

2024 AMW x Retiree Council 'Living History' Project Transcript

The 2024 Class of All Maine Women and members of the Retiree Council met on Saturday, February 10, to conduct the Living History Project. The project interviewed two retirees of the University to collect their experiences at the University of Maine. Members of All Maine Women took and submitted notes to Fogler Library Special Collections in addition to recording the interview.

Paige Allen (00:07):

...Unmute myself. Okay.

Paige Allen (00:19):

Yeah. Perfect. So welcome everyone to the All Maine Women and Retiree's Council Living History Project. It's a great honor to have everyone here. So we're going to just give a little bit of background about All Maine Women and the project before we start. So All Maine Women is a Senior Honor Society meant for females and non-binary folks to...it sort of exemplifies what qualities someone who's graduating should have. So we have dedicated leadership, service and scholarship...members of each class. We turn over every year and are selected based on those three qualities. And during the year that you're an All Maine Woman, you go to sort of different campus events, go to the President's box, and...when we wear the tree sticker on our right cheek, you know that you're surrounded by someone who's a member of All Maine Women. So I think in 2016 is when the project first started, and we partnered with the Retiree's Council, who selected four recent retirees of the University to interview.

(01:39):

And this is an oral history project, so we'll be recording the interview. Eventually, I'll be transcribing it and submitting it to Fogler Special Collections so it can live on as a "Living History" project. So the point of the project is to engage All Maine Women with the recent retirees of the University. So the Retirees Council had originally chosen four retirees, but we might interview the other two at a later date. But the two retirees are here in front of us to tell us about their experiences and their time at the University of Maine. So how this will work, the members of All Maine Women who are present, we have little interview sheets. I'll start from the first question and then we'll just go around in a circle. And the interviewees will bounce off of each other. Well, you don't have to if you want to, you can bounce off of each other, but we'll sort of trade off who goes first.

(02:39):

So perhaps you'll answer the first question and then you'll follow up with your answer. And then the next question you'll start first we'll go back like that. At the end of the interview, we'll have a spot, sort of like a catchall of anything that you missed. So if you wanted, I think I can get you a pen if you'd like, but if you have something that one of our questions didn't cover and you felt

that was very formative and your experiences at UMaine. And there is a place to say sort of your closing remarks at the end. So does anyone have any questions before we start? No. Okay, perfect. I think I need a pen...do you want a writing utensil?

Maxine Harrow (03:26):

Yes, I do.

Paige Allen (03:27):

Okay, perfect.

Maxine Harrow (03:28):

You got my back there. Thank you.

Paige Allen (03:33):

Of course. Okay, so I will do the required questions first, and then we can go around. So we'll start on the left here. Would you mind stating your name, your dates of employment, the department in which you worked, and your position in that department? And I can repeat those if you forget.

William 'Bill' Dalton (04:02):

It. Sure, that's fine. Okay. I'm William 'Bill' Dalton, known as Bill. I started employment here at the University in January of 1982. And I concluded...I retired on October 11th, 2022. I worked in the Department of Auxiliary Services in dining in particular, and I was the Assistant Director of the Catering Operation overseeing all the catering on campus.

Paige Allen (04:37):

Perfect. And would you mind telling us your name, your dates of employment, your department, and your position in that department as well.

Maxine Harrow (04:45):

So my name is Maxine Edelman Harrow. I actually had to lookup yesterday when I did start at the University and it was in the March of 1978. I had moved to Maine in 1975. I had two little ones at home, and I started at the family daycare as a family daycare coordinator. Of course, I was involved with my own little two and trying to figure out how do I go back to work. And I worked there for about a little over a year, year and a half. And then I took an interim position...as an Assistant Dean of Students in 1980 I believe. In student services over in the Memorial Union. And when that position became a permanent position, I applied for it, got that, and became the Associate Dean of Students where I stayed until around I think '91 when I came

over here to Shibles Hall and became the Director of Educational Field Experiences and Certification in the College of Education. And I retired in 2005.

Paige Allen (06:22):

So now we'll move on to guided questions. These are meant to be open-ended questions designed to facilitate a conversation...and if the interviewee would like to tell a story that does not fit any under of these questions, we can cover that at the end. So just like I said earlier, if you have something that you want to cover, just make sure make a note and we can talk about it at the end. But now we can start with...oh, okay.

Hope Carroll:

Can you please share your story of joining the University?

Maxine Harrow (06:55):

Well, I remember when I first applied for a job here, and I hadn't been working for a while, we had been moving and we came to Maine and I had these two young ones and I applied for this job. It's been a while since I had worked and I remember when I got the call that I got the job jumping in bed with my kids. I was really excited to become a part of the University of Maine. And I think I still would jump in bed (laughter)...it was a wonderful start to a wonderful community where I met lifelong friends, colleagues, students who I still have contact with. So basically, that's the most I can remember from way back then.

