

Lebanon Valley College®



Voices of Lebanon Valley College
150th Anniversary Oral History Project

Lebanon Valley College Archives—Vernon and Doris Bishop Library

Oral History of

Marsha Chaitt Grosky

Alumna, Class of 1960

Date: May 20, 2014

Interviewed by Art Ford

Professor *Emeritus* of English and Alumnus, Class of 1959

Transcribed by Jananne Ferrere

Vernon and Doris Bishop Library Student Worker and Alumna, Class of 2015

Notice: This is a transcript of an audio recorded interview conducted for the Lebanon Valley College Archives – Vernon and Doris Bishop Library. A draft of this transcript was edited and some corrections were made; therefore, the reader should remember that this is essentially a transcript of the spoken word, rather than the written word.

Restrictions: The oral history transcript may be read, quoted from, cited and reproduced for purposes of research. It may not be published in full except by permission of Lebanon Valley College.

Mrs. Marcia Chait Grosky '60—Grosky taught elementary and secondary school while her husband, Murray Grosky '57, was in medical school. She describes life on campus as an economics major and particularly the restrictions placed on female students at the time.

A: I'm Art Ford. I'm here with Marsha Grosky. We're in the College library. The date is May 20, 2014. And we're going to be talking to Marsha about her experiences as a student, since she graduated from here and her connection with the College over the years. So, Marsha first of all, let me ask you your hometown.

M: I grew up—I was born and grew up in Reading, Pennsylvania.

A: OK. What high school did you go to there?

M: Reading High.

A: Reading High, all right. And what kinds of things were you involved in there, extracurricular, other than the academic side of things?

M: Well, it's so long ago (laughing). Why didn't you ask me that around 40 years ago? I know I was in a lot of plays. I'm a frustrated actress; unfortunately I can't sing the way people do here and I guess there were lots of clubs, but off-hand, I can't name any.

A: (unintelligible)

M: No, I liked to be in plays. There was a senior play that everyone did—actually, it was a musical. It was fun and I just—I'm basically, I'm lucky I enjoy where I'm at. Wherever I was, I basically enjoyed it.

A: So you came to Lebanon Valley College then? Why did you choose Lebanon—

M: Well, I didn't exactly choose—I went to Penn State for my freshman year.

A: Up at the main campus?

M: Yes. And then my sister was getting married the following October, and I basically stayed home for that semester, and instead of going back to Penn State for personal reasons, I went to

Lebanon Valley. I knew about it—basically, I have a cousin, Shirley Rothenberg—maybe you know Logan's? Well, it was a dress store in Lebanon. And Shirley graduated from Lebanon Valley and I just heard a lot about it and I just went there instead of going back to Penn State.

A: Well, of course Reading is—

M: Well, I did go to Albright for summer school, and things like that and took some classes. But, no, I wanted to be a little further (laughing). I wanted to be my own. You know, once you live at home, forget it.

A: Let's move back to your non-academic life then. Your parents, were they college graduates?

M: Strangely, my father was not. My father was—he went to work, I don't know if his education went beyond eighth grade, but he did quite well for himself. He owned his own pawn shop. He had that—first that was in Philadelphia, then he came to Reading. My mother died in childbirth, so I have no background on my mother whatsoever.

A: And you said you had a sister?

M: I have a sister.

A: Any other siblings?

M: No, just the two of us. I'm the youngest. We're only 20 months apart. And she also went to Penn State her first year, then she got married (laughing).

A: Well, (unintelligible). We'll come back to your experience with Lebanon Valley in a little while. After you left Lebanon Valley, what did you do?

M: I was a teacher. I was a teacher in New Jersey.

A: And what did you teach?

