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Jinx McCombs Oral History Interview

Jinx McCombs
Raymond College

Lorenzo Spaccarelli
Holt-Atherton Special Collections, University of the Pacific

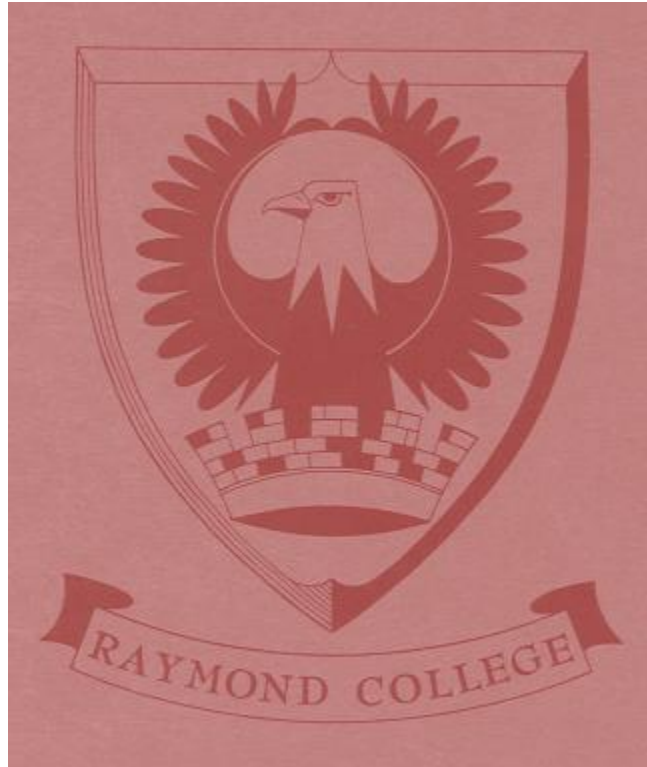
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RAYMOND COLLEGE PROJECT ORAL HISTORIES
UNIVERSITY OF THE PACIFIC ARCHIVES



Jinx McCombs (1962-1965)
Raymond College Student

March 8, 2023

By Lorenzo Spaccarelli

Transcription by Lorenzo Spaccarelli University of the Pacific,
Department of Special Collections, Library

Jinx McCombs Interview

Transcribed by: Lorenzo Spaccarelli

Lorenzo Spaccarelli: Hello, my name is Lorenzo Spaccarelli. I am a third-year history major at the University of the Pacific, and I am interviewing Jinx McCombs from my apartment on Pacific's Stockton campus. So I'm now going to turn it over and ask you a couple questions. So can you tell me your name, please, for the record?

Jinx McCombs: McCombs.

Spaccarelli: Okay, sounds great. And today's date is March 8, 2023. And we're recording, the interview is taking place over Zoom, and you are where?

McCombs: I'm on the Mendocino Coast in California, at my home.

Spaccarelli: Sounds great. Okay, first question to really get into it. What years did you attend Raymond?

McCombs: I was in the first class that started in the fall of 1962, and I graduated with that class in June of 1965.

Spaccarelli: Perfect. Okay. And so what was behind your choice in attending Raymond?

McCombs: The immediate inspiration was that Dr. Martin, who was the provost, and Dr. Peckham, the dean of student life, did a presentation about Raymond in Bakersfield, which was the closest big city to the little town where I lived. And my mother read about it and said, I think you're going to be interested in this. And so I went with her. And indeed, I was interested. It sounded like just the sort of thing I wanted to find. So then I applied and they accepted me. And that was it.

Spaccarelli: Nice. Did you get a chance, I know some people have mentioned that they got to visit Raymond before. Did you get to visit Raymond before you were on campus? Before you started officially, I mean?

McCombs: Yes. I had been to the Pacific campus quite a few times because my mom was fairly active with Methodist Church. And they held annual conference there at that time. And so I can't even remember, it's been a long time, whether I had visited her while she was there, whether there were other kinds of events that I went to. My best recollection is that I had not seen the quadrangle until I arrived, you know, ready to move in and go to freshman camp. I think that's right.

