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Mary Ann and Robert Guenzler

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Illinois Wesleyan University

Robert Guenzler '53 and '56

Illinois Wesleyan University

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Oral History Interview with Robert and Mary Ann Guenzler
In their Aurora, IL home, April 12, 2013

Marsha Guenzler-Stevens: This is Marsha Guenzler-Stevens interviewing her parents. Could you tell us your names please?

Mary Ann Guenzler: Mary Ann Hagemeyer -Guenzler, and I graduated in 1953.

Robert Guenzler: And I'm Robert A. "Bob" Guenzler, graduated in 1953.

Marsha: Okay. So let's start by you telling what you majored in and any particular things you were involved in that you were really fond of.

Mary Ann: I majored in Sociology and Psychology.

Marsha: Things you were involved in, anything in particular?

Mary Ann: Involved in—accompanied my husband-to-be—

Marsha: Ah!

Mary Ann: —for his recital. I also—I was taking organ lessons which I really enjoyed.

Marsha: You lived in?

Mary Ann: I lived at Pfeiffer—

[Robert coughs]

Mary Ann: —first year. I was only there two years. Lived in Pfeiffer my first year, and Blackstock my senior year. That was a great place.

Marsha: And both were just women?

Mary Ann: Yes.

Marsha: And...Dad, you were a?

Robert: A music education major, with vocal music as my emphasis and French horn as a minor, and I was very active in all the musical organizations except for women's chorus.

Marsha: Oh my God!

Robert: Yeah. [Chuckles] I was in every ensemble there was possible. And one of the few people who actually got a letter and a blanket for serving four years in the marching band under Maury Willis. [Chuckles]

Marsha: And you lived—

Robert: I lived—

Marsha: —where your first year?

Robert: I lived in Magill. It was the second year of that dorm—my freshman year, and then I was in Phi Mu Alpha Alpha Lambda Chapter house the remaining three years, and served there as a warden, as one of my titles and I was a chorus director, ended up being the treasurer my senior year.

Marsha: Alright so go back to those Phi Mu Alpha days. Any fond memories or things about Phi Mu Alpha that stand out in your mind?

Robert: Well we were unique in that we were a national organization and very few chapters had a house, so we were social. And also, being a part of the officers, I remember paying off the mortgage the first time. And that took place in the Chestnut Street property, and it was quite a highlight for us. We had meals; we had lunch and dinner, all the time, except for our senior year I think we were running financial loan problems. We had our food at the Memorial Center that year. Franklin Park was a great place for recreation. Lived next door to a—well, one house in between Hank Charles our voice professor, and the other side of the SAI house, which was handy. And Hank Charles was my church choir director, so I would get a ride to church on Sunday mornings to go sing in the choir.

Marsha: So are there—you started mentioning Hank Charles for both of you. Are there any staff or faculty that stick out in your mind as really significant in your development?

Robert: Ha-ha! Well, Henry Charles was my voice teacher and my sponsor. And also Dwight Drexler I had as an instructor in advanced analysis, and Hank also was my theory teacher. And my mentor, obviously, Lloyd Pfautsch was a very big influence as my choral director and my conducting teacher that I chose a career as a high school choral director and a church musician.

Marsha: So I'm helping Mary Ann—so Mary Ann, who was your significant faculty member?

Mary Ann: I went to Joliet Junior College my first two years, came down there as a junior. And Bob and I were up pretty steady-going at that time. But my top teacher my junior year was Dr. Samuel Ratcliffe who was the head of the Sociology and he was super. But he did retire that year.

Marsha: Hm!

Mary Ann: So then we got another professor who was very good.

Robert: It was Salzman.

Mary Ann: Thank you.

[Robert chuckles]

Marsha: Did you—were there staff members that you remember as being important to you? I think there was a Blackstock house mother?

Mary Ann: The house mothers at that time were very good, and...

Marsha: Mother Christ?

Mary Ann: Mother Christ was in Blackstock and she was wonderful.

Robert: Yeah, yeah.

