

**University of Illinois Student Life and Culture Archives**  
**World War II at Illinois Oral History Project**  
**Dena Epstein**  
**Hyde Park, Illinois**  
**March 14, 2008**

START OF TAPE I, SIDE A

**Chris D'Arpa: This is Chris D'Arpa. I'm in Hyde Park, talking with Dena Epstein. It's Friday the 14<sup>th</sup> of March, 2008. And Dena if you could tell me... Let's just start with background. If you could say your name.**

Dena Epstein: Dena Epstein.

**CD: And tell me a little bit about yourself, where you were born, where you went to school, and a little bit about your family.**

DE: Ok. I was born in Milwaukee, the second child of four. My father was born in Milwaukee. My mother was born in Poland and came to this country in 1892.

**CD: Ok.**

DE: She grew up in Hull House neighborhood.

[background noise]

**CD: You can keep talking.**

DE: Ok. And her memoirs which were published by the University of Illinois Press are the only known description of Hull House written by a woman from the neighborhood. Which, at first, I could not believe but I realized soon that most of the ladies in that neighborhood couldn't read nor write. [laughter] So anyhow she became a protégé of Jane Addams and won a scholarship to the University of Chicago after having quit school in fifth grade because her father died and left her mother who had never worked outside the home with six children. So my mother really led a remarkable life. And my father died in 1927. So we moved back to Chicago where her home had been in Chicago and friends and family could help her find work.

**CD: Um hmm.**

DE: She had four children to support. I graduated from Hyde Park High School commuting from Wilson Avenue on the North Side my last year because her job transferred her all over the city. And she, I don't know why I said she, I won a scholarship to the University of Chicago through competitive examinations. Which they don't give anymore I am sure. (I guess he is leaving. Referring to a man who entered the room.)

**CD: (Ok)**

DE: I was a music major at the University of Chicago not because I had any particular objective and view but because I was interested in it. And I didn't realize for several years that the music department at the University was in its infancy and had not really figured out what it was going to do. I found that out when I applied for a summer job and the man at the employment office said to me, "What department are you in." And when I told him he said, "Don't come to me for a job because I can't place anyone from that department." Well, at that point, I decided I had to do something about music to get a job.

[loud background noise]

**CD: (just let me pause this, let's see what is going on. I am like Studs Terkel, Studs Terkel talks about how he goes into interviews, you know, and says, "Oh I don't have a clue how this machine works.")**

DE: [laughter]

**CD: (And then he says his interviewees are sort of sympathetic...)**

DE: (I was at his house last year because he and my brother were buddies in the twenties.)

**CD: (Oh really?)**

DE: (And my brother was in town and Studs insisted he had to see him. So we went.)

**CD: (Oh how sweet!)**

DE: (Yeah, he is quite a guy.)

**CD: (He is quite a guy.)**

DE: (Ninety-five and just published another book [laughter])

**CD: (Yeah, I was just, I actually saw him, last, must have been in the fall at a conference. So I am going to sit closer to you.)**

DE: (Ok.)

**CD: (Ok. And I am just going to hold this.)**

DE: (Ok.)

**CD: (And I am going to keep this. Are you still running?)**

DE: [laughter] (I thought you were talking to me at first!)

**CD: [laughter] (Are you still running?)**

DE: (As well as I can.)

**CD: (I think this one is still going so that's good.)**

DE: (Congratulations.)

**CD: (The back up is going and it's registering well.)**

DE: (Ok.)

**CD: (And this one is...)**

DE: (Where should I start now?)

**CD: (Be comfortable. I'll adjust this to wherever we need to have it.)**

DE: Well, anyhow, I knew a student at the graduate library school at the University of Chicago and I went to him for advice and he recommended that I go to library school. He said, "I think you'd very well suited for that kind of work."

**CD: Now what was your major? What was your undergraduate work in?**

DE: At the University of Chicago you took survey courses. This was during the thirties. So actually the background I got was a very good background for library work because it was very comprehensive. And the courses, the special courses I took were in the music department. And they surveyed music libraries, not libraries but music culture throughout the world which was just perfect for doing music library work. Although I certainly didn't realize it at the time. So even though the training I got at the University of Chicago wasn't intended to be background for library work it turned out to be very well suited to that. So I got my bachelors at the University of Chicago in three years because I didn't have enough money to go more years. And then I took a year and tried to earn some money which was not very successful. But I did work for a year.

**CD: Do you remember the job you had?**

DE: I was a cashier at a drug store. On Forty Seventh Street in the middle of the black community. Very educational for me [laughter].

**CD: I bet.**

DE: And then I went down to Urbana to find out why they had never answered my application.

**CD: Well, let me ask you this, why did you not, did you apply to the University of Chicago's library school?**

DE: It was a graduate library school. I had to have a Master's degree to be admitted.

**CD: Really?**

DE: Yeah!

**CD: I didn't know that.**

DE: Yeah. So I wasn't eligible. I knew that. And so I applied to the University of Michigan library school and I was rejected. [laughter] And the University of Chicago was kind of puzzled to why I was rejected and found out that the director of the school was in Rome cataloging the Vatican Library and his secretary who was acting on admissions and she didn't approve of survey courses. So she rejected everybody. [Laughter] (Hits mic, I am sorry.)

**CD: That's ok.**

DE: From the University of Chicago. It had nothing to do with me at all.

**CD: Funny!**

DE: Life in the thirties. Anyhow, when I went down to Urbana and pointed out I had a BA degree not B Music degree the University of Illinois reconsidered and accepted me.

**CD: And was it the library school that you went to talk to or was it the graduate college?**

DE: No it was the library school.

**CD: Library school.**

DE: Yeah.

**CD: And where was the library school at the time?**

DE: In the library. In the building which I guess is now obsolete.

**CD: Well...**

DE: They have additional buildings. I know there was some remodeling while I was there. Well, I thought the courses in the library school on the whole were very good. I didn't like the courses in administration because I wasn't interested in that. But the other courses were very good practiced things that prepared you for doing the actual job.

**CD: Did you have any required courses?**

DE: I think the whole course...

**CD: The whole program was?**

DE: The whole program was required.