Spaccarelli: OK. And then we sort of already touched on this, but... Well, not really. What were your first impressions of Raymond College? What did you think when you got there?

McCombs: Well, I guess my first impressions were from that presentation I had heard. I love the idea that it was intellectually challenging. I love the idea of the interrelationship of subject matter and the close community. I had an older brother who went to Caltech, five years older than I was. So I had been to Caltech. So I had seen besides the Pacific campus, excuse me, besides the Pacific campus, I had seen another, at least that other classic college campus. And coming from a little town out in the middle of the valley, I was very impressed with that. The classic look of it. And I wanted to be part of that.

Spaccarelli: That's fair. But in terms of, you know, when you got there, when you started getting engaged with the classes, did it feel like, did it feel like... How did it feel, when you started getting into it?

McCombs: Okay, well, the very first thing that happened, I think we were there, maybe an hour or two, maybe long enough to leave our personal belongings in the dormitory. And then we loaded on buses and went up to Lake Tahoe for freshman camp. And we were the first class. So it was, I think there were 65 of us, and maybe eight or 10 faculty members and we went to a campground in, at Lake Tahoe and spent the next, seems to me it was about a week but might have been four days or something with seminars, and of course a lot of socializing too. But the seminars were, they were putting out their appealing, interesting, challenging ideas and across a range of issues, the range of the liberal arts. So language, English language, I don't remember any other languages at freshman camp, literature, economics, world history. One of the, one of the things I remember was there was a lecture, and one of the faculty members who gave it made a distinction between connotation and denotation in subject matter, and it was, I mean it was, I knew the words, it was a distinction I sort of had thought about but hadn't... it was very impressive to me that that was, that was a fairly simple idea and yet it was an idea that had implications that fit across many kinds of subject matter and... And my reaction was hey, this is what I came for. I want this kind of new ideas, stimulation, chance to talk with other people who are interested in ideas. And I suppose that was the other thing about freshman camp was here was a chance to interact with a whole group of people who also thought that denotation and connotation were worth talking about. And in my little agricultural town high school, I might have been able to find one other person who was interested but here were a whole batch of other people who were interested, so I was signed on.

Spaccarelli: You felt at home.

McCombs: Yes.

Spaccarelli: Nice. And then getting into, you know, the Raymond experience. Were there memorable events that stood out to you over the course of your time at Raymond, like, for example, high tables, or, you know, charity events or events where, a Pacific event or someth- anything in particular that stood out?

McCombs: The whole style of the way the college operated was, was great. That we had our, we had three classes a day with a one hour, full hour for the class then a 15 minute break between, while we usually moved to a different place. And quite often, during the 15 minutes, the conversation we'd be continuing as we walked out across the quad to the next class. It was, it was, you know, sparks flying, it was very stimulating, exciting, interesting place to be. High tables were, were, they were not as important in a way, as the, as the basic courses, but they were always, well at least, almost always, very interesting, somebody that we might have heard about had had a chance to hear them speak in person and ask questions. And it was a big range of people. (There) was a jazz trumpeter. A jazz trumpeter, an academic from San Francisco, who was politically very involved, Hasegawa. Anyway, you know the names. 50 years later, the names are not all there but anyway that was, you know, that was interesting. It- one of the things that I think I was too young to understand was that people from the community came in to attend high table. And, um, I'm afraid we were not as respectful as we could and should have been to... We were buzzing with all that we were learning and tended to think that they were a little lax in their thinking, and a little casual or not well-focused in questions and comments. I remember there was somebody that we referred to among ourselves as "old 40 years a teacher", because she introduced herself that way when she started and, you know, now that some of us have been 40 years a teacher, we have a better sense that that was a phrase that deserved some respect. At the time we just thought it was comical.

Spaccarelli: Yeah. Okay. And when you say people outside the community are you saying outside Raymond or like other Pacific people or you're saying like Stocktonians?

