

Oral History Interview
with
Sylvia Duncan

Interview Conducted by
Juliana Nykolaiszyn
May 19, 2014

O-STATE Stories
Oral History Project

Oklahoma Oral History Research Program
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O-State Stories

An Oral History Project of the OSU Library

Interview History

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The recording and transcript of this interview were processed at the Oklahoma State University Library in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

Project Detail

The purpose of O-STATE Stories Oral History Project is to gather and preserve memories revolving around Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College (OAMC) and Oklahoma State University (OSU).

This project was approved by the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board on October 5, 2006.

Legal Status

Scholarly use of the recordings and transcripts of the interview with Sylvia Duncan is unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on May 19, 2014

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About Sylvia Duncan...

Sylvia Duncan was born in Chickasha, Oklahoma, 1929, the youngest of five children, and moved to Stillwater with her family in 1936. She graduated Stillwater High School in 1946, and enrolled at Oklahoma State University (then Oklahoma A&M College) with plans to major in architecture. After meeting her husband-to-be, however, she changed her major to accounting. She remained unfazed by the male-dominated field, completing her degree in just three years, newly married, and as a member of the Mortar Board Honor Society, no less. Duncan took a job with a downtown accounting office in 1949 after graduation, and stayed there until 1954. From that point on, she created a home office, earned her CPA license, and created a rather noteworthy career for herself.

Duncan was the first woman president of the Oklahoma Society of CPAs (OSCPA), and the first woman chair of the State Board of Accountancy. She was the treasurer for the National Association of State Boards of Accountancy and became a member of the Board of Directors of the American Institute of CPAs. Among her accolades are the Oklahoma Accounting Hall of Fame Award, as well as the Oklahoma Public Service Award. She has served in all Stillwater offices of the North Central Chapter of OSCP, and has remained the Continuing Professional Education coordinator for the chapter, which keeps her current in the world of accounting. In 1985 she wrote the bylaws for and helped coordinate Stillwater's sister-city agreement with Kameoka, Japan, and for over fifty years Sylvia and her husband have taught English to OSU's international students. In her interview, not only does she discuss her personal and professional life, but she also reminisces in great detail about her college experience and historic downtown Stillwater.

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Sylvia Duncan

Oral History Interview

Interviewed by Juliana Nykolaiszyn
May 19, 2014
Stillwater, Oklahoma



Nykolaiszyn *My name is Juliana Nykolaiszyn, and today is Monday, May 19, 2014, and I am in Stillwater, Oklahoma, interviewing Sylvia Duncan as part of the O-State Stories Oral History Project. Thank you for joining me today.*

Duncan I'm pleased that you asked me.

Nykolaiszyn *Well, Sylvia, I'd like to learn a little bit more about you. Could you tell me the year you were born and where you were born?*

Duncan I was born in a rather infamous year, 1929, the year of the beginning of the Great Depression, and I was born in Chickasha, Oklahoma.

Nykolaiszyn *Okay, and what did your parents do for a living?*

Duncan My mother was a homemaker. I was the youngest of five children, even though they were spread out in long distances apart. My father was rather itinerant. He did lots of things. He traded horses. (Laughs) He traded all kinds of things in agricultural fields. At one time, he and my mother, (this was before living in Chickasha) they actually operated what was known in those days as a boarding house.

Nykolaiszyn *Can you go into detail about the boarding house? How large was it?*

Duncan I cannot because I was not born at that time. It was in Hobart, Oklahoma, and as I said, I was the youngest of five children. The two oldest children were only two years apart. All of the rest were six years apart, so I actually was born the year that my oldest sister, sibling, graduated from what was then Oklahoma College for Women in Chickasha.

Nykolaiszyn *Well, tell me about your path to Stillwater. How did your family get from Chickasha to Stillwater?*

Duncan Our family, which at that time consisted of my oldest brother, my brother just six years older than I, my mother, and myself, we came to Stillwater in August of 1936, I believe, and the reason was for my older brother to attend Oklahoma A&M [Agricultural and Mechanical] College as an agronomy major. I, at that time, was beginning the second grade.

Nykolaiszyn *And why Oklahoma A&M?*

Duncan My brother had been employed with the state conservation service, soil conversation service, and one of his mentors was a man who I think had attended A&M. He was the major influence. He saw potential in my brother, and so he was the catalyst that caused us to come to Stillwater. (Laughter)

Nykolaiszyn *And so your family is starting anew in Stillwater, and what part of town did they settle in?*

Duncan We rented a house first, which was on East Tenth Street. The house is still there. It was 323 East Tenth. Today it's just back of what was the armory, but now it's part of the city Parks and Recreation activities.

Nykolaiszyn *Okay, and in Stillwater, what did your parents do for a living?*

Duncan Well, we didn't have a great living. (Laughs) My mother did find employment at OSU. She was a cook at the OSU cafeteria for many, many years. At one point, after we had been in Stillwater for a while, we did move to a location in north Stillwater, very close to what is now the site of Will Rogers Elementary School. At that time, there was a dairy farm there, and we lived on the dairy farm. My two brothers helped the owner of the dairy farm with the milking and milk processing, and so that was employment for them. It was a long way from the elementary schools in Stillwater, but I remember I walked from that location to Jefferson School, which is now the location of the Board of Education on Main Street.