Mary Ann: Stopped to talk with her every day, and she was just like a mother to us. She was very good. And Blackstock is quite a building, and we had a good group of women living there, and really liked it. I think it was unusual in that we slept up in the third floor—

Marsha: That's right.

Mary Ann: —in the cold dorm, and that meant that the windows were open all year. And so in the wintertime, you had heavy covers and once you got to that third floor you ran and got in bed, because it was cold—

Marsha: Some things—

Mary Ann: —and really wanted to get in. [Laughs]

Marsha: Some things never change. [Mary Ann laughs]

Marsha: We slept in the cold dorm at the AO Pi house and there was snow on your blankets sometimes.

[Mary Ann chuckles]

Robert: Same at the Phi Mu Alpha House. Except my senior year, when I was treasurer, I had a small room of my own.

Marsha: You didn't have to sleep in the dorm room?

Robert: I wasn't in the dorm; it was right off the dorm. There were two—there was a double deck bunk in there.

Marsha: Do you—you worked on campus too. Where'd you work when you were in school?

Mary Ann: I worked for the cafeteria just my first semester. And then I worked for Mrs. Carberry. And it was in the faculty office, and then we did all the printing and the typing and

especially things—tests, or anything the faculty wanted printing. And at that time, you printed with a—

Robert: Mimeograph.

Mary Ann: —Mimeograph or a...

Robert: Ditto master.

Mary Ann: Ditto master.

Marsha: Oh gosh they're the worst.

Mary Ann: And Ditto master, at one time, I did ruin a jumper with the ink that was the purple ink.

Marsha: And that was in Hedding? Is that where those offices were?

Robert: Kemp Hall.

Marsha: Kemp?

Mary Ann: Kemp.

Robert: That was the administrative—

Marsha: In the lower—oh.

Mary Ann: Kemp Hall right in the door.

Robert: I worked in the music library and the listening library sometimes. And also the big thing that helped me through school was being part of the Apollo Quartet for four years, which helped pay my tuition, and I got a good suit each year. And I also got to say that Maury Willis was a very important person. Only had him for two years; he was my horn teacher, and I had two different marching band directors because he was on a sabbatical at one point, but a very significant person.

Marsha: What's quite funny is, I'd turn around and we'd go to music camp and Uncle Maury would be our—

Robert: —running the camp.

Marsha: —camp director.

[Robert chuckles]

Marsha: So you were in the Apollo Quartet. So what was that like to travel all the time?

Robert: Well the way it was worked we were an arm of the music department and the admissions office. And we were on the road one day a week at least until our schedule cleared so that we would do high school assembly programs and programs from various organizations that were advertising for Illinois Wesleyan, and trying to recruit students and goodwill. And we would travel in the springtime as a group for two or three days like a little tour, a mini tour, sometimes with the collegiate choir. But it was a real good experience.

Marsha: Were you popular on campus as well?

Robert: I don't know if I was popular—

[Marsha chuckles]

Robert: —I was very busy. My professors, some of them, told me I was majoring in extracurricular activity. Worked in a homecoming committee all through it, was homecoming chairman my senior year, and in charge of the Greek sing, and was the chorus director for Phi Mu Alpha. That helped, too, of course.

Marsha: Are there any students from your era that you remember fondly? Your classmates, or particularly important—

Mary Ann: Jean Robert Gaines—

Marsha: —classmates?

Mary Ann: —was a close friend. We were roommates our senior year at Blackstock, and very good friends, and—

Robert: Her husband Chuck Gaines was my freshman roommate and he was in the Quartet the last two years of our times and Marlyn Ten Boer, Mugs as we knew him, good Dutchman from Fulton, Illinois, was a year ahead of me in school, but he was also in the Quartet, and Jim Smith and more Quartet people and all the different—people—were in the School of Music and the Co-Choir.

Marsha: And what's kind of crazy is next generation, the Gaines girls would be in school same time we were.

Mary Ann: I'm trying to say...out in the East, that just died, I mean West...

Marsha: The...Horn's?

Mary Ann: Mm.

Robert: M-hm.

