

Minnesota State University, Mankato,
 Memorial Library, Southern Minnesota Historical Center
 Grundmeier, Shirley A., 1924-2018. Oral History Interview, 2007.
 SMHC Manuscript Collection 1751

Date of interview: 13 July 2007

Narrator: Shirley A. Grundmeier (SG)

Interviewer: Anne Stenzel (AS)

Speaker	Details
AS	Today is July 13 th 2007. My name is Anne Stenzel and I am interviewing Shirley Grundmeier. We're at the Centennial Student Union at Minnesota State University. First Question will be where did you attend college?
SG	Mankato State, I can't remember it wasn't university then. Was it plain state college or was it Mankato State College? I can't remember it was 1979, 8. I think, I don't remember, I started. I went for thirteen years that's all I know.
AS	Okay. What you, you said that you started in 1979.
SG	Well I started, um I worked I was a secretary at the West High School, and I quit in June of that year. Of June, 1978 I think. Anyway I took the summer session and then in the fall I began as a full time student. Win[ston] um was sick though he was um he had a problem that he was out of school he's also, he's an educator here. Chemistry and um I could only go part-time because he was in the hospital that year, and for three months, and so I really could only take half of what I wanted to do, to do. I had decided to go to music even though many years before when I was a secretary. I thought if ever I had a chance to go to college I would go for English and Speech. Because what I really wanted to do was direct plays. I had worked with Harry Fitterer at West High uh doing music and uh sound for some plays and I've actually been on stage a couple times when someone gotten sick and so I had always loved theater, and I thought if I can get my degree I will eventually do that.
AS	And what degree did you, or degrees did you finally complete?
SG	I started with um, I have to look here to make sure '82. I, I took my time as long as I was in music I went for all the musical groups that I could. I was in Chamber Singers, I was in choir. Uh one year I was even in the Sophomore Chorus. Because I enjoyed singing. Um and I took private voice all every quarter that I was there from Warren Hettinga and uh after uh I graduated with, uh, my Bachelor's degree which was in a Bachelor of Music. In vocal performance in 82. Then I continued with Dr. Moxness who had taken Laura Reed's position, and I took two years from her after that. And while I was at it, I was just taking it enrichment at the time, but I decided to go for a masters. Because I was enjoying it and it seemed to be working for me. I really loved music rather than going and stopping and trying to. For example I toyed with the idea of going into women studies. I liked that field and when I had taken a class in it, uh I found that was that I had a lot of life experiences being an older person. And uh, the teacher at the time, Dr. Claire Bright told me that I would be a very good role model for younger students because I had these experiences. But I decided instead to go to music.
AS	Okay.
SG	So I stayed with music and then in, uh December of 85. I got the Master's in Music. So I had a Bachelor's in music first and a Master's in Music. And then what do I do (laughter)? Well uh I again took some more classes I took weaving. I took uh the Bible is Literature anything to oh what I felt like I wanted to do, you know? Just to keep learning. And I was involved in a lot of things I was involved in Sweet Adeline Chorus for a long time and um a teaching

Minnesota State University, Mankato,
 Memorial Library, Southern Minnesota Historical Center
 Grundmeier, Shirley A., 1924-2018. Oral History Interview, 2007.
 SMHC Manuscript Collection 1751