**CD: And did you, do you remember who your instructors were?**

DE: I remember some of them. Some of them. It's a long time. The woman who directed my thesis who was really wonderful was Ann Morris Boyd who retired a couple of years after I finished. I think on the whole the faculty was first rate. I was taught to catalog and do reference work. And do a variety of things which you need to know if you working as a librarian. And I worked in a public library only once and that was during World War II. I worked in the Newark Public Library.

**CD: The Newark Public Library?**

DE: In Newark, I commuted from Morristown, New Jersey. My husband was working at the Picatinny Arsenal in Dover, New Jersey which had been built during the American Revolution and was still functioning. [laughter] So I think it was good idea that I came because he needed a lot of encouragement. I still remember coming home from Newark one day and he was lying on the couch. He'd been standing next to a man when a bomb went off. And the man was killed, he was just taken to the hospital for the rest of the day.

**CD: Oye.**

DE: But he was not in a good mood at all.

**CD: He had no lingering effects from that?**

DE: The hospital apparently got him just in time.

**CD: Wow.**

DE: Treated him immediately and he came home. He was not in good mood but he wasn't in pain. And that was the only time he was injured that I remember. Now there may have been others I didn't know about.

**CD: So tell me the year that you went down to Illinois for your graduate, was it an MS?**

DE: MA in LS. And then I worked for a Master's the next year.

**CD: Oh, ok. So which year did you head down to Urbana?**

DE: I graduated from Chicago in 1937 and I think I went down to Urbana in the fall of 1938 because I took a year off to work in-between. And I shared housing with my friend Miriam Kramer whose husband was in the Graduate Library School at Chicago.

**CD: What was his name?**

DE: Sidney Kramer.

**CD: Sidney Kramer.**

DE: Later he started a bookstore in Washington that was very well known...

**CD: Kramer books?**

DE: That's right.

**CD: Oh, ok.**

DE: And his children are now scattered all over the country. I keep hearing from them occasionally.

**CD: How long was the program for the MA program at the library school?**

DE: One year.

**CD: One year?**

DE: Um hmm. Now, maybe, some people who had other specialties had longer programs. I don't know but I just took whatever they offered and I was there for one year and in 1942 World War II broke out. And I had met my husband two years earlier. He was in the Chemistry Department, I was in the Library Department.

**CD: At Illinois?**

DE: At Illinois. He got his Bachelors at New York University. And then came here for a doctorate.

**CD: And just for the record, what was his name?**

DE: His name was Morton Epstein. And we got to be good friends. I didn't have any expectations but...

**CD: How did you meet?**

DE: I think it was at a graduate, what do you call it, guild meeting.

**CD: Graduate guild meeting?**

DE: They had an organization for graduate students at that time, I don't know how long it lasted, they even had their own radio program on the University station.

**CD: Really? What was it, a social organization?**

DE: Social organization. It also had political ideas of one kind or another.

**CD: Of one kind or another or?**

DE: I don't remember any... He was much more active in it than I was. I still was a newcomer and he had been around awhile. But that's where I met him and we became friends and he started inviting me to the movies and taking me to dinner and that kind of thing. So we became very good friends but I had not expected anything more than that. But with the war breaking out and his being shipped off to an Arsenal that he never heard of before he wanted some family support. [laughter] So he asked me to marry him on very short notice because he had to get there in a hurry. And he took me East with him for a week to meet his family. I never met anybody in his family but we took it up from there and got along just fine. And I was in New York for one week. I had never been East before so this was a big event in my life.

**CD: How did you get there? Did you take the train?**

DE: We drove.

**CD: You drove?**

DE: And I was getting very excited about seeing mountains because I had never seen a mountain. And we drove through the Alleghenies at midnight so I didn't see very much. [laughter].

**CD: You probably left here in the morning, afternoon and you hit Pennsylvania.**

DE: Exactly. But anyhow, after a week, he went off to his Arsenal and I got on the train and went back to Urbana. And at one point I hit the music thing that I was going to be cataloging. I don't know exactly.

**CD: So you were working in the Library at this time?**

DE: When I finished my Bachelors I was offered a halftime job in the catalog department.

**CD: Your Bachelor's or your Master's?**

DE: Oh I think I got a Bachelor's first?

**CD: But you got that here or at Chicago?**

DE: I got a second Bachelor's.

**CD: Really?**

DE: I think so.

**CD: Ok.**

DE: Because I think my diploma says Bachelor's. Anyhow I was going to school halftime and working halftime.

**CD: In the Library, cataloging?**

DE: Cataloging in the Library. And going to school whenever the classes for Master's candidates were offered.

**CD: And that must have been convenient because...Was the cataloging department in the Library?**

DE: It certainly was. I just went upstairs.

**CD: Just went upstairs to the Library School.**

DE: And at that time they also gave me an occasional assignment of escorting music students through the Library. Apparently nobody had ever done that before. Because some of the books I opened their pages weren't cut. [laughter]

**CD: Now was that part of what you did in Cataloging was free those?**

DE: Well, I was asked to do it and I was glad to do it.

**CD: What floor was Cataloging on? Do you remember?**

DE: I think it was on the second floor.

**CD: So it probably hasn't moved since you were there?**



DE: Well, it could not be... It was a very big room.

**CD: And do you remember the reading room in the Library. The main reading room was that?**

DE: I am trying to recognize it, to visualize it.

**CD: I should have brought pictures.**

DE: Yeah I don't think... I didn't spend much time in that room.

**CD: Ok.**

DE: And I am trying to remember. I know there was something about the freshman reading room that happened while I was still there. Where they moved it into the underground and somehow I got involved in transferring books to one place to another. I don't know how that happened.

**CD: Now did you have access? Did students in general to the stacks or?**

DE: The Library School students did. I don't know if students, if others did.

**CD: Other students. Describe what it was like going into the stacks. Do you remember?**

DE: Well, I made a lot of use of the stacks because of my thesis.