M: Very interesting. They had something that was called a “core” program. I taught seventh and eighth grade, and it turns out it was everything. It was very difficult because of doing lesson plans. Math and science was one core, English and history was another, and everyone taught—oh, what do you call it—it was something like health—everybody did that. It was just a small school in New Jersey. When I got interviews, I was afraid—not afraid, but a lot of the jobs that I could’ve gotten, weren’t in good residencies; residencies in Philadelphia... And this came up—you know how they come to the schools, this was just a little school across from the river, you know where Camden—it was very safe and I decided that I was going to try it, not knowing that I was going to teach what I was. They didn’t tell you that. But, I did it. I had a lot of lesson plans, let’s just put it that way (laughing). It was a lot of work, but it was a nice place—a very small school because it was only seventh and eighth grade.

A: What brought you to New Jersey?

M: The fact that it wasn’t even—OK, I was engaged to Dr. Grosky. Well, he was in medical school at the School of Jefferson—we wanted to be close together. As I said, this was just more convenient to be there in New Jersey than to be in Philadelphia because I did not—I would not have lived in the city. We’re not going to discuss my driving (laughing). And so, I would just take the bus and I would get in another bus in Philly, if I wanted to go home to Reading. It really was—it seemed much safer than being in Philadelphia and when I had the opportunity, I thought all right. I was just there one year as a teacher. Then, we got married and I taught in Harrisburg, where I taught sixth grade.

A: Was that the “core” kind of thing, too?

M: No, it was just sixth grade.

A: It was still part of elementary school?

M: Yes, in those days, it was. I guess now, things have changed, I don't know.

A: It's part of middle school.

M: Right. But no, sixth grade was elementary school. Murray was an intern or he was a resident, so we kept moving and moving.

A: Where all did that take you?

M: Well basically, Harrisburg, that's where I taught after New Jersey. Then, I taught in the outskirts of Philadelphia. I taught two years there, then we moved again because he took his residency, then a fellowship. I didn't teach again.

A: Did you have any children?

M: Well, that's what happened. Both of our children are adopted. We got Mitchell when—I was in my last year in Philadelphia.

A: Where did you finally settle down?

M: In Lebanon.

A: In Lebanon?

M: Which was his hometown. He went into practice, so he moved back to Lebanon.

A: So you lived in Lebanon from when until now?

M: From—let's see, Mitchell is 48... So, Mitchell wasn't even a year old when we moved to Lebanon.

A: We can do the math later. Most of your adult life you've been living in Lebanon?

M: Right. I didn't get far. I went from Reading to Lebanon. That's not too far.

A: Did you keep in contact with the College since you were so close to it anyway, all of those years?

M: No. Not really, not a lot. Maybe we'd come up to different things here, but Murray was a graduate of Lebanon Valley.

A: And he was the class of?

M: Well, OK. I graduated in '60, so he probably graduated in '58.

A: Let's come back to Lebanon Valley College, then.

M: OK.

A: Talk a little bit about that, we will come back to things if the subject comes up. So, you arrived at Lebanon Valley in what would've been about what, '58?

M: I graduated high school in let's see, '55. I graduated college—since I was off for a semester—I graduated in '60.

A: Had you been to Lebanon Valley before?

M: Not really.

A: I'm interested in your recollection of the physical plant itself. Did you think anything in particular about it?

M: It was very small. I was in Sheridan Hall. I think that was the last year of it. There was a big change in the time that I started to the time that I ended because there was a lot of construction. You had the dining room; I think was new. Actually, the dorm I was in was a new dorm.

A: And which one was that?

M: Mary Green. What was nice about it—it was small.

A: Did you choose the small dormitory?

M: No, actually, I think—the year—since I started the second semester, after that I think they closed it. I could be wrong. I mean, I wasn't—I chose either—I had no choice. I honestly think that might have been either the first or second year of the new dorm. I had gotten a nice roommate—no one that I had known—her name at the time was Becky Myers—I don't know what her married name is now, but she was from Hershey and her father had a very, very big position in Hershey. So, we roomed together for practically the whole time.

A: I should ask you your maiden name when you were a student?

M: Chaitt. C-H-A-I-T-T. Different, right? (laughing)

A: What was it like living in a small dormitory like that? Just living on campus as a student?

