Bearcat Memory Project Transcription

Summer 2021

Interviewee: Martha Stephens

Interviewer(s): Katelyn Parvesse

Tech Support: Mosaed Alameri

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Transcribed by: Katelyn Parvesse

Edited by: [FirstName LastName]

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00:00:00

Katelyn Parvesse: Hi, my name is Katelyn, today we're going to be interviewing Dr. Stevens, can you please tell us your name and your association with UC

Martha Stephens:  Martha Stephens I came to UC with uh well with my husband to teach there and I was in the English department he taught political science.

KP: And can you I apologize for the technical difficulties we had earlier. Can you please reiterate what your work was at UC?

00:00:35

MS: Well, um I came and, as I say, in 1967, as a new assistant professor, we had just finished our PhDs at Indiana University. And um, yeah, so, I taught a lot of different courses that you see, over those early years, I taught a good bit of freshman English, I sort of liked to do that. I sort of liked to get kids that had just arrived on campus, and see where their, what they knew and were coming from. And I taught various other courses in mostly in modern literature. And I'll never forget a certain sophomore course I taught. Every body in those days, all the students that were going to get English majors, um had to take a sophomore literature course, and then go on to major courses. And, um, so I an—I set up a course called literature and Marxism. And I wondered if it would be approved for me to teach that, it's not something that would have been offered otherwise, or in the past. And some faculty kind of objected to it. But the chairman said it was okay. So, um, it was listed as one of the sophomore led courses. Well, came into class, the very first day, looked around at the guys usually about thirty people, I believe. And I told them what the course would be about some didn't really barely knew the name of it. They just wanted to get this requirement off. And I said, well, yeah, Marxism says, we will be talking about and what writers what American writers have in common with Marxist writers, and how they feel about it. And some, a few students got up and left [chuckle]. They didn't want—they thought this was too much, or trade. But, um, so now, that course went on the full year, those days when we were on a quarter system. And um, I struggled with the class for a while. Um, I mean, they didn't know if they wanted—others didn't know if they really wanted to hear much about Karl Marx and uh his American writers that uh could, were associated with that tremendous movement. So, I struggled with them for a while. And I felt I don't know if these guys are going to get interested or not. I forget what writers what American writers or or English writers we talked about the first quarter I tried to kind of break them in slowly, to, the, to the radical literature that we have, in English, so called radical. Steinbeck wrote grapes of grapes of wrath. I mean, to some people at that time I mean, that was kind of [unknown] you know. But it for a while, he considered himself a socialist, I believe. His later books were quite different and more kind of ordinary themes. But anyway, I felt they gradually came around to to liking the idea that various writers in English that were particularly interesting were in so ways they shared quite a bit—marxist. And so it was it was a lot of fun. And in the end, when we finally did the most modern writers at times Steinbeck, grapes of wrath. You may remember this I don't know if people study it anymore. But it was about um, poor people caught in the dustbowl, their farms were drying up. And they had to go somewhere else. That was our fault. The whole country. Oh my god, the way we destroyed the grasslands and everything's what caused the dustbowl, you know, um cattle, for instance. But um, they had to flee. And they went to California. Th—they went that way, you know, and life was so hard for them. And it was so hard in California. The grapes of wrath. People, you hear sometimes today, people say, “The grapes of wrath are growing in the people every day”, meaning people are ups getting more and more upset with the way things are for everybody. And yes, you hear that sometimes today. Anyway, that was a lot of fun that course. And I taught there later on, I taught advanced courses in modern, mostly in modern literature, though, I know I had a seminar and in Dickens, uh Charles Dickens. I mean, he was a great Crusader in a lot of ways. You know, I mean, he had grown up poor in, near London. And um, he always kind of sided with common people and poor people, struggling people, but a lot of his stories have to do with the th-the lower classes. So that was that was nice to do a seminar with him. So, I mean, all kinds of things. You know.

KP: I also am familiar with your book, The Treatment. Um, and I know um that it talks about the radiations that we're done. Could you speak more about this? Um, and what happened and why not many people are still aware of it?

