

**Oral History Number: 449-001**

**Interviewee: Emma Lommasson**

**Interviewer: George Dennison**

**Date of Interview: August 18, 2014**

George Dennison: I'm George Dennison, and I'm interviewing Emma May (?) Lommasson. Today is the 17th...18th...I'm sorry about that. It's 2014, and the place is Emma's apartment at The Village. The purpose is to have an extended discussion. There was an interview with Emma some time ago, in which she talked about her origins, coming here to the University. We're going to try to focus today on the incidents that she finds interesting. But I'd like to start by asking her to explain why she chose the University of Montana, which in those days, was Montana State. [unintelligible].

Emma Lommasson: I chose Montana State University because that's the only school I knew about. I came from this very, very small coal-mining town. No other woman had ever gone to university from there, and a young man who graduated ahead of me came here the year before. I decided I didn't want to spend the rest of my time in the same [unintelligible] Montana, and I wanted an education. [unintelligible] schools was also my teacher, is the one that helped me. He told me to get a University catalog, and I got it and read every bit of it. I knew what it was all about, and I also knew I wanted to major in mathematics. He was very instrumental in helping me do all of this, because he had children whom he had sent to the University. So that's how I started doing this.

I didn't know a thing about the University at that time. I didn't know what a university was, whether there was going to be one building, two buildings, or what. I arrived all alone, a little girl not knowing anything about the world. Rode on the train, changed trains at Helena from Sand Coulee [Montana]. I drove to Great Falls—my dad took me—and a train from Great Falls to Helena, and then changed trains from Helena to Missoula. [Sound of chimes in background] There we had University students meeting the train, because others were coming here at the same time. They took us to North Hall—Brantley Hall now. My roommate was already there. She came from Plevna, Montana. She was just as uninformed as I was, only she was a little more knowledgeable about the world than I was. Because I had not talked to anyone who had gone to the University before. So the very first day is very memorable because so many girls were crying. They were away from home. But when I was there, I decided this is what I wanted. No matter how lonely I was, I was not going to cry. I was determined that I was going to go to the University, graduate, and become a teacher.

GD: Why'd you want to become a teacher?

EL: Because I liked the teachers I had in school, and Mr. Griffith, my teacher and superintendent of schools in high school, was a wonderful chemistry teacher also. He instilled in me a love of education and was very, very helpful.

GD: Good. Why did you choose mathematics?

EL: Because that was my favorite subject from the very beginning. From the very beginning of school, my mother used to help me with it. I came from Italian-born parents, and I didn't know a word of English when I went into the first grade.

GD: (Laughs) So are you still bilingual?

EL: I can't say that I am. Of course, I will never forget Italian. I will always understand it, but to speak it, it's a little different matter because I haven't spoken it for a long time. But I will never lose it.

GD: Were they teaching Italian here, when you came?

EL: No.

GD: No?

EL: No. I studied French and Spanish when I came here, but I thought those were too easy. My Spanish teacher, bless his heart, found out that I was Italian, so he told me—I'll never forget this—at the very beginning, he said, "If you want to take a day off, you can stay home every Friday," because he said, "You know this language better than anybody who took Spanish," and Italian is almost the same. But I wouldn't skip a class for anything.

GD: You remember Umberto? [Umberto Benedetti]

EL: Oh, of course.

GD: Well, he used to say that you can't have a university without Italian.

EL: Oh...No, I studied Latin in high school, and then French and Spanish here. Then I taught Spanish the first two years I taught school. So I could have been a linguist. My advisor told me that I could have had a government job someday and become a linguist. But I knew nothing about being a linguist, and I knew what it was about to be a teacher. So I had to get out to work so I could send my sister through school.

GD: Well then, why is it that you didn't remain a teacher?

EL: Because when I came to visit, I taught school in Sand Coulee for four years. I came to visit my sister, who was going to school here, and Dr. Lennes [Dr. Nels J. Lennes] invited us—Doctor and Mrs. Lennes—invited us over to their house for Thanksgiving dinner. I was here at Thanksgiving time. At that time, he offered me a job as his secretary. I would be teaching one of

his courses, and I would be doing all the typing for the textbooks that he was writing. So when I went home and asked my superintendent if I could be relieved from me contract, he said no. He said, "I will not release you." He said, "You're going to stay here." So I stayed to, let see, that was November. So I stayed through June.