M: It was fine. I mean, as I said, I was at Penn State in a dorm—a big dorm. No, it was very easy, but in those days, I used to go home every weekend. So socially, I mean, I went to some things, but on the whole, I was not that involved because I would go home.

A: So you weren't aware of any of the restrictions?

M: Well, the restrictions were during the week—you had to be in by 9 o'clock, it was very early (laughing). You mean when you would go out on a weekend? I don't know. You had to be in by 11 p.m. I was sure of that. I mean socially, I did not do that much because I went home.

A: What did you think of the restrictions where you had to be in by a certain hour, that sort of thing back then?

M: Well, you know, when—it didn't really matter. That's what it was. What would you do? I'm not the type of person, to this day, I wanted to go out—I just don't drink. And you're not allowed to drink there anyways, but that's beside the point. I mean, I would go to the movies

and everything was finished by 11 o'clock. Now that I'm an old lady, everything is finished by 11 o'clock (laughing). It's going back, "its 10 o'clock-time to go to bed" (laughing).

A: Other than the academic side, what kinds of activities were you involved in on campus?

M: Well, I was in May Day, I liked to dance. I was friendly with one of the teachers—can't even think of her name—used to go to the movies together.

A: What did she teach?

M: She was an English teacher. And I remember going to the movies with her. Maybe I was naïve, but—

A: I can't remember an English teacher from those days...

M: Besides movies and going out to eat, and there was something—the clubs... What would be the clubs of the—the women have—I know there was something for the men.

A: Like sororities?

M: But I didn't participate in that. You know, as I said, I went to school—I—the socialization was mainly in the dorms, and partly because I used to go home every weekend.

A: Were you involved in any plays on campus?

M: I was not.

A: What about athletics? Anything like that?

M: In those days, I wasn't athletic. I'm more athletic now. Now, I play tennis. You wouldn't say golf—"I finished playing golf." No, I mean, I really—I'm saying—I really didn't participate in that many things.

A: Let's go to the academic side because you participated in that (laughing).

M: I had to. If I could've gotten out of it, I would (laughing).

A: What was your major?

M: Economics, which after—I almost finished graduating—I wasn't going to get a job. I went to Albright to get some education courses. That's why I was secondary, rather than elementary—because I had the social studies and the economics and—so basically how I used it was teaching. Oh, wait a minute! I really used it. I still use it. I did all of my husband's books. I forgot I had accounting. Now you see I can get things ready for income tax, but I did all of Murray's books. The whole office—they didn't have as many people as they do now, but I did all of them until the quarterly, then that went to the accountants.

A: You must have been one of the few women in economics?

M: I was.

A: What was that like?

M: I like guys (laughing). It didn't bother me. In fact, I think there were two sisters that were also in economics, but not while I was there. When I was there, I was the only one.

A: Were you really?

M: Yes.

A: Why would you want to go into that?

M: Well, I was just thinking of business. I still remember—Dr. [Joseph] Tom—one of the branches of social studies—yes, I still remember that—that's good because I don't remember much (laughing).

A: Did you like him as a teacher?

M: Well, let's put it this way, I'm sure he was an excellent teacher. He wasn't warm, it was just his personality and you just accepted it. He was a nice man. He didn't have a great sense of

humor. I'm trying to think of some of the teachers—I had this one—he had the greatest sense of humor and was terrific.

A: Is he in business/economics as well?

M: No, it was social studies or history. Everybody loved him. In fact, I think he became a dean or something here?

A: Carl Ehrhart.

M: Well, Ehrhart, we loved him. Didn't he teach religion also?

A: Religion and philosophy.

M: Right. And I loved him. Oh, I loved him. And being Jewish, it was funny. He would ask me certain questions. Now, I think if anyone would think of anybody—he would be their favorite, am I correct?

A: Yes.

M: He was terrific. Is he still alive?

A: No, he died seven years ago [2003] at least.

