

An Interview with
Marylen Mann

at the Historical Society of Missouri St. Louis

Research Center, St. Louis, Missouri

10 October 2013 & June 17, 2016

Interviewed by Dr. Blanche M. Touhill

Transcribed by Valerie Leri and edited by

Josephine Sporleder



Oral History Program

The State Historical Society of Missouri

Collection S1148 International Women's Forum DVD 18

NOTICE

- 1) This material may be protected by copyright law (Title 17, U.S. Code). It may not be cited without acknowledgment to the Western Historical Manuscript Collection, a Joint Collection of the University of Missouri and the State Historical Society of Missouri Manuscripts, Columbia, Missouri. Citations should include: [Name of collection] Project, Collection Number C4020, [name of interviewee], [date of interview], Western Historical Manuscript Collection, Columbia, Missouri.

- 2) Reproductions of this transcript are available for reference use only and cannot be reproduced or published in any form (including digital formats) without written permission from the Western Historical Manuscript Collection.

- 3) Use of information or quotations from any [Name of collection] Collection transcript indicates agreement to indemnify and hold harmless the University of Missouri, the State Historical Society of Missouri, their officers, employees, and agents, and the interviewee from and against all claims and actions arising out of the use of this material.

For further information, contact: State Historical Society of Missouri, St. Louis Research Center, 222 Thomas Jefferson Library, One University Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63121 (314) 516-5119

PREFACE

The interview was taped on a placed on a tripod. There are periodic background sounds but the recording is of generally high quality.

The following transcript represents a rendering of the oral history interview. Stylistic alterations have been made as part of a general transcription policy. The interviewee offered clarifications and suggestions, which the following transcript reflects. Any use of brackets [] indicates editorial insertions not found on the original audio recordings. Physical gestures, certain vocal inflections such as imitation, and/or pauses are designated by a combination of italics and brackets []. Any use of parentheses () indicates a spoken aside evident from the speaker's intonation, or laughter. Quotation marks [""] identify speech depicting dialogue, speech patterns, or the initial use of nicknames. Em dashes [—] are used as a stylistic method to show a meaningful pause or an attempt to capture nuances of dialogue or speech patterns. Words are *italicized* when emphasized in speech or when indicating a court case title. Particularly animated speech is identified with **bold** lettering. Underlining [] indicates a proper title of a publication. The use of underlining and double question marks in parentheses [(??)] denotes unintelligible phrases. Although substantial care has been taken to render this transcript as accurately as possible, any remaining errors are the responsibility of the editor, Josephine Sporleder.

Marylen Mann 10-10-2013 & 6-17-2016

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MISSOURI-ST. LOUIS

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S FORUM ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

OCTOBER 10, 2013 & JUNE 17, 2016

MARYLEN MANN INTERVIEWED BY DR. BLANCHE M. TOUHILL

Blanche Touhill: Why don't you introduce yourself?

Marylen Mann: My name is Marylen Mann.

Blanche Touhill: Tell me a little bit about your early life: your parents; your siblings; where you went to school, elementary or secondary school, even college. Who influenced you, your mother, your father, your uncle, a teacher, all of the above?

Marylen Mann: I grew up in St. Louis and mainly in University City. My parents were extraordinary people. They were very simple. They were not able to get college educations. The Depression prevented that but they were very warm and very loving. My father owned a retail store, men's, women's and children's, and my mother helped him. We all did during busy times. My mother was the kind of person who could do anything. She could cook; she could sew; she was a natural linguist. In the early days of my father's business, on Saturdays, farmers would come in...it was across from the Biddle Market...and many of them were immigrants and my mother could speak whatever language. She had no training. She was a natural mathematician. But she was basically a loving homemaker and she and my father had a very warm relationship and I think the thing that made a difference in my growing up years was their sense of commitment, not only to their family, but to other people, people in need. They were very giving and we had an extended family and our house was a gathering place so on Sunday, people would drop by for bagels and coffee and cream cheese and there was concern about...well, I remember in the early days of World War II, raising money to get people out of Europe who were Jewish and were in great danger of ending up in concentration camps. There were always people for dinner who had no one else. So they didn't have a lot of education but there was a lot of concern about others and about what was going on in the world. I have

one sister. She's nine-and-a-half years older than I am. We are very different. She raised three children. She went to the University of Missouri and got a degree in journalism, raised her children and then came back here to the University of Missouri to get her degree in counseling and ended up as a principal in junior high, at first Brentwood and then Maplewood, Richmond Heights, and went to the White House three times to get citations for being the top "Best Test" scores. She just turned 85 and she is still professor on an online university, training teachers and administrators. She's incredibly organized and focused on what she does but not interested in the community at all. So we're very different that way. I think the teacher that had the greatest impact on me was Morris Ames, who was my philosophy professor at Washington University and he, too, was a simple man but brilliant and was able to translate philosophy concepts into everyday life. His parents had been pig farmers and he told wonderful barnyard stories relating Aristotle to his experiences growing up and it was fascinating. Anyway, he and his wife, they were both philosophy professors, Morris and Elisabeth Ames decided that I had a very fine mind. I loved philosophy and I became one of their stars and was often at their home for dinner and got to know the professors in the Philosophy Department, not only as teachers but as friends and their view of myself was stunning to me. I was always a good student but I didn't think I was special and they made a difference in my life, so much so that when I graduated...and I graduated in three years; I was very young, but I wanted to go in philosophy. They had both gone to the University of London, had favorite professors there and wanted me to go there. My parents were horrified. I was very young and my study of philosophy had changed my religious beliefs. They were accepting but didn't know where else I was going to go. We had a very traditionally Jewish family and let's say that I'm always culturally Jewish but I was no longer practicing. I had a broader view of the world. Another professor that made a great impact on me was Houston Smith and he was the Religions of Man, he had me as his grader when I was a senior and I was to arrange the teas for his monthly colloquium where he brought people from all over to talk about integrating philosophy and religion and to other aspects and other departments. And so I got to meet some fascinating people. At any rate, philosophy was a great draw for me. My parents, who never discouraged anything, said, "No, that's not a path for you." So I went and applied to the Law School at Washington U and really

not because I wanted to be a lawyer, but I thought it would be a good mental discipline for me. I didn't think I was very disciplined. Lo and behold, I got in and I think there was only one other woman in 1957, at Washington U Law School. And when I came home, all excited, my father said, "If you want to continue your education at this point, I am happy to support that but you're going to spend three years at hard labor and it's going to cost a great deal of money..." ...I think tuition was \$360 a semester at that time..."...and you're going to be a glorified law clerk. So it's either social work or education and that will enable you to have a career and fall back on something..."...because, of course, everybody was supposed to get married and raise children but you could work up until that time. And so I knew social work was not for me and my friends in the Philosophy Department took me in the Department of Education and said, "Don't make her take (Play and Games?). Give her something challenging." And so I was part of a program that was an experimental program and we bussed children from all over St. Louis Public Schools who had 130 IQ or above and it was the first gifted program. It was at Shaw School and it was an interesting experience for me and I think my work in Oasis is an outgrowth of work with gifted children.

Blanche Touhill: What did you do in the program? Did you teach them? Were you, like, the administrator? What role did you play in that?

Marylen Mann: Well, I did some curriculum development and I did observations and very little teaching but what excited me was the creation of programs that would challenge and would be fascinating for these kids.

Blanche Touhill: And that then led to a Master's Degree in Education?

Marylen Mann: Well, yes.

Blanche Touhill: Did you replicate that anyplace else, with the children, or did it just...how did you get from the children to Oasis?

Marylen Mann: Well, I taught for one year in the Normandy School District and I was told by Superintendent Barnes that I was being given a gifted classroom. Now, those were before the days of the Special Education District and what I got was 34 children who were challenged. They were low IQ, they had some emotional problems and it was an incredible experience because, although I adored them, I was not prepared for this classroom. So at the end of the year, even though they asked me to stay, I declined. At that

point, Ladue School District asked me to come and be an Enrichment teacher for the Price School and so I was able to plan programs for kids in the whole school and that was...

Blanche Touhill: I bet that was exciting.

