamma, can I have a nickel for a candy car? Mamma, can I have a nickel for a, a dime for a comic book?" My two favorite things in the old days, comic books and candy bars. And there was always money. And my mother at one time worked in a knitting mill, so I had all these little cute sweaters that itched me that I hated. _____ with little skirts. I was a cute little kid, little curly hair. I never knew because my mother sacrificed that I had the nicest clothes, the good shoes. Back in

best

those days, ^{nine} nineteen dollars for a pair of kids shoes, you're talking fifty years ago. I remember the one thing that my mother and father, I remember dissention, was that he thought that was too much to put on a kid's foot. I'll tell you the truth. My dad buys his shoes now at K-Mart. So, he's eighty-one years old. And that's what she had to deal with. But...we had good shoes, wonderful clothes. Always seemed to have enough food. For not only us, but for everybody. I mean, a stranger would come to the house, we would always have enough food in the pot. A family could sit down and eat with us. I didn't know I was poor. The only time I've ever felt really, really bad, my senior year in college at Western Reserve, I don't know if I'm going to be able to talk about this. My mother got very sick. I wanted to quit school and work. And she told me that ^{her} he whole life she wanted me to have an education, and that she would die if I did this. So I worked at night at General Electric from 11 to 7 in the morning. I went and did my student teaching from 8 until 3:30. Then I went to my classes and visited with my mother, because we had to take two extra classes. And uh, no one was really there to help us. I had an uncle who was just about a multi-millionaire at that point. I'll tell you a funny story about him. My mother's friend, a friend of hers helped us, but we would ^{not} have enough money to pay the rent. You had to pay it on the first, but we didn't get our checks for disability or anything until about the third, and with my check.... But she had a friend that was so cheap

she squeaked. She used one tea bag for a whole month. Elsie would have a half-pound butter or quarter-pound butter for a whole year. She was really, you know...people made fun of her. And she'd save all this money and then she'd marry a guy and he'd take all of her money and disappear. She said, she worked for the city and she said she should work for the sanitation department because she picked up all the garbage. And I'm saying this because this woman was my mother's friend. She was the only one that would bring my money to my grandmother so she could pay the rent on the first. Then on the third, when our money would come in, my check and everything, she would give it back to her. So this cheap woman was the only one that saved our lives. No one else in our family really cared. But I went to graduate, and you had to have so much money to get your cap and gown. And I had sold all my books and everything I could, and I was a dollar short. A dollar short! And I was sitting there in the Student Union over at West Reserve University, trying to figure out how the hell to do this. This person came over to me and said, "My, God, Maureen, I haven't seen you. Remember you gave me that dollar a year ago and I've been trying to find...I don't even remember. I do not remember ever giving anyone a dollar. And handed me the dollar and I went and got my graduation gown. I walked home, it was a lot of miles because I had no car fare. But I had my gown. And in my student teaching, the kids that I had there, you're not allowed to take presents and stuff.... I remember they

bought me a white blouse with a lot of frilly things, and just a couple—a tennis racket. I never played tennis, but I still have it. And all these useless things. But that blouse was just great with this white skirt that I had so I could wear it underneath my graduation gown. But, then I knew I was having trouble financially. I remember when I graduated, I went and looked for a job. I could not not have a job. I needed a job now. And I went and I got this job. But I couldn't start for a week. It's almost like God said, "Take a week, go to sleep, get up," you know... "live". And I did. From then I never stopped working. We never went hungry.

But I never realized all of this. That so many people sacrificed for me. And...and that's my youth. That was my young life. God, I lived a long time. Okay, what else do you want to know?

Jessica: When did you move out of New York?

Maureen: When did I move out of New York. Well, we went there when I was about two, and left probably when I was four and a half. Probably two and a half years. We lived on Seventy-second Street, overlooking Central Park.

Jessica: And you moved from New York back to...?

Maureen: Cleveland (Cleveland?) Cleveland at the time when my grandmother needed us. She got together again with my dad. But my grandmother then had to live with

us. Then it just all fell apart. I guess when I was about five they separated for the last time. I don't know exactly. As I told you, I found their divorce papers, what? Ten years ago? I was forty-something before I even knew my father divorced my mother. I remember saying something to him. He said that they had split many times and that he had asked her to go with him to Akron because he was doing construction work. And she refused to go. And uh, I think he was fooling around, but that's alright, because he's eighty-one, he fools around now. But I think, it was just that he wanted his wife with him and she made a choice. She chose her mother. Personally, I'm glad she did. I have to tell you. But if I had lived in the environment of my dad's house, I would not have had a college education, I would not have been able to be what I am today. And I really like myself a lot, because he's very Italian. He comes...my mother grandparents were immigrants, too, from Italy. And now he's proud of me, of who and what I am. But you know, so much is just like get married, have kids and stuff like that. And he was, he's so oppressive. He really is. He has a horrible temper. I have one, too. I'm just like him. I hate it. But I think it would have been awful living in that environment with that man all those years. I would have never been able to like him. I now love him. Okay? I would never have been able to like him had I been raised by him, to see how he would have been verbally abusive to my mother, domineering. If you meet my dad, you think he's the greatest guy in the

world. Your dad knows my dad. He'll take the whole group out to eat and everything. But when it came to buying me a pair of shoes for nine bucks, he wouldn't have given her the money.