	<p>still, I taught voice for 20 years, choir directing. I was using my music degrees. But I asked Dr. Hustoles uh because of my interest in theater, would it be possible to go ahead and earn a Master's in theater without taking an the undergrad degree in theater. And he said yes that would be possible because some of my music credits would transfer to that Masters as well. So I think it took me, I, it didn't count how many, years I was spending on any of these things. Because when teaching I was able very, very happily able to go with, uh, through the classes as his dependent, you know one of your family members could take tuition free. So that's why I stayed for 13 years.</p>
AS	<p>Where did you go to high school and what year did you graduate?</p>
SG	<p>Well I actually graduated in June, of 1942. Um, I was seventeen, and I had gone to Mankato High school, as it was called. Although we weren't at the high school building because it had burned. We went to Lincoln School because the war was on. And Lincoln Junior High was uh, converted to a high school and all the junior high peoples had to go to Franklin junior high at that time. So they had to double up over there and we had to use the, the Lincoln, uh, junior high side of the building with the elementary school was still on the other side of the building. That's up on Fulton street. But we were very crowded needless to say. And I wasn't too far from home I was born, not born but I was raised on Van Brunt Street. And so I walked home from school for lunch everyday anyway.</p>
AS	<p>Why did you decide to attend college? You pretty much answered that.</p>
SG	<p>I always wanted to, I always wanted to. But, well I was married once before, uh. During the war I met a man that uh, you know, fell for him of course. And um, made the wrong choice but that's okay the good choice, the wrong choice ended to be the right choice because I got three wonderful kids out of it. But when I came back to Mankato I had lived in the East during the first marriage. And uh, I had a friend who was actually audiovisual director at Mankato West, what was plain Mankato High School then. And he knew that I would be a good secretary for him because I have had training and that. And he wanted me to be his secretary. So I was able to get a job without too much trouble that put food on the table and so on. But, uh after about a year I knew I wanted more because I was ambitious. And I wanted to, I had always thought teaching would be good. I had a mother who taught, later my brother were both teacher graduates from Mankato. Not at that time but they were later than I was. But eventually fourteen members of our family, extended family will have graduated from here. Two of my grandchildren have already. But to get back to the um teaching, there were two that were very instrumental. One was Harry Fitterer, who I have referred to before, and the other was Marion Powers whose husband was on the faculty as a speech professor, Doctor Max Powers. And Marion said, 'You shouldn't stay in this job because you are better than that. You can go to college and learn, you want to be a teacher I think that's where you belong. Have you tried a one year plan?' I said what's that? She said 'what will you be doing if you do go to college or what are you going to be doing if you don't go to college?' Well I figured if I went to college my mother said she would take care of the kids so I can go at night Monday nights for a night class, and then in the summer I took the summer classes which began, I can take two summer sessions one was 7:30 and I think one was 9:30 or so. So I was almost a sophomore after a year of doing this, and it was just falling into place so well. The kids were happy and nothing was wrong, and my mother was perfectly willing to keep the kids. When they didn't have to go to school of course.</p>
AS	<p>Were you the first person in your family to attend college?</p>

Minnesota State University, Mankato,
 Memorial Library, Southern Minnesota Historical Center
 Grundmeier, Shirley A., 1924-2018. Oral History Interview, 2007.
 SMHC Manuscript Collection 1751