McCombs: Stocktonians is what I was thinking of, although there certainly were people from elsewhere on campus. One of the things that I hadn't thought of ahead of time was that there was a certain amount of tension between Raymond College and College of Pacific. I think a lot of people felt that these Raymond hothouse flowers were being brought in, catered to and treated as super special, and naturally they resented that. So, we encountered some hostility when we went out to the other parts of the campus that we didn't expect. And some of us, I think, were better than others at finding ways to make connections and start to bridge that gap. And not everybody, there were welcoming people on the campus as a whole too.

Spaccarelli: Yeah. Well, that, that, you know, that gets right into the next question. So if you want to elaborate any further, do you remember any controversies during your time at Raymond? And that includes like between well, between the cluster colleges, for your time it was only going to be Raymond and Covell right, between the cluster colleges and the university and like between administrators, any sort of, you know, controversies.

McCombs: There were some personal events that happened and I'm not sure I want to talk about those because most of them involve personal histories. We mostly kind of rode through those and and got to the other side of them. If you talk to many people from my era, you probably have heard that Dr. Peckham was...

Spaccarelli: Strict.

McCombs: Was seen as a villain by a great many people. I think in part, that was a role that he was given, to be the tough, the good cop, bad cop that Dr. Martin was the good administrator who was funny and charming and a little bit outrageous and Dr. Peckham was the one who came in to establish the rules. And it may be that that fit Dr. Peckham's personality. I have heard stories from other people that were there when I was, that really shocked me because I didn't have any idea that there were some intrusive punitive measures that happened that I really wasn't aware of. It was a very different time in the early 60s. In a lot of ways, it was still the 50s, it was still, there were still fairly rigid social expectations that were just beginning to come apart. And maybe as they came apart, that created extra conflict. You know, in some ways, not unlike our time that, although it never, never became that kind of two camps hostility that we're seeing in the country right now, but I think there was a tendency for, there was a strong right-wing general community in California at that time. And there was a newspaper that subscribed, that that was a spokesperson or a spokespaper for that. And they were looking for any bad news about Raymond College that they could tell. And there, they found some. So we felt somewhat besieged. But I think, I think most of the time, they kept us terribly busy, we had a huge reading list. And the idea at that time was that you didn't use textbooks, you used original sources. So we would have, you know, 10 books to read for this class and 12 books to read for that class and it... If you actually read them, and I did my best, that could soak up a lot of time. Wrote papers, I was always a bit of a night person and that was my first chance to actually live it. And so I was often up well past midnight. You know, finishing writing what I would be turning in at 8:30 in the morning. And I would be surprised to read it again and say, Oh, that's not bad actually.

Spaccarelli: (Chuckles) Well, sounds great, actually that sounds like a blast, but I, and I guess the other thing is, you're talking about these restrictive, like, social norms of behavior. My understanding is, maybe this is a little bit after your time, I don't know, but Raymond was one of the leaders, led some of the pushes against those restrictive limitations.

McCombs: Really, I think, very true. What happened at the time was, you know, women's hours across the campus were that you had to be in the dorm, I think originally it was something like 8pm. And, you know, if you were going to be outside of the dorm after 8pm you had to get a pass, and you could only get so many passes per term, that sort of thing. So, the Raymond women, the men didn't have those restrictions but the women did...

Spaccarelli: Of course, right? (throws hands up in gesture of bafflement)

McCombs: (laughing) Yeah... So the women, you know, stood their ground and got, first probably that it would be 9:30pm instead of eight and COP women were furious. Why do those girls get a privilege that we don't have? And we kept saying, you know, go work for it. If we got it, you can get it. And that was what happened and, what, are you still there?

Spaccarelli: Yeah, still here.

McCombs: Okay, I'm not sure what happened to the picture. It'll probably be back. Anyway, that was what happened that, you know, gradually, Raymond women had fewer and fewer restrictions, and then COP had fewer and fewer restrictions. And of course within an enormously, I mean within the, I'd say four years of the beginning of Raymond, almost all of those restrictions disappeared, but we had a student government president or whatever term we used, who was asked to leave Raymond, because he had climbed up on the balcony roof to have an after-hours visit with his, with his beloved. And I mean, you know, maybe he was in the room, maybe not. Anyway, he, one event, he was asked to leave the college. Within two years after that, I know there was a couple that was living together in the dorm. And, you know, officially people didn't know that but, but the change in that short of time. Of course it was happening much more widely than just at the college, but it was a very wide divergence.

