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## Interview with Mary Margaret Stewart, March 13, 2014

Mary Margaret Stewart  
*Gettysburg College*

Michael J. Birkner  
*Gettysburg College*

### **Interview Participants**

Interviewee: Mary Margaret Stewart, Professor of English, Gettysburg College

Interviewer: Michael J. Birkner, Benjamin Franklin Professor of the Liberal Arts & Professor of History, Gettysburg College

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## Interview with Mary Margaret Stewart, March 13, 2014

### **Description**

Michael Birkner continued his interview with Mary Margaret Stewart on March 13, 2014, covering her decades-long career at Gettysburg College, starting under the administration of Willard Stewart Paul in the 1950s and concluding in the 1990s. Topics covered include her academic activities, relationship with other members of the faculty, and thoughts on the college administration over the years.

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### **Disciplines**

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**MICHAEL BIRKNER INTERVIEW WITH  
MARY MARGARET STEWART, 3/13/2014**

[Note: this transcript has been reviewed by Mary Margaret Stewart, who in various places corrected typographical errors, clarified individual statements and occasionally expanded on certain observations she made in the interview.]

**Michael Birkner:** This is March 13, 2014. I'm Michael Birkner, sitting again in the basement of Musselman Library with Professor of English Emerita Mary Margaret Stewart. This time we're going to move on with the second of our oral history conversations. Mary Margaret, the first question I'm going to ask you really comes out of the first transcript. In passing, in our first conversation, you said something nice about General Paul, but we didn't do anything with it. So I just [wondered] if you would offer any personal observations you had about Willard Stewart Paul, who was president of the college when you came here to teach.

**Mary Margaret Stewart:** Yes. I was one of the faculty members – and I don't know how many of us there were, actually – that liked General Paul. He was very kind to me whenever he saw me on campus. He knew me by name, and would walk with me across campus. He intrigued me because he'd been a general in World

War II, and I had always been interested in World War II, and he would talk to me about it. I remember one time I was at the Hooks' [Sociology Department Chair Wade Hook and his wife] for dinner, and I was seated next to General Paul. I asked him questions and he freely talked about it. Mrs. Paul was upset; she didn't think he should talk about his army experience.

[laughs] So in that way, I liked him personally, and we got along. I did something that was not very wise when I first came. Dottie Bloom worked for the Alumni Bulletin, and in her quiet way she liked to stir up things. She asked me if I would write - I'd been here a very short time - my opinion of where things were going in Gettysburg and all. I talked about [how] our priorities were wrong. I can't believe [that] - I'd just come to campus, and I did that.

**Birkner:** You were young and enthusiastic, Mary Margaret.

**Stewart:** I guess. [laughs] I took the college to task for putting all this money in the Student Union Building when their library was in such disarray. General Paul was not pleased. Never said anything to me, but he did comment to Dottie Bloom, "Who does she think she is?" But he never took it out on me, and I admired that about him, because right after I'd done it, I realized what a rather foolish thing it was.

**Birkner:** He was old-school, wasn't he, in the way he operated? I got the sense he was old-school in the way he treated women,

with the good and the bad of that. Did you ever have any sense of that? Dottie told me a story that he whistled at her, for example, on the campus, and told her she had "nice gams," that kind of thing. She didn't take it in a bad way, because it was General Paul, but I didn't know if you had ever witnessed anything like that.

**Stewart:** No. He never did that. It's funny about whistling, because I used to whistle a lot, and I was whistling, walking across campus, and somebody was behind me, and this voice came: "Whistling women and old hens always come to bad ends."

[laughter] And it was General Paul. So then he joined me, and we walked over to wherever we were going together. He did something else, and I find this interesting. Up to that time, we had [a] very old-fashioned catalog, and after he had, I think, dismissed that dean, whomever we had —

**Birkner:** Seymour Dunn.

**Stewart:** Yes, Seymour Dunn, and then he put Charlie Glatfelter in. You know, it's only in recent years I've realized how young Charlie [was].

**Birkner:** 36 years old when he became dean.

**Stewart:** [laughs] Yes, he was. But he appointed Charlie and me — and this is awful: I can't remember the other members of the committee — but we were to revise the catalog.

**Birkner:** The other person might have been Ed Freed. I'm not sure.

**Stewart:** I don't know. I think I would've remembered if it were Ed.

**Birkner:** It might not have been. Ed might have worked on a different project with Charlie, so I'll take that back. Yes, there would have been one or two others on your project.

**Stewart:** There would've, right. We completely redid the catalog. We had lots of pictures in it; we had commentary about the academic program and about campus life. Charlie, after we had planned in general what we were going to do, assigned each of us a particular part to be responsible for, and I was responsible for campus life. He was responsible for the academic programs. So the two of us – I don't mean to blow our own horns – actually had the most work to do. I think it turned out well. I looked for my copy today, and I couldn't find it; I was going to show it to you. But you may have seen it.

**Birkner:** I have seen it, and you'd be interested to know that in one of the interviews that I did with Charlie, at his insistence, we started an interview in which he spent 15 minutes describing his work on the catalog, because he said it was important that I understood, and future readers understood, how significant this catalog was, because they had never had anything comparable before 1961. So clearly, you were young and

you got this very significant and demanding assignment. It was certainly a way of integrating you into this community in a big way.

**Stewart:** Yeah. I built up – and it's old-hat now – the fact that the college was a community, and then went on from that. I know I didn't realize how important it was to Charlie until very late in his life. I saw him at Christ Lutheran, so I'm sure we were at a funeral together, because that's about the only time I go to Christ Lutheran. He was standing in his pew, and I went over and I talked to him. He said, "Mary Margaret, I've been thinking about the past and all. I think one of the most important things we did was that catalog." Then he went on and on about the catalog – almost cried. I was so touched and amazed that it meant that much to him. This is typical of General Paul. He was very pleased with the catalog. He called us into his office, and I don't know if you know that in his office he had a desk, and on one side was the United States flag, and on the other was the Gettysburg College flag. So you really felt you were sort of in a military court.

**Birkner:** No, I didn't know that.

**Stewart:** We lined up in front of his desk, and he told us how pleased he was with our work, and that he was going to put a letter of commendation in all our folders. *[laughs]* Now that was very military too, I think.

**Birkner:** Indeed it was. It would be interesting to know if it's in your folder still. *[laughter]* Why don't you take a minute and say something about Charlie Glatfelter, either as dean or generally *[about]* your interactions with him over the years?

**Stewart:** He was always one of my favorite faculty members. He was so sensible. In some ways he was conservative, but he was always willing to try something new. I was on the Academic Policy Committee when Basil was dean.

**Birkner:** That would've been 1966 to 1971.

**Stewart:** Yeah. There I go again, saying "Yeah." *[laughs]*

**Birkner:** That's how we talk.

**Stewart:** Right. Charlie. . . well, he was no longer dean, but still very active in the college. Our task was to come up with suggestions for new academic semesters *[and]* programs, and that's when we put forward the January term. I had some reservations about the January term, but I think it's extremely important *[that]* at that point in our college history, we went to January term. It freed us from the past, in a way. It gave us an opportunity to introduce Women's Studies, African-American Studies, interdisciplinary studies of all sorts, and eventually, those that were really worthwhile went into the other part of the curriculum, the part we considered more serious. But you wouldn't think of Charlie -



**Birkner:** I wouldn't, no.

**Stewart:** He really led the march.

**Birkner:** So you worked with him, and both of you supported this.

**Stewart:** Yes, we both supported it.

**Birkner:** Was there any other person that you would mention who helped push for the January term?

**Stewart:** I think Basil was really keen for it. I think that both he and Charlie saw it as one of the only ways we could get beyond certain [things].