00:07:05

MS: Yes, thank you. Well, it's, it's, it's still hard for me to think back on those days. But just um twenty-one people died in those six experiments at our university. Over ninety, had the so called treatments, were radiated thinking they were being treated for cancer. They didn't know they were in an experimental of any kind, much less that it was for the military. The Department of Defense signed us up here at UC, to, to, to, to do these tests, and they lasted for ten—over ten years because they wanted to see what would happen to soldiers in a nuclear battlefield. How much radiation could they absorb and still fight. That was the whole point of the experiments. But the subjects were poor people, many black people, more blacks than whites, a—as I recall, at least as many, probably rather, because General Hospital where these took place in those days, starting in the sixties, was a place where poor people went and blacks had to go there, no other hospital would take them. You had to go to General Hospital. So this was black people and poor whites to to to draw on for subjects of their experiments. So this was this the way I—I was the first person outside the College of Medicine, to know what was happening. The very first person in the city, as far as I've ever known. And the—here’s how I found out about it. In the hall one day, I was, I'd been here about four years or something. It was during the Vietnam War. And we were some of us were marching uh, down town with others trying to prevent or stop the Vietnam War, terrible war, terrible. Never, in my opinion, never should have been there at all. Terrible crimes committed by us. Well, these were Vietnam days. So in the hall one day, a friend of mine from another department said, “Oh, Martha I gotta show you something.” And he pulled out a copy, I'm pretty sure it was The Village Voice. It was a short article in there. That said some kind of military research was going on, on our campus. And this person, in fact, had come here to see what it was, and had wanted to interview these some kind of experiments. He wanted to interview some of the subjects, but the College of Medicine would not allow him to. So, he could not get anywhere. Well, we, I said, “my God, we don't want any war research on this campus.” God. So I said, “well, listen, let's find out what it's all about.” And so I had a leav—a short—a quarters leave coming up. So I had a little time. I was still teaching, right then. Um, so I went over to the College of Medicine. And the director of the college was very friendly and nice to me. But he said, “Miss, there’s no reason for me to give you any documents from the doctors, who are who are doing these test—” he admitted they were doing tests of some kind, but you wouldn't be able to read. You're an English teacher. So well, I've studied a little bit about radiation. I understand what radiation is. And he said, um—I went three times. Well, the last time when I entered his office, the college of medicine doctor Gall, Edward Gall. There was a big stack of papers on his desk. He said, “Miss, I'm gonna let you have these, but I'm sure that you, you won't be able to make anything of it.” Now to this day, I, I, I, I, I assume that Dr. Gall did not know what was in those papers. He trusted that investigators, they were doing the right things. He he didn't know. Because why would he have turned them over? I mean, we learned they weren't classified, so we could have gotten them. But he could have caused us to, you know, maybe even get an attorney or something to get hold of him. But he gave them to me. So anyway, I drove back to my campus to to uh, the main campus, parked in front of McMicken hall where I taught. In those days, you could park [chuckle] on the drive—. And I had a two o'clock class, but it's quite a ways off. So I sat there in my car and pulled out these papers and thought wha—what what do I have here? And I started reading. And it was clear right away, what had happened. P—people thought they were being treated for cancer. And some had die—I saw right away because they had profiles of each of the people they had radiated every year when they sent a report back to the Defense Department it included at the back of each uh, uh paper. The profile of each of the people they had radiated. So naturally those, I read some of them. I though “ oh my god, some died from this radiation and their families never knew like they died of cancer.” I could see see that. Right. I mean, I didn't know how many or anything but I saw that some—. So I don't know I got out of my car and walked around the back of Mcmicken Hall looked over towards the towers, medical school. Thought “God right here on this campus. They were killing people.” Well, anyway, I took those papers home that quarter. And at Christmas time, I mean at night sitting at that dining room table, my husband would read stories to the kids, and then they, we, well one of us would. And and and when we got them in bed, we had three ch— let me see, three children or were there three, it would probably just two at that time. When they when they got in bed, and things quieted down, I got out all my papers and studied and studied and studied. And um, after uh I don’t know three or four weeks of study in everything, I wrote up a four page paper. My findings about the people that had been irradiated and what happened to them. Now, I didn't know who they were, each profile would have a, the initials, supposedly the initials of the patient being described. And the and the date of death. Their date. M—uh—yes, most had died. I mean, even those that, as far as we know, live to die of cancer they had [unknown], okay. So, but it was clear that I, I learned, I knew what radiation was, it takes about a month to get the kind of dose they were giving people, it destroys your bone marrow, you can't make any new white blood cells, you will pass away, and it takes about a month. I learned that, that at the at the extent of radiation they were getting. I mean, you know, if you've been in the middle of a nuclear blast, I mean, you would go. But this would be like you were on the edges and took a take a while to get you. Um, so, of course the dose is different. Some people got more radiation than others. So anyway, I wrote that paper up. And I said to my little group, the guy that showed me the paper and all, we had a little group called the junior faculty association, new y--young professors like I was without tenure, you know? So I said, “Now look, you guys. I've studied and I have a paper, we got to tell everybody what happened here. We, I know, I know what happened, and we got to tell everybody.” So, and so another friend of the other group said “yes, we can have a press conference read you paper.” That well, I, I guess I didn't say first, I guess we said four of us sat at that dining room table of mine one night. I said “we're gonna, okay, if we're going to have a press conference and and read this paper, let's be sure that it's accurate. I mean, you asked me anything, you haven't read the documents. But if, if there's something here that needs to be better documented, then let's do it, I can do it.” And so there wasn't much for them to co—they they studied. And I probably made a few edits or edit. And so, alright, one of our group got up and left. He said, “I don't want any part of this.” But there were, there were four as I recall four of us left. So one of those four lined up ou—our press conference. We had it right out on campus. I don't know if we tried to get a room inside or couldn't or didn't want to [chuckle] I, I dont remember that. So we just set up a table out there and some chairs. Only a few people came. But a magical thing happened. We didn't know it at the time, but the Washington Post sent a reporter. I mean, this this friend that set up a press conference had notified—it was very smart, wasn't he? He he notified the press, certain press. And um, so the Washington Post did com—did send somebody a stringer, you know, somebody that could that was stationed nearby, and Cincinnati Enquirer did not send anybody. You know. But the next there was a big door. Well, I mean, we thought it was a big story probably wasn't that big. Like so, you know, in the Washington Post? Well, all hell broke loose in the College of Medicine when that all appeared. And to make a long story short, nobody, as far as we know, nobody was radiated after that. There were certainly no reports to the— it was over. I mean, that was it. So I have said all along well, that four page paper of mine, saved some lives. Now, I've written six or seven other books. I mean, other than the one on on those tests, but that four page paper, might be more important than all my other little stuff. [chuckle] Gosh, so it's been, I think, kind of a tragic thing. That right now in Cincinnati, there were there were times when they got very getting explain that briefly, too—but right now. It's being dismissed, again. Becau—I mean, the Enquirer won't cover anything about it. It's like this is a dark chapter in Cincinnati history. Let's let it lay let's don't bring it back. And a lot of people don't know that it ever happened. Certainly newcomers wouldn't know that didn't read the press in years past. And was so I I I I that's why I spoke to the democratic forum on Tuesday about it. We uh, they ask—uh I was a speak the the the speaker last Tuesday, we have a noon virtual forum every week. And some of the ol—, even the older people there didn't know about so well. I mean, we just can't forget this. You know, ninety people, well over ninety people were used in experiments that could have killed them. And it was a it was a terrible crime. Well, as you as you know, you may know, Katelyn, there was a lot of trying to make a long story short.