**CD: And what was your thesis topic?**

DE: My thesis topic was music publishing in Chicago before the fire. The firm of Root and Cady. Which turns out to have been historically the most important music publishing house ever in the United States. And for the thesis I needed to consult newspapers from the period, 1858 to 1871. With the fire these firms were all burned out and none of them survived. But apparently my picking that topic was a very fortunate one for me because people were getting very interested in what happened during the Civil War. And Chicago became a real headquarters. Their songs were sold all over the country. Songs like the *Battle Cry of Freedom* was published in Chicago and whereas normally a Master's thesis, I think, is of importance primarily to its author, this thesis actually got a lot of attention which I still am in a state of astonishment.

**CD: Do you remember who your committee members were? Did you have to have?**

DE: Well Ann Boyd was my advisor.

**CD: Your advisor.**

DE: I don't remember the committee at all. But the story of that thesis even though it goes outside of Urbana is really incredible for it was, yeah the war was still going on, I think. And the Music Library Association had just been organized and they were putting out a mimeograph book. So I wrote to the editor of the book, by this time I was in New Jersey. And the author gave an appendix for my thesis that would be useful to public libraries and he wrote back and said he wasn't the editor any more and I should write to John Windle at the Newberry Library. So I wrote to John Windle and he wrote back and said he wasn't the editor anymore. I should write to Richard S. Hill at the Library of Congress. So I wrote to Richard S. Hill and he never answered my letter. While my husband was being sent to the Pentagon on business, so, I said if you have time look up Sidney Kramer at the Library of Congress. He had met Sidney in Urbana, and see if he knows this guy Hill and if so why didn't he answer my letter? Well when Mort came back he told me, "I was laughing on the train all the way from Washington to Morristown" because yes, he knew Sidney well and he called Sidney and he kept saying, "What, what, what, what?" and finally he just exploded, "Why don't you tell the girl?" Hill had decided, I guess unknown to anybody else, he was going to convert this mimeograph newsletter into a scholarly journal and he needed articles so he borrowed my thesis through interlibrary loan from the University of Illinois, read it, decided to publish it and had never gotten around to telling me. He wasn't doing anything illegal because we became very good friends. And it did appear in Notes and I still have copies of it. It was published in volume three number one.

**CD: And the journal title was...**

DE: Notes for the Music Library Association.

**CD: Now Kramer was originally on the Library staff here at Chicago? Where did you meet Sidney Kramer?**

DE: I met him in the neighborhood.

**CD: Of Hyde Park?**

DE: Of Hyde Park. He was not on the Library staff.

**CD: Ok.**

DE: He was in the Graduate Library School and he was writing his doctoral dissertation. When I went off to Library School.

**CD: And then he wound up in Urbana?**

DE: In summer school, he was teaching there. I remember there's a picture of the three of us and it's obviously in the middle of summer from the vegetation. I don't know how

long he stayed there because by the time my husband went to the Pentagon he was at the Library of Congress and when he left the Library of Congress he started his bookstore.

**CD: Ok.**

DE: And when the war ended we moved to Washington because my husband had a job at the National Bureau of Standards. And I got a job at the Library of Congress because there must not have been music librarians to hire if the people would hire me on the spot.

**CD: Were you still cataloging or what were your tasks?**

DE: In Newark I was the assistant art and music librarian in the public library which was the third floor of the Newark Museum. And I did whatever needed to be done.

**CD: What about at Library of Congress?**

DE: Library of Congress I worked in the copyright cataloging division. Because the man who was then chief of the music division did not want to hire women and I was asked not to apply there because it would cause absolute consternation all over the division.

**CD: Do you remember his name?**

DE: Harold Spivak. But Dick Hill asked me not to apply and I figured why should I get myself in a tangle like that? And the experience I had in the Copyright cataloging division was well worth it. I worked for Virginia Cunningham who was a wonderful person.

**CD: And do you remember the years you were at LC?**

DE: Well, let's see. The war was over so...

**CD: The late forties you think or?**

DE: I think probably the late forties, yeah. And I worked there until I was seven months pregnant with my first child. And I decided I didn't need to commute from Silver Spring, Maryland to Washington.

**CD: So what year would that have been?**

DE: About, golly. I have all this at home. I worked at the Library of Congress for about two years.

**CD: Ok.**

DE: A little less than two years. I think I became pregnant while I was working there.

**CD: And you said that you knew Don Krummel?**

DE: From the music, I did volunteer work in the music division.

**CD: After this?**

DE: Or before it.

**CD: Oh.**

DE: Before I got a job and Don was working there at that time. And then later I knew him of course when he was at the Newberry and I was working at the University of Chicago.

**CD: Now, let me see if I can steer us back to Illinois and figure out, let's try and pinpoint when you were there and talk a little bit about what life was like at Illinois. What the campus was like. So we're thinking it was just prior to World War II because you...**

DE: World, before I married, yeah, it was prior to World War II.

**CD: So it was probably '38 to '41 or '42?**

DE: As I recall there were very few black students.

**CD: But do I have the timeframe right?**

DE: I think so.

**CD: Ok.**

DE: Yeah.

**CD: What we've heard, I mean what the record shows, history shows us that college campuses were used for training purposes for the military and that Illinois was a center for that. So the men who were on campus were more often than not in the military.**

DE: Well, the men I met, there was some in the Library School. And the others I met were chemists. Because they were friends of my husband, the guy I married. I never knew anybody in a uniform.

**CD: So that may have happened later, after the war had started.**

DE: It could have, yeah.

**CD: So where did you live when you were at Illinois?**

DE: The first year Miriam and I rented a room from a family on California Avenue.

**CD: In Urbana?**

DE: In Urbana. And I would walk to work. And it never occurred to me that you needed transportation. I had walked to the University of Chicago campus too. Then the next year, Miriam finished what she was doing and went back to Chicago.

**CD: Now was she also in the Library School?**

DE: Yeah.

**CD: Ok.**

DE: And I rented an apartment with a friend of mine from college on the third floor of an apartment building. It's where the Hall is now. The big concert hall.

**CD: Oh Krannert?**

DE: Krannert! Yeah!

**CD: The Krannert...**

DE: That used to be real estate.

**CD: Sure, of course.**

DE: And I lived there! But I can't remember the exact name of the street.

**CD: Well, it probably doesn't exist any more because that takes up such a huge area.**

DE: Yeah. Well, the street may lead to the Hall.