Then Dr. Lennes said he would wait for me. He said, "I won't hire anybody else." So that began my career at this university. I couldn't find a decent apartment or room to live in, so Mrs. Lennes said, "Why don't you live right here in the house?" So they rented me the room right next to the room I used for an office [sound of traffic] for 30 dollars a month. So I got up in the morning at seven o'clock, moved right in...I didn't eat breakfast, moved right into the office, sat at the typewriter all day, and went out to eat dinner at night. Lived there for a full year. Then I finally found an apartment. I worked for him only three years, because, you know, why? In the meantime, I got married, and I collapsed from overwork.

GD: Wow! He was a slave driver, huh?

EL: Well, it's my fault, too. I don't blame it totally on him, because he wrote the setup and wrote these textbooks at night and then put the papers on my typing table. Then I would type them all day long. Well, there was no such thing as coffee break or nobody to talk to, so I worked my full eight, nine, ten hours, until I got that pile done every day. Then finally his wife came to me one day and asked me if I would slow down. She said, "You're driving him to the point where he isn't sleeping."

I said, "But I have all that work piled up there, and I can't stand it."

She said, "He's trying to keep ahead of you." So we worked out all of that later. But anyway. Very interesting.

Then I got to teach one math class every quarter, and I immediately got my master's degree. He told me in order to make me legal to teach freshman algebra or whatever course...I taught geometry most of the time, and I earned my master's degree in mathematics while I was working for him.

GD: Good. When you came back and when you were here the first time, Charles Clapp was president. Did you know him very well?

EL: I knew him fairly well, but not...I was a very, very shy young lady. [laughs] I remember distinctly, when we used to have such a thing as "firesides" in the dormitory. On Friday nights, they would hire a little band of two or three, and we would dance in the parlor. President Clapp and Mrs. Clapp [Mary Brennan Clapp] were chaperones quite a bit of the time. I remember dancing with him, and he telling me that he and his wife had just come from New York where they had seen the opera Aida. I knew nothing about opera, naturally, coming from Sand Coulee, and he said that the leading character, he said, "You look just like her." [laughs]

GD: [laughs] Well he was a pretty big old guy, wasn't he?

EL: Yes. A very reserved...I got to know her quite well.

GD: Oh, did you?

EL: Yes, after he died. She was teaching in the English Department. Yes. Then, she used to come to our A.A.U.W. meetings. A very, very fine lady, very reserved, very quiet. And raised all of those children. [Sound of traffic]. I've forgotten how many. Five?

GD: I think five.

EL: Yes. No, I got to know them quite well. Naturally, I didn't get to know him well, except because I was...He was a reserved gentleman, and I was shy.

GD: Did you interact with Mrs. Clapp as she was writing the history? [*Narrative of Montana State University, 1893-1935*]

EL: No. Once in a great while, I would talk to her, but I don't remember discussing any of that with her. Not at all.

GD: You don't know why she was selected?

EL: What?

GD: She was selected to write it?

EL: No, I don't know that.

GD: Who would have been the logical choice? Do you think, in your estimation at that time, who would have been the logical person to write the history?

EL: Now, that had never occurred to me.

GD: What about Paul Phillips?

EL: Who?

GD: Phillips?

EL: Oh, Paul Phillips, of course. Paul Phillips and N.J. Lennes were very close friends. N.J. Lennes went to bat for him during all those years they had the terrible scandal about him.

GD: There's always talk about the "Phillips Scandal." What was that?

EL: Oh, don't you know about it?

GD: What was it?

EL: Well, Dr. Phillips had a little office in the basement of Main Hall, which was later my office when I was Assistant Registrar. They said that Paul Phillips was interested in young girls, young college girls, and that he would have them...Terrible tales were told about him, that were not truth. That he would invite him to his office down there in Main Hall and close the door and lock it. I occupied that office for several years, and there was no lock on that door, so they immediately found out that the truth was not told. Because I laughed...only I, who was working in that office knew the story about Paul Phillips, and that story about locking the door inside was the one that stuck in my mind. That's the one that I remember, so definitely.

GD: Did you tell somebody about the absence of a lock?

