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Interviewee: Susan Mountin

Interviewer: Michelle Sweetser

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Michelle Sweetser: Alright, so we are recording. And for the record I want to state that today is May 4, 2016, and I am Michelle Sweetser, University Archivist. I'm here with Susan Mountin, who currently serves as Director of Manresa for Faculty. So thanks for joining me today, Susan. I want to start out by just kind of reflecting first on your experiences as an undergraduate here at Marquette. You graduated in 1971, so I assume you would have arrived in the fall of 1967?

Susan Mountin: Correct.

Michelle Sweetser: What drew you to Marquette as an undergraduate?

Susan Mountin: It was pretty clear decision. Marquette had a Catholic Journalism College and I had been involved in journalism as a high school student. I was co-editor of the paper and actually, my co-editor and I came here together. Truth be told, I was much more interested in Madison because I had done summer journalism camps there and loved the place. But my family—I had much younger brothers and sisters and my family wanted me closer so I could continue to babysit and I commuted to Marquette.

Michelle Sweetser: Gotcha. So being a good family member then! So you were raised in a religious tradition, then?

Susan Mountin: Yes, I am a card-carrying, baptized Catholic from my—I think I was just two weeks old when I was baptized. And my parents were very active in the church. My mom sang in the choir and my dad did Holy Name and ushers and things like that. So very much it was part of my upbringing. My great-grandparents, we lived with them when I was a child which was more common in those days and now is more common again. And taught me my prayers in German, so faith was always an important part, but in a different sense. My parents were laborers. They were factory workers and as a result, they didn't have a whole lot of education background to go with the faith tradition. So it was a very different kind of faith experience for me.

Michelle Sweetser: So coming to Marquette then, and commuting, did you participate in spiritual and religious exercises here on campus, or did you kind of remain a part of your home parish?

Susan Mountin: That's a fabulous question and in many ways I continued to be a part of the home parish. I was involved as a catechist for the grade school programs on Saturday mornings. And I'm trying to think if there were other things, although I did already by the time I was a sophomore get involved in a retreat movement within the archdiocese called the Search Retreat Program. And then later as a junior, did a cursillo. My parents had already done a cursillo retreat and very much encouraged me to do that. So I think that was my junior year. You know, it's interesting because there was no Campus Ministry when I was a student at Marquette. And we had the university chaplain who happened to be Fr. John Naus. And I did regularly frequent his office and I also got involved in theology fairly early. And by the end of my sophomore year—partially because of the encouragement of one my classmates who later became my maid of honor and was a nun. She kept saying, "You love theology so much, have you thought of double majoring?" And I said, "Well, I didn't know you could." And then I explored that and by junior year I created—claimed a second major. And then majored in journalism and theology. And crammed a lot of theology courses into those last two years to get the major in. And I think at that point

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there was a turning point in terms of my connections with the university. And by my senior year, in 1970 is when Campus Ministry began at Marquette. And it was also the only year in which I spent part of the year living in a building, in a house, basically, with nine other students. Or I guess ten other women, on Fourteenth Street. And it, it opened things up differently in terms of the faith life because I could go to the evening Masses that used to be in the old Campus Ministry spot which was an old apartment building on Wisconsin Avenue between Seventeenth and Eighteenth.

Michelle Sweetser: Merrity?

Susan Mountin: Merrity Hall. And then many, many years later came back to work in that building as a campus minister!

Michelle Sweetser: Great. So you mentioned the retreat movement the Search program, the notion of a cursillo retreat. This is kind of coming out of Vatican II--

Susan Mountin: --very much--

Michelle Sweetser: --and retreats were no longer compulsory. So, can you talk a little bit about why you chose to participate in these retreats and kind of what the sense was on campus among students about participating in them?