Marylen Mann: That was exciting, although I think the teachers were slightly wary of me pulling children out of the classroom and doing things that, let's say, were a little bit more creative. They were good teachers but they were very, very traditional at that time. Fast forward: I got married. When my children were very young, I got an invitation to supervise students at Washington University and, although my contemporaries were not doing that and I think my mother and my mother-in-law were surprised and not terrible supportive, my husband was and we managed. My children were not quite two and four, they were very, very active little boys but I think it was good for them and good for me to go back to work. I did that for a year and then got an invitation to come here and do curriculum development, my love, and management of the elementary school, which was not my strong suit but the curriculum development was. At the same time, we had moved to Clayton and there was a vacancy on the Clayton School Board and I was asked to fill it and I was very hesitant about that because the school district was a hotbed of politics in Clayton. It was revered but people moved into Clayton because of the school district and every child was exceptional and every parent was not just supportive, but involved to the extreme. And so there was a lot of interest and a lot of opinions and school board members, the elections were always hotly contested and I didn't feel that I had a stomach for that. My husband said to me, "I think you would be good and I think you should do this and I promise you that if you do, I'll come to the board meetings and I'll sit in the back and I'll take you out for a drink of wine afterwards and you can always look at me if things get tough" and he had a wonderful sense of humor and that's what happened and as things got dicey, I'd look to the back of the room and he'd make one of these faces and it was just terrific. After a while, the rest of the board members used to come with us to have a drink after the board meeting and we coalesced into a unit and I stayed on the board for 13 years and every time I see people who served at one point or another on the board, they will always bring up what a wonderful time we had and how we were able to iron out

differences by going out for a glass of wine after the board meetings. Sometimes it was very late but everybody came.

Blanche Touhill: So that networking, you were always involved in networking in a way...

Marylen Mann: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: ...with the Philosophy Department and then with the School Board, but you still had your love and your love was the curriculum?

Marylen Mann: My love was the curriculum, yeah, dreaming up ideas and I think because I've always regretted that I don't have any artistic ability. I can't paint, I can't draw, I can't sing, I can't play an instrument, and I'm passionate about the arts and I revere artists and so I guess this was my creative outlet, that and cooking.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, I didn't know you were a good cook.

Marylen Mann: I wouldn't say I was a good cook but I love cooking and I do not cook with a recipe so it's my creativity. Nothing ever turns out the same way twice but I enjoy it. As I think I said before, I think I have an undisciplined mind. It doesn't allow me to follow a recipe.

Blanche Touhill: When you married your husband, did you realize he would be so supportive of what you wanted to do?

Marylen Mann: Yes, because we dated for five-and-a-half years and he asked me to marry him after the first six months and I told him that I had a list of things I wanted to do, that I wanted to get my graduate degree, I wanted to work, I wanted to work outside of St. Louis for a while because I hadn't been able to go away to school except for the summers. I went to UCLA and SMU, and I wanted to see the world and I wanted to take a summer off and just travel, and in the meantime, I dated other people but he was always there. After my year at Ladue, I did go to Dallas. I had friends there and I was teaching in Dallas and he called me and he said, "I've waited for you. I've let you do all of your list and now I want you to, at the end of this job, I want you to pack up and come home and let's get married." And I said, "Well, I love you but I'm not sure I'm in love" and he said, "I'm going to teach you what it means and you need to marry me because no one else understands you the way I do and will support you the way I do" and he thought I could do anything. He encouraged me to

go back to work; he encouraged me on the school board. He was always there to be the with the boys if I had other things to do and to tell me that I could do something better than anyone else did.

Blanche Touhill: Isn't that wonderful.

Marylen Mann: It was wonderful.

Blanche Touhill: How did you meet him?

Marylen Mann: At a party. It was a Washington U undergraduate party and he had another date and I had another date and...

Blanche Touhill: ...that was the beginning?

Marylen Mann: Yes, yes, that was the beginning and he was an utterly charming, warm man with the best sense of humor in the world.

Blanche Touhill: What did he do for a living?

Marylen Mann: He was a businessman. He was in a company, vice president of Anchor Floor Company but his real love was children and sports. He was a great athlete and he was rated one of the top three amateur golfers in St. Louis but he loved all kinds of sports and he really was engaged with my boys and he coached everything and he had a real sense of what was important for kids to learn, that winning was good but it was the sportsmanship, the love of the game and being a team player. And so all the parents wanted their children to be on Norman's team because he would pick out kids who had a difficult time and he'd promote them and he'd encourage them. So we really had the same philosophy on life and financial success was not a big issue with us and so we didn't have a lot of money.

Blanche Touhill: Well, you had enough.

Marylen Mann: We absolutely had enough, we had enough.

Blanche Touhill: Did your boys grow up in Clayton then and went to the Clayton schools?

Marylen Mann: Yes, it was important to both of us to move into Clayton by the time the boys went to school. We'd been living in Parkway and Parkway was a good district but I'd done my student teaching in Clayton and that's

where I wanted my boys to have their education. And unfortunately, my husband became ill with cancer and the boys were young...

Blanche Touhill: Oh, my.

Marylen Mann: And he was ill for seven-and-a-half years.

Blanche Touhill: How old were they when he died?

Marylen Mann: They were 14 and 15, but it was a long illness. But because of my work in the Clayton school board, I met the president of the laboratory that was here in St. Louis called (Semron?) and it was one of the efforts of Johnson's Great Society that we were going to change the face of education by the curriculum we developed and how we trained teachers and they set up 10 labs across the country and the one here in St. Louis was dedicated to aesthetic education: new math and they took the old mental hospital on Arsenal which was a horror, and got a grant and so (Bacchius and Roupe?) got great awards for turning it into this magnificent contemporary facility.

Blanche Touhill: And you were the curriculum person?

Marylen Mann: What I was upset about all the time that I was teaching here at UMSL was, I placed students in the schools, it wasn't student teaching but it was experience and internships, if you will, and I got in a lot of classrooms and I'm a great lover of our cultural institutions in St. Louis and have been a volunteer for all of them, and was very disappointed about the disconnect. We did not have good programs at that time. If you went to the Historical Society, everything was behind a glass case and a rope and at the Art Museum, the message was "don't get too close to the paintings" and so when I found out what (Semron?) was all about [inaudible 22:02] I said to the president and the vice president, "I think what you ought to do..."...because their task was to develop programs for a 10-state area. They had support from the Department of Education and they did create a programs, pilot test them, refine them and market them and I said, "I think you ought to develop some programs to connect the cultural institutions with what was needed in the school" and actually, the schools, teachers didn't even really take advantage of the archives in the libraries they have in the cultural institutions because they really weren't encouraged to and I thought the classrooms needed some enrichment and they said to me, "Well, that's fine and we'll tell you what:

why don't you come on down. We don't have money to pay you but if you can write a grant, you can support yourself." And so I foolishly did that...not foolishly but...

Blanche Touhill: At that time, the cultural institutions didn't have an education director. They didn't have anything to link with the schools either, did they?

Marylen Mann: Not much, no.

Blanche Touhill: I guess that is the way, they probably had something but it was very minimal.

Marylen Mann: They did.

Blanche Touhill: And it was probably in the traditional mode.

Marylen Mann: Absolutely, and so the first thing that I did was look at the Historical Society and talk to five school districts, the public library system, the engineers club. I decided that...put together a program called "Historian as Detective" and to use artifacts to tell the story of history so the inquiry method and we used the Edes Bridge as a main event and to talk about James B. Edes who was an extraordinary mind and inventor and self-educated man, who had a fascinating history and the bridge. And so what we did...and the Historical Society was a little reluctant at first but the aim was to get archives that could go out into the classroom and then culminate into a visit to the museum. So we got that grant and it was for 4th, 5th and 6th graders and, of course, teaching history of Missouri, St. Louis history, was a part of the curriculum at that time and we copied archives of children's writing at that time and newspaper articles and the building of the bridge and what was going on in St. Louis and the United States at that time, the invention of the (iron clads?) which helped win the Civil War and all of that, and even the aesthetics of the bridge. So we had woven everything. And that was successful and it led to other things. It led to the ABC Program at the Art Museum and I started collaborating with...

Blanche Touhill: What's the ABC Program?

Marylen Mann: It was a similar program that I did not develop but was involved in that was interactive at the Art Museum and I think I better fast forward. There's a lot more to tell you.

- Blanche Touhill: Oh, okay. What years was that? Was that the '70s?
- Marylen Mann: Yes, early '70s.
- Blanche Touhill: Yes, because I can remember myself in that period, there was a great desire on the part of some teachers to have the children be more interactive.
- Marylen Mann: Right.
- Blanche Touhill: But the traditional view was the lecture and the instruction of the teacher and there was very little input from the student.
- Marylen Mann: Yes, there was a great movement. In fact, it was "Let's Knock Down the Walls," the big Quonset huts.
- Blanche Touhill: Oh, yes, the open classrooms.
- Marylen Mann: Open classroom, that's right.
- Blanche Touhill: How long were you at Semron?
- Marylen Mann: I was at Semron for 10 years and started as a volunteer.
- Blanche Touhill: And you wrote a lot of grants?
- Marylen Mann: Yes, I wrote a lot of grants. I went there having no idea what the grant proposal looked like.
- Blanche Touhill: Did these plans that this curriculum change that you were introducing, did the schools endorse that?
- Marylen Mann: Oh, some schools really did, some schools did and some schools took it and put it on the shelf but our job was to entice teachers and train teachers and, really, it was very exciting and we had a commitment to a 10-state area so it wasn't just here. I eventually became director of the Aesthetic Education Learning Center there which I wasn't terribly prepared for but a lot of my tenure there was on the job.
- Blanche Touhill: So you traveled out to the 10 states?
- Marylen Mann: I did not, they came to us.
- Blanche Touhill: So there was some grant or some way to get the teachers here for the training?

