

## WEST CENTRAL SCHOOL OF AGRICULTURE ORAL INTERVIEW

### CAROL BERG INTERVIEW

March 23, 2005

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[Transcriber's Note: Carol (Lamb) Berg graduated from WCSA in 1945, and attended the WCSA Advanced Class in 1946. She worked as a WCSA faculty stenographer from 1946 through 1947. Carol and her husband Charles met while both were attending WCSA. The couple were married in 1948, and raised seven children on a farm near Chokio.]

Transcriber's Key:

DC: Dana Carter, Interviewer  
CB: Carol Berg  
CHB: Charles Berg  
...: Incomplete sentence  
[xxx]: Unable to transcribe; dialogue no clear on audio tape

*Tape 1: Side 1*

DC: I don't want to miss any of this.

CB: There was the Home Management Cottage and all the girls had to live there at one time during their school years and I was the first girl allowed not to. I took the business course instead. Nanna Jestrup was in charge of Girls' Dormitory at that time and she thought that was a big mistake because everybody should know how to dress chickens and make jam.

DC: And did that ever hurt you not having that?

CB: Well, I had to learn on my own, eventually. And here's the Girls' Dorm. [Showing picture of Camden to interviewer]

DC: Yeah, that's Camden with its top floor. I've never seen it with its top floor.

CHB: See, they had a fire on that top floor.

CB: Yes, someone was smoking up there.

DC: Yes, 1949.

CB: You know the dates better than I do. And this is the Junior Girls' Dorm. Junior Hall.

DC: That must be Blakely because there's the corner of Spooner right there.

CB: They all have new names and have been renovated. There was a diary that was written by somebody that's kind of interesting. Then they had judging teams. Charlie is on this... He was on the crop judging too, but maybe not that year.

- DC: As you say... I found a few pictures. I was looking to make sure that I brought the right years out so... Checking to make sure you were in there.
- CB: This was the pool.
- DC: Oh wow.
- CHB: She's got that book. She's probably looked through it. [Referring to WCSA year books. Apparently they are going through yearbooks and photos.]
- DC: Oh no, I haven't yet.
- CB: There was a Girls' Athletic Association. That was not me. And so, when people say there were no sports for girls...
- DC: There was one girl who was in my class and who is doing her paper on athletics. And...
- CB: There were quite a few things we could be doing too. I belong to this Girls' Athletic Association, but I was not athletic, and I never made any teams. That was that year. I was the editor of this book. [Apparently opening another yearbook.] We put this one together.
- DC: These are better pictures...
- CB: This is the farm. All boys had farm classes. Well, anyway, that was my book. This is the results of it. [xxx] drew these Old McDonald cartoons for us... There's my name. Here's a picture of... That would be what?
- CHB: What?
- DC: Right now, its Blakely, Behmler, and Social Science, which is right now under renovation. We're not going to get that back to fall 2006. I'm saddened.
- CB: More about this Home Management Class and cottage. We graduated in three years. We were called freshmen, juniors and seniors. And then the fourth year, for those who chose to take it, or those who just wanted it or needed it to go to college, was called Advanced. The Special Students were some servicemen who returned that maybe had some high school, some who had started in high school and came there for one year. So there were five categories. They had Debate and Declam. We were both in that. Charlie was on the Student Council. All those judging contests. That was the highlights of that year. We both went the fourth year. This was the debate team, which Charlie was on. I didn't make it. Here are all kinds of other things. Good Manners Week. They were supposed to last all year, but...
- DC: With kids...
- CB: So that was the highlights of the *Moccasins*. You can take them...
- DC: I know we have them back in the archives. We have one for every year. I'm surprised you still have these and had them out...
- CHB: If I were to be the caretaker, we wouldn't have them.
- CB: We wouldn't know where they were.
- DC: My mom gets all over my brother's case because he's in high school right now. We have yearbooks that are about that thick. I got one every year I was in high school because, you know, I really liked high school and I thought it would be a good way to keep memories. He's like, "I

don't want one, I don't want one." And she goes, "Some day you are going to look back and you're going to want this." So she's been buying them for Christmas and they've been Christmas presents. "You're going to have one," "I don't want one." "Too bad, I'm keeping it."