Spaccarelli: Yeah, that makes sense. Yeah, no, I mean it was the 60s, big transformation between the beginning and the end.

McCombs: Yes.

Spaccarelli: But, to follow up with that, just a quick question, clarifying. When you say student president, are you talking about like student government within Raymond or are you talking about Pacific as a whole?

McCombs: No, within Raymond.

Spaccarelli: Okay, interesting.

McCombs: When, when we were, early on, in the very first year, deciding whether we were going to have a student government, and if so, what would its structure be and how would it be organized, and I argued that the top position for the Raymond student government should be called the grand high grasshopper, because I thought that would be a good way of keeping it from being taken too seriously. I didn't win on that, I don't remember..

Spaccarelli: (Laughs)

McCombs: ...the president or the, whatever, but I still think it was a good idea.

Spaccarelli: Sounds like a good idea. Cool. Okay, so yeah so big, big changes, controversies definitely. And I guess then another thing I'd say just like, you know, to go along with some of the research I've done myself as I'm going through this project. Dr. Martin. My understanding was that he was pretty, conservative doesn't seem like quite the right word, but like he had standards for what he expected, how he expected students to behave. Did that apply to those, you know... how did he react when students were pushing those boundaries?

McCombs: I don't remember Dr. Martin taking much position on that. I, in fact, he, he enjoyed being outrageous. He was intellectually stimulating, he, what was the phrase? I mean there were several phrases that were about intense academic commitment. And, and those I think came from Dr. Martin. I remember one Christmas, when we were in the common room, a bunch of us gathered, and there were these big round tables that you know had a support under the center of the table, and Dr. Martin standing on one of those tables and giving a kind of a wild and crazy speech, that was satire and funny and rocking the table back and forth and there was always the possibility he was going to suddenly go falling off and, and, and we were, we were enraptured. Here was this man of such dignity and such intellectual worth, who would share that kind of a silly moment with us. Oh, another story, you may have heard this from someone else, but at one high table- and high table in those days, the, the students all came in, found their seats in the great hall. And then, after all the students were seated, except one or two students who had been honored by being invited to join the faculty at the high table. Then all the faculty led by Dr. Martin marched in, in robes, through the dining room, up to the high table, and then Dr. Martin would give the invocation, and then we would sit down and the food would begin. Well of course students couldn't totally resist that. So- and some of us waited tables, that was one of the jobs we could hold to make a little side money. So one high table- it had been whispered about, some of us knew- when the faculty arrived at the high table, in each of the fancy water goblets, there was a little goldfish swimming. And I'm sure they all saw as soon as they got to the table, but nothing was said, Dr. Martin gave the invocation with his usual dignity. And then he reached down and picked up his water goblet, held it up so anybody who had missed knowing what it was would have a chance to see, and drained it. And set it down and then the high table went on. So, you know, there was a lot of hero worship. I certainly I, I thought, you know, what a great man, he was. And I think not everybody was completely as convinced as I was, but I think overall, in our first classes, there was really a lot of admiration for Dr. Martin. And then, I can't remember, he stayed a year or two beyond 1965 when we graduated, and then Dr. Kolker came in, who I think was much more approachable, a different dramatic style, and he was very much beloved.

Spaccarelli: Yeah, I, what I've learned is that the provosts in Raymond were pretty solid. Just generally, a lot of student admiration, from what I've heard.

McCombs: Yes.

Spaccarelli: So, yeah.

McCombs: I think that's true.

Spaccarelli: Okay, then. Next, so what are your thoughts on the educational style of the Raymond teaching philosophy?

McCombs: It could have been designed exactly for me.