**Birkner:** Wouldn't you agree that part of the motivation – not necessarily the most important part, but part of the motivation – was to find a way to change the college calendar, so that you went from a 5-5 student load to a 4-4, and also to move the faculty from a 4-4 teaching load to a 3-1-3?

**Stewart:** I agree. You're right. That's right. I should've said that. It's not just the curriculum. It was also the college calendar, and to a large extent, teaching load.

**Birkner:** As a student, I found the January term a wonderful thing, particularly since I was there at the beginning, before it f lost some of its luster. As a faculty member, I'm sure I would've appreciated the reduction in teaching load, but one thing a student wouldn't appreciate is how little time the faculty had to prepare between semesters. You go from grading

your final bluebooks right before Christmas to teaching a new class right after New Year's, and then you get one week before you're starting another full semester.

**Stewart:** That's right. It was draining. It really was draining. And then your first semester would start, and no sooner would it start than you have to come up with proposals for your next January term.

**Birkner:** You know this probably as well as any faculty member, because for some period you had responsibility for the January term.

**Stewart:** Two years, '78 to '80.

**Birkner:** How did you get involved with that that way, to take that kind of responsibility?

**Stewart:** This is kind of an embarrassing part, because it involves friendship and all. Betty Martin was in charge of the January term, and Len Holder was dean then, and was not totally satisfied with what she was doing.

**Birkner:** With the January term, or more generally?

**Stewart:** I don't really know. I know part of it was the January term. So he, I guess, dismissed her, and I was very upset about it, because I was a good friend of Betty's. Norm Forness and Bruce Boenau and I went to see Leonard about it, and Leonard was of course very gracious. We didn't get anyplace. Then Leonard called me in at another time, and was kind of shy

about this because I'd been on the group that was critical of what he'd done, and asked me if I would be January term director. I felt a tension there between Betty and me, and then I finally decided that it wasn't going to matter whether I took it or not – Betty was not going to have that job. I had always thought that the January term could be presented in better ways than it had been, so I really sort of wanted the job. So I took it. Betty was hurt, very hurt. But I think it says a lot about both of us that we sat in the car one night and talked it out. We went on from then as if nothing had happened. At least that's my [feeling].

**Birkner:** It speaks well of you both. Let me ask you about this January term business. For starters, were you fully removed from the classroom? How did it affect your overall workload?

**Stewart:** It made it very hard, because I got [a] one-course relief a semester. I went from 3 to 2 each semester. I worked every afternoon in the Provost's Office – it was the Dean's Office then, [so] the Dean's Office – and I worked a good deal of the summer, too.

**Birkner:** You didn't get a great deal out of it, did you?

**Stewart:** I didn't get a great deal out of it, but I got great satisfaction. I loved doing it. I worked one year with Leonard, which I really liked because I was really on my own then. The next year I worked with Dave Potts, whom I liked too,

but he . . . well, he didn't welcome my dog on the weekends as Leonard [had, because] Leonard was never there on the weekends. [laughter] Leonard had a home; poor David didn't. But we had never had a good definition of an internship, so we worked that out. We had never had a good definition of what we now call work-study. The first year I was director, Karl Mattson came over and talked to me, and wondered if we could work something out - sort of like internships, or more service, rather than working for a job in the future. He wondered if we couldn't take advantage of the Lutheran Church's missions and projects all over the world. And thus we established a third kind of internship, a service-learning internship. Really, then, the beginnings of what he foresaw as the Center for Public Service began in the January Term. When I say 'we,' I mean 'me' and the J-Term Committee. I worked out definitions of the three internships and then asked the committee members to make suggestions and then approve the definitions. If memory serves me correctly, the J-Term Committee then submitted the definitions to the Academic Policy and Program Committee for final approval. I also wrote a new J-Term Catalog which was much fuller and more attractive than any J-Term Catalog we had had in the past. For one thing, it was professionally designed. It seemed to me that it made the January Term seem more important, serious, and also full of possibilities. [Consequently], the

beginnings of what [Karl Mattson] foresaw as the Center for Public Service began in January term.<sup>1</sup>

**Birkner:** That's very interesting, and it makes sense. It's a parallel in some ways to what you said about interdisciplinary studies emerging out of J-term. There's no question that some creative ideas came out of J-term. It does seem from my perspective--and I admit I wasn't here for the great bulk of its existence--but it does seem that too many faculty did not take seriously enough their obligations in teaching the courses, and let students run off and party hearty.

**Stewart:** I think some of them did that. Yes, I do too, I do, too.

**Birkner:** It worked I think especially well for the sciences and the languages and the theater, and perhaps music, where they could take trips to other countries or to go around the country for some purpose, and get, if you will, experiential learning as part of what went on. That's one of the things I did in the January term - [I] went to France for five weeks. But I heard

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<sup>1</sup>Mary Margaret added the following comment in the editing process: "One thing that distinguished the J-Term at Gettysburg College from the J-Term offered by many other institutions was the seriousness with which the faculty at Gettysburg took the January Term, particularly when it was first established. The faculty insisted that a "course is a course" whether offered in the Fall Term, Spring Term, or January Term. I remember Dick Mara particularly was adamant on this position. Furthermore, each student was required to take four January Terms to graduate, and each faculty member was required to teach a course each January Term, if that faculty member was not on sabbatical leave that year. I would say that among those institutions that offered the January Term, Gettysburg College was the exception in this regard."

stories about faculty members who only met three or four times with the students, if that, and let them just do what they wanted to do. Knowing you as I do, I know you would not have done that. *[laughter]* Did you continue to teach January term through the whole run of the January term?

**Stewart:** No. I didn't have to teach January term when I was directing [it].

**Birkner:** But what about as a faculty member? Did you teach January term from '69 to the end?

**Stewart:** Yes.

**Birkner:** What kind of things do you remember having taught in January term?

**Stewart:** Nancy Locher and I team-taught a course called *Women and Madness*, and we taught it two years. We met in the Dean of Students' office, actually, in one of the conference rooms. Nancy and I thought it would be good for them to see that you could have classrooms anyplace on campus – which now is what we all do, but we didn't much then. So we all met over there. Nancy's background is in psych, and we read novels and memoirs one a week, and then we had a movie or something every week.

**Birkner:** So everything from *Jane Eyre* to Virginia Woolf.

**Stewart:** Yes, and Sylvia Plath. It was not so long after Sylvia Plath [died]; it was in the early '70s that we were doing this.

**Birkner:** Tell me about the experience of teaching that course. Who signed up for it, and what was the dynamic, as you remember it? Was it a good thing?

**Stewart:** Yes. I think we had at least one man in the course. Most all of our students were women.

**Birkner:** Understandably. But how did these women take the course? How did they go at it? Were they like, "This is news, and I'm hungry to learn it," or was it just a course for them?

**Stewart:** No, I think they really wanted that course, and that was fun; they came from very various disciplines, and that was fun. There was a lot of discussion in class – we sat around the big conference table. Then I would meet with a group – we had the movie in the evening – and the group that was leading the discussion after the movie would see the movie ahead of time, and since I didn't have office hours as Nancy did, I would see the movie and work with them on that. Then some evening during the week the whole class would come in [and see the movie]. So that was nice, too – we took advantage of more time available for students.

**Birkner:** I think you maximized the opportunity of the January term, because they're not doing another class.

**Stewart:** Right. I think most of the students were enthusiastic. Some of them – as in any class, I suppose, but

this more than others – brought with them some problems of their own.

**Birkner:** Naturally. Did you teach the course more than once?

**Stewart:** We taught it twice.

**Birkner:** Overall, you feel good about it?

**Stewart:** Yes, and we both read all the papers, and we would comment on the papers, but we wouldn't put a grade on the paper until the other person had read it, and then the two of us met. Almost always, we agreed completely. It was amazing.