CHB: Where does your mother live now?

DC: She lives in Delano with my brother and she's a substitute teacher there and so the yearbooks are partially for her so she can go through the yearbook and go, "That's the one who was acting up in my class. I remember him. Next time I have him, I'll remember." Because then she can figure out who's who...

CB: We have a lot of yearbooks here from the years our sons and daughters were home because they never take them with them.

DC: Mine are mostly at home.

CHB: There's only so much stuff you can lug around.

DC: I know. Since I've moved so much, I've learned that. You can only take so much with you. Wow, those are incredible.

CB: Well used.

DC: Well loved.

DC: I'm supposed to interview both of you separately, is what I've been told.

CHB: I can leave because I'm a stock trader and I've got my computers downstairs.

DC: Whichever way you want to go.

CHB: Well, we'll probably tell different stories.

DC: I can take all the information I can get.

CHB: Okay, you ask the questions and we'll try to answer.

DC: Yep. I have a whole bunch of questions. There are so many things I'm interested in.

CB: Do you take cream or sugar?

DC: No thanks, I'm fine.

CB: Do you want a glass of water after your ordeal?

DC: Yes please, actually, that would be great. The mud is flying, I just washed my truck last week... Well, there went that.

CB: We have the car washed and by the time we get home...

DC: Yep, I'm just like, "Oh, I gave up."

CHB: I only take those dirt roads when it's dry.

DC: Yeah. Well, I mean, the first little bit was dry enough and I was, "It should be like that most of the way, this will be fine. It's just a dirt road."

CHB: You got past that spot.

DC: I got past that spot. That's where I got stuck. It was bad. I called my dad. I went, "Dad, help, I'm stuck."

CHB: You have a four-wheel drive?

DC: Yes.

CHB: Well, that's why you got out.

DC: I had it in 4-High and I wasn't getting anywhere. He goes, "Put it in neutral, shift it down to 4-Low, and do the best you can. Go slow." I got out and called him back, "I'm free."

CB: [xxx]

DC: Yep. My grandma pays for me to have just kind of emergency use cell phone. That was my graduation gift from her.

DC: All right. My name is Dana Carter and I'm here with Carol Berg on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March 2005 doing an oral history. What year did you graduate from...

CB: I graduated in 1945.

DC: 1945. Okay. Your hometown then was...

CB: Motley, Minnesota.

DC: Motley, okay. Because I know there was one [ag school] here and one in Crookston, so I wasn't sure where everyone went around to. Just to start out, would you describe a typical day at school. You know you wake up...

CB: We lived in dorms. At that time we had only one roommate. I think that changed later – that there were two in a room. I think there was some kind of alarm that woke us up in the morning. We went to the dining hall for breakfast. This was early because classes started at 8 o'clock. We had classes from 8-4. Then we studied after that, late afternoon or evening besides whatever extracurricular activities or work programs we had. It was long days, but we were right there. We weren't riding a school bus for an hour.

DC: So what did your dorm room look like.

CB: By today's standards it was small. Two twin beds. We each had a dresser. I don't think we had desks, but I'm not sure. Maybe one.

DC: Maybe one?

CB: We shared.

DC: One window typical?

CB: In think we had a corner room.

DC: Oh did you?

CB: Windows on two sides.

DC: That would be nice.

CB: There were small closets but nobody had a lot of clothes.

DC: It was interesting. I came across records of room inspections.

CB: Oh yes. We had to make our beds, sweep the floors, and keep things tidy. We were inspected, not every room and not every day but you never knew. If they weren't in good shape, we got some kind of demerit. Didn't get to go out or something like that.

DC: So what did the inside of the dining hall look like? Were there big long tables...

CB: There were long tables, probably eight or ten. Not round tables. We had assigned seats. We had to sit at the same table for a number of days – I don't know how often that changed. That was so people would get acquainted with each other.

DC: Hmmm, interesting. You mentioned that you worked in the kitchen.