SG	My mother attended here. In fact graduated from here, in fact she graduated here in I believe in '23, I'm not sure. She went to school here in '22 that's when it burned. She took the one year degree. She became a teacher on the one year degree, taught country school. But she married my father in '23, and I'm not sure whether she taught the year between '22 and '23 because then I was born in the end of July '24. And I think she may have taught that year, I'm not sure. I guess I never looked to see what class she is part of. I'm going to do that now though. I want to find out.
AS	How did your family respond to your plans pursuing your education?
SG	Well I think uh, they were young enough it was my choice anyway, I wasn't about to ask them. But um what happened about that same time was that after 6 years of being alone. Yeah. I was alone for 6 years you know having left my first husband. Six years later I married my second husband. And at that point I did not go back to school once we were married for...I quit about two years into my program. But we start, because I knew I was going to get married, and I wanted to be a good housewife and mother to the children, and I had my full time job as well. So to make a good home college had to go on a back burner. But then um I stayed with my job at West High as secretary in the audio-visual center for 20 years. I knew that I still wanted college but for the mean time with the new husband I felt my, you know I belonged to the house and to the home and so there is time for the other. Um, but what happened was the sad thing, my son married a girl who died two months later in a car crash. And uh that was my catalyst. I thought and I had been wanting to go back to school and Gwen was very much for it. I need to go back, I need to go back and get the degree that I have been waiting for. And the kids were all through high school and he had finished and he was on his own college degree and so now was the time.
AS	I am going to ask this question but I am pretty sure that I know the answer to it. Why did you choose MSU?
SG	I choose MSU because for one thing it was here, uh and besides uh I had already begun here, and my feeling is that Mankato was where I was born, where I was reared. I had spent enough time living in another area of the country, fourteen years, and I knew that was not where I wanted to bring my kids up. And I felt that if we stayed here uh, first of all they could use the school system here was great the college was fine. And as I say two of my kids taught after they graduated. My sister taught, my brother taught, my brother's wife, was a, became a teacher, you know. As I say fourteen members of our family have eventually graduated from here.
AS	Do you remember coming to MSU to register for the first time?
SG	When I came back to register as a full time student. It was a little tricky, it was not only that but there was a little bit of, well what should we say. I had worked with High Schoolers enough to know for twenty years. That there was some a little bit of prejudice against the older student coming back, and at that time there weren't so many. I was kind of breaking the mold. Because that remember was back in the early 80's late 70's, and early 80's. And I remember standing in line for registration down on the first level of the Union. And I was standing behind a football player, and he was, well to use the word loosely very, crossly cutting us out, older people. He said 'I wish all these older people would, we would get through a lot sooner if some of these people didn't come back and go to school.' And he didn't look at me, because I was much smaller than he was. But he said it loud enough, that I said 'were you speaking of me by any chance?' He says, 'I sure was, if we didn't have all you we would get through this line a lot quicker.' Well I said, 'what's wrong with the older

Minnesota State University, Mankato,
 Memorial Library, Southern Minnesota Historical Center
 Grundmeier, Shirley A., 1924-2018. Oral History Interview, 2007.
 SMHC Manuscript Collection 1751

	<p>person getting a degree?' 'Well you're doing, first place you raise the curve.' And of course he was a football player so he probably was used to getting his grades fairly easily, and that time. I mean I am not knocking the athletic program I don't mean to do that. But I know every class that I went into, I had to prove myself as a friend to the students first, before I could really try to get good grades. It was hard at first because I wasn't trying to show them up, it's just I was motivated a lot more coming back to school after so many years.</p>
AS	<p>That's a good, that's a good sign. What were earliest memories about MSU, the people, the places, the campus activities?</p>
SG	<p>Well I joined, I was in so many of the performing things. Uh, and I got into theater right away too, not because I was in their department but because I was in musicals. I was in Carousel, you know and South Pacific and all that. And um, I got to know so many fine young people, that I just loved school, I loved the teaching, the professors were wonderful. I had only one class that I ever quit, one class. And the reason for that was that I just couldn't see the professor's philosophy. I mean it was, he was completely against everything that I felt, and that was the only class that I ever quit.</p>
AS	<p>Can I ask what class it was?</p>
SG	<p>Well it happened to be Music Theory, and the reason is I already had a year theory from another teacher, and when I got into the second year of theory this professor said, 'I don't believe in the book we are using.' And he threw it out. And he tried to tell me that a Beethoven sonata should be, this is the way you analyze this with, the movements, and so on. And I stood it for about five weeks and finally I just, I said this isn't for me because I am so confused now. So I quit when I could and then later on there was a professor Dr. Paul Goldstaub, who was a marvelous man. And I asked him if it wasn't too late. He was already teaching first year theory and I ask Professor Goldstaub if I could sit in and just audit his first year theory to get his slant on. Because my first theory teacher was Dr. Karl Kittleson, and he was wonderful. But I got so much more than from second year of going through the first year of theory with Dr. Goldstaub. Because for one thing he used a method where you analyzed chord symbols and you must have had that too.</p>
AS	<p>I did.</p>
SG	<p>And I found and I can play so much easier. Because I can analyze the chords now and write the chords symbol above it and then I don't read the notes, which is bad. But I, no, the funny thing is I taught my students by when I would play for them and then they had to go find a pianists or accompanist. They said that they preferred the way I played. Because I did leave after MSU after the Masters. I taught at Bethany for five years, and I did have students then that absolutely in spite of the fact that Bethany is a marvelous, um music school. They still, they said we like the way you play. Okay kids listen this isn't perfection don't do it that way.</p>
AS	<p>Where did you live while attending MSU?</p>
SG	<p>Well most, I lived with my mother, at first. But then once Win (Winston) and I were married we were in our house, uh, uh on North fourth street until six years ago. And by then of course I was well through school. We had both retired and now we live in Old Main Village.</p>
AS	<p>Okay.</p>
SG	<p>So, all my life actually in school was either on Van Brunt where I had been brought up or in our house on fourth street.</p>
AS	<p>Did you receive any financial aid or scholarships?</p>