EL: No, only Dr. Lennes. Afterwards. [Sound of traffic]

GD: Well, what was he doing?

EL: Dr. Lennes went to bat for him and won his case. There were...My, I went through days and days of listening to all of that, and writing...they have minutes of all those meetings, and the President's Office kept the minutes, and Dr. Lennes...Now, I'm telling tales, am I not?

GD: Well, this happened, what, 80 years ago.

EL: Eighty years ago. Now, listen, there isn't anyone else around who knows about this, is there?

GD: I don't believe so.

EL: Oh, all of this is so clear to me.

GD: Let's hear it!

EL: And you haven't heard it?

GD: Let's hear it!

EL: Because...And you haven't heard it?

GD: Let's hear it!

EL: Because I was right there in that house on Gerald Ave., living right there and typing all night long. The President's Office, they had a trial for Paul C. Phillips. I worked for Paul Phillips for a year afterwards. I typed his books, too, and he has my name on some of them. He gave me thank you. Dr. Lennes never did, but Paul C. Phillips did. Lennes loaned me to Paul Phillips to type his history book. Paul C. Phillips was a bright historian.

Well, the story was that Paul Phillips used to invite the girls over to this office to visit with him, and then he'd shut the door and lock it—inside. There was no lock on that door. So then, finally, after many, many days of trials and everything, he was...Of course, he was paid for everything. He was given back pay and everything. They found out that these were untruths that were being told.

GD: But he resigned.

EL: Oh yes, he resigned. He had to resign. But then they hired him back, didn't they? Yes.

GD: After a bit of a controversy.

EL: Yes, a lot. Okay. The...what do you call them, the minutes of all these court's proceedings—90 pages.

GD: Yes. Transcripts.

EL: Transcripts. Okay, now, 90 pages for that. Dr. Lennes called the President's Office, and he said, "I want a copy of those transcripts."

She said...I don't know what she said to him, but the end result was that he could have them at five o'clock at night, and they had to be back in the President's Office at eight o'clock in the morning, the following morning. So, Dr. Lennes said, "Deal. Emma will you come and copy our manual [unintelligible]." [Sound of chiming clock]. [unintelligible] Mrs. Lennes sat right next to me. I put three carbon [unintelligible], so I have four copies of these minutes, and I typed all 90 pages of those after five o'clock one night, and eight o'clock in the morning, I delivered the transcript back to her. She was completely shocked, and so was everyone else. We didn't have a copy machine, or in those days we didn't have them. Those were interesting days, weren't they? That was a long time ago. You can't imagine it even, can you?

GD: Oh yes, I can imagine.

EL: I didn't know that I was [unintelligible] this. This is all very vivid in my mind, because after three years, one day, my...I don't know what I lost. I lost everything, and I fainted dead away.

GD: Oh really?

EL: Yes. I was at the hospital visiting a student of ours and standing there, and I just dropped. And the end result was overwork and tension. I stayed away for three or four weeks and went back to work, and then I quit working for Dr. Lennes. The pressure—

GD: Phillips was a vice president when he was accused?

EL: Yes. He was a very good history teacher that everybody liked, and he was writing a textbook. [sound of traffic] So after all of this was over, Phillips, of course, was very grateful to Dr. Lennes. They were very good friends. Very grateful to Dr. Lennes for what he did, and Dr. Lennes said, "I will loan you Emma while you get your other book done." Dr. Phillips had me typing history. So I typed history books for quite a few years.

GD: Well, that's good preparation, you can type it for me.

EL: Pardon?

GD: You can type it for me then.

EL: [laughs] Not anymore. Inside of his book, there's an acknowledgment to Emma Lommasson. But Dr. Lennes, then, when I told him I was going to quit, my husband thought it was time for me to get out of there, then he offered to put my name in his math book. But it didn't happen, because I quit.

GD: All right. Do you suppose that incident had anything to do with the decision to let Mary Clapp write the history, rather than Paul Phillips?

EL: Oh, I don't know any of that. That's right, Paul Phillips could have written it instead of Mary Clapp. I don't know anything about that.

GD: Okay. I just wondered. Did you know [George] Finlay Simmons very well?