CB: I worked different places different years. I think the first year I was cleaning offices, then at some point I worked in the kitchen, and then one year I worked in the lunchroom, which was the place people went after games. Until ten o'clock. We had to be in by ten o'clock.

DC: Had to be in bed by ten o'clock?

CB: In the dorm. Our lights were turned off. There were no lights in the rooms after ten o'clock.

DC: What did a typical classroom look like? You mentioned you took business...

CB: The third and fourth years I was there I took the business courses, which were typing and bookkeeping. We didn't have computers...

DC: Of course not. So it was just long tables with equipment on them or desks, or....

CB: Some tables some desks.

DC: Teacher up front, chalkboard, I take it.

CB: Yes.

DC: You mentioned that they had that Home Management House. Did you get to see the inside of that?

CB: I was inside there several times, but I didn't live there.

DC: That was just a typical house, bedrooms, bathrooms, living room, dining room, and kitchen?

CB: The girls that lived there – I don't know how many at one time – the house mother (that's what they were called – the preceptess) was a woman who had a son about 12 or 13 and he played tricks on the girls. They tried to get him to help with dishes, and he'd always get out of it somehow. They had a baby there. Somebody had to be with that baby 24 hours a day.

DC: That would be quite the training. Were footballs games big on campus?

CB: Football games were big on campus. There was always entertainment on the weekends. Yes, a movie, football game... Sometimes somebody came in from Minneapolis, which was a big thing.

- DC: I can imagine it being a big thing.
- CB: It might have been a mime or a magician. Different things, different times.
- DC: I understand there used to be a passenger train service from the Twin Cities to Morris.
- CB: Yes, my home was at Motley. I had a sister at the Ag School at the same time. We would take the train to Staples. Gas was rationed and teenagers did not have cars and parents could not come and bring you back just for a weekend – maybe for Christmas vacation or an extended vacation – but we'd take the train.
- DC: I wish they had that nowadays. I live down by the cities. It would be so much easier to take a train. But instead, I'm driving. What was town like back then? Was it smaller then?
- CB: I suppose it was. All the buildings were older. There were a couple of hotels, for instance. There were three banks... There are still that many at three locations – very modern now.
- DC: Did you go into town a lot or did you stay on campus?
- CB: Not a lot. You had to have permission to go downtown. You had to sign out of the dorm and sign in when you got home. If you wanted to go to a movie downtown you had to go through that. You had to be home by ten. When I worked at the lunchroom I was allowed to stay out until 10:30. I'm guessing – but I don't remember for sure... This was 60 years ago – I'm thinking that lunchroom was open until ten, or maybe it was 9:30, but we had to clean up. So I was allowed to stay out later because I was working.
- DC: Do you know if the townspeople liked having the students around?
- CB: We didn't see them. I would venture to say that's still true of some of the townsfolk. They never go to the campus for anything. Not as much as it was then. They don't go to plays, concerts, or good entertainment. I go, and we're 25 miles away.
- DC: I know that some of the high schoolers end up not liking the campus much, because we end up taking a lot of the jobs in town. Did you meet with any of the students from the Morris High School?
- CB: Seldom.
- DC: They kept you pretty segregated?
- CB: I'm sure the ones who were in high school at the time would say the same thing. They had their own activities, and we didn't ever feel the need to [xxx].
- DC: True. Another question, was dating allowed between WCSA students and Morris students? Or was dating allowed on campus at all?
- CB: We dated. Like for these Saturday night things or the football games, and basketball in the winter. This was just a six month-school to allow the farm kids to be home for planting and harvest. So it was from October until the end of March.
- DC: Interesting.
- CB: I didn't ever, but some of the kids dated high school kids that they met through sports.
- DC: So they had a pretty relaxed policy toward dating?