**Birkner:** That's great.

**Stewart:** Yeah, it was. It was fun to do, and we still reminisce about it.

**Birkner:** Tell me before I move on to anything else if you can remember another course or two that you taught in the scheme of the January term. I'm sure that you must have taught other things. Did you teach Boswell or Johnson?

**Stewart:** No, I didn't. I taught another women's course, with just women writers. I think I called it Women as Writers. That was popular, and I enjoyed that. For one thing, it gave me an opportunity to teach both nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature, and of course, Virginia Woolf was very important in that, because of her work on women as writers. I think Women's Studies really started in the January term.



**Birkner:** Since we've talked about classes a little bit, let's back up to the early '60s. Tell me what a typical semester's teaching consisted of for you in the early to mid-1960s.

**Stewart:** I think it was the same until I went on sabbatical the first time, and what that meant was four courses a semester. Two of them were Composition, and two of them were Literary Foundations.

**Birkner:** So you weren't teaching your specializations for a long time?

**Stewart:** Oh, no.

**Birkner:** I had no idea.

**Stewart:** Dick Geyer was teaching eighteenth century when I came, and he continued teaching it, I think, until I went on sabbatical the first time.

**Birkner:** Did you get a sabbatical in the seventh year of your being at Gettysburg, or was it later?

**Stewart:** No, I got it right away.

**Birkner:** So you would've been on sabbatical in '66-'67 or something like that, right? But you're saying for the first seven years, you did two Comps and two Lit Founds a semester? Of course the Lit Found class has a first half and a second half. You did it that way?

**Stewart:** I did it that way, yes. I always had two Compositions; that was straight. But sometimes I would be asked

to teach [what] went under various names but essentially was an Introduction to Literature course, a course particularly desired [by] non-majors.

**Birkner:** It's interesting what you said, because people could be pretty territorial about their material. Ted Baskerville told me at one point that it wasn't until Jim Pickering became dean that he was allowed to teach Medieval, even though he felt he should have been allowed to teach Medieval, but Jim had claims on it, because he'd gotten to Gettysburg a year or two before Ted did. Does that ring a bell with you?

**Stewart:** That's funny, Mike, that you say that.

**Birkner:** I'm telling you what Ted told me; I can't verify anything.

**Stewart:** I know. But there was tension. Ted and Jim worked well together, but there was tension. My feeling was that Jim was the one who felt he wasn't allowed to teach Medieval.

**Birkner:** Maybe I have it backwards.

**Stewart:** I think you do.

**Birkner:** Maybe it's Jim who told me this. I've interviewed them both.

**Stewart:** I'm sure it's Jim that told you that.

**Birkner:** One of them felt aggrieved, I know that.

**Stewart:** Oh, it's Jim! It's Jim that felt aggrieved, very aggrieved.

**Birkner:** I apologize if I have that backwards. It's in the transcripts, so we can always go to it. So Ted was holding out on Jim.

**Stewart:** Yes, and both Ted and Jim, as you know, were very strong individuals, and could be intimidating if they wanted to be, and Dick Geyer was more easily intimidated than some chairs would be. But I think Ted had the upper hand on Jim.

**Birkner:** Even though Jim was the senior of the two.

**Stewart:** Yes, and my feeling was that Dick always would go with Ted, rather than [Jim], even though he had to withstand the blue, angry eyes of Jim.

**Birkner:** Can you say anything more about that tension between Baskerville and Pickering? It had to do with something more than the fact that they were both strong personalities. Was there a sense of one-upmanship or something going on there?

**Stewart:** I don't know. I was so fond of both of them . . .

**Birkner:** You were also in a position then to be a detached observer.

**Stewart:** Oh, I know. I'm afraid I've been influenced by Jim, too, because this is Jim's view. Ted really wanted Medieval. But at Columbia, it would take him too long to get his degree in that, or something. Anyway, he went to Renaissance, and I think he was brilliant in Renaissance. So he wanted to teach both. I

mean, his field was Renaissance, so he was going to teach that; but he wanted to teach Medieval, too.

**Birkner:** So you think that may have been the source of some of the tension.

**Stewart:** Oh, it was. It was.

**Birkner:** What was Geyer's attitude about all of this? He was just going to favor Baskerville?

**Stewart:** Yes.

**Birkner:** So Baskerville got the Medieval.

**Stewart:** And Jim got Chaucer.

**Birkner:** Right. Which he loved.

**Stewart:** Yes, he did, but he also wanted to teach the other, and he would do that when Ted would go on sabbatical. But [when] Ted came back, he had the course he wanted. And then, when we started an emphasis on language and linguistics and things, Ted's the one that got to teach the [history of the English] language.

**Birkner:** Do you think that Jim would have wanted to do that?

**Stewart:** I don't know; I don't think so. Certainly not by the time that it happened.

**Birkner:** So when did you get to teach eighteenth century? What was the change? Geyer was around for a good long time.

**Stewart:** Yeah. I did get to teach it before I went on sabbatical.

**Birkner:** These are things we can look up in the catalog, that's not a problem, but I just wanted to get your memory on it, because by the time I was a student in the late '60s, you were known as the person you should take eighteenth century with.

**Stewart:** Yeah. Well, I was the only one teaching it.

**Birkner:** But it wasn't Geyer they were talking about, it was Mary Margaret Stewart. So you had a claim on it by the late '60s, for sure, and you were working at that time, getting some scholarship out and doing some new work on the eighteenth century, so it was your field.

**Stewart:** Yeah, and when I was on sabbatical I think Roger Smith taught the course. It didn't go back to Geyer.

**Birkner:** That's interesting. Geyer, I think, was teaching nineteenth century.

**Stewart:** And twentieth, because he taught the Faulkner course.

**Birkner:** During the '60s, how many other women besides Marie McLennand and you were in the English Department?

**Stewart:** When I first started, Kathrine Taylor was here.

**Birkner:** That's right. She was there until the mid-'60s at least. You never developed a warm relationship with her.

**Stewart:** No, we never did.

**Birkner:** Generational, or something else?

**Stewart:** I have no idea, really. We just didn't click somehow. I can remember when we used to have our faculty meetings, she'd

sit over on one side of the room and I'd be on the opposite side. *[laughs]* Isn't that odd.

**Birkner:** Did you read her book on Florence [during the flood of 1966]?

**Stewart:** No, but I read her other [one].

**Birkner:** "Address Unknown." You can read that one in 25 minutes.

**Stewart:** I know you can.

**Birkner:** But it gave her a lot of cachet.

**Stewart:** It did, it did. She was a lovely woman, and certainly students liked her. One of the reasons [we did not interact much] is that our offices were never close. She shared her office with Francis Mason; their office was in what's now the Alumni Building.

**Birkner:** So they weren't even in your building.

**Stewart:** No. So the only time I saw her was -

**Birkner:** At department meetings and other functions.

**Stewart:** Right.

**Birkner:** I see. That would definitely tend you keep you apart. Geography's important.

**Stewart:** Yeah. I think she got to be fairly close to Janet Powers when Janet first came as an instructor in the department, and, of course, she was close to Ted and Mary. But I don't think that she was close to Jim.

**Birkner:** Did you have many interactions with Francis Mason?

**Stewart:** Oh, yes.

**Birkner:** Tell me about him.

**Stewart:** I liked Francis Mason. He read most of the time — I mean, in his classroom.

**Birkner:** Poetry or something else? From a manuscript? What was he reading?

**Stewart:** When he taught Milton, he read Paradise Lost to the students. But I saw him in his down years. Part of the time, Don Lindeman would have to walk him to class, and see that he got in. Once he was in the classroom, apparently he'd stay there, and complete the hour. But see, my office was right next to where he taught Milton. You know at Glatfelter, how faculty offices used to be attached to classrooms? The door between the classroom and the office was right at my desk, and I could hear what went on in the class, and that's all that went on.