KP: Take your time. We have all day.

00:23:01

MS: Well, um we didn't get anywhere with the press in 1971, when we had had out press conference except for The Washington Post. Thank God, we stopped. Well, no, we thought, well, attorneys should sue the university. Now, that we we they know, they suddenly stopped, they admitted, the fact, what they had done, and they need to be sued, or sent to jail. I mean, somehow we didn't think of it that way. I sometimes do now. But um, we couldn't get any attorneys interest. They wouldn't go up against the University. We understood. I didn't try very hard. I think some of my group did. Um, in those days, the only mac—the only paper in town, for instance, if they heard that something was going on at UC that might need to be covered, they would just make a call to maybe the president's office and they'd say, “Oh, are y’all having some difficulties over there?” And the President or whoever they come and say, “Oh, no, everything's okay.” [chuckle] And no coverage in the Cincinnati press. But we had to be content. At least we stopped. Nobody else will move those [unknown]. Okay, skip ahead forty years. I—it all popped up again when President Clinton set up an advisory committee to study the deliberate exposures of the Cold War. And we were mentioned as cause I mean, even though there was no coverage here, they had been the Washington Post their some papers had written to me about my paper read at the press co—I mean, there was some knowledge around the country, if not here, as to what had happened to us. And um, so a panel of people came here from that committee, that Clinton set up, because we were among those to be studied. They came here and, and interviewed people interviewed me. And in the report, they finally pu—what started off that commission was that people were dying that lived in the areas where bomb tests were going on, I think, Nevada. And so that's what led Clinton to set up that committee. I mean, who else died when we were doing such experiments or tests that shouldn't have been done? And so we became part of that. But the final report of the committee s—told about us in these experiments on cancer patients, they didn't say it, anybody died they weren't willing to say. So—alright, that was in, oh, 2000. A long time since we had—it stopped here. And so some of us sat down said look, we need to sue, we can. The the descendants of the people that were already radiated need to go to court and demand redress. And so we we uh, a few of us work. Oh, I guess it that Yeah. At that time, I said to my husband, “my God”, I said, “Look, here it is 2000. My God, we stopped those tests.” But I said “now people are suddenly interested in them again.” And I so I said, “but I don't know if I have the documents anymore. I I may have thrown away.” And he said, “No, I'm pretty sure they're down in the basement and an old filing cabinet down there.” So I went down there. Yep, there they were. So I called Enquirer. I said, “Look, we're part of the Clinton Advisory committee bababa, if you want to know what happened here and the story, you can come and get the documents that the doctors put out about the patients. And you will see the whole story.” Well, a reporter came to my house and “bring me back, copy these if you want to bring them back to me.” She did. She took em’ away. So the Enquirer had a story about that long, didn't mention any deaths. So I thought Okay, we had another paper—Cincinnati Post—I did the same thing with them. I called them up, told em’ I have some papers I think you'd care about. They came out they got em’, they brought him back. Four days later. A reporter there, Im always forgetting his name, printed a front page story. Cincinnati Radiations Revealed. Well, you can imagine what happened at the Enquirer. They went berserk. That was their story. Somebody else said they should have. That's the only way they ever covered. Well, now this reporter came right back to me. “Oh”, she came to the door. I said, “What Linda?” She said, “Oh, you say you don't even read my paper, so I brought you a copy of it.” And she said, “Listen, we're going to do this.” I said, “you didn't care. Your paper didn't care that people died.” So I worked with the post. Well, she she would bring me the paper every day. That reminded me of that last week. And the post didn't really have the staff that they could take this on and try to find the families and all. So I ended up well, this reporter God I went to class one day and she was waiting outside my classroom. I hadn't agreed to work. Linda no, I didn’t I tell you you. But finally, I said, I will have to work with her, because they can find the families. See if they if the paper it goes around the community. Well, this graduate student I had this was in 2000 when it all pumped up again and I had a graduate student she gotten interested in the whole case when it back up, she knew I was in the center of it. And she told me, let me see, right, right before we went over to the Enquirer, she said, well, she said, “Look, we know the date that initials, and we have the dates of death.” An she said, “I can find some of these people for you”. I said “well, there is his great big office that has birth and death records. You can pull those down those big Ledger's, I couldn't do it I my vision and all, I can't do that.” She said “but I will. I will do it.” She did. And she came back one night she came over she said “ Martha, we've got three families we can start a law suit.”