M: He was such a nice man and he was interesting. I remember—I took the Teachings of Jesus. I think I shared this with you, it could've been he—when they found out I was Jewish and said if I wanted to go to services on Friday night, remember?

A: Yes.

M: I just didn't have any problems. It was on Tuesday mornings or Wednesday mornings. What was it called?

A: Chapel.

M: They had interesting speakers there. Things like that don't bother me at all.

A: It didn't bother you back then either?

M: No, no.

A: Being Jewish had no effect on...

M: No, I had lots of friends—Jewish friends—and friends that weren't Jewish. I think that's how you learn about the world and religions and whatever. I'm glad you asked me that question because I liked Dr. Ehrhart.

A: Yes, other than that?

M: And he became dean or something, didn't he?

A: Yes, not too long after you graduated. In fact, the next two or three years probably. He was dean for many years, and he still had the same sense of humor.

M: Oh, he was terrific.

A: Other than Carl Ehrhart, any other teachers pop into your mind?

M: Well, Dr. Tom did, but he popped in and then he popped out (laughing). Well, they—the social studies teacher was terrific too, but I can't—

A: Was that Alex Fehr?

M: It could have been. I do remember—I do not remember the words—but I know I said something that I was completely naïve and couldn't take another impression of what I said and he said, "OK. Everyone's excused" and he just stopped the class. Everybody loved me (laughing). It's true. Don't ask me what I said—but I was completely oblivious.

A: Was it something positive or negative?

M: No, I think it was something—it could've been taken sexually but I—don't know what I said (laughing).

A: That had to be Alex Fehr.

M: It was. He was hysterical. He said, "All right. Everyone, let's go!" And everyone clapped.

That's a true story.

A: That's a good one.

M: Only I would do that. Do you believe that? (laughing)

A: Other courses? How about science courses?

M: Like chemistry? I don't think—I probably had to take something, but I didn't particularly like science. I didn't mind math—we had to take what, algebra? And I just took them, but if anything, I liked social studies.

A: I don't even remember who else was in the—

M: Right, there weren't that many teachers then. So sometimes, you had the same teacher for four years, or professor I should say—excuse me.

A: Ralph Sherk was in that department.

M: Sherk?

A: Shay.

M: Shay, oh. He was around a long time.

A: And you mentioned [Hiram] Sherk?

M: No, well, I thought that's what you said. Wasn't he social studies?

A: Yes. He was history, specifically.

M: No, I probably said something in his class, too (laughing).

A: How about the English Department? You had to take some English courses. Freshmen English, do you remember who you had?

M: Don't ask me why, but I don't remember. Maybe the English—I'm trying to think of the woman—there were female teachers in the English Department. I can't think—

A: That would be Rosaline Tucker (?).

M: I honestly do not remember their names. No, I can't help you out there. I was always good in English. I like the subjunctive pace. I really think that—

A: I never heard anyone say that before.

M: Well, good. I'm glad I can be different (laughing). I just think people don't know it. It's very interesting. I personally think that when you have proper English, you come across with more validity and there are people that don't have proper grammar. On the whole, I still remember the subjunctive. Whether that was pushed on us in college, I don't know, but I can honestly say that I do remember that.

A: Did you have any literature courses?

M: I'm sure I did, but I don't—don't ask me what I read. To this day, I mean, I don't really read. I'm sure we had to read in English class, without a doubt. But what stands in my mind, I really don't remember.

A: Now let me ask you this, broaden out just a little bit. Since you lived in the area and you said you occasionally made it back on campus and saw it change, what's your impression now?

M: Oh, I'm completely impressed. I think it's beautiful. I mean, there's—also, and I'm sure even when I went there, Lebanon Valley has a wonderful reputation. I mean, academically it's—it's an excellent school—"oh, you had a good basketball team." I go back and remember, I wasn't there then, who were the big stars?

A: Oh, you mean in the early '50s?

M: Yes.

A: Howie Landa.

M: Yes, Howie Landa.