Susan Mountin: That's a really good question. I don't know how many students would have been involved in the Search and cursillo because they were diocesan kind of things. I think at the same time I was doing those things certainly they continued to offer retreats on campus through Father Naus. And students actually were expected to still go on retreat those first few years, but if you did a retreat another setting like I did that covered you, basically. By the time I was a senior, however, they did eliminate that requirement, and even in those days the retreat was: Haul yourself in to Gesu, sit in Gesu for three hours, and listen to a Jesuit. You know, it was a very different kind of experience than something like Search, which was very interactive and included witness talks and a lot of prayer and kind of contemporary prayer life and social justice issues, and you know those kinds of things. A little bit different than the typical kind of retreat you would have experienced if you walked into Upper Gesu for that experience and were talked to for several hours. So it was much more interactive. And I was drawn to that and found life in it, and found life in it to then later become a leader on the retreats and training for that. And interesting enough—we found this out kind of accidentally—but on one of those retreats, maybe my sophomore or junior year, found out Noreen Lephardt was on the retreat team on that, on one of the retreats that I was a retreatee on - was down at old St. Mary's!

Michelle Sweetser: It's a small world!

Susan Mountin: God, I kind remembered here there! Or I kind of remember somebody just like her. And then as we unpacked the experience later as adults, we said, "Oh yeah, we were there together!"

Michelle Sweetser: Yeah, so that's great that you had the kind of local connections to go to these retreats that were—you know, sounds like more meaningful to you and what you needed.

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Susan Mountin: Well, and at that time and I mean I don't know if I could say it was more meaningful in the sense that because I did those things I never walked into Gesu with my classmates. However, I think my faith development through the Theology Department was extremely significant. I had extraordinary professors and great classes and I think it was at a time, when we were in a transition between the theology faculty teaching, but also being concerned about the faith development of the students. Certainly that starts to change in the seventies, after there is the development of Campus Ministry as a separate entity with a focus on the faith development of the students, and then the poor theologians having to meet all the demands of tenure and have the—I mean there were good things about wanting theology to be recognized as an academic department as a peer among other academic departments with the same kind of quality and expectations, for those faculty. But at the same time it feels—felt to me - like we were beginning to lose something in that connection.

Michelle Sweetser: Sure, sure. So can you talk about some maybe some of these professors of these classes that were instrumental?

Susan Mountin: Many. Many. And I remember them well. Probably my favorite was Fr. Tom Caldwell, who is still here and up at San Camillo. He taught Old Testament courses so I actually took every course he taught in my four years. I think he was on sabbatical one year so I missed him. But Psalms and Wisdom Literature and it was just wonderful because he has a fabulous sense of humor—very dry sense of humor, a lot of puns he uses. And I would get so frustrated with my classmates, because they would just kind of like be asleep at their desks and if you really listened to him you were laughing all the time and he had this tremendous lexicon of the Old Testament terminology and history. And you just listened to him, he just made it engaging. Fr. Tad Guzie I had for several courses. He's no longer a Jesuit, he left and married, as many of my professors did actually. It was the time that that was happening, but I took courses on sacraments and sacramentology. Very, very, important I think in kind of an understanding the basic framework of the Catholic faith, particularly with its focus on symbol and sign. You know, really connecting with what I was also doing in my philosophy classes at the same time. You know, doing Susanne Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key*, where we spent time looking at sign and symbol. Or my metaphysics class in which we used Bernard Lonergan who is both a theologian and a philosopher who talked about metaphysical reality. And that enters into our understanding of sacraments. I mean, there was just so much rich coalescing. And I'm talking about this like it was yesterday and it was forty-five years ago. But clearly it had a powerful influence on me and then—I can keep going?

Michelle Sweetser: Keep going! Yeah, I mean if there are more of like, let's, yeah.

Susan Mountin: Well, let's see, sophomore year, actually it was the cusp of the Vatican Council. And all sophomores took Vatican II theology with Father Bernie Cooke on closed circuit TV.

Michelle Sweetser: Oh, wow.

Susan Mountin: So you sat in a lecture hall of 150 students. Mine was in the biology building and looked at a little teeny tiny TV [laughter] at the front of the room, in which Fr. Cooke was giving us the lecture and then we met in discussion groups once a week to talk about this common lecture experience.

