



Margaret Carter Oral History Interview, April 18, 2016

Title

“Carrying Education Wherever You Go”

Date

April 18, 2016

Location

Carter residence, Portland, Oregon.

Summary

In the interview, Carter discusses her family background and upbringing in Shreveport, Louisiana, commenting on her love of school, her keen interest in music and oratory, and the important roles that her parents played in shaping her values. She then notes her abbreviated undergraduate experience at Grambling State University, her decision to marry and leave school, the jobs that she held in the years that followed, and the violent abuse that she suffered at the hands of her husband.

From there, Carter describes the vision and the circumstances that led her to move herself and her five children to Oregon. She likewise recounts the resurrection of her college ambitions, her initial contacts with Oregon State University, and her enrollment in OSU's Portland-based master's in counseling program. In reflecting on her stint as an OSU graduate student, Carter details the ways in which the program was structured, the impact that it made on her, and her ultimate transition into a counseling position at Portland Community College.

The remainder of the session is chiefly devoted to Carter's years of service in the Oregon legislature. In this, she relays the story behind her decision to run for office, speaks of her first political campaign, and notes her early involvement in a variety of educational issues. In addition, Carter reflects on run-ins that she had with various political opponents and outlines her activities as chair of the Joint Budget Committee.

The interview concludes with an expression of appreciation for the role that OSU played in Carter's life and advice that she would pass along to students of today.

Interviewee

Margaret Carter

Interviewer

Janice Dilg

Website

<http://scarc.library.oregonstate.edu/oh150/carter/>

Transcript

Janice Dilg: Today is April 19th, 2016. My name is Janice Dilg, I'm the oral historian for the OSU 150 Oral History Project, and I'm here today with Margaret L. Carter in her home in northeast Portland, to interview her about her experiences with OSU. Welcome.

Margaret Carter: Thank you.

JD: If you would please start by talking – a little brief family history. Where you were born, you're early life.

MC: I was born in Shreveport, Louisiana to parents who were very involved and connected in the community. My father was a Baptist minister and he was a home builder. And my mother worked alongside him during the summer months when she was off, because during the school year she was a cook, the head cook at the school cafeteria, which she loved greatly.

I grew up with sisters – a family of nine children – and I was the eighth child born to Emma Carter and Sam Carter. And as the youngest daughter in the family, I had a brother younger than me, who was bratty as all outdoors. But we had a great family life and today, when I moved to Oregon, my siblings all moved here as well. So we had a great life.

I was a singer and a speaker growing up in school. In those days, they had oratorical contests and you had to be a part of what was the largest communication system that we had in those days. It was great, growing up.

JD: Did you like school? What were your favorite subjects?

MC: I absolutely loved school. I could not start when other kids started because I was so small, they said I was too small to come to school. So I didn't start school until I was seven years of age. And at that time, they could decide you couldn't come because of your size or something of that nature. But I was really kind of a kid who was very inquisitive and who read a lot, so I was promoted twice a year from the first grade to the second grade, from the third grade to the fourth grade, and then from the sixth grade to the eighth grade. So I caught up in years in that way. But I loved school, I loved sports even until this day – I'm a Blazers thirty-one year season ticket holder. I love that. And I've always been a singer – we sang semi-professionally all over the country. And for the first years of my schooling, I won first place in oratorical contests.

So I had a very very rich life, and in those days you just didn't know that you were poor either. That's another thing. And so my father as a home builder and as a minister, when the church could not pay him, they would go out to the cattle area and give us meat and give us eggs and give us chicken. So I never knew any other lifestyle. So it was a great life that I was raised in in Shreveport, Louisiana.

But life dealt me a great hand in that I had the kind of talent that people were always seeking out. So my mother would go with me and send some of the other older kids to chaperone me and do things as I spoke and as I sung across the country.

JD: And you were clearly an excellent student as well, in that you were the salutatorian for your high school.

MC: I was. I was the first soprano voice in the choir in school, and we represented the school at Grambling State University in musical contests. As salutatorian of my class, I always wanted to shine academically because I was so verbal. I mean, almost to the point of being bratty verbal; wanting to talk all the time and that kind of stuff. But I loved language – it's lyrical, it's musical to me. Language is beautiful and I wanted to do it correctly. So literature and English and music, being in the drama program, all of those were things that piqued my interest very very early on in my life. As a matter of fact, I go back to the third grade, and I was the lead singer that sung a solo in school. So it never bothered me about a crowd or something of that nature, because I've always been pushed to the front, which was quite exciting. Scary sometimes, but exciting, because I loved memorizing poetry and remembering very much the different parts of speech. That was me and I enjoyed it very much and I don't even complain about it today.