No, I love him, but I would not have chosen to like him. I would not choose him for a father. But uh...he's fine. You know...there's worse. But that, we just...we just lived there for a very short period of time. And she continued doing some of the talent work and going to work and coming back. But my grandmother was there, I was there, she just settled down to a mundane job making like a buck-ten an hour, just enough for us to starve to death on. Never, never fulfilled her dreams except through me. Wanted to be a journalist, wanted to be in the show business thing, you know, and to manage stuff. And she had to end up managing a Red Robin's dress shop, or working in the garment department at Higby's. Or you know what I'm saying? Or Lane Bryant, she had to work at these shit jobs.

Jessica: Why didn't she go into journalism?

Maureen: Because she had a mother and a daughter to support. She couldn't go back to school. She wasn't, she was a wonderful woman and very strong and raised me, and you know, we never wanted. But she didn't have the strength to stand up to her mother. She needed somebody. She needed a good...by the time I was old enough to support her in doing what she was, the one thing that I

hate is she died before I could give her more. She died very young. I gave her a lot. But I...I didn't have time to pay her back.

Jessica: Why did you leave Cleveland?

Maureen: Oh, why did I leave Cleveland...because I met a young man who came to teach at a high school I was teaching at. He brought me to visit his family in West Virginia. I fell in love with West Virginia. We never got married. I was his sister's roommate for about twenty, twenty-five years. We saw each other all that time, but we never married. His mother loved me and she said, "I love you so much I want to tell you, do not marry my son. It'll be the worst mistake you'll ever make." And she was right. He never got married. I could tell you horror stories when.... He is so much for himself that it's not that the world revolves around him. It's just there's no one else in his world. Big example.... New Year's Eve, his sister and I and everyone, were invited to a party. Now, mind you, I'm not ten years old-I'm a woman now. I'm probably twenty-five years old, twenty-six years old. I'm down here and uh...he never really said he was going to go to this party. But I just knew he would come down. So we were sitting there and his sister says to me, "You going to sit here until midnight? This is New Year's Eve, why in the hell don't you go over there? He'll find you over there. Leave a note on the door." No, no, I'll wait.

I say this to you because I say it out of uh...an idea that you should take a lesson here. But nevertheless, we left and we went over there to this party. A lot of people, nice people having fun. At about ten minutes to midnight, it was over in Ohio across from Huntington, [audio problems]...door and everybody's really happy because guess who walks in? Bill. And he comes in and he looks at me and he said, "I thought we were going to spend New Year's together and you're not there. And I left the party. Today, he would have left the party. And that's the whole thing. What the hell. You had ten minutes, nine minutes to New Year's. You could have stayed. Now I don't drink. But he did. You could have had a drink, you could have had a coke or something. You could have been nice to the people. I wasn't there waiting for him. How absolutely absurd. I shouldn't even have thought about waiting for him. And it was always things like that. It's just like...I had, first of all, I was an intelligent adult woman. Why would I be sitting around waiting for someone. But it's just that he never thought I wouldn't be there. I mean, he was just, not outraged. I mean, he didn't abuse me. But he was like hurt! I was sitting there. He finally got there at 11:30 and I wasn't there. He never said he was coming. I just knew he was going to be there. So...so, we're still friends. I mean, not, I mean just friends. But it was because of him. He came to teach in Cleveland at the same high school. I, when I got out of college, instead of going into teaching or into the

theater or television or anything, I did do some of the work part-time. I went into retailing like my mom. I was a buying assistant in a department store, making \$52,000 a year, doing good money. I had an accident. I have an artificial bone in my left leg. I fell down fifty steps at the Rapid Transit. So I had a lot of problems and I still worked the job. But when I finished, I realized I couldn't physically do a lot of the things forever. So I went to find a job. I had a secondary teaching certificate. While I was sitting, no, they sent me to this high school. While I was sitting in the principal's office, I was going to teach the English classes, the speech, radio, theater teacher called and quit. And the man looked at it, it started with a K, a little old man, God, he must have been ninety. Said, "Well, Ms. Milicia, it looks like you are more qualified to teach speech and theater and everything, than you are English." And I said, "Well..." He said, "How would you like that job?" And I said, "Oh, boy, would I." And I taught at John Adams High School during the day, and John...John Adams during the day and John Hay at night, adult education. I always, always had two jobs. I was bored if I had to sit. And Bill came to teach. He'd graduated from Marshall. He was an English teacher. We got to be really good friends. And as I said, I came down here and I just...just like the speed and everything. I liked not going at you know, a hundred and ten miles an hour, ninety was good enough. There was just...when I first came down here, my mother said

something to me. Because we always lived in the fast lane. She said, "Oh, my God, after you go down third and up fifth, what do you do? Or down fifth and up third?" And I said, "Well, maybe you grow up." Before she died, she was trying to get herself in a position, financially, to come down here and live with my stepfather and everything. Because she really learned to love it.