Nykolaiszyn *That's quite a walk.*

Duncan It was. (Laughs)

Nykolaiszyn *So, if you could, can you describe Jefferson School for me? How large was it at that time?*

Duncan It was a two-story building, just a square cube. I think there were probably four large classrooms on each floor, and on the first floor were the offices, the principal's office. There may have been—I think that would be correct because it went through the first through the sixth grade. There was no kindergarten, and I think there was just one room for each grade.

Nykolaiszyn *And did you take your lunch?*

Duncan Yes, I think I did because we didn't have a cafeteria, but I don't remember a great deal. (Laughs) One of the things I remember about the school experience there was that we always had immunizations. It was routine to come, and the county health department, I think it was, gave the immunizations. Of course, we had to have permission from our parents, but I know I was very squeamish about that. I was often one who would faint. (Laughs) But I also remember the principal at that school, a woman named Beulah Timberlake, and also a teacher who was excellent. Her name was Frances, F-R-A-N-C-E-S. Jenkins was her maiden name, but she married a man later in life after she had taught many, many years. She married a man whose name was Francis, F-R-A-N-C-I-S, Escue. She continued to live in Stillwater and died just a few years ago. She was very high on penmanship, and I credit her with my penmanship today. (Laughs)

Nykolaiszyn *Good memories in a rough time. Could you tell that Oklahoma was in the middle of the Depression growing up?*

Duncan Well, yes. I remember (this was earlier, before we came to Stillwater) for a very short time, we moved from Chickasha. I was a preschooler. We moved from Chickasha to the town of Rush Springs, which is about twenty miles south of Chickasha, and I remember that one of our main foods was sweet potatoes. They seemed to be plentiful and very nutritious, and so I have those memories of, but, you know, times were hard.

Nykolaiszyn *So after Jefferson School, where did you attend?*

Duncan Well, to tell you quite truthfully, I attended, I think, every elementary school in Stillwater. When we first came, I went to Lincoln School. Then I attended a very small school that is now the Masonic Lodge building at the corner of Duck and Miller, and at that time it was known as Norwood School. Then when we moved to this dairy farm, I went to Jefferson School. Then later we lived in the west part of town, and all of these were rental houses where we lived. I went to what was Eugene Field School, and that is now the location where Consumer's IGA is located.

Nykolaiszyn *Was it challenging bouncing around school to school?*

Duncan I never did have any trouble. (Laughs) I made friends easily, and my grades never did suffer. I can't complain. Then I went to Stillwater Junior High School, and I went to Stillwater High School. Those high schools were where there was North High School, which is where the Stillwater Community Center is now, and then there was South High School, where is now has been converted into the Stillwater Public Library. In the latter part of my high school career, sometimes we had classes at the North High

School and at the South High School, so between classes sometimes you had to walk that block and a half or two blocks between the two schools. I graduated from Stillwater High School in 1946. A part of my high school, I took home economics courses and was active in what was called the Future Homemakers of Oklahoma, Future Homemakers of America, and actually served as a state vice president of that organization. I probably took more math courses than I did home economics. I have been a homemaker, but I didn't devote my career to being a home-ec teacher or a home economist of any kind.

Nykolaiszyn *Well, when you're in high school and you're thinking about the future, did you know what you wanted to be when you grew up?*

Duncan When I was thinking of going to college, I thought I was going to enroll in architecture and major in architecture. That's one reason I took a lot of math, but I changed my major after I met my now-husband. He was an accounting major because his brother had an accounting practice already here in Stillwater, and so I changed my major to accounting.

Nykolaiszyn *So let's talk about your path to OSU. Why did you decide to attend Oklahoma A&M at that time?*

Duncan Well, one reason is because I could be at home, and we didn't have that expense of travel or food and housing. Also, I did receive what was known as a Presidential Scholarship, and it was only a hundred dollars. I think it was just a hundred dollars; it may have been a hundred dollars a semester. I had that during my college career, and that was based upon academic record in high school. I did graduate as Salutatorian of the graduating class of 1946 and belonged to National Honor Society and those things that go along with that.

Nykolaiszyn *Now, did you meet your husband at A&M, or was it prior to enrollment?*

Duncan I met him, actually, it was prior to enrollment. He had been in World War II in the Navy, and he returned from the Navy in the fall-winter, December really, I think, of 1945. His brother who had the accounting practice in Stillwater had built an apartment house on South Washington Street, and that's where his brother and family lived, which was only a wife and one daughter. At that time, my mother and brother, just six years older than I, were living in an apartment, in that apartment building that my husband's brother had built, but when my husband returned from the service, they converted a part of a double-car garage below into a bedroom for him.