EL: No, because Finlay Simmons...This is also an interesting part of my past. Dr. Lennes was instrumental in getting George Finlay Simmons appointed president of this university. When I arrived in 1937, Dr. Lennes was instrumental in getting him fired.

GD: Well, he wasn't fired?

EL: He was dismissed.

GD: No, he left in '41.

EL: Now, I have had many contacts with his son in recent years, and Doctor...I didn't know Dr. Simmons at all. I met him, probably several times and had a beautiful, beautiful picture of him, which I gave his son. I thought he was a very, very fine gentleman from what I knew—very well liked.

GD: There was a hearing by the Board [Board of Education] in January through June, something like that in 1940. But the Board sustained him. After all the testimony, they still sustained him.

EL: And then what happened?

GD: Well, the Board initially decided that Lennes had to retire or he was going to be fired, and H.G. Merriam went off to Oregon—he was to be terminated. Two other faculty member were to be terminated. Do you know about that?

EL: No, I didn't know that they were terminated.

GD: They were, and then the Board changed its mind.

EL: Oh, see now, that I don't know. Now, when Dr. Lennes retired, was he asked to retire?

GD: Well, initially the Board said, "If you don't retire, we're going to fire you." But then they rescinded that also and called Merriam back from Oregon and put the two faculty members back in.

EL: See, because by then I had quit working for Dr. Lennes, so I was not involved.

GD: But did you know...did you type up the material for the case against Simmons?

EL: Yes, that's the material that I was typing. Yes.

GD: What were the details there, do you remember?

EL: I don't remember any of it. I was an innocent...a lady from a small town and a small circle, and was very innocent about anything that was going on. I couldn't believe what I was typing. Of course, I learned from my high school study teacher, that when there are private circumstances, that means private. I had many people, as I walked around the city of Missoula from time to time when I went shopping, who would come up to me—University people—who would ask me questions. I remember my stock answer was, "I'm Dr. Lennes' private secretary. What goes on in the office never goes out of the office." I never, never opened my mouth about a thing.

GD: But you have to here. This is history.

EL: And here I'm talking, 100 years later about it, because nobody's alive but me, right?

GD: Nobody is. It would be interesting to know what all happened during that period. Accusations were that both Lennes and Merriam wanted to be president.

EL: Yes, Merriam wanted to be president. I was the kind of a secretary who was a small-town girl with a great deal of respect for my boss and never opened my mouth when I left the office. So I missed out on a lot, because I could have been gabby and gossipy. Yes, but I didn't.

GD: Did you know Merriam very well?

EL: No, but I kind of held him with a great deal of respect. And afraid of him. I was afraid of him. Now, Dr. Freeman, [Edmund L. Freeman] I wasn't afraid of him.

GD: Why?

EL: I don't know, Dr. Freeman seemed like a very personable professor. But Dr. Merriam—

GD: Distant and aloof?

EL: Yes. I was involved in a lot of wonderful history, wasn't I? Had I only known.

GD: [laughs] I think you knew. A lot more than you say.

EL: Very interesting. But one thing about those days, those men were wonderful gentlemen though. I don't know, the people seem to be different in those days from what they are now. But they were...I treated them, or held them, in a great deal of respect. Every one of them. I was shocked at what was going on.

GD: Well, the accusations were that Simmons was the downtown candidate. The Missoula Merc and other business interests appointed him, right? Got him appointed, anyway, and that he wasn't qualified.

EL: Oh! Now, you've met his son, didn't you?

GD: Yes.

EL: George Finlay. I still talk to him periodically. He's still living.

GD: He's got a lot of material [unintelligible] to look through.

EL: Oh yes, yes. He's a very, very fine man, I think.

GD: Oh yes, I'm sure. Retired now, right?

EL: Yes. And he lives alone now. He lost his wife.

GD: He's very much concerned about defending the reputation of his father.

EL: Yes, yes. He's writing his father's history. Now, I have some material that he sent me, that he had written about his father. [Life and Letters of Finlay Simmons, Mss 705]

GD: I think he put it in the archives too. [Mansfield Library's Archives and Special Collections]

EL: Yes, I think he did.

GD: So I have access to it.

EL: Yes.

GD: Did you meet Elrod?

EL: No, because I was not ever in the Science Department, or I knew who he was, and he knew who I was, because I was working out there, but that's all. It didn't go anywhere. He probably would never have remembered who I was.