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Which, was you know—was it a good methodology? Probably not. But I know, you know, at the time it was I think a way of having all the students - as I look at it now as a professional and say - we had a common experience. And there are few of those now in comparison. And there was richness in that. So, certainly, and then later getting to know Fr. Cooke as a grad student was a really important thing because he is probably one of the premier theologians and always will be in my mind. I had Fr. Sheets for Teilhard de Chardin again—listen to the presence of the Jesuits in this picture! Very, very important for me. But he later became a bishop. He was bishop in South Bend, I think. And actually I interviewed him for my doctoral dissertation which is kind of interesting. But, just a wonderful wonderful teacher and theologian. Dear, dear, dear man. I mean those are a couple of the ones that stuck out for me, I had Fr. Korth—well later as a graduate student for canon law in an independent study. And that was a challenge!

Michelle Sweetser: What made it a challenge?

Susan Mountin: I was working full time and taking two courses in the graduate program in theology and to be in a one-on-one with a renowned canon lawyer. It's not like you could hide behind your desk. You really needed to be prepared to have a one-on-one conversation once a week. And the only reason that was an independent study at that time is that the chair of the department, Fr. Quentin Quesnell at the time, wanted me to be taking two classes, not one, when I was working at the *Catholic Herald*. And I couldn't work it out with my work schedule to be in two full classes, so he said, "Well if I can find somebody to teach you an independent study you could do in the evening, would you do it?" I said sure, I guess. And it was Fr. Korth.

Michelle Sweetser: So you've kind of shared some of this in-classroom experience, what was it like, did you go to these, to Jesuits, with personal things, or you know, your own faith building outside the classroom? You talked about going to Fr. Naus, as well. And how did you find those relationships to be?

Susan Mountin: Just immensely supportive. And I think their doors were always open and they were present. Stopping into their offices I think happened on a fairly regular basis. They regularly did parties and gatherings for the theo students—the majors by the time I was major. Junior year. Went to those. Once Campus Ministry started in regular Masses and Masses at St Joan of Arc, Mass at Merrity Hall on the floor, on the shag carpet, with the big pillows. It was definitely an experience of the sixties and seventies. The orange shag carpet was something else, you know, so definitely for me regular Mass attendance had been part of my life forever and ever. And then the personal relationships. I think because they really cared about us. I have a memory of—shoot, what's the Jesuit's name? I'll come up with the name later.

Michelle Sweetser: That's fine.

Susan Mountin: But at one point, I think in the beginning of senior year, he had a pizza party for all the theo majors. And he sat with us around table and there were probably fourteen, fifteen of us and he said he wanted us to be sure that with a theology major, the church was at a place in which we would have jobs working in the church. And he wanted to make sure we knew that. And I thought that it was

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so visionary in a sense. I don't know how many of us ended up—well actually quite a few of us ended up as theologians or working lay ministry, when I think about the people sitting around that table. So there was a vision of the church of the future happening at that time. But it was also responding to what had happened in Vatican II. And a real shift in—and that wasn't to deny the importance of priesthood, but it was also to hold up lay people as leaders in the church. Both and.

Michelle Sweetser: Right. As you kind of think back around your peer group in theology what was the kind of balance, men and women? Did you find yourself surrounded by women who were majors, or mostly men, or was it pretty mixed?

Susan Mountin: Here different, obviously, from when I went to the seminary. But when I was here, I'd say it was fairly mixed at that point. Remember, we didn't have many women models. We only had a couple of TAs, and a couple of nuns that were here, but I don't think there were any females on the full-time faculty. There were almost all Jesuits. There were very few lay people. And a couple of Protestants teaching. You know we had a rabbi teaching. We had an Anglican priest teaching, who was really valued, by the way. And so, I think the modeling wasn't there in the same way.

Michelle Sweetser: Right.

Susan Mountin: But classmates, it was a mix. We had quite a few nuns that were here doing studies. And as I said, Kathy became our maid of honor for me, which is pretty amazing.

Michelle Sweetser: Great. You mentioned in passing Joan of Arc Chapel, which had just been reconstructed here on campus shortly before then. So you went to Masses there? What was it like as they kind of figured out how to use that space and to observe Mass there—celebrate Mass there?