Marsha: And then you—if you had to think about particular traditions or programs or events that happened during your time at Illinois Wesleyan that stand out, are there any traditions or other kinds of things you remember from your era that—?

Robert: One of the things that continues at Illinois Wesleyan now in the school of music that Lloyd Pfautsch began was a contemporary composers symposium. And they would bring in a famous composer, would write some works for you, the choir, the wind ensemble, or whatever it would be. And that began I think about my junior year, and has continued up to this day. Finding a good contemporary composer, promoting contemporary music creates venues.

Marsha: You mentioned Greek sing earlier—

Robert: Yeah.

Marsha: —what was that?

Robert: Well, at Homecoming time we had all the sororities and fraternities would have choruses. And they would compete as part of the—you had floats for parades and you had house decorations. Sometimes they went into cooperative activities—

Marsha: And the Greek sings?

Robert: —and the Greek sings—the independent also, besides the Greek—organizations had representative choruses. The SAIs, the DOs, and the Phi Mus would compete against themselves, since they were more music related and the others were not so highly polished, perhaps. [Chuckles] But they had a good time.

Marsha: Yeah! It sounds like somebody—

Robert: We probably—

Marsha: —at the school of music was no fool!

Robert: —had the worst house decorations and the worst floats in the world.

Mary Ann: Oh awful.

[Marsha and Robert chuckle]

Marsha: Well when you think about the traditions, Homecoming was certainly one of them. Were there other big traditions? Were there any dances or movies or any kind of thing?

Robert: Oh, we were talking about movies before Mary Ann came down to Bloomington. Since I didn't have anybody to date I attended movies. I would probably get three movies in every weekend.

Marsha: Where did you go see them, on campus?

Robert: Oh no no, at the Castle Theater, the Esquire Theater, and Urban theater in Bloomington. I managed to get a good three movies in every weekend, for sure. Occasionally went out to Normal.

Marsha: Whoa! Add a fourth!

Robert: Right there. [Chuckles]

Marsha: You've watched Wesleyan grow and change over the last almost 60 years. What do you think have been some of the biggest changes at Wesleyan since your time there?

Robert: Definitely the higher standards, I think, of students and attract students nation—worldwide. I think when we were first in school there were a lot of people from Illinois and Missouri and we had a few from New York. Wherever the strength of our alumni were, I think, that was what attracted people. And we were more of a regional university than we were worldwide as they are now. There were a few foreign exchange students but that was about the extent of it.

Mary Ann: Well and the campus now has several beautiful buildings, which they needed. And I'm sure that when they add this new classroom building, that will make it much better for the students from what I understand. And the fact that they took Hansen, which at our time was the gym, and have made it into a multipurpose building that is used all the time, is really great.

Marsha: So who hangs out in Hansen Center now?

Mary Ann: I think all the students do—

Robert: And faculty—

Mary Ann: —from what I understand—

Robert: —Yeah, and alumni who come to visit. [Chuckles]

Mary Ann: —they have programs on Friday and Saturday night that are very good, and the students run them, or are in charge of them, and seems to be the real hangout or the real place for the students.

Marsha: So you know that because you have happen to have an inside spot.

Mary Ann: Yes.

Marsha: Who's your inside spot?

Mary Ann: Amy DeBoer is a sophomore down there now. She happens to be a granddaughter of ours.

Marsha: She's your only granddaughter, who did the deed, because you're—

Mary Ann: Went to Wesleyan.

Robert: Yup.

Marsha: M-hm.

Mary Ann: And she happens to be on the staff there at Hansen, even though she's a very busy student, and helps practically daily or every other day with things. And so we do keep up with what's happening there.

Marsha: What was—?

Mary Ann: And—

Marsha: Oh I'm sorry.

Mary Ann: —I happen to be on the Council of Women which was started by Marsha to give the women at Wesleyan more info, more help, more guidance. And I think that's been a terrific organization for Wesleyan.

Marsha: When you found out that Amy was interested in Illinois Wesleyan, what was that like for you as grandparents who'd gone there let's just say a few years before her?