But you know, it's so different. I mean, you know, look at New York City, Cleveland, Ohio...Huntington, West Virginia? But there's so much to be said.... And I mean, you really do grow up. You put your priorities in the right place. And I came to get a graduate degree. And they hired me before I graduated and I never left. So I like the job. And poor Bill wasn't here. He was still up there and he wanted to come back here. He couldn't come back here because they didn't hire husbands and wives, and we were headed in that direction. I told him to do it anyway. But he didn't. [interruption to answer telephone]

Jessica: You mentioned you never married Bill. Why did you never marry at all?

Maureen: Oh, boy, I don't really know. Yes, I do. When I was twenty-one years old, I was diagnosed with cancer. And I total and complete hysterectomy. At that time, I was just about coming out of college. I was working at the store. I had a couple of really, really bad years. I mentioned the accident with the leg. But I had like

cancer surgery, a complete hysterectomy. I had gallstones removal. And the accident was all in a period of like three to four years. I want you to know I never missed a day of teaching. It would be like in the summer. Now I did, the job, when I had the job with the lake, see, I was already.... Yeah, I first had the accident and then other things happened. I really liked kids. And I have to tell you the truth. I don't...I say this, but I don't really know the answer to that. Maybe the reason is that since I couldn't have children, I didn't want to put up with a husband. I don't know. I love my independence, I love who and what I am. I...I...I relate to men well. I always have. It's not that. I could have. Today, my friends who were up from Florida, they made a crack to someone, we were sitting around, that he would marry me at any moment at any time. And he's eligible. Uh...as you grow older, you grow more independent. I had a good life and I have enough money. I don't know. To me marriage meant family. And if you can't have a family, what the Hell do I need with all the aggravation for. No, you know what I'm saying. I think that's it. I don't know. I don't know. But I didn't. But his mother was right. Bill was not the one.

Jessica: You mentioned a stepfather. Did your mother remarry?

Maureen: Yes, when I was twenty-one years old, or twenty-two. She didn't remarry until then. Because she

didn't want me to have a stepfather. She didn't want anyone telling me what to do and maybe bringing strife into our situation. So she dated. She was an attractive woman, heavy set, but attractive. Always had boyfriends and everything, you know, men friends, who were very nice to me. But she really never.... And when she

trash. But, well, he was already put up with my grandmother I guess. That's okay. But basically, she really didn't marry until I was out of college and working. It wasn't until just before I guess...I was still living at home. And I'm trying to think the cancer surgery, and then I moved out after my cancer surgery. Because my mother and grandmother, every time I would get a cold or if something would hurt, they would think, "Oh..." And I couldn't live, I said I couldn't live with this. I have to forget and go on with my life. So you have to understand. My grandmother threw a fit, because she wanted all her little chicks right there. But my mother help me set up an apartment, not because she didn't want me there, and didn't love me. But she knew I had to get away from my grandmother, otherwise, I'd end up the same way she did.

So, she was very bright. So I got an apartment. Yeah, he was all right. He drank, and I believe he was an alcoholic. He was never abusive. But, I taught him how to drive, I bought them their first car. I remember a lecture I gave when they bought their really new, new car. The thing looked like a wreck and he kept having

wrecks. He would back into a tree with nobody else in the car. And I told him one day, "If you kill my mother in an accident when you're drinking and driving..." my mother held her breath because it was the only time I ever talked back to anybody, I said, "you'll never take another breath on this earth if you injure my mother." And that's the only bad word I ever said to the man. But it was getting kind of bad. I could see...he did have an accident that injured her, in a sense, her back, she already had cancer, which was already in pieces. And that wasn't very nice. Plus the fact, he had a girlfriend on the side. I found that out afterwards. I remember after my mother died, we were there and a phone call came in at about 3 o'clock in the morning, when the bars closed, 3:30. And I picked up the phone in one room and he picked up the phone in the other, and I heard a woman's voice. So I hung up. And he told me that, he got dressed and he was going out. And I said, "What's this?" "Oh, they're calling me into work." And so he walked out the door and I was going out the door after him with my roommate who was there, because we were there about my mother's stuff. And she said, "You're like the dog who chases the car. What are you going to do when you catch the car?" My mother was already dead.