Susan Mountin: From the get-go—I think in those early years, one of the things that was really important was that there was always music every Mass. You know where today there isn't. So there was at least a guitarist, we didn't have keyboards in those days, so there wasn't a piano. But guitar music was a really big thing in the sixties and seventies in churches. So that was a very conformable thing and there weren't the chairs that there are now, kind of lined up like a church. There were just the benches on the side that made it look a little bit more traditional, you know, how it would have been. And there were the prie dieux, which are the kneelers and they were still sturdy and people used those if they wanted to kneel and pray. But I think the sense of community was really important and the attendance was better than it is today.

Michelle Sweetser: Oh, really?

Susan Mountin: No question, yeah. Much, much better. And we did noon, four, and ten p.m., Monday through Friday. Except no ten p.m. on Friday nights. So that was very significant. And I think the preaching was great. You know I mean the priests were great and invited people and helped them reflect on their lives in a really powerful way and connected with them really well. So it's like the glory years!

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Michelle Sweetser: [laughter] Well, later we can talk a little bit about what's changed. I'll try to stay in that period I think now.

Susan Mountin: Yeah, the other thing I should have reflected on is that Father Naus's Schroeder Hall Masses down in the basement of Schroeder Hall before they partitioned the space, at midnight on Saturday nights. That was also my era. And there would be 350 to 400 students crammed in the place sitting in the window ledges and everybody'd come after their dates: you'd go out for the night or you'd go to the mov—whether it was a date or you were out with friends, you'd go out, you know, for the evening and end it with Mass at midnight. And it was, I think, when some of the leaders already of alums in the Milwaukee community, people like John and Mary Cary, and John with the MACC fund. They were regulars at that Mass, you know. And really powerful connections were made among people who prayed together. And I think that was part of Marquette's identity in those days.

Michelle Sweetser: Sure. What made that Mass so popular? Was it Father Naus? Was it the timing? Both?

Susan Mountin: That's a good question, I think it's a both-and. I mean definitely because he could relax with students and have fun with students and you know do his silly things that he did at ten p.m. Mass in more recent years at St. Joan of Arc. It was important. But also the time. And you know, I think it became a really significant, common experience for students who wanted to have faith life as part of their lives. And we didn't have four p.m. Mass in those days. There was no Sunday afternoon Mass. This was like *the* campus Mass. So, it was really important I think in that sense. They were *fun!* [laughter]

Michelle Sweetser: [laughter]

Susan Mountin: The music was great. It was lively and energetic. And he was fun and he connected with our lives and that was really important. So we stayed to him connected to him forever.

Michelle Sweetser: Right, right. He had a long association with the campus.

Susan Mountin: He presided at my son's wedding! We flew him to Michigan.

Michelle Sweetser: Wow.

Susan Mountin: Long relationship.

Michelle Sweetser: It really is an interconnected network. You talked a little tiny bit about going to Mass in Gesu, and so I want to kind of come back to that. Was it the case that there was kind of a separate Mass for students in that time period?

Susan Mountin: No, actually. And, my Mass attendance and prayer at Gesu was in the lower church for noon Mass basically, and to go back, to go pray there. Quiet, it was the place, the back pews are gone now, but it used to be pews all the way to the back door. And especially as a commuter, I'd like to say I didn't go there occasionally to sleep. I probably did, I don't remember that specifically but there were a number of people actually, who had also done Search in the diocese, and it was not unusual for three,

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four, five of us to be kneeling and praying in the back pew a couple of days a week at various times—you'd bump into friends of yours that were there praying. Yeah, it was pretty fun.

Michelle Sweetser: Yeah, it sounds like it. What did you find, kind of most valuable, in your Marquette experience in the area of kind of developing your religious and moral values?

Susan Mountin: I would again reiterate the classroom experience. And I mean, I'm not sure John Naus's Masses helped my development of values as much as develop a sense of community, which I think was really, really important. But I do know that the coursework, what we read, what we talked about, helped make the connections between the values of faith and the Church and our life decisions. They were not separated. And I would definitely think that that is the key piece for me.

Michelle Sweetser: Do you feel that Marquette currently offers that kind of experience for students?

Susan Mountin: I would say that's harder to find now. Partially because of the professionalization of theologians. And people who are hired that don't see their work as a theologian focused on the undergraduates. I think there is much more attention being given to the graduate program, and preparing people to teach college theology. But ironically, if you are not teaching college theology in such a way that it connects with our students' lives in the issues of our world, I don't think it's particularly as strong as it was then. That's my own sense.