Robert: Quite a few. No, definitely proud of the fact that someone in the family would continue the traditions. And having had two daughters that graduated from there, and a son-in-law, and it'd be nice to have another third generation type as many of our colleagues, fellow alumni have had that same opportunity or privilege. And—

Marsha: And—

Robert: —we're strong advocates of liberal arts educations, and we want to make sure that they had that opportunity if possible.

Marsha: And Amy's not the only person you've influenced to go there when you think over the years beyond your two daughters.

Robert: No, fortunately with our teaching experience, we were both recruiting a lot of students through our teaching career and church. Greatest churches we attended, participated in, that was important. And—

Mary Ann: At one time you had a number but I can't remember—

Robert: Well we were up in the 30's I think at one point, yeah.

Mary Ann: We had students that had been high school students or friends of ours who—

Robert: Yeah. And we're still on the lookout for—occasionally we'll run into somebody who's interested in the school. Yeah. I felt actually a great opportunity also; I was able to go back at the time after two years in the military, to go back to Wesleyan for a master's degree. They don't offer that sort of thing anymore, but it was very helpful. I was able to work in classes on the GI Bill and also teach part time outside of Bloomington for a couple days a week and it worked out very nicely for us.

Marsha: And you lived, during that time?

Mary Ann: Well we first lived in barracks—

Robert: Went on campus—

Mary Ann: —and—

Robert: —in the barracks apartment, yeah.

Mary Ann: And then they decided to tear the barracks down and build the dorms. And so we lived in a house right next to Blackstock, and had our daughter Susan, and she—

Robert: She was born in Texas.

Mary Ann: Yeah. Born in Texas—

Robert: Yeah.

Mary Ann: —but she—

Robert: And before we left town, we had Marsha. [Chuckles]

Marsha: And the deal was—that house that you—they needed the space there to put—

Robert: Yes. They thought they might need some additional space for male students and—

Mary Ann: The second floor.

Robert: —for the second semester. But it didn't come fast.

Marsha: And you paid rent or no rent?

Robert: Oh we paid rent—

Mary Ann: Oh yes.

Robert: —yeah.

Marsha: And you paid the heating cost for the whole house, right?

Robert: It was a great big old house and they were going to tear it down eventually, but yeah. It was very expensive. They split the cost and we closed it down about four rooms, I think, we lived in. [Chuckles]

Marsha: And that was next door to Gulick, right? And there were—

Mary Ann: No no, Blackstock.

Marsha: Blackstock.

Mary Ann: That was great.

Robert: Well, yeah, whatever the new dorm was called.

Marsha: It's called Gulick, it's old now.

[Marsha and Robert laugh]

Mary Ann: Our Susie, as a little one, would go over there, and she was a good friend of...

Robert: Mother Christ.

Mary Ann: Mother Christ, just like...our girls like we were.

Marsha: She still has her rocking chair, doesn't she?

Mary Ann: She has a rocking chair that was given to her as a special antique.

Marsha: That had been Mother Christ's. And then Mother Christ would come back into your life much, much later. Not her specifically, but her...granddaughter? Wasn't that Jade Larson?

Mary Ann: Oh she was at Wesleyan—

Robert: Yeah.

Marsha: And her—

Robert: —husband was a Methodist pastor, yeah.

Marsha: Yeah. When you think about the traditions that draw you back to Wesleyan or the things that keep you coming back, what are the things that keep you coming back?

Robert: Well the friendships that we gained all the time that we were in school and also the connections to our own children being involved on campus, and faculty connections, and

longevity was a great thing as well—our former teachers and now with acquaintances—some of the professors like Professor Hess and some of the others we've had—

Marsha: Yeah. You have seen the place change too in terms of who goes there. Dad, you mentioned that it's not the same, it draws internationally and the like. One of the questions they ask is about diversity. And that may be about men and women, it might be about race and ethnicity, it might be about region in the country. When you were in school was there very much diversity in the student population?