I didn't know my mother knew about it. My aunt was kind enough to tell me that she thought my mother knew this was happening. I hope not. She was a very proud woman. But this guy turned out to be a jerk. He was bleeding me for money and bleeding my uncle for money,

saying you know, my mother needed this, my mother needed that. He was really supporting another woman on our money.

And then my mother bought some stock. And she didn't put her name and his name on it. Because she was trying to get herself.... She put my name and his name on this illuminating stock where he worked. So that when she died, he had to come to me to sign it. And everyone said, "You are such a fool!" But I just signed everything over to him. It wasn't my money, it was their money. And I didn't want anything from him. I just wanted rid of him. I wanted rid of him. I didn't want to become responsible for him in my life. So I haven't heard from him. He had a son that started bleeding me for cash, too, and I said, "Hey, guy, your father married my mother. I didn't choose you to raise." He was a marine, he was working, he had a wife. And he needed my money, too? Forget that, David. I did send him money once and my roommate said [inaudible] And so then he would always call collect and finally one day she said, "David, if you can't pay for the call, we can't listen."

Jessica: Was it Bonnie?

Maureen: No, no, Ginny Plumley (Bill's sister). Dr. Plumley. She's still teaching here. She was a student, too. We were students together. But yeah, yeah....

Jessica: Okay, tell me about being at teenager and your years at college.

Maureen: Now, see, you're asking me about a period of my life that I really don't have any thought about. (okay) Maybe I wasn't a real happy teenager. And even in college. Theater was my whole life. And so I always had my theater friends. We did plays. And I guess I was just so focused on the stuff I don't remember having much of a life in college. I belong...well, I didn't belong to a sorority because I thought they were too.... So I joined this independent women's group, Alpha Dextioma. And then they went national. They joined the So I ended up in a sorority anyway. And then kind of...I went to Southern Baptist University my first year. Stetson, I won an art scholarship there. And the point was, they didn't take any Jewish members. So I said, "I better get out because..." you know. And they said no. So I was probably the first Jewish woman to be in a Christian sorority or something. But I ended up...I never...it was never important to me. And I remember when I went Western Reserve they, the Jewish girls had a group or sorority. I just never [audio problems]...types. I just don't remember a lot about my teenage years. I remember liking books and drawing and painting, and liking being around adults more than kids. I didn't like people my own age. I always liked to relate to adults. I don't have much.

I'll tell you an incident, though. [interruption-

audio difficulties] ...as I am now, fat. I lost about fifty or sixty pounds and I was a looker. I looked like Sophia Loren, I have some pictures I'll show you. Or Gina Lollobrigida. And I really looked good. I was a model. And the girls that really didn't want to be my friends when I was fat, when the girls starting hanging around me, they would invite me to parties so the guys would come. And I always thought that I stayed heavy after that because I thought people liked me better for who I was when I was heavy, that they just wanted my body and what I could bring them. I don't know that that's true. That might be a justification. But I always thought about that. You know...I can start and stop anything. I don't smoke, I don't drink, you know, so what the hell. I could do not other things, too. But that happened a couple times in my life. Once when I was very young, there again I had an accident. And I was dying. And the doctor thought, I didn't get hurt, but psychology [audio problems]...Vitamin B-12 shots and liver shots and all this stuff. And one day, he was my doctor, he called me and I was about twelve or thirteen. We were at an amusement park. And the heat from the sheet metal brought, it was called the Dippy-Whip, brought the sheet metal up and cut my car in half and the handle bars. But I released my hands and I scooted to the side so I was not injured at all. The car was in half, and the handle bars were gone. And everyone was, "Oh, my God, you're so lucky. You should have

You know, we didn't have, I didn't have my father or mother. So the kids, their mothers and fathers took me. They said that all the time. I think I internalized, "Oh, my God, you're so lucky. You should have died." I lost about fifty pounds in a month. And that's about the time, no, I was twelve or thirteen. I looked like I was sixteen. And the doctor just said, "If you want to die, Maureen, you go ahead, because I'm not going to give you anything else. There's absolutely nothing wrong with you. Except, you think you should have died, and so you're willing yourself to die." It was hard for me to believe that you could do that. And he gave me that speech not to come back any more. And of course, I went back. He took care of my family, my grandmother, my mother and myself. He was my doctor my whole life.

But after that, I turned my whole life around. And then that was when I was thin and looked good. The people liked me. I was about twelve or thirteen. The whole thing really made an impression on me. That I wanted people to like me for who I was and my mind and everything, not for what I looked like. But that's such a shallow thing. You know...your beauty fades. You're beautiful when you're young, and then you get older and this and that. So if you don't have anything to offer as a human being and your body is the only thing people are relating to, how scary is that? And, and I'm surprised I thought about it when I was young, but I did.

END OF SIDE 1

Jessica: You've got a couple of long-term roommates.