**Birkner:** It must have been pretty stultifying for most of the students.

**Stewart:** Oh, it must've been terrible.

**Birkner:** He was of course one of Henry W. A. Hanson's boys early on, but that was a long time before.

**Stewart:** I think at one time he was quite a dynamic teacher. Dick Mara used to talk about him, and he apparently was a very hard grader, especially on papers and compositions.

**Birkner:** I've heard that. What did you think of the English Department that you were a part of? Did you ever have the time to think about it?

**Stewart:** *[laughs]* Yes. I thought it could be stronger. See, Ted wasn't there my first year, and I really was busy just trying to read and keep ahead of what I was teaching. But I liked people in the English Department. I thought when I first met Don Lindeman he was really sharp. Jim, of course, is impressive, I think, and I thought so then, and I was certainly bowled over with his memory. None of us were that struck with Dick. He was a nice, nice man, but not a very strong leader. In Ted's way, he used to refer to him as "our fearless leader."  
*[laughs]* But I saw possibilities in the department, and I liked the people I was working with. They knew a whole lot more than I did.

**Birkner:** You're generous in that regard, saying that. You've said it before. Let's take it in a slightly different direction. If you think about college or university departments in the 1950s, '60s, and '70s, you probably would say that the departments that had the most women in them tended to be Education and English. Yet when you came to Gettysburg, you had three women – that's not nothing, but [only] three in your early years at Gettysburg. When did you start getting a consciousness that there ought to be more parity, or at least more effort, to



get a woman's voice in the department? I'm curious about your role in that.

**Stewart:** As the '60s went on, I became more conscious of that, and I attended a very important MLA meeting [in] 1969. We had sessions that were like free-university sessions where they weren't on the program, but they were highly [charged]. People from Berkeley; I can't remember the man's name - I do know he was a Melville scholar. Franklin - was that his last name? I don't know. He was a firebrand. It was very anti-Vietnam. That was the big [thing].

**Birkner:** Wasn't there a person named Louis Kampf who ran for president of the MLA?

**Stewart:** I think he and Florence Howe were the two important leaders. They were both, I think, arrested. The police came in[to] the hotel and arrested some people.

**Birkner:** You were at this meeting and you were charged up by it?

**Stewart:** I was, and I went to a meeting of women convened by Florence Howe to discuss the representation of women in the MLA, the number of women who were presenters at the annual meetings, and the topics of concern to women on the program. These women concluded they wanted to make a motion at the general business meeting scheduled at the conclusion of the conference for the MLA to form a Woman's Caucus for the Modern Languages. It would

be concerned about women in the profession, their role in MLA, women's issues, and their presentations at MLA annual conferences. So I volunteered to be in that group. You wouldn't have remembered her, I don't think—Sherry Flynn.

**Birkner:** I don't know about her.

**Stewart:** She was an instructor here, and she was there, and she said she'd serve with me, and a couple of other women did, too. We wrote up a motion to form this caucus for women in MLA, and I was asked by Florence Howe and the other women to present it at the business meeting [of the MLA]. You can't imagine how many motions were being presented at that meeting. There was a whole queue, a whole line of us, and some of the people around me — men — made it known to me that my motion was frivolous, compared to theirs. But I stuck with it, presented it, and it passed. Then I was different when I came back.

**Birkner:** You carried some of that enthusiasm back with you to the Gettysburg campus.

**Stewart:** Oh, yeah.

**Birkner:** You're talking about 1969. '69, '70, and '71 are really the apex of the campus activism everywhere, and you have a lot of young people, male and female, who are charged up about a lot of things, Vietnam being a centerpiece but not the only thing. Student participation in the governance of the university was an issue. Fairer treatment of women was an

issue. I guess we should get into this a little bit. I always had the sense that you were a magnet for young women in particular who felt that we could be doing a better job at Gettysburg in terms of treating women [better] and giving women opportunities. Why don't you tell me a little bit about your perception of that? You had groupies, didn't you?

**Stewart:** I never thought of myself as having groupies.

**Birkner:** Women who called themselves Mary Margaret Stewart acolytes?

**Stewart:** Well, no, I don't know.

**Birkner:** In retrospect, women [graduates] tell me this, talking after 30, 40 years, that you were someone who meant a lot to them.

**Stewart:** I'm pleased if that's true. But it wouldn't be saying a whole lot. There weren't a whole lot of us on campus, and to have somebody among the few who speaks up, naturally . . .

**Birkner:** You were somebody they could talk to.

**Stewart:** Right, and I enjoyed their stopping by the office, and I think I attracted young women into my courses that wouldn't have taken those courses otherwise. Some of my most exciting teaching was teaching those early courses in what we now call Women's Studies. I think it was in the fall of 1972 when Ruth Bader Ginsburg came to campus as the Phi Beta Kappa scholar, and Jan Powers sent around a notice saying she was looking for

classes where Ruth Bader Ginsburg could speak. I thought, "My goodness, everybody would want her." So I wrote a note to Jan and said, "Jan, this course has nothing to do with law or justice or anything like that, but I'd be happy to have her in my women's course," whatever it was. So Jan sent her. To this day I treasure [that].

**Birkner:** Was it a good experience?

**Stewart:** Yes, it was wonderful. I told her that she could talk about anything she wanted to talk about to us. So she said, "I'll just talk a little about my background and what it was like to be a student at Harvard Law School; then I'll take any questions that the students have." So it was very exciting for all of us.

**Birkner:** Did the kids participate?

**Stewart:** Yes, they did.

**Birkner:** So it was a good moment.

**Stewart:** Oh, it was a wonderful moment, yes.

**Birkner:** How did things evolve in terms of the hiring process? What can you tell me about how, when there was a vacancy or a new position, how did the issue of gender play out?

**Stewart:** I think there were some of us that were very outspoken [about] the fact that we should be at least looking at women, and bringing them to campus. One of the things that we did [was this]. AAUP was active, and Chan Coulter was very active in

that, I remember – I think it was when he was president. At about the same time that MLA formed a Committee W, Chan appointed one for our local chapter, and I was on it, and I think Roger Stemen [was on it, too].

**Birkner:** Roger was in AAUP.

**Stewart:** Yeah, and Amie Tannenbaum, which wasn't her name then.

**Birkner:** Godman.

**Stewart:** Godman, yeah. We did a survey of the faculty, and we got permission to use the survey that American Studies had used. It was depressing, because it was clear that the faculty's attitude towards women was primarily [that] they belonged somewhere else, not here. The thing I regret more than anything – no, not more than anything, but I regret it – [is that] when I was cleaning out my office when I was retiring, I had all that stuff there. Did I think of the archives? No.

**Birkner:** That happens. It would've been very valuable stuff.

**Stewart:** Wouldn't it have been?

**Birkner:** What was the outcome of it, though? Did anything get pushed?

**Stewart:** Yes, I think so. For one thing, it raised awareness. I think that, to a large extent, people had been going on for years and they just hadn't really thought about it – hadn't thought about how important it is for women to have female

mentors as well as male mentors, and men too. So I don't think it was as difficult as it might have been [earlier].

**Birkner:** What was the cash value, though, of it? Did you get more hires in noticeable numbers of women?

**Stewart:** Oh, yes.

**Birkner:** How did it work out in the English Department? Tell me about your hires there. You had a woman named Pamela DiPesa for a while. Who was she, and how did she get in, what did she do, and how long did she last? Do you remember her?