- Marylen Mann: That's right, the Department of Education.
- Blanche Touhill: What's interesting about that, there's always been a debate in education whether you should bring change to the classroom through the teacher or through the administrator or focus on the students and what's interesting is, you all focused on the teachers.
- Marylen Mann: And the administrators and so they would come in but my last effort there was a two-week workshop where we had 60 administrators and teachers from the 10-state area and we demonstrated materials and did all kinds of interesting things. They went away very excited. Unfortunately, that whole effort did not change the face of education but I think that sowed some important seeds.
- Blanche Touhill: I would agree with you. It might not have turned the tide then but it was really embraced later, it really was.
- Marylen Mann: It was. I think it shook up the status quo and some places, too much so. I think the open classroom concept got carried away and I think ever since we've had an effort to pull back and find some balance, you know, educator pendulum, as we know, swings back and forth. It was when I was at Semron that I got a call from a friend of mine, Judy Aaronson who was at Webster College and Webster at that time was trying to impact the city schools. They had these Aesthetic Learning Centers and they had the community art schools that had been established and Judy said, "What you're doing..." "...what I'm doing..." we really ought to join forces and let's put on a city-wide conference on how we can integrate, enliven what's going on in the classroom" and we used the Arts & Education Council and we decided to put together a catalogue. We went to all the cultural institutions. First of all, we had to write a grant, of course, and we got money from Rockefeller to do this and we catalogued what the institution had for teachers and for children, what kinds of programs were really exciting and innovative and our theory was that if they didn't have things, that they'd be embarrassed and they'd have to put them together and we could help them. So we put the catalogue together and we had a weekend conference and it was at Clayton and I was a school board member so it was easy to use that as the venue and we had 350 people attend and they were school board members and they were parents, PTA people and teachers and cultural institutions and it got a lot of press. At that time, a friend of mine was Margie May and she and her

husband, Buster, had just gotten divorced and she was at loose ends. She needed something to sink her teeth into to help get over this trauma of the parting. So I said, "Margie, why don't you co-chair this effort with Earl Hobbes," superintendent of Clayton and she did and they both worked together and did a good job of presenting us, being faced in the community. Well, the day after the conference, I got a call from Father Lucius Seventes who was head of the area Agency on Aging and he said, "I'd like you to take a day out of your life and come with me" and I took Margie with me and he took me to senior centers all over the city: church basements; store fronts, and I learned about the fact that the Administration on Aging, part of United States Health & Human Services sent money down to communities through these area Agencies on Aging and their centers and it was primary support for those who needed some financial help, informational help. They had the free hot lunches and there was Social Security advice and there was ombudsmen if you needed to find a nursing home, things like that. And what I saw in the centers were people who had led productive lives and they were there because they came for lunch but really had nothing else to do and they were playing Pinochle and watching television and...I've repeated this so many times but it's an image that really touched my heart...it was before Easter and in one center, people were gluing bunnies on placemats and I thought, this is not a good way to grow old. This is condescending. This is not valuing people. And so after we spent the day, Father Seventes said, "What do you think?" and I said, "I would not want to end up like this," and he said, "What would you do?" and so, going back to my gifted children and Semron, I said, "I'd bring history in; I'd bring art, and I'd bring speakers in, I'd bring teachers. I'd get people engaged and he said, "Okay," he said, "There's some new money in Washington. Why don't you decide a program and go after it." So I went back to Semron, I was very excited and I said, "I've got something new that's educational" and they said, "No, we're not interested in old people; we're interested in kids but if you want to do that, do it on your own time." They were practically paying me nothing so I wasn't losing anything. And I started working on a proposal and the more I investigated, the more amazed I was at the fact that, where the demographics going, where the population was heading and what was available for people. And I was barely 40...I don't think I was even 40, I was that age, what would there be for me and there wasn't anything. The universities weren't offering

these programs and the people who had modest incomes, they gravitated towards these centers and the people who had money, I guess, went to their country clubs, to cruises, whatever, but there was this vast middle class and the people at the centers that there just wasn't anything for them unless they had the initiative to go out and go to concerts and go to plays, had the money and the time to do that. And so I really was fascinated. I got it together and then we had some political difficulties and the city went their way. They took my proposal and it was funded and someone from Webster did that. But I was still very, very interested and I went to the Mideast area Agency on Aging and I said, "What do you think about this?" and they liked the idea and so they gave me a grant of \$8,000 to put programs in all 45 of their centers in a four-county area four times a year. I thought that was wonderful and I look back now and think how unbelievably naïve I was, it was ridiculous. So I pulled out my rolodex of teacher friends and family friends and anybody I knew that could teach something and when I couldn't find anybody, I'd go and do it myself. I'd use the history materials. I did things like...the center in Sullivan, Missouri...and the interesting thing about it is I had made these connections, networking through the school board for 13 years, with superintendents so I knew people in Jefferson and Franklin County and these counties because I knew the superintendents so I could go and use them. But it was interesting, I remember the superintendent in Sullivan had told me that they had some suicides and some kids were very depressed. There was a real downturn because of the minds: people were out of work and...and so what I said to him is, "Can we bus some of the high school kids, can we make a group of Social Studies and Journalism and bus these kids over to the senior center and let's do a focus on the Depression years and have people tell their stories about how they survived the Depression but together read short stories and see movies and eat Depression food, lard on bread was one meal that people had for lunch," and I thought, perhaps not only history but let these seniors talk about what they went through and a lot of them made it humorous and had a great deal of [inaudible 39:15], they talk about how tough things were but they survived because people do survive terrible times. And that's the kind of thing I did and, of course, one of my memorable events is I went to Dellwood, that was a big, big senior center and I thought I'd bring Mr. Edes and his bridge, Historian as Detective (act?) and so it was listed as "Mr. Edes and his Bridge" and I got there and

there were tables set up, tables for four and I dragged all my material in. I was setting up my slide projector and bringing my box of...and everybody was set and I said, "We're going to start now" and somebody said, "Well, where's Mr. Edes?" and I said, "I'm going to talk about him and the building..."...and they said, "You mean, you're not going to teach bridge?" I said, "No," and they all got up and walked out. So not all my programs were successful but, by far, most of them were, and by getting into all these places, I really began to understand seniors and a lot of them had a lot of different situations from a lot of different places. I loved them, was fascinated by their outlook on life and, of course, everyone is different but it was a revelation. It was a different time of life, when you've finished raising your family and your job is over, what are you going to do? Who are you? It's a new phase of life. And people's attitudes towards this were so interesting. Well, I had a group together, I didn't just do that, but Margie and I put an advice group together because I wanted to do things that were broader-based outside the center and so we would meet and dream up things and there was a big exhibit at the Art Museum and I got the Art Museum to let us have the museum on Tuesday morning before it was open just for seniors and we had people help, get wheelchairs in and we had special docent tours and that was not easy to get. The head of Education there was very afraid that people were going to spill...we were serving iced tea and they were going to spill it on the floor and then slip and fall and hip fractures. He didn't want a place full of old people, you know, and we got over that and we did a project, we called for all people who had been at the World's Fair to come to the planetarium and we would record them and we would have ice cream cones and whatever and we taped them and then the city lost the tapes. But it was Margie May who said, "Why don't we..."...because she had been married to Buster and the Famous Bar (store?) was here in town, part of May Company..."Why don't we use the store auditoriums" because at that time, many of the stores had auditoriums that they used for fashion shows and Santa Land and they were available for the community when they weren't using them. And so we decided to have programs once a month in Northland and Clayton and in South Town. They all had auditoriums and I would bring people from the newspaper and people who had written books, people from the Symphony, historians, whatever and I'm not even sure how the word got out but people started to come and then we had a mailing list and then we