William 'Bill' Dalton (08:03):

I joined the University of Maine community here after working...actually as a student. I graduated from here, took a job elsewhere, and worked in a management training program for two years. This opportunity came up and at the time I was working in a hotel and essentially seven days a week, long hours. And this looked like a better opportunity for me at the time. As it turned out, it was. So I returned to my Alma Mata and started to here then. My family had also worked here on campus. Both my mother and father had worked here. I grew up in Orono, so it was a natural fit for me. I knew the campus pretty well.

Melissa Genoter (09:10):

Perfect. Alright, so our next question, and we already talked about technology this morning, but what important changes or transformations happened that affected your work while you were employed here?

William 'Bill' Dalton (09:23):

Well, absolutely. First and foremost is the computer age. When I was in school, the computer courses we took, we had all these cards, and you had to learn basic computer language and other things. When I came here, I didn't have a computer at my desk, I'm not sure anybody did. So everything was done manually. And in the catering world, as you work with clients and your menus are all manually done, although we could mimeograph them and pass them out, I custom-wrote menus a lot. Orders to the kitchens were all handwritten. So when the computer age came into play, it became much easier and faster, although it did take a little bit of time to get used to operating the computer system. And so I would say by far that was the biggest—the technology, those changes in technology, and I'm sure that it's ever-changing, but that was the biggest step in my world.

(10:54):

Other changes that happened around the University that affected my particular job included the opening of the Arts Center, closing of Wells back in the early nineties for regular feeding, and they moved the catering operation into Wells, which gave us our first space other than farming things out to the other dining commons to do meals, which meant, by the way, that any banquet in the evening had to happen after the regular student feeding after the commons closed. So the earliest a banquet could possibly happen was seven o'clock at night and you had to make the room look like something. And so that was very challenging, although we did take advantage of using the Damn Yankee, which was over the Bear's Den in the Memorial Union back then. It's essentially where the marketplace is currently, Bear's Den is. Other things took place: the building of the Buchanan Alumni House and the opening of that was a huge change. They had moved from Crossland Hall, which was a very small space, over to there. That was unbelievable. They did remodel the Bear's Den, as I just mentioned. Then in early two thousands, they renovated Wells Commons to become the conference space that it is today. And that was a huge change. It actually gave us space that looked professional, and we could host conferences and meetings, and the technology was there. So that was huge change to our world around a lot. So...

Maxine Harrow (12:51):

So I will ditto a lot of things that you said, particularly computer-age technology, but to me and for my job and many of my colleagues, the major transformation was the empowerment of women. When we came, we might be sitting in a room with directors and you would be the only woman. And to be heard, and to make a difference, was an interesting proposition. So we did, when I was in student services, we focused on women. We had women's leadership, student conferences, we supported the Women in Curriculum program, Ann Schoenberger, we started the women's leadership with Sharon Barker as a leader... and it was a major contribution and transformation for women here on this campus. We never had a woman President, that happened after I retired. It is wonderful to see All Maine Women doing this and I think that was for me, a major important change here at the University.

Meghan McDonald (14:34):

Good question. While on campus, where was your favorite or go-to place to meet and spend time with people?

Maxine Harrow (14:39):

Well, I worked in the Memorial Union for many years, so that was my go-to place. It was where we have...we would meet as groups. I used to also be responsible for non-traditional women. We would have a lounge there, we would have a place that they could get together. I was also responsible for off-campus students, and that was their living room on campus. It is where meetings would happen. Women in Curriculum would meet every Wednesday at noon. You'd bring your lunch, and you'd hear wonderful people speak, and it was where things just happened. The Bear's Den, I can't remember, God, the Bear's Den, so long ago, it was a great place to come. I used to...when my kids would come up to visit me, we'd always go to the Bear's Den. We'd love to be in the Bear's Den. Yeah...

William 'Bill' Dalton (15:55):

Well, thanks Maxine. You stole all of my thunder. Absolutely. The only place, the heart of the campus, was the Bear's Den. Memorial Union had all of the lounges that Maxine mentioned. So any meeting that took place on campus was at the Union building. The Bear's Den, as a student, I lived off campus, so I spent all my time in between classes at the Bear's Den or in the fraternity, but sometimes at the Bear's Den, no, mostly at the Bear's Den. And that was the heart of it. There was a bowling alley across from it, bowling alley and pool tables and pinball machines. There was a faculty staff bowling league that I participated in and some of the people in my department as well. So we bonded a lot after work there. And that was...without the campus as it is today and the expansions that have taken place on the renovations, what have you. That was it, the Memorial Union, the place to be.