**CD: Lead to the Hall. So I think those streets are Illinois, Iowa, and Oregon or something like that.**

DE: Yeah, that sounds reasonable.

**CD: Met in those areas. So you were close, very close to campus. Did much of your social life take place on campus?**

DE: When I was in library school I didn't have much social life. Except through this graduate guild because I had no money and I couldn't afford, I remember if I ate lunch

with friends then I couldn't eat any dinner because I could only afford one meal a day. And so when I got to be good friends with Mort he gave orders that I should eat on his meal ticket because he was shocked when he realized how little money I had.

**CD: So he had a card that allowed him to?**

DE: He had, there was a restaurant across the street from the Chemistry Building named, golly what was it called? It was a lunch counter. But he had a meal ticket there that he bought in advance and he gave instructions that they should punch his meal ticket for anything I ate. Which was of course was a great blessing. [laughter] He was a very generous guy!

**CD: That's great! And so you would go to campus first thing in the morning and...**

DE: Yeah, I don't, I guess Cop Powell's, does that make sense? The restaurant across the street from the Chemistry Building.

**CD: Oh there is no restaurant there anymore!**

DE: [laughter] I live in the past.

**CD: No, it's Powell's.**

DE: That sounds right.

**CD: It's Powell's lunch counter.**

DE: Yeah.

**CD: Yes.**

DE: And I would, I might have breakfast there which would probably a bowl of cereal and a cup of coffee. And lunch, there were cafeterias on campus in the Union Building. And there was a library in the Union Building so I think we got special treatment because we would help man the staff there.

**CD: How interesting.**

DE: Yeah, the Union Building at that time was a good place to do all kinds of things.

**CD: And the library was a lending library or a reference library?**

DE: I think it was a lending library, yeah. There probably were reference books there.

**CD: Right.**

DE: And I sang in a chorus the first quarter I was there but the conductor was really inadequate and I was used to better conductors at the University of Chicago. So I didn't continue.

**CD: Now, what do you remember about students on campus? You started to say that weren't many African American students on campus. What about some the ratio of women to men and various...**

DE: I have no idea.

**CD: You didn't really...**

DE: Didn't pay much attention. I spent most of my time in the library.

**CD: Did you work with students in the library? Or no because of cataloging?**

DE: I don't think I ever worked on a charging desk. Mary Lois Bull at that time was in the library office and I remember going to her for assignments.

**CD: Cool! Interesting.**

DE: And it was a fairly demanding program so that it took most of my time.

**CD: Did it?**

DE: Yeah.

**CD: How did it work? Because you know we have computers, computer labs, and in cataloging we are actually on computers using...**

DE: There were no computers there. In fact, after I came back to Urbana and was finishing my degree my husband was sent by the Army to Urbana to see the first computer ever installed, which filled two floors. And I remember that because he stayed with me. I was living in a faculty house at that time and they said, "If we were married, fine." [Laughter] But otherwise I never saw a computer. And in 1950 I went to a Gordon conference with my husband up in New Hampshire and at that time he was learning how to run a computer.

**CD: And what's a Gordon conference?**

DE: A scientific conference.

**CD: Ok.**

DE: Apparently they are very hard, I didn't go to any of the sessions I just went for the ride, so to speak. But apparently they are highly respected conferences. And at that time I think he was working for the Colgate Palmolive Company.

START OF TAPE I, SIDE B

**CD: Now going back to Library School, so did you get, you did get experience working because you actually worked in the cataloging department classes...**

DE: The people in my classes when I was working for my Bachelor's were largely interested in working in public libraries. And they were primarily interested in the problems that public libraries are concerned with. I was much more interested in an academic library. And I would directly assign myself in that direction. So I didn't spend a lot of time with them. I remember there were three Black girls in the Library School at that time. And they were flunked out as I recall. Now maybe one of them wasn't. I can't remember all the details.

**CD: Well, you are going have to clue me in. What does flunked out?**

DE: Flunked out.

**CD: Flunked out, ok.**

DE: Means they failed and I was outraged. I felt if they were admitted they should have been given special help. But that's life in the forties

**CD: Did you say anything to anyone?**

DE: I can't remember.

**CD: Yeah.**

DE: I remember in the ladies room talking to one of the girls and expressing my feelings on the subject and she just shrugged, she didn't really...

**CD: Really? Do you remember where they were from, what part of the country they were from?**

DE: No.

**CD: Were they Chicagoans too?**

DE: No, I don't think so.

**CD: So, did you have an impression of the academic librarians, the university librarians?**



DE: No, I didn't. I know that some of the librarians, some of the instructors in the Library School said that there had been complaints that the curriculum wasn't up to date and they felt this was unnecessary and unfair. I had no complaints about the program. But then I wasn't planning to do things that some of these others did. I have never administered a library in my whole life. I've been president of the Music Library Association but I have never been in charge of an administration. All the years I worked at Chicago I was always an assistant.

**CD: And were you in cataloging?**

DE: At Chicago? No, I was music reference.

**CD: Music reference, ok.**

DE: But I was the assistant music librarian. I did a lot of cataloging at Chicago but not in the catalog department.

**CD: And since the purpose of this interview is to talk about Illinois pre World War II the sense of the campus, do you have any other memories of what campus life was like in general?**

DE: There were political clubs on campus. I don't know whether they were officially recognized but they were interested in politics and I was interested in things like that. So I got to know the people and they were the rebellious types. So, the campus was not just peaches and cream all the time.

**CD: Were there demonstrations or were there more gatherings to discuss the politics of the day?**

DE: I think more gatherings.

**CD: And how did people get their news? How, if you were talking about what was happening in the world, how did people...**

DE: I think the newspapers, television barely existed at that time and radio did exist but people didn't rely on it for their news. I'm trying to think of an example.

**CD: Did you have more than just the local newspapers and the Daily Illini?**

DE: Oh yeah. At the library.

**CD: At the library. So students would use the periodicals room at the library.**

DE: Yeah. Now when I was an undergraduate at the University of Chicago there were practically uprisings.