- CB: If you were home by 10 o'clock.
- DC: If you're home by 10 o'clock?
- CB: And the housemother knows where you're going.
- DC: Was it one of those... Boys aren't allowed in the girls' dorm and girls weren't allowed in the boys' dorm?
- CB: Well, not in the rooms, but there were common rooms – living rooms – and, of course, that was before TV. There was radio, but they'd bring their books and study together.
- DC: So if someone wanted to go spend some time alone with their boyfriend, girlfriend, or significant other, where do you think... Was there a popular place to go?
- CB: They went to the lunchroom. If they were going to go downtown, that meant walking downtown and walking back.
- DC: In some cases, I bet running back. "It's almost ten!"
- CB: No cell phones, so we couldn't call and say...
- DC: "I'm coming!" Was living in town very different from living on the farm? I can guess it was, but...
- CB: I'm sure it was for the farm kids, but I lived in a small town. As a student we really didn't go downtown a lot.
- DC: So it wasn't a big adjustment for you.
- CB: No. It was a bigger town than I was used to. There were lots of things down there, but nobody had a lot of money, so we didn't go shopping and buy things. We didn't need to buy groceries because we had all our meals provided. So going downtown meant going to a movie or maybe bowling.
- DC: So was it a big adjustment for you to come to school? I know a lot of freshmen come and get all scared...
- CB: I loved it.
- DC: Did you visit home frequently?
- CB: Not much, because of the driving. We went by train. We went for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and it [ag school] was over by Easter.
- DC: Did your parents come visit you?
- CB: Not just to come visit, because of the gas restrictions. Graduation. I'm sure there were other events. The kids that were in concerts or plays, the parents would come.
- DC: So if your parents came to visit you, could you have them in your room?
- CB: I'm sure. It would have been alright. The rooms were small and there were two people. Most of the socializing was done in the living room or common area.
- DC: Were there any favorite teachers on campus? Anyone that everybody loved?

- CB: I suppose each student had a favorite teacher. We all didn't take the same classes, although there were things that were required, and there were quite a few electives.
- DC: Were there any class clowns or teachers' pets?
- CB: Oh yeah.
- DC: Would you say that life on campus was easier or harder than living at home? Did you have more responsibility or was it a different responsibility?
- CB: It was a different responsibility. There were no younger kids around, and I had younger siblings. So I missed them. But everything we needed was right there. We did our own laundry – the washing machines with wringers, and a place to hang them on the clothesline. And we had to clean our rooms. But the food was taken care of. We didn't have to worry about how we were going to get something. One of the highlights of my time was that I was the editor of the yearbook when I was a senior. And Nanna Jelstrup, who was the housemother in the girls dorm for years and years and years, drove the board to Minneapolis for a convention. [xxx]
- DC: I'm twenty miles out from Minneapolis, and I'm still, "Oh, I'm going to Minneapolis" because we just don't go there that often. So did the campus look different than the surrounding countryside?
- CB: It was impressive. Brick buildings. It was an Indian school before it became a high school. And now, of course, it's a university. All the buildings were big and brick – it was impressive. Beautiful trees.
- DC: Lots of trees? Looking around, not necessarily here, but driving around today – there aren't that many trees.
- CB: And every tree that you saw, somebody planted. This is prairie. People came here a couple generations ago.
- DC: So did anything other than the trees stand out as being different?
- CB: I had never been on a campus before our parents took us there. I really didn't have... We had some picture postcards of some of the buildings, but I really didn't have a feel of the size of the campus. Comparing it to a high school in a small town, it was big.
- DC: Yeah. I can imagine, with the square in the middle. I've heard a little bit about Station Days. But I haven't heard much. Can you describe one of those for me? I mean, what it is...
- CB: That was in the summer. It had nothing to do with school credit. We had the six months of school, and then we had to have home projects. And someone from the staff had to come out and inspect our projects, see our homes, meet our parents, and all that, which also made us feel very important. Teachers had more respect then. Now, a lot of them choose to be called by their first names. It was always Miss, Mrs. and Mr. and their last name. The men on the faculty wore suits and ties all the time, maybe a sweater once in awhile. Coaches may have been different. In the livestock classes it may have been different. But for the girls, the teachers were always dignified.
- DC: I've also heard it mentioned that a lot of alumni came back to Station Days.
- CB: Oh, Station Days. They had tours of the farm, part of the campus, specific grains to see the comparisons of different varieties, and they'd tour the people around on hayracks. They still have something similar in the gardens in the summer. And then, other times they'd have 4-H groups, and women's groups coming in, and the summer I worked there we got all the dorm rooms ready

for these different events. We'd put the flowers all over the campus. We'd cut flowers and put them in the rooms, and on the tables in the dining hall. We treated them as guests.