produced this little brochure and it became bigger and bigger and bigger and Famous Bar used to make these wonderful chocolate chip cookies and they agreed to serve coffee and cookies to the people who came. And then I said to them, "Why don't you give their age off the price of lunch." At that time, the stores were experiencing a real downturn and I said, "Why don't you give people their age off the price of lunch in the tea room and it'll up your business" so they said yes, so we had people saying, "Don't forget, I'm 72; 72 cents off." So we really started to pack that auditorium and it dawned on me that these people were different and they were the well mobile elderly and I talked to them and found out that they, too, were lacking something, that they wanted to be stimulated, they wanted new things to learn, they were interested in, of course, their health, their finances, they wanted an opportunity to meet people who were interested in similar things because people would hang around afterward with cookies and talk to each other about what they learned and then, "See you next month," or "I'm going to Northland in two weeks. Are you going to be there?" but it also seemed to me that these people needed an opportunity...they were very intelligent and they had a lot of experience. They had to feel that they had something to offer, not just past tense and so I started to think about a program, broader, and I had asked them, "Well, if you want more, do you know about these programs we're doing in the senior centers?" and they'd say, "That's where the free hot lunch is," and "We don't want to go there." And so I realized it was a social stigma and so we not only had the people in the senior center but we had this vast middle class and they also had needs and maybe it wasn't as financially pressing but it was quality of life. And at that time, the Administration on Aging, the [inaudible 46:00] Americans Act came up with a new piece of legislation for public-private partnerships and something that could be construed as quality of life, successful aging. And here we had all these people coming to the department store but...I have to backtrack because before that, because of Semron, we had this great success in these programs, we went to the Administration on Aging and got a grant to bring the teams of people from our same 10-state area in to look at what could you do to enhance a community through arts and humanities, and that was successful. So the Administration on Aging knew a little bit about us and decided to go there to talk about a public-private partnership and it seemed to me that the private part of the partnership would be the department stores

because people loved coming there. It was part of everybody's experience. It was familiar. It was not generational. It was safe, you knew where to park and in some ways, it was unique in that it was a place where you made choices and as you get older, your choices are more limited but even if you didn't buy, I loved seeing women going through the furniture department and saying, "If I was going to refurnish, I'd buy that, or "I'd love to do a whole room in that color" or "I just love those baby clothes. I don't have anybody to buy for anymore but look how cute that is," and it just was a place of stimulation. So I went to Famous Bar and said, "If I got this money to administer the program, would you give us some space to do this five days a week?" and at first they looked at me as if I had said, "Close the women's shoe department; stop selling women's shoes unless you have these four programs." This was very innovative because they had never housed a social service organization and it was a big risk for them. But by this time, we'd had programs in the stores for almost three years and I said, "Come and see who we have and question people and see what they want and give us some space. This will be a great boon for these people who have been your loyal customers and, believe me, their families will thank you also because their families are concerned about their health and well-being and we want to address all these things, not just the arts and humanities, but we want to address learning and we want to address this whole business of health, this concept of wellness," which really wasn't being addressed then: if you're well, how do you stay well or how do you manage what you've got? And I thought of an important thing because it was an important thing in my life, was volunteerism, self-esteem through volunteerism and so it was very interesting. We had one meeting where one of the vice presidents said, "Marylen, they're just coming for the chocolate chip cookies and the coffee. They're really not coming for the programs" and there were others that said "No, I've been there. These people really are hungry for what's going on in the auditorium more than the cookies." And they said, "Okay, we'll do that if you get the money." I'm not sure they thought we were going to get the money. But we did and at first they just shoved aside some racks, so you could walk through the lingerie department at Northland and see people doing Tai Chi or painting or listening to a lecture and in South Town, it was next to the appliance department and we had to ask them to find some other place for us because the TVs were interfering with the lectures. So we learned

along the way and after doing this for two years...and my commitment to the United States government, that first grant, the first Oasis grant was to do the prototype here but replicate the program in three other cities. So at the end of two years, we'd have four cities because if something was important, it had to work in more than one place and then again, this was my experience at Semron where you work in a larger area, you pick locations that are not similar. You had to have this diversity. So at the end of two years, I got a call from the head of the foundation here. I also got a call from Sears that this had been written up, and Federated and May Company said, "We would be willing to..."...by this time we'd been in four of their stores in four cities..."We'd be willing to support you on a larger basis to expand," and they were the only company who said, "We don't care about sales. We're not going to tie this. We don't care if people are customers. We don't care what they buy. As long as we've got room in the stores and the local cities want you...but the buck stops with you. If something goes wrong, we don't want anybody coming to talk to the store. It's got to be you." It was the May way. And also, we began programming all over the city and they didn't care if we programmed at other places but home base had to be in a department store so that people really understood...brought people into the store and people understood that this was a May Company project. And so we would have our programs at the Art Museum or the community college or whatever.

Blanche Touhill: Now, at one point you left UMSL. When did you leave UMSL?

Marylen Mann: Well, I left when it became too difficult for me to work at Semron and come out here and my husband was dying and it was physically impossible.

Blanche Touhill: But I thought there was a point when you had Oasis here.

Marylen Mann: Yes, that's right because I started the program, Oasis, at Semron. When the Reagan Administration came in, it was very helpful to me because he came in with the concept of public-private partnerships but he also came in saying that these labs were not productive and money shouldn't go in. And so, ironically, even the lab...although the lab was not supportive of what I was doing with seniors...their money was cut out and my program was the only left standing because I was the only one that was not supported by those grants from the Department of Education. And so

when looking for a home, UMSL offered me a home. Jim Lawler, he ran the center on...

Blanche Touhill: Oh, Jim Lolley?

Marylen Mann: Jim Lolley, and so we were housed here and it was wonderful but as the program grew, the university didn't have the support. I mean, I had a staff of four but we were all in one room and the financial support wasn't there. My partnerships, when I started, were the City Offices on Aging...the Agencies on Aging, we were supported by the Administration on Aging and what I said to them when I went for the grant is, "You are not reaching all the people that you could be reaching. You're reaching the people in the senior center. You have services that are important to people who don't go to that center and if you sponsor this program, they will know about them because as part of our educational offering, you'll come in and tell them about the kind of support and advice you give" and they liked that because numbers were very important. So our partnerships were with area Agencies on Aging, City Offices on Aging, but also, because I felt that the health and wellness programs are very important, I went to hospitals and this was an innovation for them also because they were not in the habit of looking at well people. They were in the habit of looking at sick people and what I said to them is, "First of all, you need to do marketing. You need to expose your doctors and your out-patient services to people in the community. These are the people who use your hospitals and services, but they need to hear from your expertise." And my concept early on was that if you have Diabetes and the doctor says you have got to stick to a diet and lose weight and they give you a diet sheet, it's very hard to go home and implement it on your own, but if you're in a group...and it was the Weight Watchers model, really, build communities, get people together who have the same problem, the same issue and meet on a regular basis and support each other and keep being reinforced by professionals and set goals and cheer each other on and if you fall off the wagon, it's okay because the group will embrace you and say, "We know you're going to do better next week." So we managed to sell that concept but we sold it first here. I went to the Medical School and my friend, David Kipness, who was dean of Medicine at that time, said, "Well, Jewish Hospital has just gotten some money to start a program on aging. Go there. Go talk to Bill Peck and maybe he'll be interested." And he was. Then I started saying, "You

know, I really think that this population could also be a basis for research" and he said, "Really?" and I had met Sergeant General C. Edward Coupe at that time through the Administration on Aging and he was fascinated with Oasis and came down to see Oasis and presented a big program that we had at the Art Museum [inaudible 57:30] an anniversary and I said to him, "What kind of thing would you be interested in research?" and he said, "Falls and hip fracture" so I went to Dr. Peck and I said, "You want to do a research program on falls and hip fracture sponsored by NIH using Oasis members?" and he thought that was fascinating. So he said, "I'll tell you what: I'll give you space and some support if you came over to us and you work for us and I'll have your registry." So, that's what happened.

Blanche Touhill: Now let's decide what we're going to do in the next five minutes.

Marylen Mann: Oasis now is in 43 cities across the country. We have over 380,000 members and we have programs that are outcome-based on falls and hip fractures, not only that but building bones and managing chronic disease. One of the programs closest to my heart is our inter-generational tutoring program where we train people to be tutors for children K through 3rd grade having trouble with reading and language development and they stick with that child for a whole year, once a week and we have helped 370,000 children across the country. We are in over 900 school districts and it's a very successful program. The program has gotten a lot of recognition. I can't take all the credit but AARP recognized me as one of the 10 people in the country to really make a difference because of Oasis. I was asked by Health and Human Services to represent the United States at the UN Conference on Economics and Aging in Lyon, Spain. We were presented as Best Practice of the United States on Aging and that was a great coup for us and for Oasis. I think that my involvement with IWF was really key because it gave me an opportunity to meet with people who also were innovators and leaders and face the same problems and we not only had a forum for discussing how do you deal with this population; how do you deal with this problem, but also, we networked and there were people like Joann Arnold who introduced us to Emerson and allowed us to get that sort of support. It's been very important.

Blanche Touhill: And if you were born 50 years earlier, would your life have been different or do you know what it would have been?