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JD: It sounds like your parents were very supportive of your efforts and your education, what was their thinking and your thinking about whether you would go on to college after high school?

MC: There was never any doubt in my mind that I would go to college. Paying for it was a doubt, so I had to academically keep myself up so I would hopefully get a scholarship to go to college. Because there were nine kids and even though my father was a home builder and my mom worked, it's still hard to educate, in those days – it would be today as well – it's hard to educate kids in higher education at that time. But, you know, we figured it out and I went to Grambling State University, and that was an exciting time in my life as well, and I enjoyed that a lot.

But my parents, as a minister, my father had to be a great motivator. Because in those days, the minister was the person, the face, of the African American community. Whenever anything went wrong, whether it was with law enforcement, whether it was civil rights issues – my parents were very strong advocates of civil rights. As a matter of fact, I remember being six years of age and my mother would take us by our hands and we would have to go and deliver voter registration cards to the community to get them signed up, because people were afraid to vote in those days as well. So as a civil rights organizer/minister, my father was, we were involved very early on in that whole political arena. Nobody in my family, prior to me, ever ran for political office. I don't know where I got this from, but it happened.

And so that was quite exciting, because I was civically engaged, academically engaged, spiritually engaged, which today I see as a very balanced life. Because I knew what it was to be on the forefront of what was happening around the issue of race and race relations in the South at that point. Even though it was a very scary time, we did it. Because my father, when they were going to a meeting in rural Louisiana, my father and his minister friend and my mom and Reverend Page's wife were in the car and the Ku Klux Klan ran them off the road and they stayed the night in a hospital that night, from that.

But we came to know who we were, our engagement, and how we were going to make a difference in our community. My father would never ever let us not know that we had responsibility to the Lord, to our community, and to our self, in that order. You just had to make that kind of sacrifice in order to do it. So even before John F. Kennedy came out with the thoughts on what you can do for your country and what your country can do for you, my father told us, "your commitment to the Lord is your first priority, and helping your community to be a stronger community is what you do next, because whatever you do, your community is never any less than who you are."

JD: Great training. So you attended Grambling for a few years and, like many people, got married, started a family. How did you end up coming to Oregon when you decided that you needed a major change?

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MC: Exactly. Well again, in those days, women went to college to find a mate.

JD: [laughs] The MRS degree.

MC: The MRS degree is right, that's exactly right! And so, you know, if you're going to get married in my father's way of thinking, you may as well get involved with the crème de la crème. And that's where the crème de la crème was, kids that were in college who came from successful parents and that kind of stuff. So that was their way of keeping that.

So I dropped out of college after two and a half years, and got married, and married a man from Buffalo, New York. And I thought I was on top of the world because I played piano for the church. So therefore, with him being in the military and being gone, I had a full-time job at an ammunition plant. Even before it was popular, Janice, I should tell you that I worked at an ammunition plant and I saw two lines blow up, where people were killed. And we nearly had one on the line where I was working and I just knew I was a goner. So I've always worked and carried on my work. I knew that, on Sundays, where I'd be. On Wednesday night, Thursday night, I'd be having choir rehearsal in rural communities and that kind of stuff. I always loved being able to make a difference in rural communities, because I don't think they have the kind of broad categories of talent that you do in the city. And so I wanted my work to be in rural Louisiana.

But I tell you, I've done a lot of different things. I sold Fuller Brush, I sold Amway products, I sold Avon. I just always that if anybody made it in America, Margaret Carter would, because I did not mind trying anything that was legal and that was something good in our community. I loved that a lot.

So after being married – getting out and marrying and for thirteen years, the last five years of my married life was torrid. Just terrible. I did not know at the time, my husband was one of those people who had PTSD, and I just put that together here lately after his death. And he was very violent, so for all of those years, I was brutally beaten and put in the hospital on many different occasions. That last one being in 1967, when my jaw bone was broken. And I got out of the hospital, and getting out of the hospital – which was very unusual on a Sunday, and I don't know what that means except that it was all unusual happenings, I'd say – and that Monday night, after I'd been home, I had this vision that I was in this very far away place. And it had a lot of greenery and beautiful, beautiful red flowers.