Kate Kemper (17:15):

Alright, so our next question is what is the most meaningful connection you made at UMaine? Please explain what memory you hold dear to you about student, class, a person in the UMaine community. There was a note on this question to sort of try to protect the confidentiality of any particular individual. So maybe don't use last names in your answers.

William 'Bill' Dalton (17:35):

Okay, sure. Well, first of all, the most meaningful connection I made, and Maxine has already again mentioned this, lifelong friends and colleagues. Absolutely. That means so much as you're starting to mature and you're starting your work life to have friends and colleagues that you're on a level with. They understand your problems, your situations, things like that. So that was the most meaningful thing. What I hold near and dear to me is, well there are several things, but I

will say when we first attracted to Special Olympics to this campus, the biggest thing that they did that affected what I did in my work was they would have a banquet in the Field House. And that grew to as many as 2,000 people for a sit-down banquet, which at the time was touted as one of the largest events in Maine as a sit-down meal. We involved everybody in dining services and some volunteers from outside of dining services to service that event to make it go smoothly and to have it even happen. It took a lot of hands to do that, but so rewarding, and I don't know anybody in dining services that would say anything different. Extremely rewarding event to be at. That weekend was very special.

(19:32):

Further, I had jotted a few notes down, so excuse me while I glance at them, but at one point... I did a lot of functions at the President's house. When he or she entertained, catering services were generally involved. At one particular reception, I remember the Secretary of State, I believe under President Clinton, but I'm not positive... We were entertaining her, Madeline Albright, and one of my student workers that had been working with us for four years, also a member of the women's basketball team. She was from the same country that Madeline Albright was from, and they started speaking in the native language. And I thought that was unbelievably fascinating. And the student that was working with was extremely bright, and she was fluent in seven languages and just a fabulous person. But that's one of the memories that I hold, particularly a student that really stands out.

Maxine Harrow (21:11):

So I guess I would concur with you about the connections we made with our colleagues. It was an incredibly supportive environment where we learned from each other, we questioned each other, and we were open to each other's needs. And that was a wonderful thing throughout my experience here at the University. And also the students. And they changed while I was here in the eighties. Yes, we had a lot of residential students. I happened to be responsible for the off-campus students and non-traditional students. And for a while, the international students. And their stories were just remarkable. And one of the things that I am still pretty proud of is my connection with Senior Alumni, who are the older alumni of this University. And they wanted to do something, and I said, 'Well, how did we, let's figure out a way to tell their stories.'

(22:35):

These remarkable students who were driving like an hour, an hour and a half a day, many with children barely... just trying to put their lives together and the need that they have for scholarships. A lot of scholarships come right after high school. You are in high school, you get these scholarships, there's some you can get at the University, but these students had been out of school for so long, and so we had them write... a number of us developed the Senior Alumni Scholarship Program where students told their stories. And all of a sudden, the senior alumni said, 'Oh my God, I can't believe this is happening, and we're not doing enough'. And that scholarship has grown. Those were the remarkable stories. And the thing that sticks with me

about this...the University of Maine, is it's a caring community. People care for each other. It's a big campus, it's a lot of people, but at the heart of it, there's a real care about who people are, that they make it and they continue on. And so that's the story that sticks with you.

Abby Cadorette (24:11):

Thank you. That's awesome. So my question is, do you have any advice for young professionals who are going into the real world, and what is one thing you wish you could tell those current students?

Maxine Harrow (24:22):

I guess I would say, and I would say this if they were coming into the University or going out of the University. To keep an open mind, be open to new ideas and new ways of thinking. When I graduated from college, I went into teaching, and I taught in New York City for six and a half years until we moved out of the city. And it's amazing the skills that you can develop. Even if you're in education, your communication skills, your ability to relate to people, it opens all sorts of avenues. I never thought I was going into higher education. I was teaching in an elementary school. And if you're open to new ideas and you're open to a continuation of learning, you might not have all the answers of where you want to go...and you don't exactly know where you're headed. But if you can keep that open mind and learn to listen to other people, but also learn to assert who you are, and where you want to go, and keep that focus and direction. It's not always easy, but you figure it out along the way, and you can have a life that is rich and full with your career, with your family, and whatever direction you want to go.

William 'Bill' Dalton (26:24):

My advice would be to act as a professional and be professional. Students should take advantage of the opportunities that UMaine offers, both academically as well as socially. This is where you are learning how to survive in the world. You face...there are good times, and there are bad times and you gel them together and move forward. It's an unbelievable opportunity here. I would suggest to learn as much as possible, including etiquette, as it will put you in an advantage in the professional world. Many years ago, it was approached to host an etiquette dinner and so I said, sure, we could do that. Who's going to come to that?