Marylen Mann: I think that I am not sure that at that time I would have been able to see the elderly population as a new frontier. I think that I would have still been in education and I still would have been seeking ways to enhance creativity and expand the world for kids and for teachers. It's interesting. I do think, though, that the women's movement did make it possible for me to think it was okay to go back to school and to throw myself into "public-private ventures" even though I had small children at home. I did not know many other people who were working while they had very young children. I'm not sure, I do think that the fact that I had parents who always encouraged and who always cared about the broader community and I would hope I would have had the same husband who kept telling me that I could do anything I wanted to do, just press ahead, share your passion.

Blanche Touhill: Well, thank you very much.

Marylen Mann: Thank you.

Blanche Touhill: We're doing a second tape in order to round out her life and we're delighted that she's back. So would you talk to us about your working/volunteer life?

Marylen Mann: Well, I started my work life teaching. I supervised student teachers at Washington University and then at the University of Missouri-St. Louis. I taught educational management and curriculum development which really fed into my life's work after that. At the same time, I was a volunteer at an entity called CMRERL; it was the Central Midwestern Regional Educational Research and Development Lab.

Blanche Touhill: How did you learn about them?

Marylen Mann: Well, it was very interesting. I was at a cocktail party one time and I had a lot of fun putting students in practicum experience in the schools and at the same time I'd been a volunteer for years at the Historical Society and the History Museum and the Planetarium and I was distressed about the resources that were really not finding its way in the classroom and those

were the days, in the '60s, where we were back in experiential learning and if you went to the Historical Society, some retired librarian with a handkerchief in her belt which they give you camp stools and say, "If you make noise with these, your class will not come back." So everything was behind a glass case and I was a cocktail party where I met the president and vice president of this new exciting laboratory that was part of Johnson's Great Society, Wade Robinson and Stan Madera and when I heard that they were in the business of putting together exciting new beautiful interactive materials for a 10-state region on how to train teachers to be more interactive, I said, "You know, what you really ought to do is take a look at what the schools need and take a look at what the cultural institutions have. You all are good at writing proposals. Put that together and in all materials." So they said, "Why don't you come down and talk about it," and I went down and talked about it and they said, "You know, we don't have any money to pay you..."

Blanche Touhill: Yes, we've heard that.

Marylen Mann: Yes..."but if you want to come down and volunteer and if you happen to write yourself into a proposal, then..."

Blanche Touhill: Sure.

Marylen Mann: So I started as a volunteer and remained there for 10 years until the Reagan Administration came in and closed all those educational labs across the country and so I started putting together programs, for instance, for the Historical Society, called Historian as Detective, taking a look at the period of the Eads Bridge and taking from their archives letters of the period and Eads life and even class work that was done and we were so surprised to see this beautiful German handwriting that 3rd graders did in the St. Louis Public Schools in the 1800's. So we put together these boxes and sent them out to the schools and I became more and more interested in what we were putting together and at the same time, Judy Aaronson was at Webster College and she was putting together programs, arts in the classroom in the city and one day we got together and we said, "You know, what we really need in St. Louis is a city-wide conference. We need a full weekend to bring together school board members" and at the time, another volunteer effort I had is I was on the Clayton school board for 13 years. I want to get back to that because that made a big impact on me. And I was in the schools and

producing materials and we really felt we should get school board members together and administrators and cultural institution people and volunteers together to look at the rich resources that we had in this community that would make use of. The Arts & Education Council was a little reluctant at that time but we convinced them that they could be the umbrella institution and that we should put together a catalogue called CARE, Cultural Arts Resources and Education and we went from Culture Institution to Cultural Institution saying, "What do you have to offer for teachers and for kids?" and if they didn't have anything, we encouraged them to put something together so they wouldn't look bad in the catalogue or at the conference. It was a great success. We had 500 people and I think some very good things came out of it, the ABC Program at the Art Museum and several other things. But the day after this conference, a Jesuit priest who was head of the area agency for aging in the City of St. Louis called me and said, "I want you to take a day out of your life and come with me," and so he took me to senior centers and what I saw then, in 1976, were places where people came to get a free hot lunch and some Social Security advice but they had nowhere to go and nothing to do so they stayed all afternoon and they played Bingo and I remember clearly one place, for Easter, and they were gluing bunnies on placemats and playing Pinochle and it was very depressing for me and so Father Savante said, "What do you think of that?" and I said, "It's a terrible way to grow old" and he said, "What would you do?" and that started me on the path. I first did some research and found out that, although the demographics were startling, very few people were talking about or doing anything other than, the focus was on disease and disabilities and taking care of basic needs for older people and yet, it seemed to me that the people I saw really had a lot to offer that wasn't being tapped into, aside from the fact that they really weren't being stimulated, sitting there gluing bunnies on placemats and being an educator, education is the means to open the world. So I did not end up working with the City of St. Louis but I went to the Midwest Area Agency on Aging and I remember I was thrilled because I convinced them to let me bring programs, arts and humanities, into 48 centers in a four-county area and they gave me the magnificent sum of \$8,000 to do this.

Blanche Touhill: That was your salary or that was your money to put the things together?

Marylen Mann: It was everything.

Blanche Touhill: So you were still a volunteer, in essence?

Marylen Mann: In essence, I was still a volunteer but the experience was a really interesting one because if I could not get a buddy who was on the newspaper or was an artist or was a historian or a movement specialist to go to these centers, I'd go myself. Now, the programs weren't very good but...

Blanche Touhill: ...they were something.

Marylen Mann: And I remember one incident where I was to go to Dellwood and I took my box of artifacts on Mr. Eads and his bridge and I was going to flush out this period of time, complete with menus from Faust Restaurant and the wonderful story, the life of James B. Eads and so when I got to the center, they had it set up for 60 people and they had tables, four people around each table and I came in carrying my archives and my slide projector and someone said, "Well, where is Mr. Eads?" and I said, "Well, Mr. Eads as James B. Eads who built Eads Bridge and I'm going to talk about them" and they said, "Do you mean Mr. Eads is not coming to teach us how to play bridge?" I said, "No," and they all got up and walked out except for two people.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, how sad but how wonderful.

Marylen Mann: So people didn't always want what I was selling.

Blanche Touhill: But they didn't know what you were going to sell. That's what the...

Marylen Mann: Right. The programs, by and large, were very, very successful. People were thrilled and I put a committee together and my very good old friend, Margie May was on it and we started talking about where else to put these programs because we were touching the population who needed the Social Security, the free hot lunch and all that the centers had to offer and there were other people out there and there was no Life-Long Learning Program. The universities weren't doing anything in the '70s. No one was. And so there was one lone man teaching people in nursing homes how to write poetry and I grabbed onto him and we did a book together. But other than that, there wasn't what I was talking about. And so Margie was part of the May Company family for many years and was used to thinking in terms of department stores so she said, "Why don't we use the auditoriums" that the stores had at that time,

three of them St. Louis and they weren't having Santa Land or a fashion show, not-for-profit organizations could use them. So we started, once a month in South Town, in Clayton and Northland to do programs and they were all arts and humanities programs and slowly people learned about them and pretty soon we had standing room only in the stores so the fire marshal told us we had to limit it and one of the things that the store did for us was serve cookies, these wonderful chocolate chip cookies they used to make in the store and coffee and that was interesting because after a while, it seemed to me that we were just scratching the surface of what was out there and the laboratory that I was based in...was closed, Reagan came into office and with it, he came in with the concept of public/private partnerships. I really needed to have a salary more than my salary at the university at that time. My husband had been ill for seven years with cancer and he was dying still and I was less support, with two young boys and I looked around at what we were doing and did a focus group or two and found out that people really wanted what we had to offer. They liked the idea of finding out new things; they liked being able to pick up old interests; they especially liked being able to meet people they didn't know who had similar interests. The coffee and cookie time was very important and people started meeting each other and coming together. They also were interested in their health, obviously and it seemed to me that what I heard was going back to the fact that people had talents and experience that they wanted to feel that they were of some use and of course it's obvious that after you've finished your job and raising your family, you have to discover who you are and it seemed to me that this was a new frontier. We had an aging population, there wasn't much going on, and yet, there were real enticing ideas out there. So I wrote a proposal that got funded by the Endowment for the Administration on Aging.

Blanche Touhill: How long did it take you to get an answer when you put in the application?

Marylen Mann: It took almost a year. It took pretty much a year. I was fortunate in that I asked to come up and talk to the reviewer and he didn't want to talk to me but I talked my way in. We established a rapport. It made a great difference.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, of course, because he told you then...that's what the reviewer's job is to do, is where the weakness was and how could you make it stronger.

Marylen Mann: Absolutely and he fully understood the idea which you couldn't really...out of the paper. So we got a small little grant which allowed us...my thinking after working at the laboratory as a volunteer, we'd produced materials for a 10-state region, really a national but we did our focus groups and bringing people in for training and our evaluations and revisions on a larger body. Of course what existed in St. Louis in terms of programs, existed across the country. I was not interested in developing programs just for our local area. So my very first grant was called something like called equipped and I brought groups of people in from a 10-state area to talk about how do you enhance what's going on in the life of seniors by using the resource of the community, and from that, it seemed to me I wanted a bigger grant and the people that we talked to in the department store, they wanted five days a week.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, my.