**CD: Around what kinds of issues, do you remember?**

DE: Golly I'm trying. The Walgreen's granddaughter was a student and apparently she reported things that he didn't approve of and the state legislature was investigating the University of Chicago campus. So that got the whole place upset. Chicago was quite an exciting place at that time. Illinois was much more temperate. I think their work with people on campus including faculty members that felt things could be changed but it wasn't as exciting as it had been at Chicago.

**CD: Was it a very diverse campus, do you remember?**

DE: Oh yeah. And one thing, through my husband I got to meet several faculty people in the math department who were friends of his. And they were very nice to me. They invited me to dinner and after he left they sort of looked after me. So I had a good time at Urbana even though at first I felt out of place because I was used to big cities.

**CD: Sure because your world was shrunk.**

DE: That's right. But in retrospect I think the training I got there was just what I needed. That it prepared me for a great variety of situations and jobs and that's what I faced in the future.

**CD: Do you remember anything about fraternities and sororities?**

DE: I know they existed but I didn't know anybody who was involved in them.

**CD: And you didn't have a sense of their presence in the world that you operated in at Illinois?**

DE: No. I first became aware of them when I went for a long walk along the street where there were a lot of fraternity houses. Up until that point I didn't know they existed.

**CD: That's interesting. And what about sporting events at Illinois? Because what I've heard is that during the war they were, for instance I spoke with a woman about a month ago who was the managing editor of the *Daily Illini* in the mid forties, '43, '44.**

DE: By that time I was gone.

**CD: Right, but I wonder when this started to happen. At that time the *Illini*, the *Daily Illini* editorial board was all women.**

DE: I didn't know that.

**CD: Because there were no men. There weren't that many men on campus and this group of four women decided to function as a collective in terms of their decision making instead of a managing editor.**

DE: Well, this would have been when everybody was off in the Army.

**CD: Right. So what Millicent Lane said was that she had a very strong sense of there being this kind of absence of men and the presence of them was only as servicemen.**

DE: By that time I was long gone.

**CD: Long gone. But you were there for the sporting events, do you remember the ever controversial Chief Illiniwek?**

DE: Well, he was around then but I don't remember ever going to a football game. For one thing I couldn't afford it.

**CD: Really?**

DE: For another thing I wasn't that interested. And the one time I was on the football field was when my husband decided to teach me to drive. That was the place where he felt it was safe. [laughter]

**CD: So you were able to take a car out onto the football field?**

DE: Yes. Well, at least that's my recollection, now maybe I'm full of beans.

**CD: Well it's a great one even if it isn't true. What a terrific picture it presents. And did you learn how to drive.**

DE: Not then, no. I finally learned how to drive from a formal teacher when I wanted to take my children to nursery school and there was no nursery school in the town where we were living. I had to go to the next town in New Jersey. So I learned how to drive and I drove until I came back to Chicago in 1963. When I saw the traffic in Chicago, I decided this is not for me. And we were in agreement; we didn't want to have two cars.

**CD: Did you live in Hyde Park?**

DE: We bought, my husband bought a house in Kenwood which was subject to my approval. I was still in New Jersey because I had to handle the move and bring the kids back from camp and all that kind of stuff.

[background noise]

**CD: (I am going to pause this for a sec.)**

DE: (I guess they are choring)

[mumbled background noises]

**CD: (I have no idea how to pause this one so I'll just keep it running so while this is off let me think about something here.) So it sounds like your world at Illinois was very focused in a way because of the demands of the program.**

DE: My need to get the most of it because of my lack of money.

**CD: Right, right. (So ok, let's start this again. It's starting.) Let's, as long as we are talking let's talk about the post War and life in Chicago. You talked about buying a house in Kenwood.**

DE: Well, life in Chicago...that was in 1963.

**CD: Ok.**

DE: And there's a lot of history about that house. My husband tried to get a mortgage from a bank downtown. We had plenty of cash because he had just sold a house and he was told we could not have a mortgage. We were a white family that shouldn't be buying that house and would we go elsewhere. And he was furious. He wanted to sue them. But our lawyer said, "don't be a mess, go to the Hyde Park bank, take out the existing mortgage on the house and forget the downtown banks." So that was episode number one.

**CD: And you were buying in this neighborhood because he was at the University of Chicago?**

DE: No. He never worked for the University in Chicago. We're an atypical family. He was working for the Chicago Board of Health. He had decided that he wanted to convert from physical chemistry to clinical chemistry. And he went to Northwestern and got training even though he could have been grandfathered in and helped organize a new organization that would not accept salesmen as members. You had to be a professional chemist. And he was very happy with that. This was the kind of thing he enjoyed doing. He never worked for the University although we lived in the University neighborhood for about twenty two years, more than that.

**CD: And thinking about Hyde Park, a question occurs to me because we have the greatest book store in the world here, the Seminary Coop Bookstore. But were there bookstores in Urbana, Champaign?**

DE: There were then and one of the bookstores that is there now was built and organized by a women from Hyde Park who was a friend of my sisters. I'm trying to remember the

name of it and I can't. I actually bought some books there when we were down in Urbana for a visit.

**CD: Was it a used bookstore or was it Folletts?**

DE: It wasn't Folletts.

**CD: Was it Jane Adams?**

DE: No. It maybe Jane Adams, now that I am not sure of.

**CD: It's in downtown Champaign?**

DE: Yeah.

**CD: Ok. So there were bookstores...**

DE: Oh yeah. You could buy books. You could...

**CD: Were there bars. Now there just bars all the way up and down Green street.**

DE: Now there were occasional bars and there was a restaurant that had various branches. I am trying to remember the name. It was an Italian name.

**CD: Cool.**

DE: And that was a nice place to eat.

**CD: Did students spend time in bars, do you know, was it a big thing? Was drinking a big thing?**

DE: [laughter] I kind of doubt it then but I don't really know because I didn't hang out there. There were lots of stores on the street...

**CD: Probably Green Street.**

DE: Green Street, yeah.

**CD: And little grocery stores?**

DE: Oh, yes.

**CD: So that you could just purchase some food instead of prepared food.**

DE: Sure, sure. The Illinois Central Railroad ran trains regularly between Chicago and Champaign

**CD: And did you commute much, did you...**

DE: Well, after I met Mort he would drive me to Chicago for the weekend. He and my mother got along very well. And he was New Yorker so Champaign was kind of tame for him. So I came to Chicago usually by car but I also went by train several times.