Robert: Initially when I went to school there was still the end of the GI's from WWII. There were a lot of temporary buildings on campus, and I think there was some diversity there in enrollment, because I think somewhere a little over 1000, maybe 1200 or so, when I first went in 1949, and by the time we graduated it was probably down about 700 or something like that. And I think there were minority students and a few Asian students who'd come from China or Korea, but that was about the extent of it.

Marsha: You had someone in Blackstock?

Mary Ann: Yeah, we had two girls from Korea at Blackstock. And they came and one was a freshman, and the other one came in, as...what, God, was she a junior?

Robert: Yeah. Eun Soo Kwak, yeah, she was a piano major.

Mary Ann: Yeah.

Robert: Yeah.

Mary Ann: And Helen—

Robert: Helen—

Mary Ann: Mary—

Robert: Was it Yun?

Mary Ann: Helen Yun, yeah.

Robert: Yeah.

Mary Ann: Was the freshman.

Robert: Yeah.

Mary Ann: And that worked out very well and it was good having someone from another country.

Marsha: Yeah.

Mary Ann: Yeah.

Marsha: The funny thing now is when you talk to students now, they all live in residence halls where men and women both live. In those days could men and women—well you wouldn't have lived in residence halls together—could you visit each other in each other's rooms? Or did you have to meet in the living room?

Robert: Oh no no, there were visiting rooms in Pfeiffer I know.

Mary Ann: Living rooms.

Robert: Living rooms of Blackstock or the sororities et cetera, and social things. Fraternities and sororities had a spring dance, usually. It was at dinnertime, a dinner dance, so that was always a big thing, and of course serenades were wonderful things.

Marsha: They took them seriously!

Robert: Oh yeah! We had engagements and pinning's and so there were serenades that were going on all year long, basically. That was kind of a highlight, a social event on the weekend.

Mary Ann: And you only visited until...10?

Robert: And hours—

Mary Ann: During the week?

Robert: —yeah! 10 o'clock I think of the week, and that may be Friday and Saturday up to midnight I think.

Mary Ann: And the lights flashed.

Robert: And the lights would flash—

Mary Ann: —on the porch.

Robert: —and the girls would have—

Mary Ann: And that meant you—

Marsha: Ooh!

Mary Ann —had five minutes to get in there.

Marsha: Ooh!

Robert: I was standing around those big trees. [Laughs]

Marsha: Yeah! Did they—did men have hours too? Or just women?

Robert: Men did not!

Marsha: Aha!

Mary Ann: Well that—

Marsha: See.

Mary Ann: —was prejudiced.

Robert: I can't recall if it was a freshman dorm but we may have had to be in by a certain time. We didn't have keys, so. We did for the fraternity house I think. But...fair enough.

Marsha: When you think about any sort of culture shocks or transitions you went through when you went to college, what were they? Alright, I have to tell—start you on a story. How'd you do your laundry when you were in college?

Robert: Well my laundry went home. I had an aluminum case and you sent your laundry home to your parents to do it. There were no laundromats too close off campus.

Marsha: So once a week you—

Robert: At one time there was a cleaning shop in the basement I think it was. You could take cleaning—

Mary Ann: Cleaning.

Robert: —dry cleaning—

Mary Ann: There was no laundry anywhere.

Robert: There were no laundry facilities around.

Marsha: So you put it in a box at the—

Robert: An aluminum box, still got the box as a matter of fact. But it went home at least once a week, and it would come back in time with clean clothes.

Marsha: Freshly ironed, knowing Grandma.

Robert: Oh yeah. That's right. [Chuckles]

Marsha: Did you do the same when you got down there?

Mary Ann: No. We had—now that I think of it—at Pfeiffer, we had—at the end of the hall, I can remember it, there was a washer and a dryer, and an ironing board.

Marsha: So obviously the women were probably doing their laundry.

Mary Ann: Yes, women did their own, you didn't send it home.

[Robert chuckles]

Marsha: And then the men were sending—

Mary Ann: I mean if we did, we wouldn't get it back maybe.

[Robert chuckles]

Marsha: Yeah. Did you—when you ate, where'd you eat dinner?