Minnesota State University, Mankato,
 Memorial Library, Southern Minnesota Historical Center
 Grundmeier, Shirley A., 1924-2018. Oral History Interview, 2007.
 SMHC Manuscript Collection 1751

SG	I didn't get, no. I wasn't eligible, really. But I did receive the tuition because of his being a professor. And I was able to take sixteen credits a quarter. I think it was at that time, now it's per semester system. But the rest I paid for myself. I mean I was working, uh, uh. During most of that time until I went full time to school. Then I was still directing choirs and also teaching privately. So I paid for everything else except tuition.
AS	Okay, the next question, you kind of already answered it. What type of jobs did you hold while you were attending school?
SG	Just that, uh. I did quit my job before I went full time. Because I wanted to, I had, I tell you why. I have been working for the public school system I was on what they call PERA, Public Employees Retirement. And I was advised by one of the people at West High that I should take it in a lump sum. Because I have not worked, I had worked twenty years, but if I took it then, than I would have the nest egg to go to school to start going to school on. So I did because I felt that Win was supplying most of the family's money. So therefore I could go for several years before, I had nine thousand dollars saved at that time, and if, and I don't remember how much tuition was but you know, it wasn't terribly high. And I was able to go. And then unfortunately about two years after I began my mother died. But the legacy that she left me I was able to continue until such time as I was um, was able to use the tuition from him. But I never had to work again and that was what was great. I could stay with it and I could do what I really love.
AS	And you've already told me what your major was.
SG	Mhm.
AS	Did it ever change while you were here?
SG	Um.
AS	Did you ever think of a different major besides?
SG	Well whenever I took a class I kept wondering. No I loved everything I took even Poli Sci (Political Science). Uh, every time I take something. Uh biology, uh they weren't even in my field, weaving, women studies in particular. I though hey if I weren't in music I would be in women's studies. Because there was so much that we needed to do for women. And especially at that time. I became as I say good friends with Dr. Bright, when I was in her class. And she really told me that if I could take a year of, off from the program I was in that she would hopefully hire me as an adjunct faculty in that department. And it was a bad choice then that I had to make. Should I stay with music, which is a very hard choice because I loved both. But decided that I was more gifted in music and I was teaching music already. So I should stay with that.
AS	Where did you meet your closest friend at MSU?
SG	Oh I had a lot of friends. I don't think that I met any that were closer than my husband who was, already, I have already met him. Uh the Powers of Max and Marion left Minnesota. Well Max died sometime in there, I can't remember. But when she left she was probably my closest, almost mentor at that time in those early years. She left and when, after he died, they went to California. That was a, oh with her gone I really didn't make any other close friends of the people I met here. Although some of the faculty I would say, would probably be, and I hated to say this because I was a student. But I think that Dr. Goldstaub probably was a close, to a person I could talk to. Uh, I didn't talk to him about personal things, of course, but about what I was feeling towards my studies. And of course I had other friends from church and you know personal friends because being a Mankato native I