And having that vision – I follow my dreams. It might sound weird and different to other people, but in my dream I was told to go on the right-hand side of my bed and I'd find some pearls. Pearls from the gentleman that I was really engaged to get married to because he was one of the deacons in the church, but so much for that. And underneath those pearls was the phone number of friends that left Louisiana and came to Oregon. I didn't know it at the time, because I asked them, in talking to them, "where is the 503 area code?" And she said, "silly, this is Oregon, where you just called." And we talked and talked about what was going on and she said, "I detect some sadness in you Margaret. That's not like you, because you're always joyful." I said, "well, I just got out of the hospital – my husband put me in the hospital – and tell me about Oregon." I just cut it off, I said, "tell me about Oregon."

And she said, "Oregon is the most beautiful; it's like heaven." She said, "it's beautiful greenery, we're an hour and a half from the beach, an hour and a half away from the mountains, and it's beautiful, Margaret, you should come." I said, "tell me about flowers." She said, "we have the most beautiful red roses everywhere, we have even a rose festival parade. You should come." I said, "but I have five children." She said, "that's no problem, we will take care of that." And she called me back again after I'd hung up and said, "and don't forget to bring your children, because Oregon is a place that it rains a lot and you might not like it at first. So bring the children so you won't have an excuse to go back home."

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So there I was. That was on a Tuesday. On Friday, I was selling furniture – all because of this dream – I was selling as much furniture as I could, put the rest in storage, and on Saturday, November the 30th, 1967, five little kids, eleven to three, were on the train with their mom coming to Portland, Oregon. Never saw it before, only in my dream, that it was a beautiful place with beautiful red roses. And those people were kind enough, they didn't break my family up. They allowed me and five children to move into their home. The Davis family was just off the hook with kindness, it was great.

I was still dealing with some level of depression after being beaten, my jawbone and stuff were still a little sore. But seven days after I arrived, I started working at The 88 Cent Store – which was one of the largest stores here in northeast Portland – for the Christmas holidays, working in the back room putting gifts together and everything. It didn't bother me that I had nearly three years of college education, didn't bother me. Whatever I could do to make a legal living for my children and for me to move ahead was what I wanted to do.

So I was really blessed. Some other people discovered me, and in January of 1968, I started working as a teacher assistant at King Elementary School, which was in Highland Elementary School. And the rest has been history about the chapters in my life. It's been absolutely wonderful.

JD: Well, and you resurrected your college aspirations. Talk a little about how you got your undergraduate degree at Portland State.

MC: Right. Well, I went on – I have to tell you a funny thing, I had no means of going to school. And so I had to quit my job if I wanted to go to school, but the principal at my school said, "I want you to teach reading. So we need to get you back in college." And he gave me the address, the card and name of a young woman he wanted me to see, who later became my friend, former Senator and civil rights leader, BLI – Bureau of Labor and Industry – director, Mary Wendy Roberts. And she was young and energetic and just moving ahead in life. And I happened to talk with her and she got me all tested and everything. But when I got ready to go to school, it was interesting, they said I had to see a psychologist, because they didn't know that I could be successful. [laughs] Yes.

So I did that and after they saw that I could be successful, we got into Portland State. We started at a community college just to brush up and transferred to Portland State. I did my undergraduate work there and started teaching at Albina Youth

Opportunity School. I was teaching reading there when, again, I was discovered by a professor, Edward F. Fuller, who was on the faculty at Oregon State University. And I was just talking, I cannot believe that Portland State, the inner-city school, does not have a counseling program. We had no counseling program.

But thank God for the visionaries of Oregon State University that worked with the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory and brought this master's-level program into Portland so those of us who wanted to have master's degrees in counseling could go to school and that possibility would become a reality for us. Which it did. I was in the second class when I heard about it. And it was great and we had live experiences. These people were total visionaries. If you didn't know what area of counseling you were going in, you still had to go and practice. We had employment practice, we had mental – we had to go to the state hospital and when those big doors closed on you, it was something else. We had to go into the prison system. And my experience was at Portland Community College in their Counseling department.