Marylen Mann: Or at least more than...

Blanche Touhill: ...once a month.

Marylen Mann: And there were travelers. Sometimes you were going to this center once a month and then the next one and the next one and so it seemed to me that I had the private partnership in that they were in the department store. They were not the people that were in the senior centers. When I said we have all these programs, they said, "That's where the free hot lunch is; we're not going there." And so it was obvious that the department store was where we all grew up at that time and it was safe, there was ample parking, it was naturally inter-generational, it wasn't where the "old people" go and, as you age, your choices become limited but the department store offered opportunities for endless choice. Even if you weren't buying, you could look at the clothes, you could look at the furnishings, you could look at the kitchen and say, "I'd get that. If I were redoing my house, that's what I would get," or "Can you believe people are wearing that now?" So it was an ideal place and it coincided with the fact that in the early '80s, the stores were empty. Women had gone back to work and retail was down. So it was my opportunity to go and talk to the head of the Famous Bar stores about giving us some space and when

I went to talk to Dick Bactrim who was the president of Famous Bar, he had just had a conference meeting that he called "The Jonesboro meeting," and if you remember, the Jonesboro were where this cult leader got everybody to drink the Kool-Aid and he had had a meeting where he draped black crepe paper and had a [inaudible except for "Kool Aid"] and we got to pull out of this slump. So was a very propitious moment for me and I said, "The government, I think, will fund the administration of this program if you give me the space and this is why you are the ideal place for this program," and I went through all the demographics and I said, "We've been in your store for two or three years now and you can come and see the people who come. They're your customers, their children are your customers," and although I did not want any of the program to be tied to sales, that wasn't the purpose, they needed traffic in the store. There's nothing worse than an empty restaurant or an empty store. And so he brought his vice presidents together for me to make a presentation and when I first did it, a couple of them acted as if I said, "Give me the women's shoe department and stop selling women's shoes." And, indeed, they had never taken a not-for-profit in and given them permanent space in the store. How could you be sure what they were doing and that your customers would approve? And so we tried a couple of experiments but I have to describe one time that was indelible in my mind. I didn't pay my presenters but what I would do was take them to lunch in the tea room first and I would talk about what we were going to talk about and serve the interview questions and [inaudible 1:22:30 - mumbles] and someone suggested to me, a woman...I guess I better not say her name...who taught at one of the community colleges and had written a book on Sacajawea and I read the book, I thought it was very good and so at lunch, I said, "I think that you have taken the trail, the Lewis and Clark, haven't you?" She said, "Oh, yes, 10 times." I said, "Really?" She said, "Yes, 9 times with either alone or with my family and then, of course, first when I was Sacajawea," and I said, "I beg your pardon?" and she said, "Yes, I am Sacajawea reincarnated one of the reasons I want to talk to your group is everyone should try and find out who they were in a prior life." Now, this is when the vice presidents were going to come in and observe my program and who was there and how we presented it," and I absolutely froze and the only thing I could think of is to say, "That is fascinating but the people who are coming today are coming to hear about the book and I'd like to

ask you back sometime just to talk about reincarnation so let's not talk about it this time."

Blanche Touhill: Oh, how clever. Well, how did she take that?

Marylen Mann: She thought that was fine. We even got the date book out. I never followed up on the date but I sat there through the whole talk like this.

Blanche Touhill: Knowing that you could go off the cliff at any moment.

Marylen Mann: There was no way that they were going to take a program in that had people talking about things like...

Blanche Touhill: ...reincarnation.

Marylen Mann: Right.

Blanche Touhill: You would go down in the stories of Famous & Bar, wouldn't you?

Marylen Mann: Oh, yes, they would talk about me: "Can you imagine this woman coming in with this kind of program and want permanent space?"

Blanche Touhill: I can't.

Marylen Mann: Well, they observed several times and they were pleased. I'm not sure they thought we'd really get the grant but we did and what I promised was that in a two-year period we would put the exemplar together in St. Louis and then replicate it through other cities across the country.

Blanche Touhill: In the Famous & Bar...in the May Company stores?

Marylen Mann: Well, I didn't promise May Company but I talked about department stores being the marketplace and how times have changed and there was publicity and Sears & Roebuck contacted me and Federated did but what they wanted was a roving program that would move through the stores depending on, if you're going to talk about food and the history of food, we'll do it in the kitchen department and that sort of thing, which didn't appeal. Both of them wanted to keep track of the sales generated by members and I said, [inaudible 1:25:50 - mumbles] and May Company called me in and said that they agreed. They wanted the program in the store; they wanted the goodwill and frankly, what I said to them is "This is a very good deal for you. You can give us money out of your foundation but its marketing money that you don't have to account for.

Blanche Touhill: Absolutely.

Marylen Mann: And they said, "We'll call ahead to other cities if you tell us where you want to go to see if they want to...we'll tell them we're pleased with the program and if they want to interview. So by the end of two years, I was in four cities and people often say, "Well, how did you choose the cities?" Well, again, I had so little money that I went to the cities where I knew I had friends who would pick me up at the airport, let me stay at their house and drive me around. So, it worked very well and from then we went on. But the hallmark of the program...and this is our 34th year...has always been one-third of the program is arts and humanities and a third is health and wellness because this is very important to people and when I started the program, as I said, the emphasis was on disability and disease. When I went to talk to my friends at the medical school to ask them to send us doctors to talk about exercise and diabetes and health, of all kinds and the importance of exercise, they would say, "That's fine but you know, Marylen, people really don't change their habits after age 60," and I really didn't believe that and so one-third of the program had to be on health and wellness and we used the Weight Watchers model and what we did was, if it was weight loss or diabetes or blood pressure control, we had professionals in from the hospital or the medical school, people would set goals, we'd keep track of them, they would support each other and they bonded into communities and actually, the basis of Oasis is developing communities for people. We have found that very successful and I put the old Jewish Hospital together, that the Administration on Aging grant really called for us to support the program through public/private partnerships and so we had the community, the area Agency of Aging-East City and the department store and then to get the medical programs. In Cleveland we got the Cleveland clinic and we convinced them that this population was important for them, to get to know who the people were and their resources of their hospital and to the Administration on Aging, I said, "The people that we're going to speak to are good numbers for you. Your health and wellness depends on the numbers you serve and these are not people you're ever going to see in the senior centers that you can come and tell about your programs in our centers" and that appealed to them. So we flourished and May Company became a national sponsor of ours. We continued to develop curriculum. One of the things that's been the most important to me is our intergenerational tutoring program where we trained seniors to be tutors

one-on-one for children, K through 4th grade who are having trouble with reading and language development.

Blanche Touhill: I notice that the public libraries have a lot of that tutoring. Is that where you began? Did you go in the schools with these people that were going to tutor?

Marylen Mann: Yes.

Blanche Touhill: You went in the schools?

Marylen Mann: Yes. We started the program because Martin Matthews asked me if I could send some volunteers to do some summer programs that were for a boys and girls school. I didn't know whether our people would go into the inner city and would they relate to the kids, but we put a call for volunteers and got 16 people and as I always did, we said, "What do you want to do with the kids and let's develop a curriculum for it and some hand-outs," and whether it was cooking or whether it was puppetry, soft puppets or whether it was Haiku poetry and we did that and they went four days a week for six weeks and they came back and were delighted and loved the children, but what I heard over and over again was no matter what the material was, no matter how simple it was, the kids couldn't read. So Matthew Dickey's had an after-school tutoring program and we found some people who would go down and do that but what we found is it didn't work at all. There was no consistency. There was no training. Kids would come in with homework they hadn't done at school and that wasn't what I felt was effective. We had to focus on reading. That's the key, a child can't read by the end of the 4th grade, he's lost to the system and it seemed to me, in terms of scale, it had to be institutionalized in the school. So we did a pilot and convinced the City of St. Louis and Kirkwood to try us out. And that was one of the most difficult things we ever had because, although I knew the superintendents very well and I think I had a good reputation with them and I was an educator, they did not think that our older people would really be trained because, as I said, it's got to be a 15-hour training, we develop materials, that they would be consistent week in and week out. We talked about one hour a week for the entire school year that they would be consistent and the only way I could do it is said, "You need to give us a coordinator. We'll train the coordinator to train the trainers. We will provide the materials and then you've got to get them together once

a month to support them because people are going to experience problems, and again, if they're a community and they can help each other solve the problems, they'll stay with it." And they were very reluctant to pull the kids out of the classroom and my sales pitch there was, "You have to worry about your tax levies and your bond issues and the people who vote "no" are the seniors in your community. First of all, they don't have kids in the school and secondly, they think you're doing a terrible job because you're not doing what they experienced and if you get them in these schools and you show them the reality, that there is no teacher in the world that can meet the needs of every one of these kids come to the classroom and that you can make gains with one-on-one and not repeating what the kid was failing in the classroom but something based on the child against the experiential, what is the child interested in; can you do an activity together..."Gee, that was fun. Let's write a story. You dictate it, I'll write it down. Then we'll both read it. Take it home and read it to your mom and your dad." Well, that bought that and the program has been an enormous success.