GD: What kind of a reputation did he have?

EL: He had a very good reputation of being a wonderful professor. I only heard very, very good things about him.

GD: What about his daughter? His daughter?

EL: Oh, I don't know his daughter. I didn't know his daughter.

GD: Mary Ferguson?

EL: Oh! Oh, Mary? Oh! [laughs] Oh yes, Mary. Oh, we all laughed about Mary. All the girls laughed about Mary.

GD: [unintelligible]

EL: Well, of course. She didn't seem to be the proper kind of person to be Dean of Women.

GD: Wow, why?

EL: Oh well, I don't know, I can't explain that, but we...Oh, naturally, I would never say anything bad about anybody, because that was not the way I was brought up. But I listened to everything that they used to talk about. But they used to laugh about Mary Elrod Ferguson, because Mrs. Sedman [Harriet Rankin Sedman] was the Dean of Women before Mary, right?

GD: Yes, and Mary was secretary for her.

EL: Secretary, okay. Then Mary must have been the acting Dean of Women.

GD: She was, beginning in '34. She got the job...Why did she get the job?

EL: I don't know that.

GD: Well, according to Jesse, [Richard H. Jesse] you knew Jesse? Irish Jesse? He was the vice president for a while, also? [Coughs] According to Jesse, she got a job because there was no retirement annuity for Morton Elrod when he was...when he suffered the stroke. So he had no income, so in lieu of an annuity, she got a job.

EL: Oh, that's right. Now that you say that, I heard that story.

GD: Oh, you did? Who did you hear it [coughs]

EL: Pardon?

GD: Who did you hear it from?

EL: I don't remember that. Now, you see, I was not the one who wasn't involved in all those things, and yet I was right in the middle of it having here worked for Dr. Lennes.

GD: Yes.

EL: Yes, but you see, I didn't know all of that was going to be a big scandal in future years.

GD: She got that job in 1934 after she got her master's degree at Columbia. Then she came back, got that job, because '35 he suffered the stroke. He didn't have any retirement pay, and the family didn't have anything. So Charles Clapp appointed her to that position. Then Finlay Simmons continued it, and she was the Acting Dean for then years.

[End Side A]

[Side B]

GD: I think we're ready now, if you are. Where were we?

EL: I don't know. I don't know. No, you know a lot about this, but all you have to do is talk about it and then I recall.

GD: You do, yes.

EL: Yes. It's just as if I'm back in those years.

GD: Well, we were talking about Mary Elrod Ferguson.

EL: Mary Elrod Ferguson. Let's see, I had Harriet Sedman for the Dean of Women.

GD: She was, what, the sister of –

EL: Wellington D. Rankin.

[Thumping noises]

EL: You remembered that.

GD: Then she retired to married, right?

EL: Retired to what?

GD: Get married.

EL: Oh, that's right. That's right, she did.

GD: She went off to England?

EL: She had one eye half closed. [laughs] There isn't anybody around that remembers her, is there? No.

GD: Except you.

EL: Except me.

GD: Did you know Melby very well? [Ernest O. Melby]

EL: Melby? Yes, I knew...I did. I didn't know any of them well, but I knew every one of them because of working out there. Melby was a dignified man, but I didn't feel I could just sit down and talk about the weather. He was very businesslike. My contacts with presidents was not very great, except when they...oh, one of them, when he wanted to know about Dr. Lennes. [laughs]

GD: That was Simmons. Did he ask you about it?

EL: No, Simmons...I didn't get to know Simmons well at all.

GD: Who asked you about Lennes?

EL: I don't remember who it was, years later, asked me about Lennes. Because they had heard about him. Tough old man.

GD: Might have been McCain? [James A. McCain]

EL: Who?

GD: McCain?

EL: Oh. McCain, I got to meet. Shall I tell you how I met McCain? The bus—

GD: Yes, you told me that story.

EL: Yes. Okay.

GD: It's in your other tape.

EL: When he got off the bus, in front of Main Hall, he said, "I'm President McCain," I could have dropped dead. Because the bus driver was trying to get me to go on the bus, and he stopped the bus twice and I finally got on. McCain used that as a good story about moving from the crowded East to here.