**Stewart:** Yes, I remember her very much.

**Birkner:** There's a picture of you with her in one of the alumni magazines I've seen.

**Stewart:** I liked her a lot. She married John McComb.

**Birkner:** Did they then both move away together?

**Stewart:** Yes, they did. I think, however, that Pamela was on a [non-tenure track].

**Birkner:** Was McComb on a tenure track?

**Stewart:** Yes. McComb had tenure.

**Birkner:** Why did he choose to leave?

**Stewart:** He went down to Hopkins and got his degree in psychiatry, and he became a psychologist.

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

**Stewart:** Mm-hmm, and [then] he went into practice.

**Birkner:** That's unusual.

**Stewart:** I know. He was a very good teacher. He was a good person.

**Birkner:** You also had a colleague named Molly something or other.

**Stewart:** Molly Anne Marks. She's one of the brightest people that ever graduated from Yale. She earned her undergraduate degree from Cornell, and she then went to Yale, and worked with [Harold] Bloom. She was one of his key students.

**Birkner:** Did you have something to do with getting her hired here?

**Stewart:** Yes, and we almost didn't get her hired, because Basil [Crapster] was dean at the time, and he had problems with hiring women, I think. We had hired John McComb. John McComb's wife, at the time, taught at Towson, so they lived halfway between. Molly Anne was married to a man who was in medical school – he also was brilliant – at Johns Hopkins. They lived in Reisterstown. We couldn't hire Molly Anne because she would be commuting.

**Birkner:** That was Basil's view.

**Stewart:** That was Basil's view.

**Birkner:** He believed you had to live in Gettysburg.

**Stewart:** But why did he not question John McComb?

**Birkner:** That's right. It's a double standard.

**Stewart:** Yeah. Anyway, the department prevailed, and we got her. She, I thought, was a dynamic person. *[laughs]* But she felt that anything she said wouldn't get very far, so she'd come into my office and talk to me about this and this and this, and then I was to present it. So it was exciting when she was here, and she went on to go to [Oberlin].

**Birkner:** Is she still there, do you think?

**Stewart:** She's dead.

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

**Stewart:** Yeah. It's very sad. She went to Oberlin, and she did not get tenure as quickly as she thought she should. She was pretty sure of herself.

**Birkner:** She certainly had a good pedigree.

**Stewart:** Yes, she did. She was very good-looking on top of everything. She got in trouble because of her relationships on campus.

**Birkner:** Meaning, she was having relationships on campus?

**Stewart:** I don't think she was. She was very close to Tannenbaum.

**Birkner:** Ted Tannenbaum?

**Stewart:** Ted. And she was very close to John Loose. I thought they were just intellectually [close], but maybe I'm naïve. But they were seen on campus together a lot. I mean, they didn't hide anything. They weren't hiding anything. Ted got called in



to President Hanson's office, [and was told] that this was unseemly.

**Birkner:** He was already going through a divorce when I had him for a sociology class in 1970 or '71. I remember he was really good for the first half of the class, and the second half of the class he was terrible. A few years later I mentioned this to a friend in the Sociology Department [Don Hinrichs], and he said that was understandable because that was the semester Tannenbaum was going through his divorce, and he just lost it the second half of the semester. But he didn't have his Ph.D. and so he moved on. But Marks left Gettysburg. Did she leave because her marriage broke up, or did she leave because she was tired of Gettysburg, or just because the Oberlin thing was attractive? How'd that work?

**Stewart:** Her marriage did break up, although she and her husband always remained good friends. But I think she was climbing.

**Birkner:** Oberlin is a good offer if you can get it, right?

**Stewart:** Right, and certainly better than Gettysburg. She was here two years. Three years, at the most. I think the students liked her a lot, and she taught well. She was very bright, and she was fun to be with, because like Pat Srebrnik, her mind was always going. She had the ability, as Pat did – at least for me – to make me have more thoughts than I would ordinarily have,

exciting sort of things. Both of those women were wonderful. Anyway, she went to Oberlin, [and] she did not get what she wanted. So she quit teaching, and went to Penn and got her degree in law. Then she went with a law firm in New York, and she married one of the partners, and they had a child. She left the law firm; she didn't like the law firm; I didn't think she would. She was legal counsel for the Beth Israel hospital in New York City. Apparently she gave her child a birthday party, and at the end of the evening she came down with this terrible fever, and within a day or so she was dead. Her former husband was called in, because he was a doctor by that time with the Cornell Medical Center. He came in, he brought in all his friends, and they couldn't do anything for her. The funny thing is [that] I heard this from an eminent eighteenth-century scholar, Paula Bachscheider. I don't know if you know her at not; right now she's at Auburn. I chaired a session at an American Society for Eighteenth Century Studies annual meeting at McMaster University in Canada, and I asked Molly Anne to respond to a paper in my session on the poet William Blake, since Blake was her specialty. She just made all sorts of friends at that meeting, was invited to present a paper at the next annual meeting, and she became close friends with Paula Backscheider. I had lost contact with Molly Anne, so I was just

horrified to hear what happened to her. I learned [what happened] through talking with Paula at a later ASECS meeting.

**Birkner:** It's tragic. You've given me a sketch of her that includes elements I simply did not know. But she was part of what I guess you could call that transitional generation of women. You're a pioneer; she's more of a transitional person who is [in] the second wave, but not the wave yet where women are equal at the college.

**Stewart:** No. It's an interesting thing: professionally, she didn't publish under "Molly Anne Marks," she published under "M. A. Marks."

**Birkner:** That was deliberate, of course.

**Stewart:** Yes, it was. You know, a study at I think Penn State showed that if it were a man's name, or could be a man, could be a woman, it was more likely to get in [print].

**Birkner:** Let me ask you – do you ever think back and say if you had tried to submit under "M. M. Stewart" instead of "Mary Margaret Stewart" it might have [had] some different results?

**Stewart:** No, I don't think so.

**Birkner:** You think you got what you got because of the merit of the work that you did.

**Stewart:** Yes.

**Birkner:** So it didn't affect your ability to get into print.

**Stewart:** No. My advisor in graduate school, Phil Daghlian, told me, when I was ready to send out an article, [to] decide ahead of time what were the journals that I wanted to publish in, and rank them one through whatever. Send it out to one; if it comes back, send it out to two. I don't think I ever sent it out to more than two.

**Birkner:** That's pretty good. Since we're on that, I always wondered: you published a fair amount in a journal called Notes and Queries. Tell me what Notes and Queries is.

**Stewart:** It's a wonderful journal that's been going on since the nineteenth century, and it's mostly notes. There are some queries, you can say. But if you have a piece of information, which you think should get out there, but it isn't really an article, but might make an article later, you can put it in Notes and Queries. In our field, in literature, it has very good status.

**Birkner:** How would people find what they're looking for in Notes and Queries? Was it a well-indexed journal? Is that the idea?

**Stewart:** Yes, it was indexed. Of course, most of us went by the MLA Bibliography then, which was able back in those days to keep up.

**Birkner:** And [it] included pieces in Notes and Queries.

**Stewart:** Yes, Notes and Queries was one of their standard [publications].

**Birkner:** Who was the gatekeeper for Notes and Queries?

**Stewart:** He was a Fellow over at Oxford, a significant and recognized scholar. Oxford published this journal. It has always been at Oxford, dating back to the nineteenth century; it is still being published at Oxford.

**Birkner:** So just the fact that you submitted it didn't mean it got in. [The editor] had to decide it was worthwhile.

**Stewart:** Yes.

**Birkner:** Am I right in saying you published fairly often in that?

**Stewart:** I did.

**Birkner:** And you published in Eighteenth Century Studies at some point, which would be a major journal in your field?

**Stewart:** Yeah, and I [published] in Philological Quarterly. MLA was my first.

**Birkner:** Which is a big deal.

**Stewart:** Yeah, it was nice. It was my second choice, though.

*[laughter]*

**Birkner:** Of course, it really wasn't until the era of Dave Potts that publishing was given very much in the way of recognition [at the college], isn't that right?