Maureen: And I've had a couple of long-term not living with roommates, too. I've lived a long time by myself. When I came down to West Virginia, I was going for my master's degree. Bill's sister was here and she was going for her bachelor's, even though she's older. She just turned sixty, as a matter of fact. She hates me for saying that. And so the two of us were looking for a place to live together. We found a wonderful house on Miller Road for like seventy-five dollars a month, which was wonderful. This man found it for us, this guy, Shorty, who's dead now. And so we just kind of lived together. I got my master's and she finally got her master's. I got my Ph.D. And then finally one day, and we bought some properties together at different places. One day it just dawned on me, "My, God, I went from like my mother's house to an apartment, then I came down here." I really just needed to grow up and be able to stand on my own two feet. I didn't need anyone there around. So I took one of the houses, she took one of the houses, and that's the way it was. Then I went to live in Charleston. Bonnie's roommate worked for the telephone company. She got a transfer to the Maryland area, and Bonnie wanted someone to share expenses. So I said, "What the heck". So I bought into her house. That's really how it happened. And you know, it's kind of you live together independently. But it's not bad. It's not bad having, you know, being an only child,

and her parents adopted it, so her brother's her nephew. The younger sister, the one who's the hypochondriac, who's still here with us, trying to take care of her mother. I will say this for Betty. She's really trying to help now that the mother's almost close to death. She really is. So, she's her own worse enemy. But it's nice having this family to bitch about.

So, I don't see it as any problem.

Jessica: Tell me about how you got involved in theater.

Maureen: Well, my mother. From the time...I was born, I really wasn't born in a trunk. But she was always handling singers and stuff. I never wanted to act, but I always hung around and I looked. I participated in the Cleveland Playhouse, McKinley Players, music carnival, Carimou Theater, a lot in junior and senior high school. It's just that I never remembered not being interested in theater. Even though I did art work, theater was my main love. Not acting, but working backstage and just being around. And then when I went to college I took a lot of

having brothers and sisters to fall back on, because Ginny had, she was one of seven. Ginny and Bill were one of seven. And I still have all those people are still my friends. I mean, just because you don't room with someone, it doesn't mean you're not friendly any more. And the same thing, Bonnie has, well, she has a vegetable for a sister and a jerk for a brother, who's really, well, I won't tell you that. The older sister had a baby and her parents adopted it, so her brother's her nephew. The younger sister, the one who's the hypochondriac, who's still here with us, trying to take care of her mother. I will say this for Betty. She's really trying to help now that the mother's almost close to death. She really is. So, she's her own worse enemy. But it's nice having this family to bitch about.

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subjects and worked on a lot of plays.

Jessica: How did you end up here? In the position that you are in now.

Maureen: Well, because I came here with Bill. They hired me before I graduated. And they hired me, I was producer/director of educational radio and television. And while I was doing that, and trying to work around all those incompetent males, the guy in the speech department, George Harpold, he just loved me. He said, "Oh, hell, come and teach for me full time." And I did. I taught broadcasting. And then they were going to move into a College of Fine Art, School of Fine Art, first. There was a man by the name of Bill Kearns. And Dorothy Johnson...I'll tell you this. Dorothy Johnson was the chairman. And Bill and Elaine and N.B. were supposed to move, the three of them. And Bill was close to wanting to retire. We, you probably met him with Elaine. They still are good friends. And he didn't want to go. Whether he thought that this whole idea would fail, or I don't know why. But Bill wasn't a risk taker. And I thought, in my mind, that Dorothy said if you don't go, you don't have a job. And I thought that was awful. Of course, I opened my big mouth and then I said, "That is really not nice." So she said, "Well, you have somewhat of a theater background. Why don't you put your money where your mouth is?" And I said, "Well, if they'll take me, I'll go." And I went. The first semester I

taught two theater courses and two speech broadcasting courses. And the deal was for three years, if I didn't like them here, then I could go back to speech. Or if they didn't like me, you know, if I didn't fulfill a need, then they could send me back. And that was written. Well, the first semester I taught two classes, the second I already taught four, six classes. By the first summer I was directing. And I uh, I had, I had some rough times. And I kept thinking about going back, and it was still like in the third year. I was going to go back, but Dorothy didn't answer her phone when I was hot. And by the time she called me back, I had cooled off. And so then the time period ended. A couple of times I went to the deans and stuff and I, I was offered the chairmanship of the speech/communications department. And I, for whatever reason, didn't accept that, at that point. I mean, because they wanted someone from the inside. And the dean then, Daryl Leaming, wanted someone from the outside, not in the department. I didn't, I knew all these people and I didn't want to impose myself, although they would have liked me. But I knew what they wanted. So I just told them I wouldn't do it. What he did is he hired a guy from WVU that lasted exactly one year. That was a mess. But he said he didn't care what they wanted--he was going to do this. But I didn't want to be a party to it. So I just stayed put. And uh, then one day I finally took my first summer off, my first vacation in about fifty-five years. They called me back and offered me the interim chairmanship and here I am.