. I thought oh my God. She said, “you can call this person tonight.” I said “I don't know. I hate to hate to call. They don't know what happened to their.” So her dad, Greg Claire came over. He said right there on this coffee table. I pulled out the profile of his mother. I said, G’reg, do you think this is your mother's prof—story of her treatment at UC?” It was about a page and a half. He read read it, he said “Yes. That's my mother.” I said “Okay. Alright,” I said “now, we have attorneys that are interested in suing the university if you want to be part of a lawsuit. And here's their card, you could call on them. But it's up to you.” Well, he did go, and he became the named plaintiff of the lawsuit. Long story short, we got a good a real good judge. She was mortified at what she heard. She said “why this is like the Nazis. They throw people out of planes they contaminated with diseases to see what would happen to soldiers that got those diseases. You did this. You did that here. Did you ever hear about the Nuremberg Code?” She said to the to the doctors. So there were, let me see, I believe eleven defendants of doctors that had worked on this project. And they all had their own attorneys. I mean, I went a few times to the court and lasted about three years, I believe. It was so much litigation around so many. And God the suits in that courtroom. Anyway, there was a judgment in favor of the families see all these? Well, I didn't. Did I ever say—sorry I left this part out, this woman that came to my door, n—I finally worked with her. So she and I stayed in touch for about six months, eight months, as they tried as they publish the real story. And every time they published a new thing on it, somebody would call in and say, “Oh, I think my grandfather was irradiated.” And then they would call me “Is this man? Really?” I said “Yes. If that is so and so. He and he um by his initials [unknown]. Yes. That seems to be the fellow that was irradiated.” And of course they they remembered what it happened at that time. They thought it was just cancer. But they remembered what what they're so um by the time, yeah. I wa—I wer—I was the righthand person for the Enquirer for about [unknown]. Very strange. No, but this Linda, I said Linda, I’d call her, “Linda, don't get me—don't get a patient sixty-six mixed up, but sixty-eight. They're both named John [laugh] Oh God. Now, they won't talk to me at all, you know, because they wanna forget it again, totally forget it. So anyway, they found about sixty families called in. One woman said she was she was sitting at her desk at the Enquirer she was she had a lot of break. And she was sitting in her desk drinking a cup of coffee, and she saw their article about a woman named Luma Tarleton. She said, she later told me this “Oh my God that’s my aunt. My great aunt. She, I didn't know she was in an experiment. She was one.” Yeah. And that kind of thing was happening around town. And so yeah, over sixty families were part of the lawsuit. So the lawsuit did not I mean, wonderful judge, but at the end, she uh, decided for the plaintiffs. And she said up, she said, “we will set up a committee um, of the attorneys, the Family Association, and [unknown] to talk about what would be a proper settlement.” And this was a civil suit. Lucky for the doctors. And so the attorney that meat from our side wasn't forceful. He was not forceful. He didn't much care exactly what the families got, as long as he could claim a victory. Or it seemed that way to me a little bit. No, I don't know if I should say—. I don't know if it was just that way. But he didn't ask for enough. And they only got five million to divide among all these descendants. So it wasn't whole lot. If you had a big family, you wouldn't get much. And one woman that I had become friends with whose mother was irradiated and in the hospital three weeks later. She definitely died of, I have to take that in the dining room. She did not she died for radiation. She was she was she was okay at home. She was cooking supper for her children. She had breast cancer but she was still active with, she had three somewhat small children and one older daughter, who was about eighteen and uh not living at home. And so th-the hospital called her, her name is Mar Jacobs one day and said, um “Oh, we've got a new treatment for your cancer. So can you come over tomorrow for an appointment?” So the next morning, she called a taxi. She lived not far from the university. But she didn't have a car she called a taxi put on her hat as people did a lot in those days, went to the hospital was irradiated 150 reds she thought it was treatment went back home that night she was terribly ill, vomited all night. The next morning, her oldest daughter had a car came and got her mother took her back to the hospital. They put her in a room and the older daughter told me later, you know years later, she said, “ I just took my coffee machine with me and I stayed in the room with my mother the three weeks that she lived.” So, so five million. She later told me she thought she was forty or fifty by the time it copped up again, and we finally found people and had the lawsuit. And she she said, “Martha that wasn't much money. I mean, some families had seven or eight people that would qualify.” And she said, “Martha I could take my share of that and spend it at Walmart in one weekend.” [laugh] Well, listen, that's, that's, that's the story. And we're still struggling today, right now. Um, we would lie because all these attacks on black people around the country have been full of news. We'd like to be remembered. Along with the others, you know, but can't be mentioned. Can't be mentioned. I called Cincinnati. I haven't wanted to talk about it for years. I've, I've wanted to do my other books, more cheerful books.[chuckle] But, I mean, I thought, No, we can't let this just go away and nobody would even know that it ever happened. And I cause I mean, I emailed the Cincinnati edition that comes on every day at twelve o'clock. They work with the Enquirer. It's an hour long program. They love Cincinnati history, they're always telling us that some big project, uh some big church, that was about to be demolished is now being fixed up. It's gonna be beautiful. Again, I mean, they they love this old history of Cincinnati. So I mean, it’s it’s part of our history, you know? So I wrote em’ an email, I said, “Well, look, let's look at our darker history too. And I would, I would, would be willing to talk with you about what happened to Cincinnati people back in the sixties,” never heard back from at all, didn't even write me back. And a reporter had been in touch with me, this was about two or three years ago, now. He got wind of, he read my book. And he got rid of it got rolled up about the story. And he wanted to do a new story in the Enquirer. And he interviewed a lot of people including my children. He said, “What was it like when your mom was?” I mean, he had a lot of intimate, my sister had been a paralegal, for the law firm. And um they killed it. He couldn't run. They killed it. He did a lot of work on it, and then it didn't run. So you see, I mean, it's gonna be just buried. If we're proud, Cincinnatians we don't want to remember that. Oh my gosh. Well, I'm sure there are other other things you might want to talk about.