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So that following season, which was September 1973, I started work at Portland Community College as a result of my graduate studies at Oregon State. And we'd have to go on the campus and be on the campus a weekend a month. And we marched with the regular graduating class because we had all the professors that were teaching us as well.

And that's the kind of visionary that this university has been over the years – it was the first university to bring such a program to the Portland area. Because many of us as parents who wanted to further our education, we had no possibility of doing that unless we take totally off work, go on campus. Well, that was not an option for people like me. Nine children and a husband and I'm going to leave? No. That was number one - economically unfeasible. And number two would have caused the greatest family destruction that one would ever see in my life, because I'm a hands-on mom. And then, number three, that there would be no way, financially, that my husband could have taken care of eleven people by himself. We couldn't have lived the lifestyle – we were living in this house, and this house cost a lot of money, to live in the older houses. So it was just not feasible at all. So I'm forever – even until this very day – I'm forever indebted and grateful to the visionaries of Oregon State University.

JD: Can you talk a little bit more about how the program worked here in Portland? Where did you meet and what was the size of your cohort?

MC: We had, I think it was twenty of us, twenty cohorts in my group. But you know, you start with twenty and you end up with less than that, because the program was pretty rigorous. Dr. Fuller had made arrangements with Northwest Regional Laboratory and the president of the Northwest Lab at that time was Dr. Ethel Simon-McWilliams. She was totally a community visionary as well. And so the minute that Oregon State came with that suggestion, that was part of her life dream – it certainly was for Ed and the professors who brought the program here.

We would attend classes every day at the lab, and then we were able to carry on our regular workloads. So it would be during the evenings and it would be during the weekends. And it would be on the weekends that we would go on campus as well, in Corvallis. It was rigorous, but the thing about it was it was so family oriented, because our professors were totally integrated into our family – our children knew them, our spouses. And Dr. Fuller would have little weekend retreats – well, little weekend parties, I should say – where our spouses would come. And so therefore, everybody knew everybody, and everybody was there as a support system. They didn't take it lightly if a person said they had to drop out, they didn't take that lightly. They did everything they could to get tutors for you, if that's what you needed. They tried to make sure to accommodate your schedule in advance to know when we were going on campus. I mean, it was a family life that we lived, academically, at the lab and in our homes, because we would have to do things of that nature too.

And it was hard in the sense that Portland was then going through some struggles around racism. And so our class would get involved in conversations about race and race relations, and we didn't take lightly at all the kind of work that many people want to do. Which was hard, because for many of us, we wanted to come back to northeast Portland. And that's the vision that Ed Fuller and those people had. But when you try to match us up with the school district, the school district wanted us to go out where there were fewer African American kids – I mean, where there were more African American kids – which would take us out of the uniqueness of our community. So that was a lesson to us as well, that even though this is where you want to be, sometimes you have to go where you're needed the most. But that was just a

vision that deserves being replicated wherever it can be, because it was a great program. And I'm a product of it; a very proud product of that.

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JD: And it was a very intensive, year-long, like fifty-seven hours or something like that.

MC: Right. It was hard.

JD: I'm sure. And when you were on campus, were those kind of unique lectures? Or what was happening when you were actually in Corvallis?

MC: Right. When we were in Corvallis, we would have other professors come and speak to the cohort. And in doing that – because they wanted us to have the experience of campus life at the master's level and also to interact with undergraduate students who wanted to go on to be counselors but who would do it involved in traditional campus life. And so our professors would come to us in a classroom setting and we would stay there for the whole weekend – Friday night, and then they would have classes all day on Saturday, and then go home on Saturday night.

It was great. It was something, if they had had a doctoral program, I would have engaged myself in that as well, because I'm one of these life-long learners. And when I say life-long, I don't just mean leaving high school to four-year to four-year and then to a doctoral program. Even at my ripe age of eighty, I still would go into a classroom today to learn, because I love words. And I love what they mean and how the lyrical quality of words, as spoken and enunciated well, is so beautiful, I just kind of hang on to it. It's great.

JD: And perhaps talk a little about, while you were in this program, how you decided what branch of counseling you wanted to go into, and then where you went once you had your degree.