Mary Ann: I ate at the Memorial Center, in the dining room there, for all my meals.

Marsha: Yeah.

Mary Ann: In fact I worked there off and on—

Robert: Your junior year.

Mary Ann: —worked in the kitchen at one time setting up salads and then punching—

Robert: Tickets.

Mary Ann: —tickets at one time too. And that helped pay for it.

Marsha: That was my first year job. Where'd you work?

Robert: I know the fraternities when we did have meal service, we didn't have Sunday dinner meal.

Marsha: Yeah.

Robert: And that was usually at the Memorial Center. And then Sunday night you'd go someplace and grab a sandwich, Steak 'n Shake, or—

Marsha: Uh huh.

Robert: Yeah. Trying to think of the other places—Hubbard's Cupboard.

Marsha: Alright so favorite sandwich at Hubbard's Cupboard, which is just gross to think about.

Robert: Oh no that was down to the quality of a hotel, "Wesleyan Special"—

Marsha: What was it?

Robert: —which was one of the restaurants on the square. It was like a ham salad with peanut butter.

Marsha: Ugh.

Robert: It was a triple decker, like a BLT sandwich.

Marsha: I think Wesleyan really went out with that—

[Robert chuckles]

Marsha: —special. When you were going to school, how much did you interact with the community of Bloomington-Normal? You went to the movies.

Robert: Well, yeah and I also did my student teaching in the public schools of Bloomington and Normal.

Marsha: Other favorite spaces besides Hubbard's Cupboard that you liked to go to? Stores?

Robert: Well there was a Quality Inn downtown, there was a Miller's Music, and we had the downtown stores. Rolands and Livingston's—

Mary Ann: Eisenbergers.

Robert: Yeah. And our music was there.

Mary Ann: There were some beautiful big stores down there to go shopping or to go looking if nothing else.

Marsha: And on the—

Robert: A rare friend would have an automobile, we rode the buses, we walked.

Mary Ann: Walked—

Robert: Yeah.

Mary Ann: —most of the time.

Robert: Yeah.

Marsha: That stayed true even when I was in school; you walked everywhere, because some people had cars, Chevy Vega's. When you think about the weekend, what'd you do on the weekends? You went to the movies.

[Robert laughs]

Mary Ann: Homework.

Robert: Well when my wife, Mary Ann, was there, we'd go to movies, or we had school activities too.

Mary Ann: And we studied.

Robert: And we studied.

Mary Ann: Or I typed his papers.

Marsha: Oh, nice.

Robert: Basketball games were a big thing. And so I was with events in Hansen, and that was a very small venue for us, and that's one of the reasons I stayed in the band, the pep band, so I could play. I was placed to sit for basketball games.

Marsha: Because you sat up in the balcony?

Robert: We sat in the stage, yeah. Played on Pep Band.

Marsha: When you think about studying, did you study in the library? Where'd you study?

Mary Ann: Yeah, Buck Library.

Marsha: Yeah?

Mary Ann: And in my room—

Robert: There were sometimes in the Cartwright room—I remember we had a little portable phonograph—listen to music on a Sunday afternoon.

Mary Ann: That was when I was in Pfeiffer.

Robert: Yeah when you were in Pfeiffer, yeah.

Marsha: Did you have a chance to think about what the big issues were when you were in college in the world? 1949 through 1953, what were the issues?

Robert: Basically the Korean War of course was heavy over our heads at that time. We had a political change of course, in Presidents, and that's how President Eisenhower was elected.

Marsha: You campaigned for somebody else then.

Robert: I campaigned—I was one of the very few on campus, along with many professors. Campaigned for Adlai Stevenson, and yes, a very important candidate, unfortunately he lost twice, but then yeah. That was the first President I voted for.

Marsha: Was Adlai a good—

Robert: —a potential candidate—

Marsha: —Bloomington candidate?

Robert: —yeah. He was our governor at the time.