Michelle Sweetser: That's what you can speak to. You talked a little bit about kind of being drawn to the theology, you know, double majoring, kind of over the course of your time here at Marquette. Can you reflect a little bit more about how you saw your faith evolve during your time here?

Susan Mountin: You know, growing up in a house in which Sunday Mass was really important, devotions were really important, you know, I went to Mother of Perpetual Help as a grade school. So I went to Mother of Perpetual Help during the day, and then on Tuesday nights with my great-grandparents and my parents, would go back, do them at night. So I have that whole devotion memorized to this day. It's a very important part of my life and my prayer. But it was a very—it was that experience of devotion and Mass, and going to Benediction and all those other things along with community experience, because my parents' social life really centered around the parish. So, you know, they were the cooks and the bottle washers for all the dinners: the choir dinner, the ushers' dinner, and things like that. So from the time I was a little girl I spent every Saturday, just about, it seemed to me, chasing around the gym while my parents were setting up for some event or cooking or something because of their involvement. But I think what, and because there wasn't as much of an intellectual life in my family, just because of who they were. And I think what happened at Marquette is it tapped into the whole realm of what I would call the Catholic intellectual tradition. That there was this tradition over centuries that helped us be—you know as a community, looking at all the issues that we needed to face. And whether it was Thomas Aquinas talking about moral issues, Athanasius as he focused on Jesus's divinity, that whole world opened up to me in the courses I was taking. And unpacking the scriptures—and the scriptures I took with Fr. Caldwell, for example. It just took in a whole different realm of—experience beyond praxis. So I had praxis experience down in many ways, and the involvement in that sense. But to be thinking about

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all these things, and be knowing that I was sharing this long history of thousands of years, I don't know if I even reflected on that, at the time, but certainly I can reflect back on it now and realize it was like an unfolding. A wonderful unfolding for me.

Michelle Sweetser: Excellent. So you graduated in 1971, and then you went to work as an editor, or a writer, at the *Catholic Herald*. How did you kind of get the position, and had you—I mean, it seems like a lovely marriage of your two majors. So how did you kind of come to that position?

Susan Mountin: That's a really fun question, you are going to laugh. We had somebody in the College of Journalism in those days, his name was Ed Pepan. And his responsibility was to connect with alums and help do job placement for alums. And he knew I was in journalism and theology and I had also been a work-study kid in journalism. My whole four years there. And actually worked for all four years for Jim Arnold, who was the professor who also wrote movie critic columns for the Catholic press around the United States. So I read lots of variety reviews of movies. That was part of my job. to read the reviews and give him summaries of things he might want to be writing about. Which was great fun. But, when I came to graduation, I think I was pretty much focused on wanting to work as a religious education director in a parish. And work for the church. And Ed called me into his office, and he said, "Susan, you know there's this job open at the *Catholic Herald*. They're looking for an assistant editor"—I don't know if it was assistant or associate, or whatever—"but I think you really ought to apply." Because of the marriage of journalism and theology. I'm like, "You know, I really wanted to work for the church," and I was applying for jobs in parishes. Well two weeks, three weeks went by. And this in March in senior year, and says, "You know,"—he called me back—and he said, "You know, I don't think they've filled the job yet, I think you ought to apply." And I'm like alright, you owe it to yourself, I'm like ok, ok. And mind you, in Professor Arnold's freshman class, the very first day, with all hundred and eighty of us in Marquette Hall, one of the things we had to do on an index card was say what do you want to do when you grow up, basically. And I wrote down I want to work for the Catholic Press!

Michelle Sweetser: Okay!