Now, technically I didn't meet him there. I met him at church. I lived right above where he lived, (Laughs) so our friendship could grow rather quickly. I didn't graduate from high school until the spring of 1946, so he was going

to school that spring semester to college. He had previously been a student at Oklahoma A&M back in 1939 and '40 and had left to go to work because he ran out of money, and then entered the service from Indiana where he was working in a factory. Then he came back here to go to school. Instead of majoring in dairy manufacturing where he had begun his educational career, he had changed to accounting because of his brother's business, and he had a built-in job. That's sort of the story on that.

Nykolaiszyn *So you met at church originally.*

Duncan We met at church.

Nykolaiszyn *Did he take you on a date?*

Duncan Not then, no, no, no. Actually, my husband is a full nine years older than I. Sometimes, according to looking at ages, he's ten years older than I. (Laughs) No, we didn't start dating until probably nine months or a year after he had returned.

Nykolaiszyn *Okay, and what would a typical date in Stillwater be like?*

Duncan Well, we went to church together most of the time. (Laughs) We walked to school together, to OSU. His brother had a large Chow dog, (his name was Nicki) and the dog would accompany us walking north on Washington Street to the campus and to Morrill Hall. Most accounting classes, the school of accountancy was in Morrill Hall, and we would go in the west entrance. The dog would accompany us to that point. He would lie down, and he would wait until we came back out from classes. He would look at everybody who came out. He was always waiting for us. We didn't always, we didn't have classes together, but we would walk together. If we went out the other door, we could go around and find him at the west door. He would do the same thing about going to church. At that time, we were both members of the Church of Christ, and the Church of Christ building was located at Sixth and Husband Street on the southeast corner of the intersection, where now is Oklahoma Abstract Company. Had been Stillwater Savings and Loan.

Originally, the building that was there at the time had been the old South Methodist Church building. Then the South Methodist Church and the North Methodist Church joined forces and became the United Methodist Church. Anyway, the South Methodist Church building was built with large steps going up, and concrete sides on them, like, you know, you see a public building with lions on each side. This Nicki, the dog, would always go to church. He would either walk if we walked, he would run along if we drove a car, and he would wait up there on the side of the stairway while we were in the worship service and would join us when we got out. He would even

go if we were out of town. Those are memories of the times that we spent together. We were both very active in the college-age group at the church, so we had parties and picnics and those kinds of things, go to Lake Blackwell and parties at Couch Park.

Nykolaiszyn *Well, let's talk a little bit about your classes. I'm going to guess that there were not many women in accounting classes at OSU at that time.*

Duncan You're extremely correct. (Laughs) I have memories of probably two other women students majoring in accounting at the time I did, maybe three. One of my best friends was an accounting major, and she later after graduation became the head of the Accounting Department at Lubbock Christian University in Lubbock, Texas. I still keep in touch with her. There were very few women students. It was always predominantly men, so I was in the minority.

Nykolaiszyn *Were the faculty members...*

Duncan They were all men. (Laughter)

Nykolaiszyn *And did you have any complications with that?*

Duncan Not really. Not really.

Nykolaiszyn *Where would you sit in the classroom?*

Duncan Oh, the second row back or something.

Nykolaiszyn *I wasn't sure if you would sit more in the back or more in the front.*

Duncan No, I sat more in the front, generally.

Nykolaiszyn *Okay, okay. Were the classes, were they very challenging?*

Duncan I suppose they were, but I don't remember struggling with anything. I remember at that time we didn't have computers other than the very beginning stages of punch-card accounting. I remember the labs where we used punch cards, and the data was punched into cards that were about, oh, eight inches long, maybe three or four inches high. Those were processed then to be read. The technology was similar to, like, a player-piano or a music box, but I remember that. Statistics classes, perhaps, were a little more challenging, but I don't remember particularly struggling.

Nykolaiszyn *Were all of your classes in Morrill, or did you have classes in other buildings?*

Duncan At that time, this was right after World War II, and there was all this influx of veterans returning to the campus. In what is now the parking lots to the north of Morrill Hall, that was a place where they put up temporary Quonset huts, and I remember a lot of classes in those Quonset huts behind Morrill Hall. You know, a Quonset hut is a half of a cylinder, and they're made of tin, and so they could be hot, they could be cold, they could be noisy if it rained. I definitely remember many classes in the Quonset huts. (Laughs) Particularly, I remember a class in business law taught by Glenn Laughlin.

I guess I remember that because that was probably the spring semester of my junior year and the honor society Mortar Board which at that time was only women. Now since, they've admitted men to membership. It was always a very secretive thing before the annual tapping in the spring when they woke you up and said, "Come as you are, in your pajamas," or whatever. Somehow, some of the ones trying to figure out who they would tap for Mortar Board had talked to this law professor, and he sort of spilled the beans to me. (Laughs) He didn't keep it very secretive, so it wasn't an extreme surprise to me when on a Sunday morning, I was tapped for Mortar Board.

Nykolaiszyn *What a great experience.*

Duncan Well, yes, (Laughter) so then I took part in Mortar Board all of my senior year.