Blanche Touhill: So it's still in the St. Louis Public Schools?

Marylen Mann: It's in every school district in the City and County. In St. Louis alone, we have 2,500 tutors that go once a week...

Blanche Touhill: ...for one hour?

Marylen Mann: For one hour, for the whole school year and we have someone, a gentleman in the St. Louis Public Schools, he tutors 16 children every week.

Blanche Touhill: That's a lot. And do they pull them out of the class?

Marylen Mann: They pull them out of the class. They're identified by the teacher and the coordinator is the one that matches...the coordinator in the district really has to get to know the tutors. The 15 hours is important. There's role play and all kinds of things with materials, but also it's an opportunity for the coordinator to flag people who really won't be able to do it and give them another job and I think this is most important. We all know there are volunteers that are well-meaning but we don't want anybody to fail and we don't want a child to have a bad experience.

Blanche Touhill: So what other experiences do you assign to these individuals if they can't do the tutoring?

Marylen Mann: There are people who hand out and collect evaluations. There are people who make sure that the materials are there in the libraries and that if a tutor comes and a child has an interest in something that is hard to find, we've got volunteers that will.

Blanche Touhill: That will find it?

Marylen Mann: That will find it. So you can have a part in this, even though tutoring is really not the thing for you.

Blanche Touhill: And is that part of Oasis?

Marylen Mann: Absolutely.

Blanche Touhill: It's an aspect of Oasis I wasn't aware you offered.

Marylen Mann: Well, our approach is to the whole person. So it's the intellectual; it's the physical wellness. We added, after a number of years, the technical so now we do all kinds of training in computers and cell phones and whatever. Then it is the aspect that I call the spiritual that is that we need to feel that we have some value and so we have a number of people...and volunteerism is very important but what we do not do is addressing and stuffing envelopes. As important as that is, I think you feel satisfied if there's a job that really either requires some learning on your part or some real transmission of information. So we have people who teach our classes, lead our groups and people who do administrative work. But the biggest program is the tutoring.

Blanche Touhill: Now, I know that in your courses sometimes you give a little stipend to the speaker and do you get that money by the money that you raise from the people taking the course?

Marylen Mann: We do and also for grants. May Company was sold to Macy's some years ago. They provided 20% of our budget as long as we raised the 80 first. It was a wonderful arrangement. We no longer have that and so we continually are trying to raise grant money and we charge a very modest fee for the classes.

Blanche Touhill: Oh, yes, I know that.

- Marylen Mann: Right. We try to get people who out of the goodness of their heart but there are some people, especially if you're an art teacher and you're going to teach an eight-week class, it's not likely that...
- Blanche Touhill: And where are your classes held? I know some of them were at the Clayton Center.
- Marylen Mann: Yes, we have a permanent center in Clayton. We now have programs at Eden Seminary in collaboration with Webster. We have classes everywhere. We have centers in St. Charles, over on the east side. When May Company sold to Macy's, we were in 28 cities.
- Blanche Touhill: Yes, so you dropped out of all of those?
- Marylen Mann: No, we have not. Actually, we run the total program in nine cities. We are in 52 cities with aspects of the program. There are some of our programs through the area Agency on Aging. They will teach our wellness programs, or some places have just the tutoring and some will do a combination of the intellectual programs and tutoring.
- Blanche Touhill: Now, when you left UMSL, then at that point, had you gotten enough grants to pay your salary?
- Marylen Mann: Well, that's very interesting. I did get a salary from the Administration on Aging grant and when the laboratory closed, I came back to UMSL for one year but in the negotiations it was difficult for the university to give us the amount of space and the support that we needed. The spirit was willing but the flesh was not able. So in talking to Jewish Hospital and Wash U Medical School, I pointed out to them that I thought that we were an excellent base for research projects. There wasn't that much research being done on the quote, [inaudible] and we had a lot of demographics and a constant interaction with people. And so I went to Washington to talk to then Surgeon General, see C. Everett Coup, told him about the program. He came down to visit. He was very impressed. One thing led to another. The hospital, in order to keep us, invited us to be a part of Jewish Hospital and so I became an employee of Jewish Hospital. All of my staff did and when they merged and it became BJC, still all of our people worked for BJC. That allowed me to have a salary. They also gave me an appointment in the Medical School because I assisted in developing research projects and we had a wonderful one. It was a five-year perspective study of falls and hip fractures in the Oasis

population, 1,350 people stayed in this study for five years. It was very detailed and a lot of good information came out of it. As a matter of fact, as a result of that, I got the bronze medal from the Surgeon General, Administration on Health.

Blanche Touhill: How was Dr. Coup?

Marylen Mann: He was wonderful to work with. He was a very charismatic and a very caring man and he was a very religious man and Ronald Reagan brought him on as Surgeon General because he thought that he knew where Dr. Coup stood on social issues but it turned out that Dr. Coup, even though he was against abortion, really would not come out and say that abortion was detrimental to the health or psychological long-term wellbeing. Dr. Coup also advocated sexual information, information about AIDS and the administration didn't like that.

Blanche Touhill: Well, I always think of him as the person who said cancer and smoking are related and that the cigarettes had to have the warning symbol on it.

Marylen Mann: That's right.

Blanche Touhill: And I know he took a lot of heat on that one because it was the first time that the official medical profession was saying...or at least the Department of Health...was saying this is disaster for the American people.

Marylen Mann: He was an extraordinary man and became a very good friend and really valued our program and gave me great emotional support to forge ahead.

Blanche Touhill: How was it to receive the medal?

Marylen Mann: It was very exciting. It was very moving for me, that he made the comment and wrote it that I had done more to take care of the health of the aging population than anyone that he knew.

Blanche Touhill: Well, you were at the forefront just as he was at the forefront, weren't you, of things to come?

Marylen Mann: I guess so, yes.

Blanche Touhill: And you're still involved in that, aren't you?

Marylen Mann: Oh, yes.

Blanche Touhill: You're the chairman of the board?

Marylen Mann: I'm no longer the chairman of the board. I'm the chairman emeritus. I do a lot of the programming in St. Louis, I meddle and I help fundraise and take part in planning but I do not run it. I have a wonderful person who runs it and I have a new idea every minute and she is the one that says to me, "Okay, you can go and do that but you've got to be responsible" or she will say, "We have too much on our plate. We can't take that on," and I say, "Okay."

Blanche Touhill: Give me one of the ideas that you had recently?

Marylen Mann: Okay. I'm going to give you two if you don't mind: One was, I thought that we had to test...when May Company was our sponsor, their condition was that we don't have the program outside of cities where May Company stores were. When that was no longer gone, we could go anywhere which is why we're in 52 cities. It seemed to me that in going to national foundations, they wanted to know what we were doing in New York and we didn't have anything in New York and you know the saying, "If you can make it in New York, you can make it anywhere," and so I decided we needed the tutoring program in New York City and Marsha said, "Go do it yourself." Well, we had a board member who was chairman of the board of the Union Settlement Association and they did a lot of things in East Harlem but they didn't have an intergenerational tutoring program so I took that on and it's a flourishing program. It's a wonderful program.

Blanche Touhill: How did you find the seniors?

Marylen Mann: There were seniors who came to Union Settlement for a number of reasons but what we did is what we do in the other cities and that is, we go through the schools. You first establish in the schools and then you send out flyers in the neighborhood and do some PR and say, "Do you want to help a child learn to read?" and the wonderful thing about the program in East Harlem is there were so many children who were Haitian or Caribbean or they were from Puerto Rico and it was very helpful to recruit people from a neighborhood who could speak the children's language in addition to English. So that program has been a great success. What I'm working on now is, there's a lot of talk about what we

call "The Last Act," last decision: How are you going to die? And so I have the head of the new BJC Hospice Center and Dr. Ira Coddner who started palliative care here and Dr. Brian Carpenter who is professor of psychology at Washington U and a number of other people, President David...the president of Eden Seminary who were interested in a program and we're doing a three-part series on "Do you know what your options are? Have you thought about how you want to end your life? Have you had this conversation with the people nearest and dearest to you, and do you want help and how to do that, and last week we went down and talked to Channel 9 and they're most interested. So that's the kind of thing that I'll get an idea and then I have to develop it and I have to find the money for it and then it's okay.