KP: Well, thank you so much for sharing that story. It's really great to hear it from you, and I really hope that um the memorial that is um currently covered by a bush will soon be able to better um remember those who have died in those experiments.

MS: Yeah. It’s wonderful that students today are are concerned. That is wonderful. You young guys, oh, some of you—y’all are getting a lot of things done.

KP: Well onto a more um, I don't know if it's cheerful, but a different subject. [chuckle] Um, I'm curious. Um, have you or what challenges have you faced working at UC being a woman? Because I know that um gender has played a role in the treatment of different faculty members, so um I was curious to see how it impacted your work.”

00:44:36

MS: I I have no idea how things are today. Now, your professor is a woman right?

KP: Yes.

MS: There probably are quite a few women today.

KP: Yes.

MS: A lot. I don't know. Would you say that quite a lot?

KP: Yes.

MS: Okay, that's wonderful. Um, when I came to UC, I wasn't at all sure they would hire me. We knew that they would hire my husband. He was the first that was to be hired. And I had been, we had both made applications around um other universities before we he was settled on this one, and none of them said they were hiring but I don't remember which ones they were two or three that he was considering. And so I would also apply. Um, so, he was hired here. And I applied. Let me see. I, I, I guess I don't know why they accepted me. But it was kind of unusual in 1967. But there's only been one woman hired in in my department. Which I mean, we have large, you know, English is a big part—a lot a lot of men, I don't know, maybe thirty, twenty-five, thirty be teaching, and only one woman. And I believe, let me see, she had been moved up when another college closed, that you see ran. They needed to provide her a job somewhere. So she came to UC it was the way I remember it, anyway. Yeah, only one other woman. Well, they just, I guess they happen to need a person in modern literature right then or something. And they did. Yow know? So I was happy to be over the job.

KP: Did you ever notice being treated differently by um your former fac—former faculty members? Um, due to being a woman? Did you ever notice, um did you ever notice how men were getting different treatment than women were and how they were often looked at as a higher priority?

00:47:38

MS: Oh, yes, some things came up. But you know, you're never sure why you didn't get something. Some and did. I mean, you know, so it wasn't blatant mistreatment of women I don't think there was we never, let me see, at the time I retired, I imagine, maybe a third of the faculty were women. I retired somewhat early because of my vision. Um I mean, I was there about twenty-one years or something. And some people I mean, I was, or was it longer than that? I know, I was, I was just barely sixty when I when I left teaching. It was yeah, I had gotten to the point that I, when I had to do a lot of poetry classes because I could read poems better than better than novels. And sometimes I would come to class, my problem would be this big [gestured with hands]. And I mean, I later had some treatment. I'm somewhat better today than I was when I left teaching. I had a certain surgeon in Boston to him and operated on my eyes it had helped me quite a bit. I still have to read most things with the magnifying glass. I can drive. Probably shouldn't drive, but I drive some where I know exactly where I'm going. I can't really read the street signs very well. I can go straight to Norwood to the library and straight [unknown]. But, so but in terms of treatment of women in those days. Um, I yeah. I mean, I don't know what they thought it some departments never hired while I—well uh for a long time they did not hire any any women. And I know there were three of us one time, I don't know something was going on and a speaker was coming to campus that we didn't think should have been invited, having to do with the Nicaraguan revolution. I mean, he was gonna defend what we had done there, which was god awful. We felt at least the three, three of us women. So we couldn't convince the men not to have him go up and speak. So we stood outside where he was speaking and held up signs and everything. Oh I don't know. But I won't say that they as time went on, some of the women disagreed with each other on things wasn't always just women against men. You know.

KP: Did you ever witness any student protests? And if you did, explain them?