**CD: And how frequently did you come back to Chicago while you were down there.**

DE: Well, you see I was doing research for my thesis in Chicago libraries too. I used newspapers in Champaign and city directories but music itself wasn't a big thing there. So I would come to Chicago for whole weeks at times just to do research.

**CD: That's amazing as a Master's student. That's great. And of course you had a place to stay here so that worked out well. And a little infusion of culture while you were here. One other question I was thinking of, a sense of the cities of Champaign Urbana. Did you have any?**

DE: At that time, while there was a bar in Urbana where the graduate guild met and that was the first time I was in a bar in Urbana. And at that time the mayor of Urbana was a math professor. [laughter] And I don't think the mayor of Champaign was ever connected with the University but maybe he was I just didn't know.

**CD: Do you remember what the guild talked about? What was a guild meeting like?**

DE: I didn't go to that many. I'm trying to remember, golly. It's so long ago.

**CD: And did you plan events or was it really more of a discussion?**

DE: I really wasn't on the inner circle. Mort was.

[background noise]

DE: (I guess there is going to be an exercise class)

**CD: (Oh ok. Well, I've kept you for more than an hour.)**

DE: Now there are things upstairs that may be totally irrelevant. But, for example, I do have the published versions of my Master's thesis both in installments and in book form.

**CD: And was this published by the University of Illinois Press? No, this was the Library of Congress, the fellow at the Library of Congress.**

DE: Library of Congress did the journals.

**CD: Right.**

DE: And the book edition was published by Harmony Park Press in Detroit. I had proposed the appendix that was still unpublished and their editorial advisor told them to publish the whole thing. So they did. I hadn't even suggested that. Incredible!

**CD: Well, it's clearly an indication of how important it was, what an important contribution it was.**

DE: And I do have copies of both the books the University of Illinois Press has published.

**CD: We should have those, certainly we have them in the library and we might even have them in the Archives. Part of our charge is to keep those.**

DE: I am sure you do. Yeah you may. Well, one of them is the history of Black folk music up until the Civil War. And the other is my mother's memoirs. It's a book about an immigrant at Hull House and it's the only book of that kind ever written because the ladies in that neighborhood didn't read and write. So that is historically really important. I didn't appreciate it at the time. She could never get a publisher while she was alive. There was no interest in immigrant women at that time. This was in the fifties. So after I retired from the University, the one thing I thought I really should do is see if I could get it published because it was a big disappointment to her. And I got very interested in it and it turned out to be a really demand book because there is no book about Hull House written by a women from the neighborhood.

**CD: Well, I am going to look for them when I get back. Now both have your name on them?**

DE: Oh yes.

**CD: Ok.**

DE: My mother's name comes first on her book and then I'm the editor.

**CD: Ok. You think I've been through library school I should be able to track it down. I won't tell anyone if I can't. Well, is there anything else you want to sort of?**

DE: Well, there are a couple of things that may be of interest to the University. I don't know. I've had several honors. The Society for American Music gave me a, what do they call it? A lifetime achievement award. And my husband for our fiftieth wedding anniversary established a fund in the Music Library Association to give grants to people doing research.

**CD: Oh that's great.**

DE: So my name is still around.

**CD: Excellent.**

DE: Even though I've been retired a long time and I'm not, right now I am not trying to do any research at all. I feel at my age and my circumstances it's not appropriate.

**CD: Were you a member, an active in ALA?**

DE: I joined ALA in 1926. [laughter] I've been a member for sixty years and in fact one of the reasons that Rachel got interested in library schools because I keep giving her my old issues. I still am a non paying dues member because I've been a member for sixty years. And just last year for the first time in history ALA had an issue of American Libraries devoted to music libraries.

**CD: That's amazing that it was the first one!**

DE: Yeah.

**CD: That's really amazing. And what do you think, this is kind of an aside, but what do you think the value of a professional organization like ALA is? Did you notice, why did you stay a member of ALA for sixty years?**

DE: I'll tell you one good reason. When I was president of MLA I was still working at the University of Chicago and I got a telephone call from a man in the publishing office at ALA. They needed someone to review a book, could I recommend somebody. So I recommended somebody and then I said, "Would you be willing to give me some advice, I have a real problem in the Music Library Association. A lot of public librarians want to provide bibliographic information for small collections and they've drawn up information and the people who come to our meetings aren't interested. They don't look at it." And he said, "Let me think, I think you should provide the information and we should do the distribution." I said, "Perfect." And I thought to myself...

**CD: Because it has a much broader reach.**

DE: Much broader reach and the people from small libraries come to their meetings. They don't come to the Music Library Association meeting. And when I saw the last ALA catalog, it's now in its fifth edition, Music Library Association is providing all the information and ALA is doing the distribution.

**CD: Terrific.**

DE: And I think that justifies sixty years of membership.

**CD: That's great. That's a great story to end on. Well thank you very much.**

DE: Well, this has been a great pleasure.



**CD: Pleasure was all mine.**

START OF TAPE TWO SIDE A PART I

(interview moves upstairs to Mrs. Epstein's apartment)

**CD: So the reason you chose black music was...**

DE: Yeah well, I was looking for something to do research on. I had two small children at home...

**CD: So this must have been when you were in D.C?**

DE: No, no. We had moved to Jersey.

**CD: To Jersey, ok.**

DE: My husband left the Bureau of Standards and went to work for the Colgate Palmolive Company. And I went to the New York Public Library hoping to find something about the man who wrote the song, "Lorena." Which was the most popular song in the Confederacy but it was published in Chicago. [laughter] And I told this story to somebody just last week and he started singing "Lorena." [laughter]

**CD: Really?**

DE: Well, it became obvious that there is no information about this gentleman. So I was carrying the book back to the charging desk and it fell open in my hands and I recognized a name, William Francis Allen, was the man who was a senior editor of a first collection of spirituals ever published. He was a historian. He wasn't a musician but he was a well-trained amateur musician. And I got interested in this collection. It was completely ignored at that time. It hadn't been, it was published in 1867, got bad reviews because at that time people didn't think that you should pay serious attention to spirituals.