Nykolaiszyn *Are there any other professors that stand out in your memory?*

Duncan Well, the head of the Accounting Department was B. F. Harrison, and there was a professor, [James] Vandegrift. I'm trying to think of his first name, which I probably can recall it. Then there were some sort of graduate students who were teaching. I can think of one by the name of McSwain, Also [George] McCowen, [who] was not a graduate assistant. [He] was a regular professor because I had known his daughter in high school. McCowen was his name. Those are the ones that stand out.

Nykolaiszyn *At what point did you get married?*

Duncan I got married on the day that my husband graduated from Oklahoma A&M, which was May 31, 1948. I had gone through high school in three years, so I graduated from high school when I was sixteen. I went through college in three years. I got married when I was eighteen and graduated from college when I was nineteen. That was on May 31, 1948. That was the day he graduated.

Nykolaiszyn *So you graduated in '49. Do you remember your graduation?*

Duncan Yes, I do. It was rather memorable. I remember the graduation exercises. I'm not sure, but there was a man in the Speech Department, D. Terry Martin, who always read the names. You handed your name written out as you came up on the stage. There was an accounting student, a man whose last name was Dodd, and I'd had classes with him. I knew him. We were seated and went to the stage in alphabetical sequence. When I handed my name, I had my name written as Sylvia Hodges Duncan. This doctor, Terry Martin, he articulated very precisely. He called my name; this Dodd person had gone ahead of me. He read my name as Sylvia Hodges Dodd, and I walked across the stage. (Laughs) So that's the most memorable thing I remember about my graduation.

Nykolaiszyn *And was it held at the stadium, or at...*

Duncan No, inside Gallagher Hall.

Nykolaiszyn *Okay, so it was in Gallagher.*

Duncan In Gallagher, yes.

Nykolaiszyn *Okay, well, speaking of Gallagher, while you were a student did you attend any sporting events?*

Duncan I went to a lot of the football games. I don't remember going to many basketball games as a student, no...

Nykolaiszyn *Okay.*

Duncan ...and I did not go to wrestling. I remember taking phys ed [physical education] in college because it was required, and that didn't help my grade point average. (Laughs)

Nykolaiszyn *Did you have to swim?*

Duncan Yes.

Nykolaiszyn *Can you tell me about the pool and the building?*

Duncan Well, I was trying to think of the name of that building. It's what has been converted into the School of Architecture now, but the swimming pool was on the first floor at the east end. That's about all I can tell you about it. I took swimming, I took bowling, but I was not a phys ed major by any means. I was not physically inclined in those things. I passed the courses, but, as I said, that usually was my B. (Laughs)

Nykolaiszyn *Did you spend much time in the old library?*

Duncan No, I can't even visualize the old library.

Nykolaiszyn *Okay.*

Duncan I really can't.

Nykolaiszyn *Okay, and were there any campus hangouts you gravitated towards?*

Duncan Not really. Probably the most well-known one at that time was Swims, which was on the corner of Elm Street and Knoblock. I had known a lot of the Swim family, and they had daughters who were about my age. There wasn't a lot of hanging out because not only did I go to major in accounting and graduate in three years, but I worked most of the time when I was going to school, as well.

Nykolaiszyn *Well, let's talk about that.*

Duncan Well, I had worked even in high school. I remember (and it just seems ludicrous, really) that I typed and corrected a man's master's thesis when I was, I think, just a senior in high school, or it could have been when I was a freshman in college. I worked for a time (this was when I was in high school) for a man in the Agricultural Education Department, a man named Don Orr and his colleague Chris White, so I had that experience. Then I did that work for this man on his master's. I don't know why he would have allowed me to do that, but, anyway, he graduated. He got his credit. Then I worked in what turned out to be my brother-in-law's accounting office, which was in the BancFirst building downtown.

Nykolaiszyn *Okay, so after graduation what do you end up doing?*

Duncan I worked in the accounting office downtown for—well, I graduated in '49, and I worked there until October of 1954. When I graduated from college and I was nineteen, I was not old enough to take the CPA examination because you had to be twenty-one. I had gotten married, and I worked. We didn't have any children, and we adopted a baby girl in October of 1954, and so I set up an office in my home. I had, of course, acquired some clients individually, working after graduation from '49 to '54, so I had plenty of work to do in my home office. I maintained my home office from October 1954, and here I am today. However, at that time, we lived on West Sixth Street. It was in May of 1969 that we moved to this location, and this has been my office ever since.

Nykolaiszyn *Well, fresh out of college, before taking the CPA exam, what was a typical day like in the office?*

Duncan

Well, you know, it depended on what you were working on. One of the things that I did most of the time, there was an older woman who worked in the office for my brother-in-law, whose principal client was the Stillwater publishing company. She had strong ties to OSU because at one time her daughter had married the son of the then-president of OSU, a man named Knapp, K-N-A-P-P. There is a street in Stillwater today named Knapp. Anyway, this woman's name was Willa Dusch. It was D-U-S-C-H. She was a long-time resident. She tutored me. She was my mentor on all the accounting processes for the publishing company and for the radio station KSPI. That became one of my main clients, but a lot of the work that I did at first was what you would call write-up work. It was, you know, basically bookkeeping for various businesses. Then I did individual and business tax returns. Of course, tax season was busier. All of it was manual. There were no computers, and your tax returns, we usually typed those or had people who typed them and used carbon paper. All of it was manual.