(27:44):

But that's fine, we'll do it. We'll try anything once. Amazingly, they recruited X number of people, I'm not sure what it is now, but it might've been 50 people; 50 students. And we just went through basics of how to act at a job interview, and if they take you to dinner, you've got all this flatware, this glassware, these are the things you're going to use first and second and what to do. Very positive responses to that. And we did that for a few years and it became quite large. The largest we did was around 200 people. And at the time when I first started doing it, I was

thinking, 'Oh, there's no way,' I'm thinking when I was in college, would I go to that? But I'm telling you, it was amazing, and it was successful. So take advantage of what's here.

Laura Petersen (29:01):

Thank you so much. Sort of on that note, What do you think makes UMaine special?

William 'Bill' Dalton (29:11):

First of all, the diversity. It's a tremendous community, especially if you're coming from an environment, small town in Maine and you land on this campus...It appears to be huge and overwhelming, but it's really a small community, as Maxine mentioned, you see the same people throughout the days and weeks and months in your time here. So it's...it's just a feeling of that community. I was at the hockey game last night. Huge student section, huge crowd in general. And that's what you like to see. Now several years ago when I was at hockey, the crowds were a little thin, and the student section was a little thin. But that's changing, and that's what you like to see. Or if you go to the Arts Center and you see a sellout crowd in the world-class entertainment that they can bring here, it just makes it special.

Maxine Harrow (30:39):

It's really the exposure you can get when you're here. The performing arts center, Collins, is just...if you just take advantage of it, it can open your world to things that at Maine, we don't always get. The diversity from sports to the arts. It's just enriching for students beyond the academics, and it's an incredible opportunity to be here.

Paige Allen (31:33):

So the last question is sort of the catchall question. Obviously, you couldn't have covered your entire University of Maine experience in six and a half questions. So is there anything else that you would want to share about your experience at UMaine that has not been covered already?

William 'Bill' Dalton (31:54):

Maxine?

Maxine Harrow (32:01):

Would I do it again? Definitely. I feel I was fortunate to be here for so long. Would I wish things were different in some ways? I think probably...resources and finances were always an issue at the University of Maine. We did things with very little funding. We kind of were winging it a lot. It is a source of concern that students can't afford it, number one. The resources and the funding isn't here to support it. That's always been an issue of people who worked here. That we continue the rigor and the excellence that we strive for at all times when we were here, that we could be the best that we could be, and even beyond that. And to maintain that high standard that I think

the University of Maine tried to achieve and continues to try to achieve with those limited resources.

William 'Bill' Dalton (33:46):

I would agree. I must say I had a fabulous career here. I truly enjoyed my work in the many people that I worked with and met over the years. There were so many opportunities to make an impact on student lives, whether they were working for me or attending a function that we were catering. Just unbelievable... in many, I'd say many...I had a lot of students that worked for me over the years, but I'm still connected on Facebook with many, I had children of students work for me. (Laughter).

(34:41):

So it was generational over my career. I didn't have grandchildren work for me, but it could have been close. My affection for the University. I went to nursery school here in Merrill Hall. So the proximity of the house that I grew up in, there was a fence between my backyard and what's now York Village. So my home basketball court was in the end of Aroostook Hall because they had a light. So I knew this campus inside and out. I lived it. I went away after high school to college and enjoyed my time away...at, well, I went to the University of Massachusetts at one point and that was fun while it lasted. I didn't go to many classes (laughter), so that was a little problem. But when I came, transferred here, I really succeeded. So it had a special place in my heart. I loved what I did. I loved the big events and splashy things. At one point I had worked for over half of the Presidents in the entire life of the University. (Laughter). So it was 10 or 11. They changed more frequently as I matured.

Maxine Harrow (36:35):

We got a new mission each time. (Laughter).

William 'Bill' Dalton (36:38)

We got a new mission each time. I really enjoyed my time, so it's special.

Paige Allen (36:49):

Sure...Thank you so much to our interviewees, and to All Maine Women, and of course the Retiree's Council for everyone's joint effort to make this project come back. This is the first time since 2020 I believe that we've done this tradition, and as we can all see sitting here around the table for about an hour or so, there's just so much about UMaine that current students don't know and there are other perspectives that we don't get as students. So I think that this was a really valuable experience, and hopefully this tradition will be revived and continue for years to come with retirees at the university, whether that be teaching, staff, faculty, what have you. So from here, the project will go up on the Digital Commons. The video should be made available in

some shape or form. And we will also be transcribing the interview process. The notes that we took from members of All Maine Women will also go into special collections, and you can keep your notes, or you could submit them as well. And I believe in June, at the Retiree's Council Homecoming, this project will also be presented, or that's what we had discussed. Yes. Earlier in the year. So I'll be sure to update everyone along the way as things become available. But how about we give a great round of applause.

Maxine Harrow (38:16):

Thank you. Yeah, thank you for the opportunity.

Paige Allen (38:20)

Awesome. Stop the recording. Okay.