Spaccarelli: (Chuckles)

McCombs: I thought about that, I came from, I came from a working class intellectual family. We read widely, we read a lot, but we didn't have a sense of, what was standard, what was, what was most important, I mean I think pretty good judgment on the whole, but for me the opportunity to come in and say okay, here is a map of, of intellectual issues of our time. And of how they interact with each other. And the encouragement to have conversations that were vigorous and exciting and lively, but not, almost never, you know, angry or attacking. I mean I wish, I wish that tradition was around these days, that it wasn't that people didn't disagree. But people listened to each other and tended to hold each other to an honest presentation of what they really thought, rather than just trying to score points or cut down others. I know that there were many people who didn't like the fact that we did, you know, we did humanities, we did social sciences, and we did hard sciences. It was, it was... I happen to be able to cover the span. I was not, I mean my interests were primarily social sciences and humanities, but having my father and my older brother who were strongly interested in sciences and math, I had been made literate. And so, so I could, I could handle it. I think there were people who just weren't ready to go there. And they felt like failures because they could do wonderful work on these other areas, but they were being really, feeling like failures on the, on the math or sciences or both. I think the faculty in those subjects did a great job of reaching out. But I know there were, there was a lot of pain for some people about that and there was really no way of getting away from it. Maybe that was part of the reason why they changed the curriculum and let students make much more choice because there were some, you know, some really good students who just couldn't manage the whole range. And that was a loss to the community as a whole. I said this in one of my emails to you that the amazing thing was, it seemed like- I wasn't there for the transformation. But it was, and it was many years later when we started having get togethers of former Raymond students across all these decades that the- all these, probably seems like a short time now that it existed. But anyway, the decades when things had changed drastically. And the amazing thing was that we early years, you know, wrapped in our, our straight jackets and narrowly clobbered into this system. And the later years when, hey, study whatever catches your attention and decide for yourselves what's a success. We all had so much in common. And there really was very little sense- I mean part of it was, of course, that it hadn't really been as different as the cliché seemed and there were very serious students throughout the time of Raymond. And there were pretty free thinkers from the beginning. So, I think the, the common thread was this interest in talking to each other, honestly, and appreciating each other's ideas, learning from someone who had a different point of view. At one time, I, we had a get-together of people from across quite a few of the years. And I happened to talk to somebody who had been waiting tables, after the end of it, who I knew. And he said to me, I have never heard people talk so passionately and so peacefully. And, but that, that was Raymond, really a characteristic.

Spaccarelli: Makes sense. Yeah. That was all fantastic. But, I mean, do you want to go, if you're interested, do you want to go more in depth about how that, you know, that philosophy changed over time and to your knowledge within Raymond and, you know, how therefore the curriculum changed. You said it became more flexible, but...

McCombs: I only know what I heard from others, really, because I wasn't there. I mean, I have, I have heard people talk about being able to design their own curriculum. Choose what subjects. I, I think that was fairly late in the Raymond time but I'm not really sure. During the time I was there it still was the very prescribed curriculum. And, you know, we had, we had no exams, we- well, in math, and I think in some of the science courses, they did some exams, but in other courses, you did not take exams during the year. And at the end of the year, you had comprehensive examinations. So you sat down and wrote essay responses to questions that were designed to cross academic boundaries. And so it was, it was quite intense. We had freshmen comprehensives over everything from our freshman year, then none at the end of our second year, and then at the end of the senior year, you did senior comprehensives which could cover anything anywhere in the, in the three year curriculum.

Spaccarelli: Sounds intense.

McCombs: It was intense. You know, we were getting together for seminars at the end of our senior year with people that we figured were the best students in these various subjects coaching everybody else and trying to get ourselves up to speed for those exams. But how, how and how fast it changed after that, I don't really have much sense. I have more of a sense of how fast it changed socially.

Spaccarelli: No, but that's great. And that's something that I can also talk with more about, you know, alums from later years too, who I'll be talking with. Okay, so next question, who were the individuals that Raymond that were most memorable, memorable to you and why?