It was eight to twelve, and one to five, and my husband was working in the same office. My brother-in-law was the owner of the business, and another man whose name was John Hunt who had graduated from Oklahoma A&M as an accounting major, a very outstanding student, and one who had known Wilton Anderson well, and who was then later head of the department, I think after B. F. Harrison. There were good role models there. Then when I left the office, I took all the work for Stillwater publishing company. I did monthly financial statements for them, and I worked for them even clear up through, I think it was 1997 that the Stillwater publishing company and the radio station was sold to this community newspaper's organization which now owns and operates the.... At one time, they had set up a radio station in Fort Collins, Colorado, the Poudre Valley Broadcasting Company. I did work for them, and I had a lot of farm accounts with people with registered cattle and dairies. In public accounting, you have lots of variation, and you learn about all kinds of businesses. (Laughs) At that point, there was quite a bit of oil play in Payne County, as there is today. I finally took the CPA exam in the fall of 1958.

Nykolaiszyn

How did you prepare for it?

Duncan

Well, I just studied on my own. I remember this Dr. Vandegrift, he lived fairly close to where we lived out on West Sixth. He and B. F. Harrison, too, they were very skeptical that I would do very well. Well, I passed it all the first time, which was unusual. Of course, today, it is taken in segments on the computer, but then you sat and took it all in two or three days. I took the exam at the state capitol in the legislative chambers, and I think I was the only woman taking it. Anyway, I got my CPA certificate then issued in February of 1959, and I know that that certificate was presented to me at Southern Hills Country Club in Tulsa. If I remember correctly, Dr. Vandegrift and B. F. Harrison and several went over there for that. (Laughs)

From there on, I got quite involved with the Oklahoma Society of CPAs [OSCPA], and I did a lot of stuff.

Ultimately in accounting, I was appointed by the governor to the State Board of Accountancy and served on that for five years, including being Chairman of the State Board of Accountancy, so that was meetings in Oklahoma City. There's an organization called NASBA, the National Association of State Boards of Accountancy. Each State Board of Accountancy that regulates the practice of public accounting belongs to this national organization. Well, ultimately I ended up serving as the national treasurer for the National Association of State Boards of Accountancy.

Also, I was still active in the Oklahoma Society of CPAs and became president of that organization, the first woman to be president of the Oklahoma Society of CPAs. With that position then, I became a member of the Board of Directors of the American Institute of CPAs. I served in that position only one year, however. Then I did receive the Oklahoma Accounting Hall of Fame Award one year, and the Oklahoma Public Service Award one year, so I got very involved in the professional organizations. Locally, Stillwater was part of what was called the North Central Chapter of the OSCP, and I served in all of the offices. I still am the CPE [continuing professional education] coordinator for that chapter even today.

Nykolaiszyn *Oh, my goodness.*

Duncan I've had a really busy professional involvement in accountancy and have sort of, maybe, broken the glass ceiling because I was the first woman chair of the Oklahoma Accountancy Board and the first woman president of the Oklahoma Society of CPAs. Of course, now there are more women accountants than there are men, and there have been a number of other presidents of the Oklahoma Society who are women. That's where we are, I think.

Nykolaiszyn *Well, with the accountancy board, which governor appointed you?*

Duncan Well, let me think. He was the one who had a little—was it Governor [David] Hall, had a little bit of a...problem, gossip. Yeah, we'll put it gossip. (Laughter)

Nykolaiszyn *Well, looking back on your career in accounting, what has been some of the more rewarding aspects for you?*

Duncan Well, I think it's been the relationships with clients because they come to depend upon you and it's a very personal thing, just like it would be with a doctor because you know, probably, more about their business than they

know. I've had people who are my clients call me to ask me all kinds of questions.

Nykolaiszyn *And technology has been, has seen lots of changes.*

Duncan Oh, yes.

Nykolaiszyn *I mean, we started talking about punch cards when you were in college. Can you just take me through some of the major technology that has impacted your work through the years?*

Duncan Well, principally, the computer, and now you do very little manually as far as write-up work. People do their own bookkeeping in-house by using accounting software. If I do accounting work for somebody, I use software instead of writing it in a journal and transferring it to a ledger, and then making handwritten financial statements. All of that is computerized. I never did really take any computer classes. I just learned on my own. I learned by doing. I'm not as proficient in some elements as I should be, but I managed.

Nykolaiszyn *You mentioned Wilton Anderson a little while ago. Did you have any interactions with him throughout the years?*

Duncan Very little, very little because I never did have any classes under Wilton Anderson. I remember being in meetings where he was, but I did not have a close relationship with him at all.