Marsha: Other issues that you think—for you, you did community college first because in some ways there just wasn't money for you to do—

Mary Ann: That's right. My brother was—we took turns. He went to community college and then he went off to ISU, and then I had two years at that community college, junior college, which was a good situation, and then went on to Wesleyan.

Marsha: And did he get drafted to go to Korea?

Mary Ann: My brother?

Marsha: M-hm.

Mary Ann: He was drafted and went to...school—

Marsha: Oh, officer candidate school?

Robert: No, he was actually in basic training—

Mary Ann: Basic training.

Robert: —and then went to officer candidate school.

Mary Ann: And then he didn't go to officer school—

Robert: He went to Korea.

Mary Ann: And graduated from that—

Robert: Actually right after we were married, yeah.

Mary Ann: And then—

Robert: The war had ended.

Mary Ann: The service. And he did not go to Korea until the week after or so after we were married.

Marsha: When you think about your classmates, some of them being—whether they left school or they made the decision to join—some of them came back. You were drafted—

Robert: Yeah. Actually I tried to enlist in a Navy program at one point, and I found out I had flat feet and curvature of the spine, and I also tried to enlist in the Air Force program, and I couldn't do the math. [Chuckles] I was a music major. But I felt fairly kind of guilty, by junior year,

because many of my high school classmates and others in college had gone on to serve in the military, but we were fortunate to have a student deferment, as long as we kept our grades up.

Mary Ann: When we graduated, and at the time we were engaged and not sure when we would get married, not knowing what Korea was going to—

Robert: There was one ad the day I graduated, yeah.

Mary Ann: And finally decided to set a wedding date for October 18th and we were married, went away for one week and came back, and there was a letter there that said—

Robert: Greetings, it's your friends and neighbors there—[Chuckles]

Mary Ann: —want you—

Robert: —on the 18th of November I was a soldier boy. [Chuckles]

Marsha: And you kept singing in the Army.

Robert: Oh yeah, sang in the army, yeah, sang in the Army.

Marsha: You have very fond memories of Illinois Wesleyan, and it draws you back. You probably know your classmates to this day better than the rest of us. When you think about what you wish for Illinois Wesleyan in the future, what do you wish?

Robert: Well continue to maintain the standards that they have and attract wonderful faculty that they have. I think that's always been a pride of the fact that we have longevity within our staff and quality education, so much different than many of our friends who go to large universities and who never see a full professor until maybe they're a senior or something. But they're subjected to graduate assistants and teaching aides and so on. At Wesleyan you're a name, you're a personality, you develop your leadership skills, and besides being a student there's opportunities to serve, and that's a big thing.

Marsha: If you had advice for tomorrow's college students what would you tell them?

Robert: Hm. [Chuckles]

Marsha: You've got plenty of experience giving it.

Robert: Well to consider, if anything I know living in the suburbs, people are going to large schools. Many of them think, well, that's a small little school, Wesleyan. It's twice the size it was when we attended there. But their standards are much, and some people think vastness is more important but I think the fact that you do get a good liberal education and you are a person of importance to everybody who is working with you, staff, and sports staff, of the university, as well as faculty you're dealing with.

Mary Ann: And I think that people that have recommended that you go and look, they have found out when they've gotten there and have been interviewed and have seen the school, they have found it to be a very good school and one where they can do a lot of learning and have activities too, and I think—

Robert: And a good stepping stone for a career and you're welcome there, and they get the support of their parents and other people with whom they associate in the working world.

Marsha: Final question. Final question, this is like Jeopardy.

[Robert chuckles]

Marsha: What do you think has been your most significant gift that you got as a result of your Illinois Wesleyan education?

[Pause]

Robert: Well I was prepared for a career. And I felt that I probably had a lot better background than some of the people who may have come out of the state universities and so on in my field. And being able to come back to the university from time to time for moral support, charge, recharge your batteries, et cetera. Keeping that close affiliation. Being in Music Education that was a special thing.

Marsha: You'd even do that at music educators' conferences. You'd have your little Illinois Wesleyan group—

Robert: We had our groups, right. We'd always get together with alumni and faculty. Yeah, kept that tie. And the same is true with working with student teachers later on from the school.