**Stewart:** That's right.

**Birkner:** You were in a department that was not going gangbusters about publishing, so the senior people were not necessarily going to say, "You get a blue ribbon for having gotten something in MLA." They might not even talk about it.

**Stewart:** No, but I think it did show up in Tenure and Promotion.

**Birkner:** You slid right through those.

**Stewart:** Yeah, and I went up the ladder much faster than Ted or Jim.

**Birkner:** Let me ask you this. Do you have a sense of where you were in the pecking order of women getting to be full professor at Gettysburg College? Were you the first to get full professor?

**Stewart:** No.

**Birkner:** Was Kathrine Kressman Taylor a full professor?

**Stewart:** I think Kathrine [was], yes.

**Birkner:** So she had it. I wasn't even aware that she was full-time. She was full-time as a full professor.

**Stewart:** She got tenure.

**Birkner:** So she had to have been. But how many other women? You would have been tenured before Ruth Pavlantos came in.

**Stewart:** Yes. Grace [Kenney] was tenured.

**Birkner:** But Grace never got to be full professor.

**Stewart:** No, she didn't.

**Birkner:** I [can] just count on the fingers of one hand the senior women in the various departments. Someone like the woman who taught for many years in Biology, Rowland Logan – she never even had a Ph.D.

**Stewart:** Didn't she?

**Birkner:** She did not, and she was never more than an assistant professor. Carol Small, who was Carol Daborn, never got her Ph.D.; she was never more than an assistant professor. I think she's still on the faculty.

**Stewart:** She is.

**Birkner:** It's kind of an odd circumstance.

**Stewart:** President Hanson saved her.

**Birkner:** He didn't want to deny tenure to two people in a family.

**Stewart:** I don't think that was it.

**Birkner:** That's what I heard; that they had denied tenure to her husband the same year.

**Stewart:** I heard that he rebuked the Personnel Committee for not having said something to her – that we kept her too long. The AAUP had come after us.

**Birkner:** I heard that story about the fellow in the Classics Department named Howard Parks, and that Ruth Pavlantos forgot when he was due for his tenure review, and that Hanson rebuked her for that. I don't know how they eventually got rid of him,

but they did. But he was given tenure because of the AAUP rules. I thought with Daborn, who now is Small, that the story was that, A, she promised to finish her Ph.D., and B, her husband had just been denied tenure, and [that] Hanson – I was told this by more than one source – did not want to, quote, “throw them out on the street.” That’s an odd story; it wouldn't happen that way today [I assume].

**Stewart:** You know that Howard’s wife still lives in town.

**Birkner:** No, I did not know that.

**Stewart:** That’s Gladys Parks.

**Birkner:** I do not know her. Is he deceased?

**Stewart:** Yes, he is. I think he had mental issues, problems.

**Birkner:** It’s very possible. Let’s get back to the plot. You were, early on, a formidable presence in the English program. You were a mentor to many young women, particularly in this very exciting period of history. Did you ever think about leaving Gettysburg College?

**Stewart:** Yes, but not really seriously. I was invited to interview for dean at Keuka College in New York State, a small women’s college in upstate New York in the Finger Lakes Region. Following the interview the President of Keuka called to invite me for a follow up interview, but I told him, “No thank you, I have decided I do not want to work in administration.” When I



went to graduate school, I was interested in administration as much as teaching, and then I fell in love with research.

**Birkner:** I always had that sense about you, that you were the teacher-scholar, or scholar-teacher. So [becoming a dean] was never really a big part of your thinking. Where did you find your community? Was it with people outside of the academic world, or was it within the Gettysburg academic world? What was your community?

**Stewart:** When I first came, I was very active in the Presbyterian Church, so I got to know people there, like the Sheens, the Lotts, [and] the Cordells. Some of those people at the Presbyterian Church were college people, too, like the Moorheads and others. Then I sort of pulled away from the church, and I would say that my social community was mostly the college. I think the college more and more consumed my time. I still belong to a bridge group that was part community and part college.

**Birkner:** That overlapped.

**Stewart:** Yes. But I've gotten, since retirement, much more involved in the community. Within the college, I would say that, when I first started here, intellectually, I was closer to the History Department than [to] the English Department. The History Department at that time was Norm, and George, and Basil, and Charlie.

**Birkner:** Richard Marius too.

**Stewart:** Yes. They had a very active Phi Alpha Theta, and I was a member of Phi Alpha Theta from my undergraduate school. So I went over there, and people within the English Department used to kid that I was really a historian, not a literary person. The other group I was close to, socially, was the Biology Department. Very close to Bob and Betty Barnes, and the Cavaliers; even the Darrahs, too, to some extent, and the Winkelmanns, of course. I felt very much at ease with them, and when I first came, we walked up the same stairs in Glatfelter. We were on the second floor. One of the persons who were so kind to me when I first came was Dr. [Earl] Bowen in the Biology Department, and of course I didn't realize he had heart problems, so it took him a while to go up the steps. He'd say, "You go ahead, Mary Margaret," and I'd say, "No, no, no," so we'd saunter up the steps together. Another person who was on the second floor who was so kind to me was Dr. [Earl] Ziegler.

**Birkner:** Who was Dr. Ziegler?

**Stewart:** He was in the Math Department, and he was a graduate of Gettysburg. He told me about [the Glatfelter] rebuilding — that's why I loved that postcard that Robin made and sent to me of the construction in '29. He told me about the stairway that had been. We had an old wooden, circular staircase that came down, which must have been magnificent, and of course when they

fireproofed the building they changed all that. But it was fun.  
Do you know the Shealers in town?

**Birkner:** I don't.

**Stewart:** Sue Shealer is his daughter.

**Birkner:** That leads me to the question of what it was like living in Gettysburg in the '60s. You could still go to Dengler's Market, and you still had department stores, and you still had bakeries, right? It must have been a nice [time] walking downtown.

**Stewart:** It was. It was lovely. Jacobs Brothers was a really good grocery store.

**Birkner:** Where was that?

**Stewart:** That's where Hauser's is now.

**Birkner:** The winery?

**Stewart:** Their downtown wine store. That was Jacobs Brothers. The Jacobs were brothers, and they married sisters, and they lived near where you live on [East] Broadway, where Ralph Oyler lived. They had two families in there.

**Birkner:** I know exactly what house you mean.

**Stewart:** One of the sisters worked at the store, and the other sister stayed home and kept house with the children. I rented a house from them for a while, because I rented that last house on Carlisle Street.

**Birkner:** All the way down toward the north side of town.

**Stewart:** Yeah, right next to the jail. *[laughs]*

That's how I got to know Curt Musselman when he was a little boy.

**Birkner:** Right, because his mom owned the house next to Mayor Troxell [on the north side of East Broadway]. So you enjoyed living in town.

**Stewart:** I did. I lived in the country for a while; that's how I met the Cavaliers. Actually, I lived on Knoxlyn-Ortanna Road.

**Birkner:** What possessed you to do that?

**Stewart:** I needed a place to live, and Hal and Mary Ann Closson — he was director of the Student Union — were very good friends of mine, partly from the college and partly from the church. They lived out there, and so I got this little house. I loved living in the country. When the Vannorsdales first came to Gettysburg, they lived in the house across the road from me. After the Vannorsdalls bought their farm, someone else (whose name I forget) lived there. Then Shirlee and Ralph Cavaliere lived there when they first came to Gettysburg. And then the Clossons, the Cavaliers, and I all moved to town.

**Birkner:** They've remained your friends.

**Stewart:** Yes.

**Birkner:** Sounds like you had a pretty good network, between church and college and others you knew in town.

**Stewart:** I did. I like it here.

**Birkner:** You had also, I assume, research you could do in Washington DC, [at] the Folger [Shakespeare Library] or other places?