Blanche Touhill: Yes. You know, just recently I met a doctor who had been trained and educated in Germany and in Germany they have hospice houses and so this doctor said to me, "I wish in the United States or in St. Louis we would develop hospice houses," and then I received word that a dear friend of mine had entered hospice and was in one of the houses which St. Anthony's Hospital has built. Have you gone there?

Marylen Mann: I have not.

Blanche Touhill: Well, I was very impressed.

Marylen Mann: I've seen the BJC.

Blanche Touhill: Yes, and I know that BJC is now contemplating...is it building one of these houses?

Marylen Mann: Oh, yes.

Blanche Touhill: And I went to visit this person and he had made the decision and he had done all the arrangements, his land and his property and I thought, well, that's what this foreign doctor was, in essence, saying to me: there are ways that make it a much softer landing, let's put it like that.

Marylen Mann: Yes, yes, and the problem is that most people think if they have a living will that it really doesn't...you really have to think of all the instances and all the ramifications.

Blanche Touhill: So you really need counseling before you...

- Marylen Mann: You need counseling and you need to be able to have a conversation. The people who are nearest and dearest have to really be sure they know, for instance, if...one example one of the doctors brought up is, "Do not resuscitate" really doesn't mean very much because every time you're in surgery, you're under anesthetic. So there's a lot to it and we're very interested in that.
- Blanche Touhill: So you and BJC, it's a partnership once again?
- Marylen Mann: Yes, it still is, it's still a partnership and I do a lot of other volunteer work but Oasis still is really very important to me because I think...
- Blanche Touhill: Yes, and you have leadership in charge that it will go on?
- Marylen Mann: Yes, yes, I have been fortunate to have excellent leadership.
- Blanche Touhill: Yes, and now the baby boomers reaching that age, the need will get larger and larger.
- Marylen Mann: We hope and I've been on many boards where either the founder or the director has been there a long time, leaves and it's a very difficult transition and I was determined that that would not be the case and it has not been.
- Blanche Touhill: No, I remember when you moved from really running it and then being a chairman of the board and now you're chairman emeritus.
- Marylen Mann: Yes, my executive director and I are very close friends so it's good to be able to be honest with each other, as long as she knows she's the boss.
- Blanche Touhill: Yes, indeed. You've gotten awards, you talked about the one award that you received. Do you want to talk about the other awards?
- Marylen Mann: There are two that have been really meaningful to me, one when I was asked to be one of the 10 people in the country to get the AARP Award.
- Blanche Touhill: What is the AARP?
- Marylen Mann: Well, of course it's the American Administration...AARP.
- Blanche Touhill: Oh, AARP.
- Marylen Mann: AARP.

- Blanche Touhill: Oh, yes, we all know that. When you reach 55, you may join this organization.
- Marylen Mann: That's right. They don't do it anymore but for two years...
- Blanche Touhill: You know, it must be the American Organization of Retired People or something like that. Well, anyway, go on.
- Marylen Mann: For several years they've produced a very glossy magazine which, they don't do that anymore, and they chose 10 people across the country who "made a difference" and they would choose 5 well known, dynamite people and then 5 nobody's like me, and the year I got it, it was Michael J. Fox, Harry Belafonte...one year it was Marlo Thomas...
- Blanche Touhill: Well known, yes, I understand.
- Marylen Mann: Well known...a governor that had made some real strides for aging and I got one.
- Blanche Touhill: Wonderful.
- Marylen Mann: And that was very, very exciting. The other award that...not exactly award but it was...but I feel very definitely the award was not for me; it was for the program.
- Blanche Touhill: Well, I understand what you're saying but you were the spearhead. You saw it ahead of time. You saw the aging coming up, yes. I think that's a brilliant idea, but go on.
- Marylen Mann: Well, it was an epiphany and I do credit the bunnies on the placemats.
- Blanche Touhill: Yes. We are stimulated by things that aren't quite right.
- Marylen Mann: That's right, and the other really exciting time was when I was asked to represent the United States at the United Nations Conference on Economics of Aging in Leone, Spain and there were 48 countries represented and I went with the U.S. Commissioner on Aging, although her office screwed up some way and at that time, you needed a Visa to go to Spain because the BAS separatists were causing problems and her office hadn't gotten a proper Visa and so instead of meeting me in Washington to fly over, I had to go by myself with somebody from the Secret Service and for a day-and-a-half, I was the sole representative of the United States.

- Blanche Touhill: Oh, how wonderful.
- Marylen Mann: And there I was with the flag and the banner and the interpreters and nobody else. All the other countries had a cadre of people with them. But finally the U.S. commissioner arrived with her entourage and I was part of the delegation but there are photographs of me, the lone American. It was very exciting.
- Blanche Touhill: How wonderful.
- Marylen Mann: And they represented us as best practice in terms of aging.
- Blanche Touhill: Did it spread overseas?
- Marylen Mann: I think that there were ideas that were adopted.
- Blanche Touhill: Not exactly but...
- Marylen Mann: Not exactly. At the time, we were still in the department store and there are many countries that...
- Blanche Touhill: No, didn't have that kind of meeting place.
- Marylen Mann: ...this didn't work. There were countries where, for instance, Austria and Germany where they felt that education was the part of the school and the state and that older people should not be going into the schools doing that. That was not appropriate. And for many reasons, they Eastern bloc countries, they couldn't begin to afford it. There were some pieces that were adopted by England and particularly by Ireland and Ireland had a lot in place. They have a Visiting Nurse Association that does a lot of wellness and were very interested in the programs and the materials we had. They have librarians that go to homes of elderly and were interested in expanding that.
- Blanche Touhill: How wonderful. You know, the Irish were some of the first to do vocational education in the 19th century.
- Marylen Mann: Isn't that interesting.
- Blanche Touhill: 1850...1840, they were teaching children to be carpenters and the trades.
- Marylen Mann: I think everybody was interested in the fact that we rely heavily on people to be historians...

Blanche Touhill: Yes, and that is a perfect idea because we all have a history.

Marylen Mann: ...come and talk about their experiences, whether it was as a soldier or as a teacher in the early days or going to school in a segregated community and we had one project that I did that I've always wanted to replicate where we sent people into junior highs and the kids would divide into pods of four, the social studies, and they would have a senior and the senior would relate their experience during World War II and the students would take notes and then they had a party at the end where they got up and talked about their historian, how important it was even though he was a supply sergeant, World War II, the soldiers couldn't march without the supplies.

Blanche Touhill: How wonderful. Would you talk about your trip to Israel with Sue Shearer and the conference on empowering women?

Marylen Mann: This was a conference that was on the topic of empowerment of women, the international conference and Sue Shearer was invited to represent Missouri and I was asked to go with her and there was no doubt in my mind that their first choice was not me and I think their first choice was Harriet Woods. Sue was much more the stature person that they wanted. She had been a state senator for many years and certainly stood for all the things that were important at that time for women: equality and choice and my program, we sought to empower older people. It wasn't as specific but Sue talked me into going with her and it was an incredible experience. Bella Abzug was there; Helen Suzman from South Africa who was an astounding person; the woman who founded the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo from Argentina and there was a lot of interest in the whole issue of empowerment and there were people there from African countries: India, places where women were really struggling to achieve what we have in this country and are still struggling. So it was a fascinating experience and I felt very honored to be there and be in the company that I was in.

Blanche Touhill: Well, I think what you've done is you've empowered elderly people or seniors, to contribute to the society.

Marylen Mann: I would like to feel that, yeah. I know the people who take part in our program, whether they teach class or tutor a child or teach everybody else how to do technology feel very good about themselves.

Blanche Touhill: What's the theme of your life?

Marylen Mann: My kids always said that I...there were two sayings that I had at home. One was "adventure, adventure," in order words, you don't want to do something, it's difficult." Adventure, adventure"...okay, come on, we can do it. And the other one is "pull up your socks." So, as everyone, I've had some very hard times and people say, "Why did you start the program," and one time I wondered and it was my son who said...my mother was brain-damaged and paralyzed; my husband was dying; my mother-in-law was dying and he said, "You could not improve the life of the people around you and so you look for the group of people who you could," and maybe that's...

Blanche Touhill: So you pulled up your socks.

Marylen Mann: I think you have to and for me, when I had emotional problems and a heavy heart, the best thing for me was to go out and do something else and find someone else to help, get over yourself.

Blanche Touhill: Yes, and help other people.

Marylen Mann: And help other people and I think that's really...I am not strong in my faith in terms of practicing but I am culturally Jewish and the phrase, [inaudible 2:02:03] means "prepare the world. We're here to leave it a better place than we found it." There is no after-life. This is it. So do the best you can right here, and I guess I've tried to.

Blanche Touhill: Well, thank you very much. It was a wonderful conversation.

Marylen Mann: Thank you, Blanche.