Nykolaiszyn *And have you had any interactions with students in your professional career, in terms of mentoring?*

Duncan Yes, very many because since I've had an office in my home, I have hired accounting students to help me. I have had some wonderful student employees, yes, more than I can count, and some I can't even really remember (Laughter) because it's been so long. One of the most recent employees I've had went on to get her law degree and is now working in the state attorney general's office. I've had some excellent, excellent students work for me. One young man who worked for me is now partner in Stanfield and O'Dell firm, with principal offices in Tulsa and Springfield, Missouri. I have another young man who has his own practice in the Dallas Metro area. Yes, I would say I have mentored lots and lots of students.

Nykolaiszyn *And do you still try to keep up with what's going on in the accounting world and keep current?*

Duncan Well, I do, mainly because I have done this coordination of our North Central Chapter CPE Program, and we get materials from Bisk Educational Company, which is in Tampa, Florida. They've recently been bought out by

a legal publication company, Thomson Reuters. Every month I get this data. I mean, we get printed material with quizzers, and then we get the DVDs. I don't have to do that, but I find it interesting. I go to the CPE every month. We have it eleven times a [year]. We don't have it in April because of the tax deadline for people. It's too pressing.

I might mention that one of the things that I have done outside of the profession, (and you may be going to ask me about that) since 1985 Stillwater has had a sister-city relationship with Kameoka, Japan. That came about because the State Department of Commerce had signed a sister-state agreement with Kyoto Prefecture in Japan. They thought it would be a good idea if there were some cities in Oklahoma who had relationships with other cities in Kyoto Prefecture, so in 1985, Stillwater signed a sister-city agreement with Kameoka, Japan.

I was one who volunteered to help with the organization of a council in Stillwater, which is a part of the city government, to handle those things. I actually wrote the bylaws. Of course, they had to be approved by everyone. I've been very active, the only member of that council to have served continuously, and I still serve on that. In that role, I had made two trips to Japan as a representative of the City of Stillwater and have lots of Japanese friends. Not necessarily as an outgrowth of that but prior to that, my husband and I had started a program at church, teaching English to international students on campus, and so we've done that for more than fifty years, and I still do that.

Nykolaiszyn *Wonderful.*

Duncan I teach two classes every week, and sometimes in years past I've taught more than that, to international students. We use the Bible, but we have an emphasis of English with pronunciation and vocabulary and grammar. It's mainly conversational English. As a result of that, I've done quite a bit of traveling to visit some students that we've had in our English classes. I've had a lot of Chinese students, but I've never been to China. I've been to Italy. I've been to Europe. I've been to South America.

Nykolaiszyn *Wow.*

Duncan We don't travel at all now because my husband is, he will be ninety-four in July. We don't do the traveling like we did, but I've had a very busy life and an enjoyable one. (Laughs)

Nykolaiszyn *And it's not over yet...*

Duncan No.

Nykolaiszyn *...because you're not retired, technically.*

Duncan No, I'm not. (Laughter) As a matter of fact, I am not as busy this week as I was last week because in addition, through the church teaching these international English classes, I have been involved with the University Center of the Church of Christ. I am secretary of the University Center administrative committee. Part of that obligation is because we have a University Center Foundation which has a very large endowment, and it's growing. I do all the financial work for that, handle the investments for that organization. We had a mid-year meeting last Saturday, so I was very busy last week with all of those reports and getting ready for that meeting. We need to make sure there's some continuity here, some people to take over. What our foundation does is it pays university students who work twenty hours or so a week at the university center in outreach to other university students. Our foundation has had, we paid six interns this past academic year, and we subsidize other activities like a fall retreat for students, or a spring retreat for students, or a women's retreat, and those kind of things.

Nykolaiszyn *You mentioned your first child earlier in the interview.*

Duncan Yes.

Nykolaiszyn *Can you tell me a little something about your children?*

Duncan All right, our daughter now is an adult services librarian at the Stillwater Public Library. She has two degrees from Oklahoma State University. Her first degree is in Spanish. Her master's degree is in TESOL, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, and most of her adult life she spent in California teaching English to non-native speakers. Then she became interested in libraries in California, and so she decided that she would get a degree in library science, which is a master's in library science. She went to OU [University of Oklahoma] to get it because it wasn't available here, so she got that degree at OU. She went back to California and worked in Antioch, California, which is in the East Bay area, but she didn't like the community at all, so she came back to Stillwater. She has taught two different times at the English Language Institute at OSU, but she's now full-time at the public library as adult services librarian. She had, a short time, taught at Texas Southmost College in Brownsville, Texas. She spent time in Mexico, and she's very fluent in Spanish. Of course, she has degree in Spanish, but she had lived in Mexico for a short time and then by being right on the Texas-Mexico border. She's never married, but she lives here in Stillwater.

Our son has taken over the accounting practice that originally belonged—well, my brother-in-law had bought it out from a man who started the business, and I think he was a graduate of Oklahoma A&M. His name was

Cassie Bingham. The brother-in-law had bought that business in 1941. Now since, I'm not in that office; brother-in-law is dead; Mr. Hunt is dead. Our son and another man, Ed Onley, who is a graduate in accounting at OSU, they have Duncan & Onley Professional Corporation, which is in BancFirst building. He lives here in Stillwater, and he has two sons who are both graduates of OSU. The older grandson of ours is a CPA, and he works for Bank of Oklahoma in the metro location in Oklahoma City. He has done very, very well. He is in the area of commercial loans for medical facilities, for very large nursing homes, hospitals, those kinds of things. He married a girl who is an OSU graduate from Elk City. Her name is Mica Edwards, and the grandson's name is Robert Duncan. They live in Edmond, and they have three children.