**CD: Because? Black spirituals or...**

DE: Black spirituals.

**CD: Black spirituals, ok.**

DE: Because the way they were performed was very difficult to follow.

**CD: Were they performed as groups in, what would it be a choir?**

DE: Before the Civil War, virtually no people who lived outside the South heard Black music. The minstrel shows were performing but they weren't doing folk music they were

doing their own stuff. And this collection from 1867 had been totally ignored except it had been attacked.

**CD: Attacked at the time it came out?**

DE: When it came out, yes, and I have reviews quoted in my book. They're incredible! And there was an Austrian musicologist who was living in London who wrote a book about Black music. He'd never been to Africa. He had never been to the United States. He'd never heard the music. He just saw what was in a book he had. And he was convinced the music was utterly worthless. Well, you know that's the kind of stuff that raised my hairs standing strait up. Anyhow, I didn't know that I was qualified to do this but I thought nobody else is paying any attention, I might as well. So I decided to see what I could do. I took a long time but I found enough stuff so that I had a full length book about it. Going up to the Civil War, not afterward because people began to realize this book is very important. I tried, for the first time in the history of the United States trained historians were being sent to the Sea Islands off the coast of North Carolina. And there was a very large Black population there and they could just listen to what was going on around them.

**CD: Are these the, what are those songs called? The gull...**

DE: Gullah is their speech.

**CD: Is their speech. Isn't there a term for the songs that they sing too, or am I confusing this with something else?**

DE: I don't know off hand.

**CD: And there were plantations on the Sea Islands?**

DE: A lot of them.

**CD: Ok.**

DE: And there was a much larger Black population than white population. Most of the whites had fled to the mainland. And the people, it happened that some of the people who went to the Sea Islands were sensitive to music and they were just bowled over by what they heard. And they tried to reduce it to notation which was very difficult because these songs are not strait forward do re mi. So I got absolutely fascinated by this.

**CD: And when were these visits? These first visits to the Sea Islands?**

DE: In 1862-63. The first time, the first words that were ever published from a Negro spiritual were published in a New York newspaper in 1862 and he didn't even try to do the music. While Lucy McKim Garrison was nineteen years old, she wasn't Garrison then she was just Lucy McKim and her father was being sent to the Sea Islands to see

what supplies they needed. He was an abolitionist from Philadelphia. He invited her to come with him as his secretary. And she just was bowled over by the music she heard. Her letters are so fascinating!

**CD: Where are they held?**

DE: Smith College.

**CD: Smith.**

DE: I never in a million years would have thought of Smith. She didn't go to school there. But after five years of correspondence with the widow of one of Lucy's sons who had remarried and her name was now Mrs. Chubb. [Laughter] She suggested I write to Eleanor Garrison in Santa Barbara, California. And Eleanor's mother was the niece of Lucretia Mott and her mother had helped Lucretia organize the first women's rights meeting in 1848. Well, when this lady, Lucretia's niece, moved to California in the twenties she took with her a freight car full of family papers. And her daughter and son were going through them just when my letter arrived. And they were so thrilled that somebody was interested in their papers they not only wrote to me and sent me manuscripts but they instructed the people at Smith to send the whole collection to me. And I had to say don't do that! [laughter] But it was just the most marvelous collection. I made three trips to NorthHampton just to read letters.

**CD: Oh that's a wonderful story too about how we learn about archival collections.**

DE: That's right! And I was told by Mrs. Chub, I was the first person who had ever asked about a woman in the Garrison family. Well, the men's letters are at Harvard but the women's letters and a lot of the men's letters are all at Smith.

**CD: At Smith. And did you ever figure out why they're at Smith?**

DE: I think Eleanor Garrison, the women who wrote to me, must have gone there.

**CD: Oh must have gone there.**

DE: I never asked her but I did get to meet her. She came to visit Mrs. Chubb and they invited me to lunch. And at that time Mrs. Chubb was not living in the house but still owned the house that had belonged to the McKims right after the Civil War. Lucy McKim married Wendell Garrison, who was Garrison's third son.

**CD: Ok.**

DE: And his friend and associate from the beginning of the abolitionist movement was Lucy's father. So this house was just a treasure trove. Mrs. Chub had decided to give the collection of material that was appropriate to Smith. And she asked me to help them sort it. It was such a glorious experience! [Laughter]

**CD: Oh it sounds wonderful! And the house was in...**

DE: Menlo Park, New Jersey. That's where the Edison Museum is and I don't know who else lived there but the McKims moved there right after the Civil War. And Lucy lived there all her life. She died at the age of 34 leaving three children behind.

**CD: Oye.**

DE: And the third editor was Charles Ware who was a Harvard graduate.

**CD: W A R E?**

DE: Right.

**CD: Ok.**

DE: His granddaughter is a historian and she was simply delighted to help me. [laughter]

**CD: What a fantastic story.**

DE: Well, I really, you know, if I have trouble going to sleep at night I just think about it. [laughter] And yet you know these people didn't know me. I didn't have any reputation but they were so thrilled that somebody was going to tell the truth about this music!

**CD: Oh that is so terrific. Now did you have any involvement with the WPA programs?**

DE: My mother did. I was in student programs but I was too young.

**CD: I didn't know there was student programs for...**

DE: National Youth Administration was a student program. They gave me money when I was Library School and I don't know if they gave me when I was at the University because I had a scholarship. But this is a story about Library School so maybe I should bend your ear again.

**CD: Oh I'd love it!**

DE: I had a job when I was in Library School before I got the cataloging job. I worked in the bindery preparing journals for binding. And the women who supervised that department was Josie Hochins who was a wonderful woman. Well, one day I got a letter from my brother who had been sending me twenty dollars a month out of his salary. He lost his job, he couldn't send me anymore money but I was scheduled to work the next day so I went to work. And Mrs. Hochins kept coming out of the office... the door of her office and staring at me and I wondered, "Did I forget to comb my hair?" Finally she

came over and said, "Please come into my office" she said, "I can see something is bothering you, please tell me what it is." So I told her. And she said, "Fortunately I am chairman of the Library School development fund, I'll have a check for you on Monday morning don't let this spoil your weekend."