Minnesota State University, Mankato,
 Memorial Library, Southern Minnesota Historical Center
 Grundmeier, Shirley A., 1924-2018. Oral History Interview, 2007.
 SMHC Manuscript Collection 1751

	still had a few friends here that, that I liked. And I had some older friends from years before who I still have.
AS	Okay, what student organizations, fraternities, sororities, student government groups did you precipitate in?
SG	I really didn't have time because I was so thoroughly immersed in music. And when you are in music and you are belonging to a like five different music organizations. And you're singing a lot your weekends are taken up, and what not. But I did everything that I could to make the best of whatever I was in, but I don't think that I had time to get really involved with other campus activities.
AS	Were you ever an athlete?
SG	Not since the, uh. Not since high school. Because in first place, again already in high school I was into music and theater. And I was in plays and operas, and all that and I was in the music group all through high school.
AS	um Did you attend any campus activities?
SG	Oh, all the time, as much as I could. We enjoyed the games. We enjoyed athletic events. I, when I became a faculty wife I was on the volleyball team. There was a faculty women's volleyball team. And I also, the um, there was a singing group too that Hazel Faust directed, and I was in that until she became too ill to continue with it.
AS	What are your thoughts or memories about the campus?
SG	I've always loved it. The only thing that I don't like sometimes is when I do come up now, I don't know as many people. I love the idea that I was always recognized. Not so much for that fact that I was on stage, but I was. But the fact that I had so many friends and every place I go there would be somebody that was happy to see me and I would be happy to see them. And now it is a little bit different, but we still attend as many music groups as we can and see as many plays. And we have not been able to attend as much athletic activity.
AS	And, what do you do for fun when you are here at MSU, or what did you do for fun when you were a student at MSU?
SG	Just about everything that I already said. No I mean really my fun was in the, well we went on trips. We went to Europe twice, and during the time I was a music student. And uh went to the, to uh, to the Florida once, uh, from there went to some-place else. I enjoyed those. I did go on several theater trips to New York when I was to go to plays with Dr. Olauson and Dr. Hustoles.
AS	And how would you describe your academic career?
SG	Ah in some ways it was difficult because I coming back of many years of not. But I worked into it, only because I worked hard. Uh we were kind of lucky there were like two other, uh, masters candidates later when was, had been in the program a little bit. Um but as an undergrad I didn't have anybody to study with. But then later on when I found two other people that were in the master's program. Uh we are still having to do tests of course. Uh I found that working together and sharing our knowledge. And I wish I had had somebody, and as an undergrad if I had been younger I would say look for somebody you can study with. Try to find out where your short comings are and where you can do better. But I always worked. I, I don't think that um. Today they say that some professors will give you

Minnesota State University, Mankato,
Memorial Library, Southern Minnesota Historical Center
Grundmeier, Shirley A., 1924-2018. Oral History Interview, 2007.
SMHC Manuscript Collection 1751

	<p>an A just for showing up. I don't believe in that. Because I, I did graduate magna cum laude with the bachelor's degree and I had about a B average or B+ all the way through. The only, like I say the only class that I quit was a music one.</p>
AS	<p>What are some of the hardest things about attending college?</p>
SG	<p>Uh sometimes you don't want to get up. Sometime you haven't got time to study, uh. Even as old as I am my life has been though that way all the time. So I do the best that I can. I try not to get too involved now and I have learned to say no once in a while. If I find it is going to stress me too much. Then I couldn't do that when I was a student. Then I can't imagine the deadlines that I had to go through. You know when I was working on a degree. And make sure, and was raising a family, three kids and doing the job with them that I should have done. I don't think maybe I spent enough time with my kid as much as I should of. That we all feel I think though.</p>
AS	<p>Yep. I am going to stop it right now I have somebody else waiting for me to do another interview.</p>
SG	<p>Is that enough?</p>