GD: How well did you know Lucille Armsby?

EL: I knew Lucille Armsby very well. Very well. A wonderful, wonderful private secretary for our president, because nothing ever came out of her mouth out of that office. Nothing. She was very strict, and she's the one of who was very firm with me, because I was working for Lennes and she couldn't stand Lennes. Oh, not many of them could stand Lennes. A lot of them asked me how I could do that. But no, Mrs. Armsby...I could never, never get close to Mrs. Armsby, to be very friendly and talk everyday talk, no.

GD: She just didn't do that?

EL: No, no. No, no. She was reserved. She was a super-duper secretary who kept her mouth shut about everything. Oh, yes.

GD: Everyone said she ran the President's Office.

EL: Oh, yes, she did. She did. Everything went through Mrs. Armsby. Then when Carl McFarland came, that was the downfall of Mrs. Armsby, because President McFarland brought Gwen Folsom. Gwen Folsom and I became good friends, to the very end. We were very, very good friends. She was single and a brilliant, brilliant woman. We got along so well in every respect. She used to come to dinner every Sunday, and...Oh, yes! She was a tremendous secretary, and neither did she divulge any secrets from the office. But neither did we talk about it, because we both knew that you don't talk about office affairs when you—

GD: Why did McFarland make a change?

EL: Why did McFarland make a change? McFarland...well, he left here under conditions—

GD: No, I mean why did he change his secretary? Did Armsby retire?

EL: Why did he change secretaries? He brought Gwen here from...Well, Gwen was his secretary forever over there.

GD: In there?

EL: In Washington, D.C.

GD: Okay.

EL: Oh, my goodness, Gwen was his secretary from early years. She knew him inside and out and he knew her, and then she also knew Mrs. McFarland.

GD: So he just let Armsby go?

EL: No, no. Armsby ran the office, but Gwen was his secretary as far as typing letters and things. No, all of the correspondence that Carl McFarland did was through Gwen. Gwen took shorthand and did everything. No, Lucille was demoted to just the office work, but she made the appointments and all those things. No, Gwen did all of the personal important stuff that went on at the University. Gwen never opened her mouth either. No, no! Gwen and I were two of a kind. We knew what it was like to be working in an office where you don't talk about things.

GD: There are lots of documents beginning in the '40s, and going up into the '60s...'50s, which have handwritten notes by Lucille Armsby giving you the history of this. Not what's in the minutes and not what's in the documents, but this is what really happened.

EL: Really?

GD: Yes. She didn't talk about that either?

EL: No. Never, never, never, never heard of it.

GD: [laughs] I thought she was pretty influential.

EL: You mean Lucille?

GD: Yes.

EL: Oh my goodness, everybody said she ran the University. They went to her for everything.

GD: There must have been a little bit of a shock for Carl McFarland to take. He's the only one who could run the University.

EL: Well, Carl McFarland had his own secretary, and Carl McFarland was a man that kept everything to himself. He called me in one day, and I was scared to death of him. I was very nervous around him. Called me in to ask me about a mathematical problem, and I was so far removed from mathematics but I figured it out. I was quite, quite nervous and hoping that god gave me the right answer.

GD: Did you know he was secretary to Charles Clapp when he was a student?

EL: Yes, when Carl McFarland went to school, yes. That's right. Now, that hasn't come back to me for a while.

GD: Interesting relationships there. He created a faculty club and a staff members club, didn't he in one of the old dormitories?

EL: Who created the—

GD: Carl. Carl McFarland.

EL: Carl McFarland, yes, there was a faculty club.

GD: They had events on weekends and in the evenings? Did you go to any of those?

EL: No, no. I was not a member of the faculty.

GD: That was in the old dormitory that burned down or was torn down, wasn't it? What was the name of it?

EL: Right after the war?

GD: Yes.

EL: Oh, those temporary dorms that they had there.

GD: Well, this was an older dorm, yes.

EL: Yes, very old, yes.

GD: But it was still there in the '50s. Then I think it burned down—was torn down.

EL: Must have been torn down. I don't remember anything being burned down. Yes, because it was a temporary situation, yes.

GD: Supposed to be. That's the one he used for the faculty club, wasn't it? [Sound of chimes]

EL: Oh.

GD: Jumbo Hall?