MC: That was really interesting because the program, if there was ever a mandate, the mandate in that was which area of counseling – in terms of philosophy – which counseling philosophy do you see you carrying out in your practice? And it was really interesting because Portland Public Schools was very Rogerian; very, very much in practice. But I was what you call Thorndikian. I believed that Dr. Thorndike did a way of practice with people, that he looked at all the philosophies, and which ever one fit the individual best, that's where he was. He didn't try to impose down your throat a particular practice that was Rogerian, Skinnerian, or any of that. What works – and I am that way until this day – what works; don't shove a particular philosophy or practice down my throat when it's not working. What is best for the individual?

And that's what this program, this whole philosophical thought around life and life-long learning, and the ability for one to adjust in society; you just don't do what you think is best for them. You try to match up the practice and the policy with the individual, in order for them to have the best outcome that one can have. It's not about me the practitioner, it's about the effectiveness and the success of the individual who came to me as a practitioner. And so that's why I love the philosophy of Dr. Thorndike in that particular sense, because I like borrowing different concepts to meet the need of the person that's coming to me. As a matter of fact, I was turned down by Portland Public Schools, because I told them, no, I was not Rogerian in nature. Period. And so I didn't get a job with them as a result of that.

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JD: Which was to Portland Community College's benefit then.

MC: Portland Community College's benefit, because I love it!

JD: And so you went there and were there for many years.

MC: Yes. I was there on faculty, counseling faculty, for twenty-seven years at PCC. Loved every minute of it. You know, I am such a world view person, if you will, that it was important to me to know how others live, how others thought, and how I fit into that... [dog barks] that world view. I was the only counselor that has worked on every campus, whether

it was just a little church group that PCC had, or whether it was at the state fair, or whether it was at one of the little churches or community center buildings in Scappoose, Oregon, I worked at every campus.

And any program within our school. Because at the time, testing was going on to see how effective two-year nursing programs, versus four-year nursing programs – those students who went on campus the first two years at the university and then went on into the completion of their undergraduate program. So it was really, really important that, then, if you were Rogerian, then you got students who learned in different kinds of ways, it would not work. I don't do well in the abstract, I have to see things to make them happen. And how many students did we have like that as well? So in working at all of these different campuses of Portland Community College, it taught the best lesson that connected to me with my academic life that one could ever have.

So I don't take a second seat to anybody in terms of my experiences at Oregon State in the master's program that I went through versus an on-campus program. It matured a lot. Plus, we brought something to the program that on-campus students could never bring, because they haven't been married, they have not been in the workforce. And so it just really brought a kind of richness that, mixed together, it fared well.

JD: And in, in 1984 or so, you had some people approach you to embark a new path.

MC: A new path. It's really interesting because I had applied for a program to do my doctoral studies in industrial psychology, because that's what I really wanted. And even then – I was introduced by Dr. Fuller and his other colleagues to industrial psychology, and what they wanted to do was to be able to take classes to the workplace and be able to do the kind of research that talked about, number one, work ethics. That talked about training skills, that talked about commitment to the workplace, talked about the mission of the workplace. All of that. And I was very interested in that.

And then at the same time, a group of people came saying that, "we would like you to run for the legislature." Well, of course, I'm thinking, "oh that will never happen." No black woman ever ran and won the legislature. One other black female had tried and that was Beatrice Canada, who tried but couldn't raise the money. And we were all living too much in our own shells – black community here, white community here, Asian community here. And so this was a totally new pathway as well for me. And the interesting thing is that I was running against an incumbent; white, male incumbent. And he was just furious with me – "how dare you run against me, I'm a Democrat."

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And then I had all these other people – one African American Republican, one white female Democrat, and the whole thing – but all of my people had faith in me. They were basically three Republican white males and one white female. That was my group who had come and asked me to run. They said, "we will do the research, we will help you to raise money, but your name came up on four different occasions in the polls that we did, and we'd like to see you run." For sure they knew that no black male, no white male, and no while female had gotten enough votes to do it. But my name came up in all four polls.

And so, at that particular time – I am very embedded in my spiritual life, as I said before – so I went to my minister and talked to him. My minister also at that time was my brother, so that was family that I was talking to as well. Then I went to my parents and I went to my children, and everybody thought, "you should do it if that's what you want to do. We'll support you." And some people came and talked to the family about what it would take and how much it might take my time away from them, but everybody was so excited, they supported me.

And we decided in 1983 that we would do it. And in doing so, it was hard at first because you have many people in the community saying that "you're not from Oregon and what makes you think you can come here and run?" So I had that up against me. And then I had the Democratic socialists who felt that the incumbent was a Democrat and he had done his work, and that I should not be in the race. And there were black men who were saying, "get out of the race, this is a man's race, we want to have a black male in the legislature from here." So I'm fighting all these opposition groups, in terms of running.