So we have three great-grandchildren. Then our son has a younger boy who is seven years younger than Robert, and his name is David. He graduated from OSU with a degree in graphic arts, and for a while he worked in Tulsa with This Land Press, which I know Donna knows about. When I say Donna, I mean Donna Wilson, knows about This Land Press. Last winter, I think it was in December, he changed jobs to work with a company which actually has their corporate headquarters in Stillwater. It's called Interworks, and it was begun by Stillwater High School graduates. Their headquarters office is out on Sangre [Road], across from Meridian Technology. Anyway, they have their headquarters here, but they have an office in the Oklahoma City area and in Tulsa, and David is with them in Tulsa. He likes it very much, and he does quite a bit of freelance graphic artwork, as well.

Nykolaiszyn *I'm hoping as we wind everything down if you could go through old Stillwater downtown for me...*

Duncan Oh, all right.

Nykolaiszyn *...and tell me...*

Duncan Well, maybe.

Nykolaiszyn *...what was there and...*

Duncan Okay.

Nykolaiszyn *...what used to be there, I mean, because I don't come across people who have such good detail of old Stillwater. If we could get some of this...*

Duncan Now, I may not have a complete memory. (Laughs)

Nykolaiszyn *...or even just some...*

Duncan Where do you want me to start?

Nykolaiszyn ...*some downtown highlights.*

Duncan Let's start sort of at the north end where the furniture store is at Main at Fifth. That used to be Leachman Theatre, and the Leachman family owned several theaters in Stillwater. There was one, well, there was the Leachman Theatre which was the newest of the theaters. Then there was one in the, probably the second location, north of Seventh Street and Main, where now Russ Teubner owns that building. I think in there is the offices of Stillwater Medical Center. In that area there used to be an Aggie Theater, and that was owned by the Leachmans. Then in the block south on the west side, about where Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory is, somewhere in there, there was another theater that the Leachman family owned that was called the Mecca Theater. Then up on campus corner where Hideaway is, right on the corner, was Campus Theater. At one time, I think the Leachman family owned all of those theaters.

Okay, going back to the area of Sixth and Main where Stillwater National Bank is, it was not the bank location. It was a hotel. That was one thing you asked, about a typical date. There was a hotel, and then south of there was a restaurant called Smith's Café. I did work for the Smith's Café a long time, but in this hotel we would—the church was right directly back of it, west of it across the alleyway. We would go down to that hotel, and we had some activities there. I think there was maybe a drugstore next door. Anyway, there was a place you could get drinks and ice cream and those kind of things.

Let me see. There used to be in that block just south of there, B&C Office Supply. Now, they're now down on Ninth Street. Then as you move on down that block, there was a men's store on the west side. I should be able to think of because my husband probably still has some clothing that has their label on, (Laughs) McBride's maybe. Then on the corner where they have just recently remodeled that building, (and I think Russ Teubner is the one who bought that building and remodeled it) that was a drugstore. Across the street, there was a drugstore, and one of those was Van Horn's Drugstore. I should remember the names of those other drugstores, but...

Nykolaiszyn *Quite a few.*

Duncan Oh, there were. If I really sat down to think about it, I could come up with the names. The west side of that block between Sixth and Seventh there was that hotel, there was B&C Office Supply, and a men's clothing store, and then that drugstore. Now, on the other side, right on the corner of Sixth and Main, used to be the Thomas Ford Agency, and the man who operated it, most of my memory, was Bill Thomas, who at one time was mayor of

Stillwater. Then the American Legion hall is upstairs, and they had downstairs things. They own that building where there's a barber shop in there now, and I was trying to think what else had been in there earlier. Then that Aggie Theater was there. On the corner of Seventh and Main way back when, when we first came to Stillwater, (this would have been 1936 or '7) there was a grocery store there, Searcy's Grocery. Then in later years, like when I was in high school, there was a music store there operated by—Chenoweth and Green was the name of it, I believe.

Then if you go across the street south where now is that Brooklyn's Restaurant, that for years was Katz Department Store. Then in that block, there used to be, way back when, a Woolworth Store. Clear on down to the corner, there used to be a TG&Y, which was a five-and-dime store on the corner. Across the street, there was that Van Horn's; back to Seventh and Main, there was Van Horn's Drug. In more recent years, Bates Brother's Clothing. I'm not sure in there where those jewelry store and things, what they might have been way back when. Might have been—there was a Washinka Jewelry Store, and then there was a ladies clothing store. In more recent years, it was called the Clothes Closet and was run by people by the name of Irby.