That's how it happened. It's not, it's...it's not been hard, it's not been easy. It's hard because the man that was chair is still there. Think about someone who for ten or twelve years kept putting your thumb down on this person and making it an oppressive situation and then you wake up one morning and that person now is your superior. I imagine that's a horrible position to be in. But I also recognize it's a horrible it puts me in because no matter what I do, it looks like you're punishing someone when I really don't. So you bend over backwards not to do anything, and you become a doormat in that particular instance. Although I've stood up a little bit more. It's kind of a hard thing. I don't want to hurt the man. I don't want to do to the man what he did to me. And yet he continues to do things to me. And I shouldn't take it. And I...do.

Jessica: You mentioned some health problems that you had in your past, and your diabetes now. How is that?

Maureen: Yes. Well, yes, yes. I have more than just that. I have diverticulosis and I'm on pain medication for different things, deterioration of the knees and hips, of that nature. I have diabetic neuropathy. I do not feel my feet, but I feel pain, and it's hard to balance. If I have no shoes, I can't balance. Excuse

Maureen: Oh, my health. I have a lot of health problems. I really do. But I don't perceive them as being a negative. It seems like all my life I've had things, all the way from you know, like cancer, which really didn't affect me, to an artificial bone in my leg to having an appendix operation, to having my gall bladder taken out, to having a polyp removed from my intestines. You know what I'm saying? It seems like I've always had to cope with something like that. And I just take it, it's just there. And you handle it. As I get older, I'm more tired. The diabetes with diabetic neuropathy, is a real problem. But not enough I behave myself. The deterioration, the pain, I go to pain management. There's just a lot of health problems. But if you hear me moan and groan, and your dad moans and groans, too, I just have to say, if there's nothing we can medically do about it, you have to learn to live with it and you have to play the hand that God deals you. So, to me, uh...this is okay. They're there. What can I tell you. Every day, you know, you get an abscess here, they take your teeth out, and now after six or seven months they're gonna put something in. I got the thing in my neck, my vertebrae, my fourth and fifth vertebrae's squashed. I don't know why the hell it's squashed, but the pain, I had to go to therapy. I did this for a couple of months. You live through it. And uh, I don't know. I don't think that my things disable me so that I'm not functioning. It would be so much easier not to have to work through moans and groans and aches and pains

and not being able to feel my feet. But that's okay. My mind is still good. And the most important thing, as you knew about the body, I don't care what happens to the shell, as long as my mind stays sharp, I can maintain an easy personality with people and be productive. That's all. If I can be productive, I don't care what happens to this body. Well, God, not too much. But you know, yeah, I have a lot of health problems.

Jessica: Since you mentioned, you told me your grandmother was a Russian Jew.

Maureen: I am Jewish. I was confirmed. I showed you some pictures. My father was a Roman-Catholic Italian. He still is a practicing Catholic. He just went back to it lately. I guess if I have to relate to anything, I relate to a universal God and not just Jesus Christ as God. So I guess that kind of makes me Jewish. But I don't, you know, I don't adhere like to the real religious Jews, like you don't eat ham and stuff like that. Or the kosher laws. I look at religion as a common sense operation. The things that we're, like the kosher laws like back five thousand, six thousand years ago, there was a reason for it. You had wooden dishes and you had your plumbing so that when you would cook beef, the grease would get down and when you would have milk, the milk and the grease would mix. So they had separate bowls. And to me, that was necessary at that time. Today, they're just kosher laws which mean clean

laws. They're not laws of God. They're laws of man to preserve themselves. God's laws, maybe the Ten Commandments. I...I...the Christians, the Jews and a lot of other, you know, religions believe in the Ten Commandments. And if in truth, Moses brought these down in the Old Testament, they're good, even there isn't a God. Whoever thought of them it was really good.

I happen to believe there is a God. I believe there is a master plan. I see so many things happening. Just recently...oh, my roommate's mother is dying and we've been coping with this now for too long. But what happened, our friends came in from Florida and we hired this girl to come on Wednesday and we were gonna go and we ran around and everything like that. Well, her mother, that was the day that she got very bad, slipped into a coma, we had to be there. So what happens that morning? There's this horrendous snow storm, we, the girl couldn't get in, we couldn't basically get out, who wants to go running around. It's just like God kept us there, and then all these things started happening. We were there during the crisis to make the decision and not a stranger sitting there. And if you don't think that I thought after we had eighty degrees on Tuesday and we have twenty-one inches in my backyard basically on Wednesday, that there was a reason for that. Now, maybe there is. Maybe there's a, what do you call it? A weather reasons. I, personally, there's so many things that have happened in my life, I personally know that there's someone there that guides us. And things happen,

many times for a reason. They're all been, in my cases, something that's help me make a decision a nice thing.