But the thing about me is that I had gone through my master's program and I felt that I had enough ammunition and courage in me, both academically and socially, that I was going to be able just to run. And not one time did I ever believe

that I would not win. People were angry with me because – they sent people to talk to me, in the event that I didn't win, what would happen? I said, "I'm sorry, I don't have losing in my vocabulary." And they were so mad at me because they felt that I was unrealistic and everything else, because most people don't win on their first go around. And I said, "you have to understand, forgive me, I'm not arrogant, I'm not trying to abuse the process of believing I can win at all. It's just that I cannot think about winning while thinking about losing. That's a loser right there." And so, psychologically, I was different for them in that way.

Another way I was different and still won, was that on Sundays, if there were things that I had to go speak to, it would have to wait until my morning service was over. Oh God, my campaign manager was so angry at me, so often. I had to fight him to say, "you can have any other day, but Sunday morning is the Lord's day, and you're not having it." And so we would just fuss our way through that.

So I ended up winning this race, the first time that this many people had turned out for a race, number one. So much so that *Time* magazine picked it up and did a story on me about that. And we had the largest turnout for the first time in decades, they talked about. And it was a really really interesting but well-fought race. And I won by 72%, I think it was 72% of the vote, and that was unheard of. Especially with having a Republican, having two other Democrats, and of those two Democrats, one was an incumbent.

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And so it was kind of hard and people didn't speak to me for a while, and I even got death threats in running that campaign. I was at one little place down on Mississippi where there was a little bar – I wasn't afraid to go in anyway, I don't know what, I just wasn't afraid. And so when I walked in, there was this one guy and he said, "oh my God," he was drunk, "oh my God, there's Shirley Chisholm over there." [laughs] And this guy came and lifted me up and put me on the pool table, and there I was on the pool table talking to those people about voting for me for the Oregon legislature. We signed up twenty-some odd people in that place. We did! We signed up people everywhere we could. We went in every place. On one occasion, I didn't even know it, I was in a drug house, trying to get people to register to vote. It was a very spiritually exciting time for me, because church communities had me everywhere speaking. It was a really quite exciting time for me to run in that campaign.

So I went on and I was in office for twenty-seven years, eleven months, and about five days, serving the legislature. And during that time, it was a great time, because I was like the inside lobbyist for the university system, especially for Oregon State and Portland State, my undergraduate and graduate schools – I call them my schools of love. And so we got a lot of things done on the educational agenda. We did things on the economic development end, and the K-12 through higher education is the work that I did.

Then I was blessed enough that people saw leadership in me and I was the first African American to become the Budget chair, when I was in the Senate, and to also become President Pro Tem. So it was quite an exciting time in doing those things. I don't like talking about being the first, but I think there is a lot for the first to give back and talk about the experiences and give hope to other people that come behind you, to know that you can make a difference.

JD: It's interesting to hear you say what a great time it was to be there, because you were there during some major budgetary contractions and upheaval in the state in what its industrial base was, and all of that, and Measure 5. Talk a little about how you worked to move things forward while all of this mayhem was going on around you.

MC: It was total mayhem in many instances. It was so contentious especially when I first went to the legislature – it was scary to me, quite frankly. Because that's during the time when we were changing our industrial base, and we had the owl issue and we had the wolf issue. And we also had women – and women worked across lines to work on issues around comparable worth, meaning that issue around women being paid in the same manner at the same level that men were being paid. Oh my God, I mean, Republican women and Democratic women together made that happen. And under the leadership of my dear friend who left us, Nancy Peterson from southern Oregon, we also got insurance premiums changed. Did you know that in this state and in the country, women paid more for their premiums than men, yet men were more prone to accidents and had more accidents than women? But we were able to change that, and needless to say, we were seen as bra-burners when we did that, it was really interesting.

Please note, young women, every decade has its own issues of contention, but that should not be the reason why you don't engage yourself and go and make a difference. One of the greatest things you can do for our country is to run and make a difference and be strong and courageous about what it is you believe. And all of us know that the greatest war we're ever going to have in the rural community is lack of education for our people. So we women have to stand up and take our place in order to do those kind of things.