EL: Oh! Oh, now I remember it. Yes. My goodness, your mind is "ooph", and you weren't there at all during that time, and you—

GD: No, but I've been reading the documents.

EL: But you're making me recall. Of course, Jumbo Hall. I used to walk from home to Jumbo Hall and then to the office.

GD: What are the reasons that Lucille Armsby was a little critical of, more than a little, of McFarland?

EL: She was very critical of him. Very critical of him.

GD: Why?

EL: Because he didn't use her as a secretary.

GD: Oh!

EL: That's the reason. That was talk all over campus. Oh, yes. When Carl McFarland came, I remember people saying that Carl McFarland is bringing his own secretary. You know, Lucille Armsby wasn't very well liked by anybody, because she was an efficient secretary that kept her mouth shut. So naturally, people wouldn't like her, because you couldn't get any information out of her. Then when he brought his own secretary, nobody took...She couldn't find out what he was thinking. Not at all. She was left out, because she didn't know what was going on behind closed doors.

GD: Although there are controversy about how the old Student Union was going to be used too, wasn't there, that involve him and her?

EL: That's right. But see, I was not mixed up in it. Now, what years were those?

GD: Well, that would have been in the '50s.

EL: In the '50s.

GD: About '54. When he was going to use the old Student Union for the fine arts. It wasn't the College of Fine Arts, there wasn't a School of Fine Arts yet. But you didn't get involved in that fight?

EL: No, no. Once I got into the Registrar's Office, my world was different. Leo Smith, under Leo Smith, straight task master.

GD: Was he?

EL: Oh, yes. Oh yes, I collapsed from overwork then too. Yes.

GD: You let people pick on you.

EL: I let them pick on me, but then that's the way I was brought up. But then I learned later, and of course much later, I did the work of two full-time people. Yes. But, I'm [unintelligible].

GD: Did you have any part of the planning of The Lodge, as it was called, which was going to replace the Student Union?

EL: Did I have anything...I didn't have anything to do with anything.

GD: [laughs] Were you involved in it, then?

EL: I stuck to my little office and had a wonderful time. The most wonderful years of all were the years when the boys were going into the service, and we were trading. One thousand boys, would come in the first of every month, and 1,000 would leave at the end of each [unintelligible]. I was just thoroughly and deeply involved with those, and Dr. Merrill (?), and those were the most wonderful years of all. There's one young man, Bob Kelly (?), whose father was one of my boys then.

GD: Oh, yes, sure!

EL: Yes, and Bob Kelly's father, then, in later years, told Bob when he was a student here that he had to come to meet me, because he said I knew his father very well. So Bob Kelly... We haven't talked to each other for long time, but not too... within the last month, he called me once, and I hadn't heard from him in a long time. No, those were the wonderful years, the war years, when these young boys came, and I gave them all tests. Then we had classes for them in various subjects, and I got to teach the highest math class. I picked all the ones that got the highest scores and took them as a class. [unintelligible] teaching brilliant young men. Yes. Then when they came back, I was the first one they met on the campus.

GD: Many of them came back for... after college. I mean, after the war?

EL: Yes. After the war. Then when the veterans started to come back, I learned what to do with them. My boss sent me to [unintelligible], and we greeted them well. And then from there, see, my time here just evolved naturally. When the boys went into the service, we taught them here. When they came back from the service, we greeted them and got them in school. Then they became part of the student body.

[Sound of beeping; Voice on speaker; Break in audio]

GD: Yes, we're back on. Going again. So what do you remember about your last few years at the University?

EL: Last few years? When did I retire, '77? '77. [unintelligible]. It was wonderful having a young man for a registrar.

GD: And who was the president then?

EL: I don't remember. I don't remember. Who was president... Let's see. It's now [20]14? Oh my! That's 37 years ago I retired.

GD: Yes.

EL: Oh, that's a long time. Who was president then? I'm drawing a blank on that one?

GD: Probably Dick Bowers. [Richard C. Bowers]

EL: Oh, Dick Bowers. I guess he was, because they gave me a little office downstairs. Yes. And President Bowers [unintelligible]. Yes, President Bowers.

GD: And then Bucklew. [Neil S. Bucklew]

EL: And then Bucklew.