A: Sorrentino?

M: OK. And there's a guy from Philly that was with Howie Landa—my son went to—Howie Landa's basketball camps.

A: He still does.

M: Does he? Is he still alive?

A: Yes.

M: Well, then he's the biggest star, right?

A: Yes.

M: Am I correct, we went to the final 16?

A: Yes, Sweet 16.

M: See? Which when you think of the size of the schools. I am not sure about this—were they competing against the big schools or were they in a different bracket?

A: No, they were competing against all of the schools in the country because they weren't divided into Division I, II, and III like they are now. It was only after that—10 years probably—early '60s—they divided like that. That's why they were playing Temple and Villanova, and all those big schools.

M: That must have been really exciting. Yes, Mitchell, my son, went to Howie Landa's camp. They, I guess, had graduated just a year or so before I was there. When did they graduate?

A: I think Howie Landa was there the year or two before you would've come.

M: Well, the school must have been so up for everything. Right, didn't it affect everyone really positively?

A: Yes, it did.

M: OK. School spirit. I mean, you had to have it.

A: It was pretty amazing. It wasn't just the school, but it was a community spirit. I mean, they packed that gym by 4 o'clock every afternoon there was a game. The game was at 8 o'clock at night (laughing). They were filling it up before in the afternoon.

M: Well, I missed it. But Murray was here.

A: Was he an athlete?

M: No.

A: It's good to have such a team sense, though. I don't know if you came up in the early '90s, but there was a team that won the Division III Championship, and we've had other good teams since then, too in basketball for some reason.

M: Well, you know what? Next year, I'm going to go to a basketball game. How's that?

A: And you can go to a women's basketball game, too.

M: Are they good, too?

A: They are an excellent team. They've gone to the NCAA's the last five years now.

M: So, basically the recruiting is good to get these good players?

A: It has to be because a school like this can't give out scholarships.

M: I think you are in the books for your sports, though. I'm going to make a point of that.

A: OK. Very good.

M: Absolutely.

A: Well, since we are broadening this out a little bit. When you think back to the College and your years here, even though you usually weren't here on weekends, if someone were to ask you as I'm about to ask you, what does Lebanon Valley College mean to you?

M: Well, OK. It means that I had a positive experience in college with very caring people—people that were willing to listen to you if you needed help, they were there. And on the whole, the students, I think, were all very nice people. It could be lots of reasons, but here I'm going to say that I think a lot of people were here because of the church and everything, and I think that if you are religious to a point, you have more commitment and—on the whole, I can say that it was very positive. I think the teachers—if you had a problem, they were there to listen to you.

OK, it was like an extended family. There, how's that one?

A: OK. Sounds like a quote they might use some day.

M: Maybe (laughing). It better say that I said it first.

A: Give credit.

M: I want all of the credit for it (laughing).

A: That reminds me of another question that I wanted to ask because as I said, this recording might be listened to someone in the years to come, and it could be if they keep up with the technology—someone 100, 200 hundred years from now. What would you want to say to them about Lebanon Valley College?

M: About Lebanon Valley?

A: In other words, not just what it means to you, but what identifies it as what it is now, that might be difficult to explain to someone 200 years from now. What needs to be said about this school?

M: The fact that it is a small—but its growing—it might not be small in—no, it will be small. A College that has a really good reputation and gives you a very good education and—OK, I'm going to go back to something that isn't for me—it would be amazing if—for a person that wants to get into a professional school—this reputation would have to be good because there were so many people that went on to medical school and graduate school. You don't get into a school like that unless they think that where you got your previous education was very good. So...

A: Final thing, then. Any further thoughts? This is your last chance to say something to the future.

M: To the future—my only thought is, I thought I would be uncomfortable, but you made it very comfortable. I didn't exaggerate or—feel fine, and I hope that whatever I said can be an asset to what you are trying to accomplish.

A: Well, thank you very much. I appreciate it. I think much of this will be useful.

M: OK.