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So back to my work, that's how the skill centers were born. Because we had lost about 179,000 board feet of lumber in this state during the '80s, and we had no place to send – most of these men knew nothing but the forest life. Cutting down trees and making lumber and that kind of stuff. So Vera Katz had done some work around Ira Magaziner and his concept of skill centers. And so I worked hard to get skill centers in this state, and Portland Community College still has a skill center, in that sense of trying to give that underclass opportunity in our state. And that's been great and I'm thoroughly excited about that.

We also funded, I was able to carry legislation – oh, I can't think the name of the program – but it's a summer program where kids would get involved across the state in learning skills and being exposed to other opportunities. So much for Margaret Carter forgetting at this point.

JD: If we figure it out, we'll add it in later.

MC: Yes ok, good, good. But it was fun doing that work.

One of probably the most contentious things that happened was when John Kitzhaber was in the first term around and they had done extensive research in this state about how we could get unions to work more closely with the legislature to determine how teachers were selected – not how much they were selected as...I'll have to come back to that one.

JD: That's fine. We've got editing.

MC: OK, good. [laughs]

JD: You were also, as a Senator, ended up being co-chair of the Joint Ways and Means, which is a very significant committee in that, kind of, budget committee.

MC: Right. But can I go back to the other one?

JD: Absolutely.

MC: Let me go back to say that the issue with the unions, because of polls that had been taken, as a result, the next year after leaving the legislature – because that's when we got term limits – well, the teachers union voted against me. Portland teachers union went out and got other unions to vote against me. And they held me in a circle, for like three hours, talking to me, screaming at me, and talking about, "do you know that you've taken my life blood away by trying to take my income away?" I wish I could remember this. But the thing is, is that it was so contentious, I was really scared. I mean, I was in that little huddle for like three hours; it was at the state convention. And I was also invited to speak. And when I stood up to speak, teachers stood up and turned their backs on me while I spoke. It was really, really and interesting time. So when I ran for state school superintendent, I lost basically in Portland, but won all down state, out in Gresham, but couldn't get enough in my own community because of that one vote. One vote. Yes. So that was interesting.

Anyway, during the time that my Senate president Peter Courtney was in office, he said, "I want you to be my Budget chair." And I was so selected and accepted it. And the interesting thing is that, when the news media came to me, one of the guys said, "we know you can sing, but we didn't know you knew how to do budgets." I said, "I can sing, that's true. But I also know numbers. I raised a family of eleven and many times the budget was quite low and I had to do adjustments, and I know how to do that. Many times I had a few dollars left over, but I had enough common sense to save for a rainy day. There were also times when I needed to add another zero and I did that. So I think the state budget might need six or seven zeros, but I know about how to have intelligence around what you do. And that is, when you're having tough times, you try to save as much as you possibly can, and you don't spend all the people – the tax payers of this state's

money – because you just want to do programs. We have to tighten the belt during those times. So its philosophy, Mr. Newspaper Guy, that you work with numbers and you work with budgets. But I tell you one thing, I will not put the strain of this budget on the backs of the poor and the elderly in this state."

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And I did not do it. Did not. You are not going to rob the older people and our children from educational opportunity. Yes, let's tighten the belt. But no, let's not cut off their throats at this time, because we cut not only their future but our future in terms of who we send to school in this state. And this is a public education system, meaning that everybody that wants to go should have the opportunity. And I stood by that then as I stand by it today.

JD: I guess that's one of the aspects of being a legislator is you have to deal with what the landscape is – good, bad or in between.

MC: You're right. It was so interesting because I believe that there are times when we have to say to the presidents of our universities, "you've got to tighten the belt." But I don't think that we should choke them up to the point where they're having just a little breath every now and then. You cannot run a system like that. I mean, that's one of the worst business models a person could ever have. I think also, one of the greatest things we ever did, when OHSU – Oregon...

JD: Health Sciences University.

MC: Health Sciences University. When Oregon Health Sciences University came to us and said, "if you're not going to give us the amount of dollars that we should have, based upon Medicaid and Medicare dollars, then give us a quasi-statement that will allow us to go out and work to get extra private dollars into the system. And we did that. Now a lot of people didn't like that because they – the legislature – would not have as much control over them. But you can't have that control if the portion of dollars that you've given to the university, to OHSU, was less than the amount of dollars that they were getting from private enterprise. So we had to deal with that philosophically, and I thought that was the best way to go, and look where OHSU is today as a result of that. It's great.