Susan Mountin: So here I was. So I was like, ok. So I did apply. And apparently quite a few candidates applied and low and behold I get an interview. And I do my references from Marquette and I get the job. And they say, "When can you start?" And this in early April. And I'm like, "Well, I have exams the first week in May." "Can you start exam week?" So I did. Because I desperately—coming from a blue-collar worker family, and you know putting myself through Marquette working many, many, many jobs. I said ok, I'll start, and literally, so they let me come back to take my exams. And I started working. But I thought two weeks into the job, our editor, Tom Smith, was just a brilliant, brilliant man, who had come from working in New York City, also a Marquette masters alum in journalism. He stands up one day—and I realize now as I'm in my sixties, what was happening when Tom stood up and it took him a while to kind of get all his joints lined up before he could move. But he would stack his papers before he went out into the press room. And I think it was all about his body at that point, and he said something about, oh yes, something about saying hi to my brother-in-law. And I said, "Well, who's your brother-in-law?" And he said "Well, Tommy Caldwell, I thought you knew?" Unbeknownst to me, one of my references was dear Fr. Caldwell! So it probably had a lot to do with getting that job. But it was a good marriage.

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And it was actually the job that led me to graduate studies in theology because as a twenty-two year old being sent to cover Hans Küng and interview Cesar Chavez, and all these—and Avery Dulles - all these phenomenal theologians. I thought even with a theology major, it was too hard to understand the depth of theology they were talking about and translate it for people in the pews. So that's what drew me into studying theology here at Marquette.

Michelle Sweetser: Sure. Did the paper help support your--

Susan Mountin: Oh God, no! [Laughter] That wasn't in the framework. Only in the fact that they did allow me time. But you know, at the same time you are often covering stories at night, so it kind of balanced out in that sense. But they did support me in the sense of wanting me to do it.

Michelle Sweetser: Right. [Laughter] I figured it unlikely that they would have financially supported that degree. But it sounds like you had some wonderful experiences as an editor there. You mentioned some really big names. Can you describe a little bit more your interactions with these kind of leaders in the field?

Susan Mountin: Well you know sometimes it was just like—I interviewed Caesar Chavez in a basement of an apartment building on 27th Street between Wisconsin and Wells. No—Wisconsin and Michigan. I was scared out of my mind, because it was a time when he was—he had just finished one of his fasts and there were protests going on. So he came accompanied with bodyguards that had guns on them. And I was alone on a Saturday morning and I remember being absolutely terrified. And I probably didn't know enough about who he was or what he was about to really even do a good interview. In fact, one of these days I want to go down to the *Catholic Herald* and see what the heck I wrote. A number of the others had to do with Stritch or the diocese or Marquette bringing them in to give speeches or they were here for a conference. And, it was very humbling, you know? And little did—I mean at the time, did you ever know—did I ever know, that they would rise to the place that they were? Probably not. Except for Hans Küng, because they—that talk actually talk was the Pere Marquette Lecture and they did it in the Pabst.

Michelle Sweetser: Oh, ok. Interesting choice of venue.

Susan Mountin: Well, you know I think it may have been—I'm trying to remember why it would have been in the Pabst, maybe because they expected more people than the old ballrooms could have held. And definitely it was packed. But I covered it and I interviewed him. Interviewed Avery Dulles—same thing. But long before he—I think it was right around the time he wrote *Models of the Church*, which was his trajectory. So, you know, exciting. But again—but you know, I think about how stupid I was. And wish I knew then what I know now, to really have a really full interview. But, it is what happened. So what are you going to do?

Michelle Sweetser: Yep, great. So you were at the *Catholic Herald* for I'm guessing about six years?

Susan Mountin: No, about three. A little over three.

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Michelle Sweetser: Ok, because you came back to Marquette in 1977?

Susan Mountin: No, I went from there to *U.S. Catholic*, in Chicago. And I was an associate editor at *U.S. Catholic*, which is a national magazine published by the Claretian Fathers.

Michelle Sweetser: OK.

Susan Mountin: So that was a real shift, from newspaper to magazine. But it was magazine plus, we produced a whole range of newsletters and books, and you know we did one covering religion at home, and one focusing on parenting. We focused on the impact of modern media—this is on the edge of “the medium is the message” and what does that mean for our young people and our church? Looking at mixed media kinds of things. Martin Marty produced a piece for us—what was that called? I don’t remember. But that went out to the clergy. And social and cultural issues. Lots of books on social justice issues. We started *Salt*, which is a magazine at that time and then my major responsibility was to make *U.S. Catholic* American’s most quoted Catholic magazine. Which meant, basically, that I would do oral interviews, sometimes on the phone, sometimes in person, with authors of the magazine about their stories. And then, produce radio scripts that would go out with tapes and a script to radio stations and TV stations all across the country. My favorite one was I interviewed Teddy Kennedy. And he had done a piece for us on nuclear disarmament. And I had an in-person interview with him, which was kind of scary—also with bodyguards and FBI people and things like that so I mean in that sense.