McCombs: Okay. I would have to say Mike Wagner. Faculty member. I know he was not as beloved among later year students as he was for us but he was, he was so deeply involved in his field, and so joyous in helping us see and discover what there was to learn about it. There's a photograph which you may have seen, it's- it must have been, you know, the Narenhado was the yearbook for for UOP. So it must be Narenhado 1963, I would guess, '63 or '64. But it's a picture of Mike standing in front of a class and he is so intense on the point he is making (gestures with hands), and it was wonderful to be a part of that and to, to catch his enthusiasm. His field was economics, and it wasn't... I had had a couple of course- the faculty crossed lines and taught other things besides their most particular field. So I had had a course with Mike, and I knew I was going to be having economics with Mike in my second year, and I was terrified because eco- no interest to me. I so admired him, and I thought, what is this going to be like when he's... It's the thing he loves best and it's the thing I'm totally bored by, money. I don't care about money. Fortunately, it turned out, you know, I learned a lot, and, and it wasn't. It wasn't just. I mean it wasn't how to make money, that wasn't the point.

Spaccarelli: It's not a business class.

McCombs: And what, what does money, what does money do to the way the culture operates in the way the government operates and how can you think about it in different ways- I mean I loved the class in fact, but it was hard. Okay, so certainly Mike was not the only... There was a poet named Paul Ramsey, who was, you know, he might not even have been there our first year. Anyway, Paul was a

midwesterner. He was soft spoken. He was low key. He was brilliant, as almost all our faculty were. He was a wonderful figure that I will never forget. Neil Lark, who was a physicist on faculty, just a wonderfully kind man who was dealing with the issue that he had a lot of students who were not very interested in physics, and he found ways to reach out to people. And I talked about Martin. I guess those are, you know, I could, I could keep going but I think those are probably the most vivid memories.

Spaccarelli: Nice. Yeah, no, those are great and Mike comes up all the time.

McCombs: I- from anybody in the first years, you were going to hear about Mike, I'm sure.

Spaccarelli: Yeah, yeah, no, truly. And apparently they wanted him to. He wanted everybody to call him Mike. Did I hear that correctly?

McCombs: Of course, at the beginning, everybody was a PhD on the faculty, and that he said to us, you know, don't call me Dr. Wagner, call me Mike and, and, you know, that was a door opener.

Spaccarelli: Right.

McCombs: Appreciated. I remember, Mike was- a lot of the faculty were maybe, at most 10 years older than we were, they had gone through, gotten their PhDs and for many of them, it was one of the first positions they had. And Mike was maybe 30 years older than we were.

Spaccarelli: Okay.

McCombs: And he was one of the faculty members that lived in one of the apartments in the dorms. So he was there all the time. And so he had students coming around, knocking on his door at night with, you know, terrible dilemmas that they needed Mike's caring and understanding. And thinking back on it, you know what, I don't think they kept up the faculty living in, in the dorms for very long because, even Mike, who was so generous with his time and energy, that had to have gotten to be too much.

Spaccarelli: Yeah, yeah, I believe that that ended, pretty, pretty soon. Yeah. Okay, cool. The next is, I guess, what, what issues were you involved with that stood out in your mind as important to the growth and development of Raymond and, you know, you as a Raymond student.

McCombs: I was not very active with student government or really a lot of extracurricular- there was a wonderful drama activity going on. And I decided, I think, big mistake, but I decided I needed to concentrate on academics. And so I was never in any of the plays that were produced. The one thing I did get involved with there was Band Frolic, I don't know if Band Frolic has survived as a Pacific tradition, but...

Spaccarelli: Unfortunately not. We still have talent shows; it's not quite the same thing from what I hear.

McCombs: Yeah. Well, Band Frolic. Of course it was new to us when we were freshmen, we had very little input about what was usual but each living group would put together a skit that was maybe 10-15 minutes long, with music usually, and perform it for the community so the university and anybody who cared to attend. So I, I always enjoyed doing new words to old songs, so I got involved in, not- partly the script but more of the songs. So I think the very first number was from Hello Dolly. And the whole dance troupe came out and the song was, um (breaks into song) COP. It's really us, Raymond College, semper fillius. Your straight life is on the skids tonight, you are out with Raymond kids tonight! (stops singing) and so on.