So, everyday I could relate so many stories, so many God stories, to you. I don't know if there's a God. I believe that, or a supreme being. But I believe that there has to be something greater than myself in this universe. And if I want to call them God, that's okay. If you want to him them Jesus, that's okay. Mohammed, you know, whatever a person.... The only thing that bothers me is someone once said it was religion that kept the masses in check. That if you were not afraid of punishment for the things that you would do in this life, or do, it's like the law. If, I guess I would go rob a bank if I did, if I didn't mind spending the rest of my life in jail. It's the punishment aspect. And religion is like that. It gives you some rules and it says if you break these rules, things will happen. So even if they don't happen, and we don't know about it, it does keep the masses in check. Even at that, it doesn't, men, man I heard, is the only living organism that doesn't kill like for food or for protection, that just kills to kill. Animals when they kill, it's either out of fear for themselves or if they're hungary or something like that. Man can have no reason to blow the head off another person. Isn't that exciting to know that we are the superior organisms and we kill for no reason.

So, I do believe that there is a God or something, out there. Yeah, yeah. They indoctrinated me when I was kid to go to temple with my great-grandfather, who's

really nice. Like we had a Christmas tree. So my grandfather used to call it a Hanukkah bush, my great-grandfather. What's the difference? A tree is a tree. He never got, my great-grandfather never got upset. He thought all people had a reason for being My great-grandmother, like an African-American guy would come because he was hungary in the neighborhood or someone would come, she would feed them. One guy didn't have shoes. My uncle was a real spiffy dresser, Willie, we called him Acey-Ducey. He looked like Edgar G. Robinson. And he had a pair of spectator shoes and they were new. And he went to the closet, he was getting dressed to go play his pinochle or something, he couldn't find his shoes. And he looked all over. He asked my great-aunt, his sisters, my great-grandmother. She gave, some guy came, he old shoes, she gave him his new shoes. So my family's always been like that, very giving. That's how we do. And it didn't make any difference, even though she couldn't speak English. When my great-grandfather died, a lot of the Italian people in our neighborhood and you know, when we were sitting Shiva in remembrance. My grandmother would bring a sweater to Tony,

was sitting out on the porch and she said, "Tony, Tony, it's cold, it's cold," gave him a sweater. She always made herself understood. Love and kindness is always understood, regardless of the language. My family was always very kind.

But my grandfather, here we were in temple, and all

the religious Orthodox Jews, the women would sit upstairs and the men would sit downstairs because you know, we're all second class citizens. And I, it was like it's thing where the little kids put like an apple in and a candle on this paper flag and they march around, see. And they march with the five books of Moses. They have these real beautiful color covers with velvet and things. The men in the congregation carry and the kids you know, carry their little flag. But then the little boy sit downstairs and the little girls go upstairs with their mother, see. But my great-grandfather, I was the only thing I had, I was the apple of his eye, so he let me sit right next to him. And they would say to him, "Herschel, what is this girl doing this?" in Jewish and Hebrew. He says, "None of your business. She sits wherever she wants to sit." He was about four-foot three. And they those men. And I usually just sit there with my grandpa. I was as big as he was. I was five years old.

But those are my memories. I have some bad memories of religion. I went to Sunday School and I got confirmed. I won the honor of being the highest grade and everything. I gave the address. And I won a scholarship to go to a very wealthy synagogue in the Heights, you know, really wealthy. And I went there and all my life people would say, "Milicia, what kind of name's Milicia? It's not very Jewish sounding." And I would say, "It's my father's name." And they would say, "Well, what's your father's first name?" And I would say,

"Rocco." And that was like reverse discrimination. They didn't like that I didn't have a Jewish sounding name. And I heard that all my life. And then I went to this hotsy-totsy temple. I didn't know then the Rabbi's daughter, _____ was her last name. I walked in and they were calling names and she says, "Milicia, what kind of name is Milicia?" It was a bad day. And I explained it was just as good as a name like Miller or Steine or any, Levine or anything like that, perhaps a little better. So much better that I didn't belong there. And I started walking out and the Rabbi stopped me, "Where are you going?" And I said, "You know, you have to take your people and your prejudice and keep them." I said, "I cannot live in an environment with so much negativism and so much hate." I said, "All my life I heard that Jews were discriminated against. We certainly do a hell of a lot of discriminating." And I walked out, and I never went back. So I never taught Sunday School. But I do teach at Leatherwood Methodist Church, at Bonnie's mother's church, I used to teach Sunday School. Because I know the pretty well.

I hate prejudice, wherever I see it. And it's like with the African-Americans. They say that people are prejudice against them. Well, there's a lot of reverse discrimination, where they're prejudiced against the white people that I honestly believe that. There's so much hate in this world. You know, brother against brother, people against people. That must be for a

reason. It must be for a reason. I wish I would know it.

Jessica: You talk about hitting prejudice, was it hard as a woman to go to college when a lot of women weren't...?