And look where many of our university systems are today. I was just at a program this past Saturday night, and there were ten kids – nine kids were present – but ten kids who were talking about going off to school in pharmacology, in engineering, one kid in physics. And three of those nine all were choosing Oregon State University to attend. Now that tells you something, that even if you go back and get one of the oldest students – 1937 as you said – or you look at me in 1972, in the '70s, and then you find young people today who are still excited at the visionary activity and the kind of educational experience that you get from going to Oregon State. You just can't beat that. And it is still a school that people select as an option today, to go to school. They could have gone out of state because they got all kinds of scholarships, but they chose Oregon State, and I think that speaks well for the people of the '30s as well as the people of the twenty-first century.

JD: You're one of their well-known alumni and in 2010 OSU publicly honored you in that way. Talk a little about thinking from when you were there to when you were given that award – what had your relationship with OSU been? What had it meant to you?

[0:55:23]

MC: Right. I love Dr. Ray, I have to tell you that. I've had relationships with other presidents and always felt esteemed when I go on campus to do any work. And I feel very indebted to the institution that gave me the opportunity that I have in life today. And I probably don't use this word often, but I can be boastful about my educational experiences at Oregon State. To know that we have a president that cares and in carrying on the mission that was started early on – and that is that we support our community life and education as much as we do those who experience education on our campuses, in our local campus here in Corvallis. And I think that's good to know, because it's a welcome mat to people no matter where they are.

My daughter went to Oregon State as well and I've always wanted to have my kids attend quality institutions, and certainly Oregon State would be one of those priority institutions for me. And hopefully the great granddaughter now that's coming along – which is the granddaughter of my daughter that went there – will go to Oregon State as well.

And being selected the alumni person that year, what an honor. When you think about yourself in the whole big wide world, that people would want to come back and honor you at doing something, you can't ask for any greater thing in life. And especially, I view life as a journey, and on my journey, to be able to look back and have my university say, "we want you to be part of the history of this campus," I feel so honored. I kind of wish – I get a little teary eyed – I wish my mother had been here to see the things that she had done to a daughter that she always said talked too much and was really gabby. So it was an honor and I still hold that in very high esteem in my life today. As you can see, even my clothes testify to my love for the university.

So I enjoyed that. And one of the latest things that's been a pleasure to me is Tammy Bray had me come down and be a part of a committee of people to get the university standing with the new health program. And to get that approved, that is so far-reaching, that the community life is still important to the university system. That here I am, these many years later, still engaged with my university. That's awesome. That's awesome.

JD: You've clearly had many rich experiences between your time as a graduate student there and today, what thoughts or ideas would you share with current OSU students? Or in the near future?

MC: Right. Oh my God, please never give up on your mission of educating communities that don't live within fifty feet of where you are physically located. The hearts and minds of the people should live with the mission of Oregon State and how it cares for its people and how it wants to send out people who are highly qualified, who make a difference in our community, who are willing to put themselves on the line when Oregon State calls them to be engaged with helping the next generation see through a vision that they never lived. But at the same time, give you a view of what that life was like then.

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Never ever stop realizing the importance of that mission of carrying education wherever you have the opportunity to do so. And I think that our young people of today, having that kind of mission as well, to carry the hearts of the university with you wherever you go, is very important. Because we all are a part of the fabric and the history of Oregon State University.

JD: Lovely sentiment and I don't have any more questions for you, but if there's something that you want to make sure gets included here that I haven't asked you about, this would be the perfect time to do that.

MC: Right. I would like to see Oregon State reach out more to inner-city kids of color. I do know that one of the other university systems have accepted a school where they are trying to get young people involved to come on their campus. And I don't know if you are doing this as vigorously as you once did, but I want to encourage you to be even more vigilant and more vigorous in your efforts to try to educate the underclass in our society. Because unless we spend more money on the front end of getting people educated, you and I are going to be paying even higher taxes when they go into our prison system. So it's important that your mission continue to extend itself, and extend itself in terms of a world view. But especially looking at underclass communities across our state.

JD: That's a wonderful note to end on. Thank you, Margaret Carter, for taking time and participating in this project.

MC: Thank you so much, Janice, I appreciate your time with me this morning.

[1:02:04]