Spaccarelli: (Chortling) Amazing.

McCombs: It began, you know, it was a campus, college scene, and went off into a somewhat, it was before psychedelics were serious, but somewhat psychedelic scene that went to a bubble dancer and then a chanteuse singing a naughty song, and then a belly dancer who was male, and it ended up with a strip tease, and then the curtain came down. So apparently that was going a little bit far...

Spaccarelli: (Chuckles)

McCombs: ... at Pacific. But we didn't know, so we just did what we thought would be entertaining.

Spaccarelli: I bet it was. It sounds fun.

McCombs: It was fun.

Spaccarelli: Oh, goodness. Wow. Cool. No, that's fantastic. Yeah, that's really amazing. So yeah, then the next question. Unless you want to go more into Band Frolic? Did you want to talk more about that?

McCombs: No, I'll let it go at that.

Spaccarelli: Okay, sounds great.

McCombs: I was the strip teaser, so that did tend to mark it in my memory. (Chuckles)

Spaccarelli: That would make sense. (Laughing) Oh goodness. Sounds just- sounds like a blast but yeah, then my next question is about, more about the high tables. So, how important were the Raymond high tables, that you got a chance to see, in informing the discussion that was had within Raymond about stuff like civil rights, feminism, community activism?

McCombs: I would say that in, at least for the first year or two, the, the high tables tended to be more intellectual. I think that, I mean, certainly we were interested in the whole civil rights movement. On a personal level, interested in feminism and making changes. I don't remember... Oh, Dick Gregory spoke,

so that was certainly someone who talked about civil rights. I guess those are memories that a lot have gotten away from me, I remember the ceremony. I remember the sense of ritual. And I remember they were stimulating, at the time. But I can't say, I remember one. Okay. I remember one high table that was probably near the end, and Hugh Wadman, who was faculty, did a presentation in which he talked about how did life ever originate on earth in the beginning, and that you had a planet with almost no atmosphere, you had cosmic rays coming in, you had all kinds of chemicals and elements. And, and all of that brutal, brutal stirring of things together and bombardment created all sorts of changes, which eventually resulted in something going from non organic to organic and, and what I took away from that, and I'm not sure that he intended it. Whether he said it I don't remember. But I had lived since I was probably 11 or 12, with the idea that there was going to be a nuclear war, that that was probably how things would end for me. And, and it would be the end of everything. And I listened to that and said, it wouldn't be the end of everything. Even if we bomb the planet back to, you know, mud and chemicals. Probably the process, at least would have a chance of starting again. There could be new life, somebody else might do it better. And so, you know, it was a, it was a very optimistic experience for me. One of, I'm sure one of many new ideas, but that was one I remember.

Spaccarelli: Well, that is a very optimistic thought, and hey, you know, another positive, so far so good on the dying from nuclear war thing.

McCombs: You know, there was a point where I realized I hadn't been worrying about that. Those, those, I mean what happened was, something happened and we started worrying again. And then I realized, wow, I hadn't had that hanging over my shoulder for a long time, years and years. Then oh, here it is back again.

Spaccarelli: Yeah. Okay, well that's fascinating. Here we are, last couple of questions here. I don't want to take too much more of your time. So, has Raymond College met your expectations as an institution as an education and, you know, why or why not?

McCombs: I am enormously grateful to Raymond College, I feel like my life has been much, much richer for having had that experience. One of the things it did was make me a generalist. And I, I'm not sure, maybe I would have been a generalist anyway, but to respect the crossing of boundaries. And that was certainly nurtured at Raymond. I feel like I could not have had a better undergraduate education. And I've heard this from other Raymond people too, that, most of us say, you know, any other academic course we took, didn't measure up very well to what happened at Raymond.

Spaccarelli: Yeah, that is a strong endorsement if ever there was one. So, um, then my next question is, what contributions did you feel Raymond made to the local community, to Stockton? Was there much?