DC: It was a big thing then. They also mentioned a Woman's Week.

CB: That was one of the events that we fixed up the dorms... Women would come in... I don't know if they belonged to clubs or just anybody was included, I'm not sure. They'd come and stay the week, probably six days, and they had programs planned for them plus a lot of free time too.

DC: So you mentioned going downtown for movies, and the dances and so forth. Was there a particular place or building on campus where everybody liked to spend their free time at, other than the living rooms? I know now, a lot of times, we go over to the Student Center and spend free time there.

CB: Well this lunchroom had tables, and people would come there to visit or study. I'm sure there were other places on campus, depending on what you were involved in, where groups gathered, but I can't think of any specifically. But there were the living rooms in the dorms. If you were going to something, or involved in something, or if you were going to something with someone from another dorm – boys' or girls' – you'd gather in one place and all get together.

DC: Okay. So what was your favorite building on campus. I mean, yours personally.

CB: The lunchroom. It was always full of kids, fun.

DC: Always a good time. So you mentioned that you did business your third and fourth year. Did you wind up using that a lot?

CB: After graduating, I worked on campus a couple years, until I was married. In 1946 and 1947, that would have been. My title was faculty stenographer. I worked for 14-17 faculty people, mimeographing their tests and doing all their correspondence, and all the things they wanted to keep. I had an office. They came into the office to tell me what they wanted or needed.

DC: Jack-of-all-trades. I think that might be all I need right now.

CB: At that time I lived downtown. I had a single room in a private home and walked to campus.

DC: Did you? That's almost never seen now... You either have to rent a house or an apartment. You can't just rent a room. That would be nice I think. You mentioned working on the *Moccasin*. Was that fun for you?

CB: It was fun.

DC: Did you do that more than one year?

CB: No. The seniors put out the yearbook. There's one junior on the board, so that one person carries over in his/her senior year and has had the experience so they knew what to do. But, somebody took pictures, somebody did drawings, somebody wrote, some things we collaborated on. I went through there and I found a few little things I'd done. I can't remember who decided...

DC: Yeah, who decided who got to do what.

CB: Of course there was a faculty supervisor.

DC: Make sure it was all above board.

CB: Right.

DC: I heard this rumor that students weren't allowed to walk on the square at all. Is that true?

CB: Probably. Probably.

DC: I know nowadays it's called the mall and they still don't like us walking on it.

CB: If people were walking on it all the time there'd be no grass there. It was just a matter of respect for the campus. I'm sure we dashed across if we were late for something...

DC: Don't get caught. So you've been back to the campus in recent years. It's changed a lot?

CB: A lot.

DC: Can't believe it. It looks like I'm out of tape.

*Tape 1: Side 2*

DC: This is so much easier than taking notes. I did one of these when I was in high school and we weren't allowed to use tape recorders. I was taking notes through the entire interview and writing furiously trying to get down verbatim, and I felt like I was ignoring them and going this doesn't work at all.

CB: I have a granddaughter your age. She goes to Moorhead. She is a political journalism major. She's coming tomorrow for a couple days on her way home for Easter.

DC: That's nice. I was just home for spring break...

CB: On the phone you sounded so much like her – I knew I'd like you.

DC: I'm not going home this weekend for Easter... [trouble with tape] Testing, testing, testing... Are you working? Please work. I was just home for spring break, otherwise I would go home. That was last week so I just got back on Sunday and I'm not turning around on Friday and going home again. Even though gas isn't rationed anymore, it's so expensive. It just seems like a waste.

CB: That's another thing that's different with college age. On holidays there was nobody that stayed. Unless it was somebody from so far away or for some reason somebody who couldn't go home, someone always invited that person to go along.

DC: I know that happened when my mom was school in the '70s. Still happens.

CB: Some stayed by choice...

DC: A lot of times you have to go home for spring break and the campus shuts down. [more conversation that does not pertain to WCSA]