**Stewart:** Yes. When I first came and was still working on Boswell, I used to go down to the old Peabody Library. Have you ever been there?

**Birkner:** No.

**Stewart:** It's now a part of the city system, but it's still in the old building. That was wonderful. It was like coming into the middle of the nineteenth century, [with] these little tiny cage elevators that go up. But they had a complete set of the Boswell papers, so I would drive down there. Then I began going to the Library of Congress and Folger.

**Birkner:** You were fortunate compared to a lot of scholars, because you were 90 miles away.

**Stewart:** I know. There was a very active period where I taught until 10:40 in the morning on Tuesday and Thursday, [on Thursday] jumped into my car, drove down to the Folger –

**Birkner:** And worked all afternoon. We always have energy when we're young, don't we?

**Stewart:** I know. *[laughs]*

**Birkner:** You got some good work done and met some good people there, I'm sure.

**Stewart:** Yes. It was really fun when people like Janet Stavropoulos came, and she worked down there too.

**Birkner:** Did you have something to do with her hire?

**Stewart:** I was for her.

**Birkner:** You didn't particularly recruit her. She applied and she was in the pool, and it winnowed down, and you liked her. I just saw her briefly a few days ago.

**Stewart:** I had dinner with her. She's still dynamic.

**Birkner:** She found a good career change, and met a new man, and that's really a good thing for her.

**Stewart:** It was.

**Birkner:** It sounds like she has a good life in Bloomington.

**Stewart:** I think she does. And you know her heart's always been in Bloomington.

**Birkner:** I know to some degree, and also partly in Gettysburg. She still is very loyal to Gettysburg.

**Stewart:** She is.

**Birkner:** She's been very supportive of Ted's fund at the library, as you know. I was curious, did you ever have any run-ins – I don't mean in a bad way, but just in terms of interactions – with Donna Schaper and the women of 1969 who led that sit-in in the CUB to try to have a moratorium to talk about parietal hours? Were you ever a part of any of that conversation? You know what I'm talking about here – that women

had to sign in and out, whereas men didn't? It was a double standard. Donna led this movement in '69, and ultimately they reduced and then got rid of the parietal hours for women. Were you ever involved in any way in that?

**Stewart:** No, not really. I supported them. Donna took courses from me; we knew each other. I remember one time I got very angry with Carey Moore. He said something I thought was derogatory about Donna, and so I stood up and surprised myself, because Donna could get to people – all of us. Since then I've seen Donna; we were on a panel together at an alumni event.

**Birkner:** She's quite a dynamo still.

**Stewart:** She is.

**Birkner:** She's had a good career. [She] married a twentieth century American historian. They now have a wonderful place to live in downtown Greenwich Village. She's the head of the Judson Memorial Church, which is a prestigious, kind of old Evangelical Church; very socially conscious, I should say. I was going to ask you whether you made any special concern or effort to promote your better students toward Ph.D.'s in English literature. Do you have any particular memories of that? Did any of your students go on to find things as college teachers or scholars?

**Stewart:** They have, but I'm not sure how I [influenced that].

**Birkner:** You didn't make it a special crusade. You just supported them when they wanted to do it.

**Stewart:** Right.

**Birkner:** You did write letters for people to go on and get Ph.D.'s.

**Stewart:** Right. We did send a number of them.

**Birkner:** The English Department has long had a prestigious lecture called the Croll Lecture. Did you bring back some Gettysburg Ph.D.'s that you had taught?

**Stewart:** No, but Molly Ann Marks and I were the ones that suggested the Croll Lecture.

**Birkner:** Where did the money come from?

**Stewart:** President Glassick gave it. No, it wasn't Glassick. I don't know, we just -

**Birkner:** You conceived of it because he'd been a Distinguished Scholar and he was a Gettysburg alumnus.

**Stewart:** Yes.

**Birkner:** I remember attending one of these lectures that Benjamin DeMott gave, from Amherst College, in which he commenced the lecture by saying that when he was a young man he was still reading Morris Croll's stuff. You're talking several generations later. That's amazing.

**Stewart:** It is. His father taught here - Croll's father.

**Birkner:** His brother was a librarian.



**Stewart:** No, his father was a librarian.

**Birkner:** Oh, was Morris Croll's father the librarian? I thought it was his brother.

**Stewart:** Yeah, and [he was] in the Math Department.

**Birkner:** I didn't realize.

**Stewart:** That's his father. He was at Princeton where all the biggies [were], during the days that all the writers were there. Do you know that Pamela DiPesa's dissertation is based on Croll's work?

**Birkner:** Since you mention her again, where did she go?

**Stewart:** She married John [McComb].

**Birkner:** She married John and they left, and he became a psychologist. I guess I never tied up the loose end of what happened to her.

**Stewart:** She was, at one time — I don't know what she's doing now — working for the House of Ruth. It's a women's [organization].

**Birkner:** I've heard of that. You were department chair for a little while. Was that a good or a frustrating experience?

**Stewart:** I thought it was a good experience.

**Birkner:** In the '90s?

**Stewart:** No, in the '80s. But before we go on from the '70s, one of the things that I am most proud of is having served on the Title IX Committee.

**Birkner:** I've talked to Nancy Locher about that.

**Stewart:** Nancy was a wonderful chair.

**Birkner:** That of course was designed to give women more opportunities in sports in particular, right? Or was it more general?

**Stewart:** In particular, but it went to everything. It had to do with hours. The women had to eat in the dining hall, and the men could get released [and] go to a fraternity. It went across all of those lines. Now what got most of the publicity, and what was very important, was the athletics. But it was far more than just that. I say she was a good chair; she was very well-organized, and she kept things on schedule, and she kept us in line. But if we said President Hanson should be talked [to], she would not hesitate to go down there and talk to him about something that he might not have been too happy to hear. We had a good committee. Bob Nordvall was on the committee, Ron Couchman was on the committee, and Dick Wescott was on the committee.

**Birkner:** I remember reading an article that Bob Nordvall wrote for the alumni magazine about Title IX. This goes back 30 years or more. But you're grateful for that. I can remember serving with you when you were chair of the Middle States Committee, when Bob Barnes was expected to chair and got terminally ill with cancer. You were very kind to step in.

**Stewart:** Is that what happened? That was ninety-something.

**Birkner:** Early '90s. I was a young faculty member at the time.

**Stewart:** I was talking to Barb and Pat yesterday, because we've had such a nice review [by the Middle States visitation team in 2014]. I said to them, "This is the strangest thing. I remember that I did that, but I remember nothing else." [That] really is frightening in a way. Now that you mention it, Bob was involved. That may trigger why I have suppressed everything, because we were such close, dear friends.

**Birkner:** I suspect you were chosen to be on the committee, and when he grew ill – and he grew ill very early on – they probably were desperate in the sense of losing their chair, and you were the senior person, and they went to you and said, "Would you please step forward," and you did. It's a very important assignment. I remember how on-task you always were, and I always admired that. But the sad part of it was that Bob passed away within a few months.

I wanted to look a little bit synoptically before we close, and ask you about broader issues of satisfaction and, if any, regrets. You have already told me that you don't think if you had signed your name "M. M. Stewart" it would have made any significant difference in terms of your scholarly output. What about your overall experience at Gettysburg College? I realize that you can't know exactly what women were experiencing at

comparable colleges, but you did talk to peers, and then you have your own experience to judge by. How do you feel about your career? Do you come out and say, "I'm really glad I did this the way I did it?"

**Stewart:** I think at the beginning, I thought [that] if I had been a man, I would've had more job opportunities.

**Birkner:** I don't think there's any doubt of that, Mary Margaret.

**Stewart:** Right. But once I came and once I made good friends and I loved the area . . . I sometimes regret that I wasn't more disciplined. I can't get work done like you can, because I don't stay on task the way you do. I've wasted a lot of time.