Michelle Sweetser: That sense, more than intimidated by him as a personality--

Susan Mountin: No, and I wasn’t intimidated by Cesar Chavez; I was by his bodyguards. But that was pretty cool. And one of things he said I’ll never forget, because he said—and we put this in the article as well—he said, “Nuclear disarmament cannot be a back burner issue for the future of the world.” And that rings in my ears over and over again. Especially on the cusp of what we are facing right now with proliferation going on in North Korea and Russia. So pretty powerful. So that was fun. It was exciting and fun and just took me down a completely different path than I had been before. I didn’t do as much writing, where at the *Catholic Herald* I was writing all time. I probably only wrote three, four, five things when I was at *U.S. Catholic*.

Michelle Sweetser: Interesting. OK.

Susan Mountin: *Then* came back to Marquette.

Michelle Sweetser: Right! So you came back to work for Marquette at Campus Ministry which is not kind of your—that freshman goal of working for the Catholic Press, and it’s not that kind of, graduating, wanting to work with parishes. So how did you come to this position, what drew it to you—you to it?

Susan Mountin: Sure. And let me just go back just a little bit. The editor at the *U.S. Catholic* was Kevin Axe also a masters in journalism alum from Marquette. He’s still around. Somewhere in Illinois near Chicago. But, how did I get there? Well, when I was at the *Catholic Herald*—and we’ll go back a little bit because that’s the only way to do this.

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Michelle Sweetser: Sure.

Susan Mountin: One of those stories I was sent to cover was on the seminary here in Milwaukee opening to lay students. And I covered the story, and then went down to interview several of the administrators, the priests that were running the seminary. And at one point, one of them, an older man, probably in his late seventies—I don't know, you know at the time he felt really old, but I was twenty-three, wait no, twenty-two probably. Fr. Ty Cullen. He said to me, "You're asking really good questions. Tell me about yourself." And I explained to him that I was working on a master's at Marquette. And he said, "You're exactly the kind of student we want here at the seminary because we're trying to really enhance lay people's understanding of the working of the Church, and I think you ought to apply." And along about that time, I think I was also feeling a disconnect with what was happening in the graduate theology program at Marquette, for me. Because I knew—now mind you, I knew at that time, I didn't want to teach college-level theology, which I ended up doing at a later date. But at the ripe old age of twenty-two, what the heck do you know? So long story short I applied and was accepted. So I was in the first lay class of students at the seminary and there were two women—but the other women, there were six accepted lay students, there were two women and four men—the other woman hadn't had any philosophy or theology. She had gone to Madison—or Wisconsin, Milwaukee—UWM. So she had to do two years of preparatory coursework to be in. And because I have a theo major and all the philosophy classes that seminarians would have, I filtered right into their class. So actually I was in the seminary with men my own age. Which was pretty fun. But in the course of doing my seminary, finishing my master's at the seminary, we also had to do field education. And when I found myself in ministry settings, there was something that came alive. So by the time we were coming back from Chicago at *U.S. Catholic*, I looked at jobs both in parishes and in Campus Ministry and in journalism—but it was secular journalism. And I got offered two parish jobs and the Marquette job. And one of my colleagues at *U.S. Catholic* had been very involved in Campus Ministry as a student at Northwestern, and she had said to me, "You know that would be my dream job, how cool is that?" And I thought, well, maybe! And it came with housing for my husband and me. And that was kind of a gift. And we were coming back really because of a tragedy in my family. My brother had, the summer before, a diving accident and at the age of nineteen became a quadriplegic. And so there was an urgency to come back because he had a one-year-old. And the commute back and forth while he was in rehab for almost a year at the hospital in Madison was very, very difficult. And what do you do, you know? You're working downtown in the Loop and you have this family dealing with this horrible crisis. So we wanted to be closer to home. So part of it was practical and part of it was like, "Yeah, I'll give this a try." So they interviewed me and they said, "Would you stay three to five years?" And I said, "Well, I guess I could do that." And my joke has always been, I think God thought I said thirty-five! And I mean, the first year was tough, as a Campus Minister. Tough, in the sense of that it was so new, and people and that staff were so busy, and when you come in new to Campus Ministry everybody's busy but you—and it takes a while to build the relationships. And then even though I had responsibilities—I was coordinating the retreat program, you know, which I love doing and I think I got the job because of all the retreat work I had done in the diocese. So the fit was good. And then by then end of the year, I just loved it so much that even though I was pregnant and giving birth in June, I was coming back in August, no question. And it just was a joy.