Maureen: No, no. I was in a field of broadcasting where I was the only woman that would sit in a class, the technical classes, camera classes. There was one other woman in the theater field in the t.v. field. She was like a real frail thing with real long nails. She would wear purple all the time and black and had really, she was really weird. And she was in some of the classes. But the guys seemingly never...I never asked them to carry the camera, if it was my turn I could carry it. I was a big girl. The one thing I learned is that if they felt a little reticent.... And even in shop in theater...[audio problems]...women, that if you do your job, that they would respect you. No, no problem.

Jessica: You have a reputation for being able to handle everyone and everything. Is there anything you're intimidated by? Or afraid of?

Maureen: No, but I have a tremendous lot of insecurities that aren't obvious. I...I...if I think I'm not wanted or something...abandonment...I don't know. Sometimes I get really frightened, yeah, I have my moments. Yeah,

I'm really an insecure person. It's not that I don't think I know what I'm doing and everything. It's just that sometimes you look around and go, "Whew! it's going awfully fast." But I'd rather...when I was younger I wouldn't try as much. My philosophy was if you weren't going to be successful, don't do it. Because I never wanted to fail. Now my philosophy is the only failure is not trying. It came with age. It came with the security of knowing that I just have a few...what are they gonna do? Fire me? I have a few more years left. Obviously, I have people in high places that kind of still like me. I try to give them rational reasons for what I would like to do. If they say yes and they say yes a lot around here for me, that's good. And if they say no, I respect them. I always ask them if I can go and ask somebody else. But I know, I know a no. If I had not gotten a raise in you know, maybe a dime or a nickel or something, or no raise at all, I would understand that this means now the kids have a raise, too. And I hate that. I'm going to try to make the money so that we don't have to do that anymore. But I really do need the money. I was fifty thousand dollars over budget. You have to understand that's a tremendous lot, amount of money. But you know why I am. Because you say to me, "Could I have twenty instead of ten hours?" And I say, "Yeah." But you're not the only one. There are a lot of kids we're helping. And they help us. So the money goes back to the kids. If you pay a buck extra, rest assured in this department you make your buck back.

Jessica: You have accomplished so much. What...do you want to accomplish in the future?

Maureen: I never, I never...I never thought about this. Uh...I really kind of let the guys push me around here. Your dad comes in with projects...[audio problems]...and James comes in with dreams more than projects. And Susie, I just kind of let the people tell me what they think they need. And if I can help them make it reality, I do. I...don't really have any ambitions. I guess I would like to go to Florida. I would like to move into the condo and decorate it the way I want to. Maybe work a little bit at the Performing Arts Center, see what the hell's going on down there. Or maybe not. I don't know. Do I have to have any? (no) I always said if you don't have any, then you're dead. Sometimes just getting up in the morning is enough to make me realize I have my whole day ahead of me.

No, you know what I said, if I...I can't die because I'm so far behind. I told the dean this, I'm so far behind, it'll take me until I'm ninety to catch up. And that's just on what I'm not doing. I mean, your dad's handing me stuff and he said, "I handed this in already." I'm going, oh, God, I have a thirty-two page vita and I don't know what the hell I'm doing. It was due yesterday. They'll maybe get it Monday. I have two proposals that were due the first. Maybe they'll get 'em next week, maybe they won't. Maybe I don't need the five

thousand dollars, that I have to do so much work. I try to tell this committee, we do so much all the time that what the heck's special in my department is everyday life here is special. We are growing in such a way, it's so exciting to see what's happening. We have children's theater, we have dinner theater, we cooperate here, we...what the heck do I have to do to show that we're a little bit better than everything else that's happening? I don't know. I think we're doing alright. I don't need the five.... And I may just say that on next Friday, I don't need your five thousand dollars. I don't need any grant, I don't want to do this. I might just say that. We work in strange ways. Theater people just work in strange ways. And I like what I do. But I don't like to be beholding to anyone for a lousy five thousand dollars. I'd pay 'em five thousand dollars to get off my back.

Jessica: Is there anything we haven't touched on you would like to be included?

Maureen: No, no. No, I had a great childhood, though. It seems like everything ended when my mother died, but it didn't. Really good love, a lot of support. A lot of handling problems in a reasonable way. Not letting the illness.... Being a doctor, an important thing that you have to learn about your patients, is that you should not let the illness take over their lives to the point that it disables them in many ways. And this happens, sometimes people are sick for so long that they have kind

of an attitude that they'll never get well. They'll never be able to...I think the thing is that you have to do what you can do now and not worry about whether you're gonna get well or not. If you get well, that's fine. And if you don't, why can't you be productive within the realm that you're there? And that's so important, to give your patients a positive attitude. I'm still alive, I can accomplish things. That's it.

Jessica: Well, I'll let you get back to work. Thanks for making the time for me.

END OF INTERVIEW