Marsha: You? If you had to think about gifts that perhaps contributed—

Mary Ann: I think I had a good education and good training in the Sociology and Psychology field. And was offered a couple jobs that I didn't actually take them but I took one with the Girl Scouts as a district director and I found that to be a really good situation and one where I could use some of the things I had learned and had had in college in order to succeed at it. And then of course we raised three wonderful daughters, and I'm sure the things we learned at Wesleyan we used—

Marsha: Hm.

[Robert chuckles]

Mary Ann: —with them too.

Marsha: Let's hope only the good things you learned at Wesleyan you used on your daughters.

[Robert chuckles]

Mary Ann: Well yeah, we did.

Marsha: What's it feel like to have—Dad you mentioned you had two daughters. I remember as one of those daughters that it was \$5,300—

Robert: M-hm.

Marsha: —tuition my senior year—

Mary Ann: Really.

Marsha: —yeah, yeah, it was. \$5,300. It was \$147 a month for room and board at the AO Pi house. That meant I had a few dollars left per month—

[Robert chuckles]

Marsha: —if you deposited \$200. As you look back on—Wesleyan wasn't cheap.

Robert: No.

Marsha: And you made a big sacrifice to put two of your kids through there. Thank god for financial aid, I say. And you made family sacrifices when you went there, Mom, and you got a Methodist scholarship, and—

Robert: Right.

Marsha: —other kinds of things. When you think about the fact that there's a fairly significant difference in price between public and private education and the sacrifice even families are making today to send their kids to school, is it worth it?

Robert: It's worth it—

Mary Ann: Yes.

Robert: —but one of the regrets probably is the fact that many of our alumni—I think it's kind of swung the other way but it was a uphill battle initially to get alumni to really get their support for the university. And as we got to continue that, that's one of the things we've prided ourselves in. Being class agents and trying to promote giving from our fellow classmates, and we've been fairly successful, I think. And that's the secret of keeping Wesleyan running, and attracting the kind of students that will benefit from the education.

Marsha: When you walk through the campus in your mind, what's your favorite place?

Robert: Well I had a lot of hours in Presser Hall. [Chuckles] Sometimes a lot of rehearsals, and, yeah. Practice rooms and—

Marsha: It's why you still run back there every time you're there, right?

Robert: Yeah.

Marsha: You have to go to a rehearsal—

Robert: Oh yeah.

Marsha: —or two.

Robert: I do.

Marsha: Your favorite place? I don't think you'd say Hedding Hall. That was a bit—

Mary Ann: That was gone—I think Buck Library as far as studying, was a good place.

Robert: It was a good center, Memorial Center.

Mary Ann: Memorial Center was, and that was dinner.

Robert: Yeah.

Mary Ann: But...

Marsha: You have been incredibly loyal alumni, and have attended way too many programs and graduations and the like, and homecomings at Illinois Wesleyan. You had this rare opportunity I think every year to go home, whether it was for homecoming or the Women's Council or whatever. When you think about the things that draw you home to Illinois Wesleyan, what do you think keeps making you go back there?

[Pause]

Robert: Well, campus is home, and Bloomington-Normal is a lovely community too. I said if I were going to retire someplace and that would be a nice second thought, second place. But—

Marsha: You're too busy?

Robert: It's an opportunity to still keep those friendships going. There's always— now they've had their Alumni Collegiate Choir thing, and some of the other attractive things we've had. And now the golden titan dinners are a tremendous opportunity to touch base with friends of longstanding, and make new friends.

Mary Ann: And it was a wonderful place, too, in that we had a daughter born right near.

Robert: Yeah.

Mary Ann: —Illinois Wesleyan—

Marsha: In a town called Normal.

Mary Ann: —and she's—

[Phone rings]

Mary Ann: —become a very important person to us and to Illinois Wesleyan.

Marsha: Thank you for your interview and I will make sure that Meg gets this. Meg, so ends the interview with Bob and Mary Ann, they'll sign their stuff. Thanks a bundle!

Robert: Thank you!