This has been in more recent years, too, there was this company called Cottontails that had a location, and they not only had that retail location, but clear out north on, well, probably Lakeview, north of Boomer Lake, a warehouse. They manufactured children's clothing. Then Central Drug on the corner. That's pretty well been—Central Drug used to be right on the corner. Central Drug is second from the corner, but it used to be. Let's see what else we've got. (Laughs) Moving on south, the building that housed, well, it was First National Bank at that time, was demolished, and the bank that's there now, BancFirst, was built to the south. I'm not sure whether BancFirst really owns the land. I know originally the people [who] owned that gave BancFirst a ninety-nine year lease...

Nykolaiszyn

Wow.

Duncan

...rather than selling it to them because I was involved in that transaction. Then, next to the bank was what was known as a Rexall Drug Store, and I'm not sure what. There were law offices then in that middle of that block between Eighth and Ninth on the west side. There were law offices of Clee Fitzgerald, Don Worthington. Some of the Worthington people are still here. Oh, Winfrey Houston, who is now retired, later was in business with Lynn Osborn. They had law offices in there. Then on the corner, way back, was a grocery store called Cooksey's. Then later it became a restaurant, and the woman that had that restaurant was known as Ma Montgomery. (Laughs) That's what everybody called her, was Ma Montgomery. Anyway, it was a very good place to eat. That was what was on the corner.

And let's see. Across the street where that—is it called First Main Place, where that computer place is now? You can walk through there, L-shaped, and there are business offices. Kent Houck owns that property now. That used to be the location of Stillwater National Bank, and it relocated to the corner of Sixth and Main on the west side. That used to be the Stillwater National Bank. Then south of there, I don't know. Murphy's has always been pretty much where Murphy's is. I may be a little blank on what was in between. (Laughs) I could probably scrape it up in my memory somewhere.

Nykolaiszyn

Not too bad for being put on the spot. (Laughter)

Duncan

No, I wasn't prepared for this! There used to be the car agency, Ward Buick, which was back of that where, well, on Ninth and Main, where it used to be Cooksey's on the corner, where that mural is on the side of the building. Just west of there used to be this Ward Buick car agency, and the Chevrolet agency was back of that First Main Place, back of the Stillwater National Bank on the east side, which would have been Eighth and Lewis Street, across from the Post Office. The Post Office used to be where now the OSU Art Gallery is. That was the Post Office. Now it's on Lewis Street.

I may be a little blank to tell you everything in between Ninth and Tenth. There's a building down there that is the Mullendore building. Mullendores used to have, I think it was more of what you'd call a department store, dry goods, clothing, and that kind of thing. Then at one time that building, (and this was when I was in high school) it was used for what they called Teen Town, and I know I was involved with that. It was a place for young people to meet, and they had activities and dances and all kinds of things to keep kids off the street. That was in that Mullendore building. My involvement with that is what led to my connection with Don Orr, who was an agricultural education professor.

I ended up working for him because I had gotten acquainted with him. He was one of the adults involved with that, as well as one of the Bellatti family, that own Stillwater [*NewsPress*]. The youngest of three sons, James Bellatti, was more nearly my age, and I know we were both officers of the group that were involved with that. I remember working with him on that, and then of course I had a lot of connection with James Bellatti all through the years. He still is alive and lives here in Stillwater because he is, you know, one of the owners of the Stillwater [*NewsPress*] and the radio station. I think I'll have to—some of those other businesses down farther south, I'm sort of blank on what...

Nykolaiszyn

They'll come to mind about seven o'clock tonight.

Duncan Right, I can probably fill you in. (Laughter) I do know that the Stillwater Public Library has done quite a bit of research and probably could identify every location for you with what's there now, what had been there previously, and prior to that. I know that they've done research on that because I even think my daughter had translated the English version into Spanish or something. I know she had done some work on that. If you need more information, I'm sure it's available.

Nykolaiszyn *Well, looking back on your career and your accomplishments and your family, how would you like to be remembered?*

Duncan Probably as a Christian, as a follower of Christ, and doing the best I could with anything I did.

Nykolaiszyn *And you've been in Oklahoma your entire life. What does Oklahoma mean to you?*

Duncan Well, there's one state that has the motto "The Land of Opportunity," and there have been lots of opportunities.

Nykolaiszyn *And is there anything you would like to say about anybody who's made, you know, just an important impact on your life as we get ready to close out today?*

Duncan Well, there have been so many people that—certainly, I often think of a woman, (this would be through church connections) her name was Velma Fagan. She inspired me a lot, and I think I owe a lot to her. My mother, and probably my brothers, both of them. There's just countless numbers of people.

Nykolaiszyn *And is there anything you'd like to add before we close on out, anything I've mentioned, I failed to mention, I failed to ask?*

Duncan Well, I don't know. (Laughter) I don't know. I probably told you too much. I had jotted down I was inducted into Phi Kappa Phi during my university career, even though it was short. I did not belong to a lot of campus organizations at all. I mean, I did through our church group of young people. Was busy with that and with working, and then with Mortar Board during my senior year. I think we pretty well covered things.

Nykolaiszyn *Well, Sylvia, thank you so much for joining us today. It's been a pleasure.*

----- *End of interview* -----