00:50:51

MS: Well, there weren't as many as I wish, often wish there were. Um let me see, when the Kent State people died, at Kent State. We had quite a protest here. Yes. And it got bad enough that the university closed. I never thought I'd see that happen. They were afraid that certain antics oh I don't know a desk was thrown out of [unknown] from a certain office that wasn't respected or? I mean, I'm not sure. I'm not sure what cau—thinking back I would, I would have my husband might remember what happened to cause us to close as certain other universities did in Ohio. We, we were the we were the ones. And the the fact that the National Guard was it when Kent State had caused, added to the turmoil there and people, eventually some people died yeah. But there wasn't a lot of student protests during my years. Let me see have I forgotten some of it? Probably—um—there were always, you know, your outline person who would join up with a Planned Parenthood. S—s—some of my women students, definitely were active in in rallies at Planned Parenthood offices and on their campus there’s one quite near campus, I believe it still exists there. And so yeah, there were certain I may be forgetting. As the wars came along, you know, probably were probably were more students active. Often downtown, they would go to rallies downtown, with others students from around you know. But as far as right on campus, um in in around, let me see, somewhere along about the middle of my career there. We did not have a faculty. And I and a few others help start a union. We uh we asked the administration to allow us to have meetings on campus. We had a we had a faculty senate. I mean, let me see we Yeah, we asked and they didn't want they wanted to block any effort that we would make to start a faculty union. Now of course, they don't want to a union you know, so we know I remember I rode the the uh shuttle bus downtown and talk to an attorney said we we’re not we are not we're not able to. That the state constitution makes it possible for everybody in universities to meet together on campus to create a a union and but we need to get the salary figures for the whole university. We need to see what the administrators are, what raises are they giving themselves when they tell us they're broke, and can't give us a raise? So our our attorney, he he would call university so we got to release those salaries. And that's everything is supposed to be public in a public university that they just they said “yes, but we really can't we don't really have have [unknown].” They put us off and finally I said to to this attorney, I went back down. I said,” Listen, Jim,” I said, “if if you don't think threatened something, the fact is, so those of us would do if if we could get the figures as it will have to uh sue the university or I forget.” And so he said, “Oh, well. Okay.” So he made one more call. He said, “we're gonna file suit tomorrow, if we don't get those figures.” Well, the next day, we got them. They were placed in the copy of everybody's salaries were placed in the library. One copy in the library. Okay. Oh, I tell you when people saw that. The people that hadn't particularly wanted a union. They did. Oh the salaries, they were giving each other.[chuckle] So yeah, now, I mean, as it turned out, the union we formed, and I was not very active, I wasn't active in that. I mean, I felt I'd done enough. And I didn't want to, frankly, do all the work to get decide how to set up our union. We saw that, yes, everybody was mad. We had a vote of the whole faculty. And it passed fairly well, fairly substantially. Although College of Medicine people didn't, weren't interested. But there weren't enough to kill it. So we had a union, and um, a friend of mine in the, in another department. She loved uh, organizational work like that. And she kind of took over and did a good job of of getting the union, you know, forming the committees and all we would need. And and so the vote passes, and we set up, it was we decided to call it the AAUP union. It wouldn't have been my first choice. But it’s alright. And the first year, we had to, we had a walkout, I mean, we went on strike, because they weren't gonna give us what we saw clearly they needed to give us for various, mainly paid but other things leaves and all or something were in question. So we all stood out in front of McMicken Hall all sides. We fit we we stayed out of class for a few days, until they signed a contract. You know. And um so, lo and behold, we got about a twenty percent raise. Students need to use, you know that? Students should always have a union. Adjunct teachers around the country, in some places, are forming unions. I mean, cheap labor, you know, we hire people to teach freshman English or whatever, for almost nothing? They can't live on they have to have another job? They need a union. In fact, I I said about the union work in the adjuncts that can be part of it. No, most faculty said, no, that wouldn't work. It would have been difficult because they were kind of a traveling. You never knew who would be the adjuncts that was the pity of it that you university with just a little bit the last minute open when they realized that they had too many freshmen in classes. So they call up somebody would agree to come next week to teach. God, slave labor. So um, we didn't, we weren't able to include adjunct part time teachers in the union and to this day. I mean, this this whole adjunct class around the country is larger. I believe. I haven't studied larger than it has ever been I understand. Because the corporations that now own the universities in effect they did in effect they own us. As I see it, they want cheap labor. They want more and more adjuncts more and more part timers. Did y’all have a good many adjunct teachers in your first year? Or did you?

KP: I'm not sure. We were all online. So I I—

MS: Oh right. Oh my gosh I’m forgetting about that. Right. Well, I hope that doesn't go farther and farther because I do not trust the people that run universities anymore. I don't see they have but they have a board of trustees. I forget how we get that board. Somebody votes on them, I guess? Or does the university just appointed? I I don’t remember. I steer clear [chuckle] I got to steer clear of something. But it is a problem. I know my grandchildren, my grandchildren goes to Ohio State and um, she has a lot of part time teachers. I mean, she's fortunate. She does have an older guy that's her main. And she studies environmental science. And she has a professor that she's very close to and they work together a lot. So some good things happen in universities even now. But my God, wealth, wealth is poured into them particularly Columbus. Very, very rich people are the main stalwarts, you know, like, if you have a new building as name for one of them, you know, so we're we’re a long way from home on that. But thank God isn't it strange, I mean, good people do do manage to do some decent things. Even now. The country is poor. This is a very poor country. We're almost like a third world country. The rich and the poor. We’re almost like a third world. People most people are struggling in this rich country where everybody could prosper in my opinion at least and a lot of very poor people. They don't even know where their next meal is coming from. Think of the homeless in this town. Tremendously more than than thirty years ago. More and more.

KP: Speaking of the wealth of the university How do you feel about um the University putting more money into campus expansion rather than other areas?

01:04:15

MS: I don't know. Let me see. Well, even that whole new law—law school wait a minute was an issue the way it was built. Some people got a lot more out of it than should have. I don't know I don't really know what is going on?