**CD: I love librarians!**

DE: Well, about thirty years later I was back in Urbana giving a lecture and she was still there. I looked her up in the telephone directory and I was able to thank her again.

**CD: That's another terrific story. But your mother worked with WPA?**

DE: My mother worked, in fact in my mother's book is a list of what she wrote for the WPA. While I was editing her manuscript I also had to document it because the University of Illinois Press had rejected it once. See, and if you go way in the back is a list of what she wrote for the WPA. [muffled noises] (now where is the WPA)

**CD: (Here and here too.)**

DE: (Yeah.)

**CD: So short plays? She wrote plays?**

DE: Yeah. She wrote plays. She wrote all kinds of stuff.

**CD: And these are... Oh she did some life histories as well?**

DE: Um hmm.

**CD: The folklore project. And this says in container A866, where?**

DE: At the Library of Congress.

**CD: At LC, huh.**

DE: And there is also stuff at the Illinois State Library. This is it. These are at the Illinois State Library.

**CD: Oh I see, yes.**

DE: These are in the manuscript division Library of Congress. Part of the folklore project WPA federal writer's project.

**CD: How interesting! I mean I suppose I'm not thinking of this carefully but to again that women were involved with the WPA projects...**

DE: Now I am sure there will be a copy of this...

**CD: Yes and let me just say that this is, I Came a Stranger the Story of the Hull House Girl by Hilda Scott Polacheck.**

DE: Satt

**CD: Satt!**

DE: She came from Poland in 1892.

**CD: Satt Polacheck and edited by Dena Eptsein. Now who's Lynn Weiner?**

DE: She teaches at Roosevelt University.

**CD: Oh ok.**

DE: She worked in the field of women's studies.

**CD: Oh terrific!**

DE: And this is Hilda's picture as a young girl.

**CD: And is this Maxwell Street or?**

DE: This is Maxwell Street.

**CD: In its heyday.**

DE: Yep! [laughter]

**CD: Not anymore.**

DE: No, I am sure. There are some pictures. This is the..probably lived in a house very much like this. This is a school, the Jewish training school she went to.

**CD: And this was in Milwaukee, this is in Chicago!**

DE: This was in Chicago, yeah.

**CD: So the Jewish training school was it on the Westside?**

DE: Right.

**CD: Ok.**

DE: It was supported by German Jews who wanted to help people who were just coming into the country to learn English. And this is a picture of Hilda at a craft demonstration and the last time I was at Hull House it still in the living room. And of course you recognize who that is.

**CD: Yes. This is terrific. There are pictures of...**

DE: This is the play that Hilda wrote or is a dramatization of a novel by a Hull House resident and she did it at the request of the women in charge of the Hull House theatre. And it was preformed at the Hull House theatre.

**CD: And what, where was Hull House at this time? Was it where University of Illinois, Chicago is?**

DE: Right!

**CD: I know... So that house was not moved and put into that area. It was right in that area.**

DE: No, no it was right in that area. It was never moved at all. But Hull House at one time had thirteen buildings and now it just has this one house.

**CD: That one house. And so did people travel from the Westside to Maxwell Street to shop?**

DE: Well, Maxwell Street was practically in their backyard!

**CD: Well I am thinking of the Westside around Humboldt Park.**

DE: Oh, well then they did travel, yes.

**CD: Ok.**

DE: In fact my nephews who now live in Austin, Texas when they came to Chicago the first thing they did was plan a trip to Maxwell Street and this would have been maybe thirty years ago.

**CD: When it was still alive.**

CD: Yeah.

**CD: Well this is great. Thank you so much again!**

START OF TAPE 2 SIDE A II

DE: No it's not in here, it's in here.

**CD: Ok.**

DE: This is the first edition. This is the first book edition and then there were issues...

**CD: The copies, ok. So this is what he published, the fellow, Hill was his name?**

DE: Yes. Richard S. Hill. And he was the head of the reference section at the Library of Congress for a very long time. I can't remember.

**CD: We're looking at the Music Publishing in Chicago before 1871, the Firm of Root and Cady you said.**

DE: Cady.

**CD: Kady.**

DE: And Cady was the first president of Hyde Park and George Frederick Root who else wrote songs for Root and Cady. Oh here it is.

**CD: This is the first article.**

[mumbled noises]

DE: George Frederick, not Root, Henry Ka... I've forgotten his last name now. Not only built his own house but it is still standing on Fifty Second Street.

**CD: Really?**

DE: And he was the town clerk of Hyde Park. He wrote Grandfather's Clock and a lot of songs that were sung all over the country.

**CD: This is so much too about the profession of librarianship and how serendipity really plays, when you come across something that you think, "oh my goodness people need to know about this!"**

DE: Absolutely, absolutely. I don't know how it happens today because there's a lot more sharing of information...

**CD: Well, and I guess I could say I don't know how it happens today too because Illinois is idiosyncratic. I mean our collection is huge and I guess there was a period of time where we were acquiring and not processing as quickly as we acquired.**

DE: Oh?



**CD: So for instance the Rare Book and Manuscripts Library with this new librarian who's been there for three or four years. When she arrived she got a huge Mellon Grant to catalog the backlog which included boxes that had never been opened.**

DE: Oh for goodness sake!

**CD: Books that were purchased from the 1950s and such that were never opened. And then the case in the library as a whole as we get a number of gifts of collections and there are spread out across campus. And I worked with a woman last summer who found theatre programs and theatre bills and theatre programs collections and they're not photographs but drawings of actors from the nineteenth century. And she found it and said, "this needs to be processed so people, researchers can use it."**

DE: Of course!

**CD: So that's one of the thrills at Illinois still. You are discovering things.**

DE: Well I remember going down into the basement to read the Chicago Tribune from the 1850s or '60s I guess and it was really exciting just to be handling it. But that was the only way I could find out what was going on with this firm.

**CD: Did you have to request it from the librarian or was it out?**

DE: As I remember it was it was out.

**CD: That's amazing. Well now it's all microfilm and computer screens.**

DE: It sure wasn't then.