**Birkner:** But "waste" is a subjective term. You had meaningful friendships; that's not a waste.

**Stewart:** I know. But I think I could've done a little more than that.

**Birkner:** I think everybody would say that, honestly. But in terms of the life you lived, and the work you did as a teacher-scholar, you look back and say, "I did okay"?

**Stewart:** Yes, I think I did okay. Now books are so important [in academia]. [Frederick] Pottle thought my dissertation was going to be published, but nobody wanted it, and I didn't really revise it in the right way.

**Birkner:** In those days it wasn't as important, because the intensity of the whole tenure process was very different back 40 years ago – absolutely different. Norm Forness once told me he didn't know he had tenure until he was walking on the campus and Bob Bloom passed him and mentioned that he had tenure. Whether that's true or not, I can't vouch, but he said it.

**Stewart:** I bet it is.

**Birkner:** That was 1972. It's amazing how different things were. You've certainly seen tremendous changes in terms of the gender balance in the school, in terms of the respectfulness that people have – not that we're in any ideal world – for women, in terms of the diversity of the campus, in terms of faculty and students. You've seen a lot of that over a long period of time.

**Stewart:** I have. I have to admit that when we began, particularly in the '90s, when we began hiring more women, I found that very invigorating, and I hadn't realized that I had missed women's companionship along the way. I mean, I had students, but that's [different], you know. In the English Department, most of the women through the years were adjuncts, some of them very talented. But I think it might have been more fun all the way through if [there had been more women].

**Birkner:** That seems like a reasonable premise to me.

[laughter] Which president that you served under did you think most highly of?

**Stewart:** The one I liked the best was General Paul, but I didn't know him for very long, and I can understand why he riled the faculty and the students, because he did sometimes treat us as if we were military. I think [C.A.] Hanson did a good job in making us more aware of academics, and the importance of academics. The trouble with him is that he was dean at Cornell and he wanted to be dean at Gettysburg too, and he was. That was a disadvantage. I liked Glassick a lot, and I think Glassick, as I've told you before, did a lot for the school. He got us involved outside ourselves, you know? He became involved in other groups. I can't help but think that [enhanced] the prestige [of the school].

**Birkner:** Many different and new interdisciplinary programs, and using David Potts as his lightning rod or hit man, whatever you want to call him, [he] changed the emphasis on accountability for your scholarly output, which Jim Pickering never liked and others never liked, but which we've adapted to, wouldn't you say?

**Stewart:** Yeah.

**Birkner:** What did you think of Gordon Haaland?

**Stewart:** I didn't care as much for Gordon Haaland.

**Birkner:** Was it because he was more aloof, or for other reasons?

**Stewart:** I just don't really have much feeling one way or the other about him. He kept the ship going. But he wasn't my first choice.

**Birkner:** I only have one more question to ask you. Do you have specific memory of your last year teaching full-time, and was your decision to retire preconceived, or did you make it on the spur of the moment after you'd taught at the end of the year? How did that work?

**Stewart:** It happened in the middle of the year. I just thought, "I can't do this another year." I was on an ad hoc committee for personnel; somebody had been denied tenure. I can't remember who it was, and it doesn't matter. It was a nice committee; Lisa [Portmess] was chair, I think. But I'd go and I'd think, "God, I've heard this just time after time." The meeting was in the conference room by the president's office, and as I walked back to Glatfelter, I said, "This is it. I'm going to go talk to Janet [Riggs]," because Janet was the provost then. They'd offered a special deal.

**Birkner:** So it connected.

**Stewart:** Yes, it did.

**Birkner:** Which reminds me, if you'll forgive me for asking an add-on to what I thought was my last question. We may have to

take this out of the tape if necessary, but did you serve on a special committee with Roger Stemen to evaluate a gender discrimination or harassment case in a department?

**Stewart:** Yes, I did.

**Birkner:** What do you say about that? Anything?

**Stewart:** I think this is probably one of several things that I would think about it. It makes me not respect Haaland as much as I could. I think that person was a close friend of his, and I think he got special treatment.

**Birkner:** In other words, you did the fact-finding, but the results didn't necessarily logically flow from the fact-finding.

**Stewart:** It was Roger and me, and what was her name — she was from the Dean's Office.

**Birkner:** Liliane Floge?

**Stewart:** Yes, Liliane Floge. That's another thing — I don't think Haaland liked Liliane Floge, and so that played into it too. And poor Roger and [I] didn't count for much, I don't think.

**Birkner:** So what you're saying is you did your due diligence, but you don't think that really justice flowed from the case.

**Stewart:** Roger doesn't talk about these things, but I don't think that Roger felt that, either.

**Birkner:** That's the impression I got, although I don't know what detail we ever went into together about it. I did



interview him, and he alluded to it, but that's as much as I can remember.

**Stewart:** This is off the subject, but did you know that Roger and I were in graduate school together?

**Birkner:** I did not. I knew you were both at Indiana, but I didn't know you were contemporaries. But I guess it makes sense.

**Stewart:** We were.

**Birkner:** What a nice connection.

**Stewart:** We had social connections too. He was dating very seriously a woman, Peggy somebody, who was in the English Department, and I was dating for a while somebody in a group he ran around with. They're an Eastern European History group.

**Birkner:** Indiana always had a strength in that area.

**Stewart:** Yes, and he ran around with that group of young men. They were very interesting people.

**Birkner:** I did not know that.

**Stewart:** Yeah. Anyway, at the beginning of I think the second or third year I'd been here, Bob Bloom said to me, "Mary Margaret, we've hired somebody that knew you in graduate school." I said, "Who?" He said, "John Stemen." [laughter] I didn't know anybody [by that name].

**Birkner:** He had bungled the name.

**Stewart:** No, his name is John Roger Stemen.

**Birkner:** John Roger Stemen.

**Stewart:** Yeah. He left out the "Roger."

**Birkner:** "Roger" is what he went by.

**Stewart:** Yeah. We had our faculty meeting up on the second floor [of] Weidensall when that used to be a big auditorium, and I was coming down the steps, and in the office there on the first floor at the bottom of the stairs, I always associated it with Chan Coulter, but that was then one of the history offices. I came down and I looked, and there was Roger Stemen, and I said, "Roger, what are you doing here?" *[laughs]*

**Birkner:** He said, "I'm teaching here now." That's a lovely story, and perhaps a nice thing to end on. I want to say it's been a privilege and a pleasure to talk with you. I may yet come back at you with some further specifics.

**Stewart:** We didn't say anything about being the chair of the department.

**Birkner:** You didn't volunteer much.

**Stewart:** I think it's because I didn't want us to miss '72 [and Title IX].

**Birkner:** Do you want to say something quickly now?

**Stewart:** I was anxious to be chair not because I wanted to be the first woman chair of the department, but I just thought there were things -- like the January term: I thought of what could be, you know. Once I was in the office, I was glad to

pass it on, about the third year. The first year, you don't know what you're doing; the second year, it all comes. Third year, it begins to get old. Fourth and fifth . . . Are they down to three now?

**Birkner:** Our current chair's in this third three-year term. I did it for 10 years. But your point is still well-taken; I think three or four is probably about right for most people.

**Stewart:** Of course, I was chair when Dave Potts's evaluation thing was coming through. Every year I was chair, I interviewed every member of the department, and the adjuncts too.

**Birkner:** That's a lot of work. You have a big department.

**Stewart:** Yes, and [I] wrote something up on each person. In time, it got to a satisfactory [level]. A member comes up for evaluation now every so often, so the chair doesn't have to write evaluations on every member every year.

**Birkner:** That's my recollection as to how I did it by the time I was in. This has been great.

END INTERVIEW