KP: It's just an ongoing cycle of rebuilding things tearing down old buildings making new ones. Um, its—

MS: Oh. Well, I mean course in my time, the old library, so called is now the law school on campus, on main campus, the new library, the library that you would use is what I call the new library [chuckle] even though it's now what thirty forty years old, I guess? Well, not quite that. That old library. It's now part of the law school right on the corner of? Can’t even call the street names. Of?

KP: Calhoun and um

MS: Yeah. And um

KP: Clifton

MS: Clifton Avenue. Yeah. That's a beautiful building. Oh, that is a gorgeous old building it just, it just broke my heart when it was closed as a library. And they built that monstrous thing on the back of campus. Nothing pretty about it. I mean, it's, it's all green vinal or something [laugh]. Yeah gosh.

KP: Well Dr. Stephens, I'm want to be mindful of your time, it has been a little over an hour. Is there anything that I haven't talked about or asked you about um that you would like to talk about?

01:06:32

MS: Well, yeah okay, let me see. The new book that I'm completing has to do with UC of all things. I mean cause for years I didn't read anything about it has to do with my, those early years of mine. And but it has nothing to do with the uh, my work around the radiations. I mean, it's kind of amazing that I was also doing other interesting, fun things. And so I would describe one day, it was one of my worst days. At UC and one of my worst days I had this little group of friends. They didn't know anything about radiation test at all. And this was another part of my life, so to speak. I had the junior faculty association, people in other departments that were anguished about the war and what was happening in medicine. And then I had this little group of friends um, that had a lot of fun together. I don't drink or anything. But I mean there was a lot of partying and drinking which is sort of be with it, but they were so funny that I like to be with em’ and a a man that I call in my novel, and I still don't want to mention his name, even though he's he he is gone. He wasn't gone when I started this book I’m speaking of, and I call him Arnaldo Gale, in in my book, and a lot of my new book is it's a memoir. You know, but but I changed names, you know. And he's the funniest man I've ever met and a brilliant man. Totally brilliant. He read everything in the world. And, oh, he he was so funny. I mean. And um, so we went, these little friends of mine. Every Friday, we would walk over through campus to a restaurant right over there in Clifton. If I could recall the name of it. A Vietnamese restaurant. I forget the name of it. God how could I? Well, we walked over there. Every Friday, we had this this thing where we we'd love to get their lobster pancakes [laugh]. And it was one spring day that we met. They came by with other three guys. The four of us and we had other friends but but mostly it was these four, we were we were four. And uh, we all walked through campus. It was so pretty campus was very beautiful. I guess it still is. I mean all the trees the [unknown] it was a beautiful spring day all the blooms coming out, you know, and so we walked through past, the old library, and cross Calhoun and um the next street over uh was our little Vietnamese restaurant. And we knew the people there, I got to know that the owner, and all it was very much a little family thing. And built out about what was once an old man's over there. And so we sit down, we have our lunch and some merriment. And uh some people uh, I’m sure Arnoldo Gail has had his drink. Or wine. So um, and so we started back to campus. We had been here three years. We weren't up for tenure. We had at least one more year, maybe two before we would be decided on for tenure. But we did have appointments with the head that afternoon. We know that we needed to be back back in the department by around two o'clock. We each had had a fifteen minute appointment. So we come back into McMicken Hall, we're feeling good. And um, we all decided to go to my little office because it was right down the hall from the main office where we would go for our to talk with the chairman about our our contract. You’re three you got three years and then normally that was renewed for two years and then it was up or out was the way things were working had been for some years. So we're waiting for our time in my little office and okay, all right. Well, I guess so. I think Arnoldo your first? Yes I think I am. And so we hear him the other three of us wait there in the room. We're kind of I don't know sleepy people we’ve had wine and all and we just we hear him clapping down the stairway. This this the hall I'm sorry, the hall down to the chairman. Okay. Arnoldo