GD: And then Koch. [James V. Koch]

EL: And Koch.

GD: And then Dennison.

EL: And then you?

GD: Yes.

EL: You were the longest.

GD: Yes. The other two that were very close were Clapp, who was almost 14 years, not quite, And Craig [Oscar J. Craig], who was about 13.

EL: Oh, was he that long?

GD: '95 to 2008.

EL: You were the longest, because you were here 20 years, didn't you? Yes.

GD: '95 to 1908. I said 2008. 1908 is when he left.

EL: When did you retired?

GD: I retired in 2010.

EL: You've been retired that long already?

GD: Yes.

EL: My goodness! Look at this old lady. So you retired in 2008. Well, I'm glad that you're doing so well, and you better relax a little bit, so—

GD: Oh, I'm enjoying myself.

EL: Okay, okay.

GD: You still go back over and look at your building [Emma B. Lommasson Center] all the time?

EL: I never go back to look at my building. That's one thing that shocked me more than anything that has happened in my 100 years. I will never forget the time...Let's see, I got invited up there to lunch, and I don't remember who was around that table. I was stunned. I was thoroughly, completely stunned and didn't know if I was hearing right. I guess you're the one that told me that the building was named after me. I just couldn't believe what I heard! I couldn't. No reason for that, none at all. Even today, I can't, it just...No, no. Can't get used to it at all. There's no reason for that. But for the [unintelligible], living here is from time to time we get a new college student coming to work in the dining room. The other day we had a new girl coming in, and she came to me. I was sitting at the dining room table, and she put her hand on my shoulder. She said, "I'm a University of Montana student, and I spent all day at the Emma Lommasson building today, because I was getting my stuff ready for registration." She said, "I can't believe that you're that Emma Lommasson."

I said, "Neither can I." I said, "I can't believe my name's up there."

And she said, "I'm very happy to know you." I thought, isn't this fun?

GD: Yes, it is.

EL: Isn't this fun? These young kids, they come here, and we have several and the boys are so nice. When they've been to my building, they'll walk by me at the table, and say, "I was in your building today." [laughs]. It's been a wonderful, wonderful, wonderful world. No, that I will never forget, as long as I live, the shock of the whole thing.

GD: Oh, the pleasure of the whole thing. Right?

EL: Yes. Well—

GD: One other thing, and then I'll let you rest. Do you remember much about the putting the sidewalks on the Oval?

EL: I remember all the talk about putting the sidewalks on the Oval, oh yes. Oh yes. Now, let's see, do they have a sidewalk all the way across the middle?

GD: Both ways.

EL: Oh, both ways. No, I remember that, but I didn't want a sidewalk on the Oval, either, because the Oval was so pretty.

GD: What was the talk? Why did he do it? Wasn't that Pantzer? [Robert T. Pantzer]

EL: I don't remember who did it. I don't. Well, Pantzer, during his reign—his regime—he had disruptive students, didn't he?

GD: He did.

EL: He had a great big meeting up there, and...but he dispersed them, though, instead of having violence.

GD: Yes, he did. Yes, he was condemned to be president during the Vietnam.

EL: Yes.

GD: [unintelligible]

EL: Yes it did, yes it did.

GD: What about Johns. [Robert Johns]

EL: Oh, Bob Johns was impossible. Bob Johns. Now, he's the only one that I don't remember being comfortable around.

GD: Oh, really? Why?

EL: No, I was afraid of him, I guess. No, Bob Johns was different from the rest of them.

GD: Well, there's campus mythology that he burned down the stadium that used to be behind Mail Hall. Did he do that?

EL: He did what?

GD: Burned it down. Set it on fire, because they wouldn't let him tear it down.

EL: Oh my goodness!

GD: You didn't hear that story?

EL: No, no. Not at all. Well, you're the president we're going to remember the most—that everybody is.

GD: I don't know about that.

EL: Yes, of course you are. You were there the longest, and nobody said bad things about you.  
[laughs]

GD: Maybe you just didn't hear them. [laughs]

EL: No, no. You were calm, reserved, and you did things in a very quiet, professional manner.  
That's important.

GD: Yes, it is, but I think I'm going to let you rest now. If we do some other recording, we'll do it later. How's that?

EL: Well, that's fine.

[End of Interview]