McCombs: I believe there were some efforts beginning to be made, I think the fact that special events, high tables and so forth, were usually open to the community. I think there was some effort made to publicize so that people who were interested would know and could come, in spite of the snotty little students who looked down their nose sometimes. But I think the, the college didn't encourage that

attitude. And I think, I think we grew out of it fairly soon, I hope so. I think that the strong impulse for community outreach hadn't really happened yet, during the time I was there. And I've, for things I've seen of both publicity from the university and other later Raymond people talking about what they did. I think that became much more of a focus later on, but we were an ivory tower to a fair degree in those first years.

Spaccarelli: Yeah.

McCombs: At least, that's how it seems to me now. I think of Toni Novak who was a good friend who went to the south to take part in civil rights marches and so she might give you an entirely different sense.

Spaccarelli: I'll reach out.

McCombs: Yeah, good. Toni is a fascinating person.

Spaccarelli: Okay, sounds good. Then you know, last two here, almost done here so the last, second to last one, how has your education at Raymond influenced your career and your life choices?

McCombs: Well, I happened to end up, not particularly by planning, but I ended up with a career as a probation officer. And that is a generalist position. I did it because I needed to find a job, it paid relatively well. I hated the idea of being a cop. And that was what I kind of assumed I would be asked to do. But it turned out that, at least, you didn't have to do that. And I, you know, there were a lot of things, in a way the probation officers were an arm of the court, who could explore issues that the judges wanted more information about. So you needed to know enough about the law to be able to speak to legal fine points, you needed to know enough about psychology to give some estimate of what was going on with somebody psychologically. Fairly often came up against medical details. You know, certainly, sociology played a big role. I think, unfortunately, the job of probation officer in most counties is probably no longer what it was when I did it. I did victim services program. I did child custody investigations. I did, of course, I did both adult and juvenile pre-sentence reports, supervised people on probation. And I, you know, did some special caseloads where I was running treatment groups, which were strictly, they could report to me in the office and sit across the desk. Or if they chose, they could take part in a treatment group. And that raised some interesting questions about, can treatment be really voluntary? You know, is it valid in those circumstances? I'm convinced that there were some people who got some real worth out of those groups, but not everybody. Anyway, so in that sense, for my career, it was a great background. And then, for the friends I made, not necessarily, I mean, I have friends that I'm still in touch with from Raymond, but that I could strike up conversations with people. You know, with many, Hugh Wadman again said he was- no, was it? Yeah. So he wasn't biology, he was chemistry, because he said he was teaching us conversational chemistry. And we could, you know, we could read a journal article or, and have enough understanding to be able to carry on a conversation and listen and understand. So all of that was good.

Spaccarelli: Fascinating. Fascinating. Okay, well, then this is the last question then. And that's simply what have we not covered? What have we not talked about that you still are wanting to talk about?

McCombs: I think I have talked enough. And I could, I could and have talked about Raymond College for hours and hours and hours, but I think it covers enough. If you decided you wanted to put two or three Raymond people together for an oral history interview, you would get something different and fascinating, I bet. So I will suggest that as a possibility. I know that's not the way it's usually done. I think not.

Spaccarelli: Not typically, but it's certainly possible. I'll have a conversation with the university archivist, the head archivist, if he's interested in doing such a thing. And I think it could be really interesting to consider some sort of, it could be over zoom as well, some sort of conversation with a couple students, perhaps, who are overlapping in years, and get their perspective, perhaps including yourself.

McCombs: Okay, well, I'd be game.

Spaccarelli: Sounds great. I, of course, that it's going to take- I'll see what I can do and we'll see if that happens soon. It might be fall semester, at this point, just logistics and planning that. But I'm a junior, so I'll be around next year and I'll probably be continuing in this role.

McCombs: Okay. Yeah, well I hope you have fun, it, it's a good group. Thank you, I have enjoyed this.

Spaccarelli: Thank you so much as well for your time, Mrs. McCombs, and I will stop the recording right now.

McCombs: Right.