our very, very precious guy. Funny man. Brilliant man. In a little while we hear him coming back. When he gets to the our door and opens it he thinks he does this [slides thumb across neck]. We had he had been cut from the faculty. He was gone. He would be gone. Usually you had one year before you had to leave. Oh my god. So the other three hosts. Well, um so uh, the the the other woman my friend Ann, god is she’s still living. And I talked to her once in a while. On the phone. She lives in California. And she said well uh it's time for me okay. She said so she got up what she was very, she's very nervous. I remember she she had a sweater on. She took it off. She put it back on she she goes down the hall. Kind of a large woman but with small feet. She comes back. She's cut she’s been cut. She's been she's dismissed. Then our other friend George. Oh George poor George. He was always almost in tears over various things we can imagine he having to confront the chairman. So same thing with him. Very softly because he never wanted to make a commotion he was he was the gentlest of all of us. And he too was let go. So my turn. I’ll put it this way, those three had not published anything. They knew they would have to to get tenure. But they weren't thinking they had to this soon. I had published I think it was just one paper. In a good journal. I mean, in fact, it was about teaching literature and Marxism, I think. And they didn't cut me. But this was above my best friends. Especially Arnoldo Gale. My god, he and I, he and I were tremendous buddies. He was in this living room many of times. I mean, always drinking and I mean, it was strange because I don't drink. But I wanted to be with him. I wanted to hear his outlandish talk of all kinds. Oh, God. Oh, so funny. And no, one time he pushed me by mistake. He pushed me against that window. I couldn't breathe. He was caressing me, holding me real tight. And I said “No Arnoldo” and he said, “What? What is it?” “I can’t breathe” I mean. Here I am with this little woman. I mean, who mainly does radiation and everything, teaches Marxism. Why would I hang out with this funny guy? I mean. Probably I mean, their families were Republicans. They weren't much of anything. I think they all turn into democrats as time went on you know, but um they all got fired. I never got over that. I needed those guys. We did so many good things together. And Arnaldo took um us to restaurants that I never heard of. I wouldn't have ever I mean in times I would I would do these even those kind of things but. He and my husband. He's the funniest thing in the world described in this book. Its hysterical. He was over here late one night drinking, and my husband was out drinking in another party, back of the neighborhood probably. Well, they had never met. At that time. He knew about Arnoldo and all, but okay. Finally, Arnoldo, he has had too much. And I said, “Listen. Oh My gosh. We're gonna have to, I'll have to go to bed now.” He said “Well, okay,” he would say. So he went up the stairs to the bathroom. Oh my gosh I don’t know. I did hear him for a while. So I went up there, and he was standing at the top of the stairs. And his coat was on the floor. I said “Arnoldo?” gosh, I thought he had to spend the night. That's for sure. He's out of it. Well, in a little while I was up there and I said “well listen I’ll help you get down.” I thought he could never drive home. He’d have to stay. But uh, suddenly we heard footsteps coming in the house. We both I mean I certainly knew that was my husband. And Arnaldo must have assumed the same thing because he rushed down the stairs and fell right there could have been hurt. Fell. I mean cause he—[chuckle]. And he was he was practically lying there when my husband came in, my husband walks over here. What who is this? They’d never met. Arnoldo, he said, “Good to meet you” [laugh] well, he barely managed to say that “Good to meet you.” Well, here's the funny thing about it, they became pretty good friends [laugh]. They both like to drink. So I was kind of normal in those ways. That was so damn funny. “Glad to meet you.” Well

KP: Well, thank you so much for your time. Dr. Stephens. Er Stephens, sorry. It's It's been a pleasure talking to you.

MS: Well, I don't know if I should’ve said everything I said.[laugh] But my husband is still living. We have a little condo near here. And he's fixing that up. This house is too much, oh so much trouble. I don't know. We're probably well, he’ll probably come over tonight. We’ll go out for supper. But he's eighty-five and not doing too well. As neither am I. I mean, I'm almost that old too. I’m eighty-four. And uh, I had fall in the yard tw—three days ago. And thank God, it didn't really hurt me. I mean, it was amazing. I tripped on a hose. Course all I'm saying is we're constantly afraid of falling and yet we're not quite careful enough. Well, listen, um have you enjoyed your quarter doing this work?

KP: I have. It's been very lovely.

MS: You're in the same course?

Mosaed Alameri: Yeah.

KP: It's been wonderful getting to talk to everybody and hear their stories. And I was especially fascinated by your story. It was really touching to hear the radiation story. So, I really appreciate your time and sharing that information with us.

MS: Well. So you're a psychology major.

KP: I am

MS: And what what is your major?

MA: I'm an English major.

MS: Oh, you are?

MA: Yeah.

MS: Oh okay.

MA: But I'm taking this class because I need it but yeah everything is going well.

MS: What period of literature do you like?

MA: Well, I mean, I'm taking English for not for non native speakers.

MS: For what I'm sorry

MA: Non native speakers. So people whose English is their second learn—

MS: Oh

MA: Yeah.

MS: Oh, okay. Yeah.

MA: So this is my major. She's a psychology major. But we got to meet in this class. So

MS: Oh, yeah. Okay. So you're in English major.

MA: Yeah.

MS: Well, notice, a lot of our great writers were radical.

MA: Yeah I mean uh

MS: I mean, John Milton years ago, who wrote paradise lost. Well, he his big thing was freedom of the press, which nobody had in those days. You could be jailed for speaking out. He was great. I mean, John Steinbeck Grapes of Wrath. I mentioned. Have you ever read that?

MA: I haven’t.

MS: Well

MA: I should get

MS: Yeah get get a hold of that.

MA: Yeah, yeah I definitely should

MS: Kurt Vonnegut slaughterhouse five.

MA: Okay.

MS: Take a look at that:

MA: Sure thing

MS: He was interesting in when the bombing of Dresden took place in the second World War. [unknown] they shouldn't have. I mean, there was no point in in destroying the city of Dresden at that time the war was ending. And yet, we blew up that much of the city. So his book slaughterhouse five

MA: Sounds very interesting. I mean, yeah I’ll definitely give that a look

MS: I mean, you could probably name any number of books. I don't I don't know about. But But, yeah, I mean, I'm just saying, Charles Dickens cared about the poor classes of England. And um I, some people wonder that English professors would be what radicals or at least progressives, I mean, why would they were studying art? Well, we're studying beautiful writing. And many of those writings are very radical, or you might say, progressive pieces of what we call today. That is, they cared about the world and what was happening to people or literature is about everything. You know. It's not just it's about everything. And you don't know what might turn up in novels, and poems and everything about life. It's a wonderful field.

MA: Yeah

MS: I think.

MA: I think so too.

MS: Oh, good. Yeah. Well

KP: Well, thank you so much. I really appreciate your time.

MS: Yeah.

01:26:54