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Michelle Sweetser: I know you said it was tough, in part because the program was so new. I think you meant Campus Ministry in general, but perhaps you mean some of the work you were doing? So I just wanted to clarify that.

Susan Mountin: Tough in the sense that everyone else was so busy and I would just sit in my office. And there are students coming in and out of this place, and no one came to see me. It would get a little boring. And at the magazine I had deadlines to meet, and, you know, it was a real—it was so structured. And in a sense you had to create or develop relationships in Campus Ministry with the whole campus: students, faculty, and staff. And I'm seven years removed, so certainly there's some faculty around when I was a student, but it was a different place by the end of the seventies. And, you know, how you enter into that I think is a different question.

Michelle Sweetser: Sure. Sure. And you mentioned that you were responsible for coordinating the retreat program, so by that point, what did the retreat program look like for students?

Susan Mountin: Well one of things they wanted me to do was build the retreat program. I think they had a couple of retreats that they offered on a regular basis. But we wanted to envision ways—and I will use the terminology I use even now—which is: how do we go beyond the usual suspects and provide a retreat experience which is so Ignatian? You know, for people to step away from their lives and ask the deeper questions and how to do that. And so I'm not quite sure how this happened, but in addition to the regular retreats that were offered on a regular basis, like one for social justice and one for the students who involved in liturgy, some quote "general retreats" as we called them. I started working with the academic programs. So within two years, we had a nursing retreat, a business retreat, a journalism retreat, a PT retreat, in which students and I worked with teams of students and faculty, and we always had a Jesuit on every retreat team. And we worked with a small group of people to create that retreat so that it would allow the people in that discipline to interact in a different way and build community. I think that whole idea of building community was always really, really important. And as Marquette continued to grow, it's very easy to be here and not be connected to anybody, and already in the seventies, and now it's even tougher. So if you could do working with PT students or nursing students and do a focus on healing, do a focus on forgiveness and the role that you have in all those processes, it- it was so much fun. And just full of joy for me. A lot of work. Lots and lots and lots of work. Because you know with a shoe-string budget it sometimes meant that I was running a retreat for forty students and doing the shopping and cooking for the meals as well. Because we were short- short-staffed, you know, in those days. And God bless my Jesuits, but they, you know—they weren't real big into doing dishes, except for a couple of them! [laughter]

Michelle Sweetser: Sure. [laughter]

Susan Mountin: And I think that went well. Even the business retreat. I mean I think of Gene Laczniak. And who else—Ed Inderrieden and Rich Robertson. He's also I think retired at this point. From business. But I have a memory of them at Holy Hill with like forty-five business students. And actually there had to be more than forty-five because this is a fun little anecdote—we were having dinner, and somebody said something about it being their birthday. And Gene Laczniak stood up and said, "Statistically, if it's your

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birthday, and we have fifty people here, somebody else here has a birthday today.” And sure enough, there was another person with a birthday on the same day! I didn’t *know* that!

Michelle Sweetser: [laughter] Wow, Statistically, really...

Susan Mountin: Statistically, if you have fifty people you should have two people with the same birthday. I have no idea. But it worked. But again, you know, what are the values of businessmen? And when you think about the work of Gene and Ed, you know over the years, how they brought those deeper questions into business education at Marquette. And why that was important. Journalism, Journalism ethics, you know, and the rise of the media. We could do things that would really, I think, augment what was happening in the classroom. So that was a big part of my job the first ten years.

Michelle Sweetser: And so it was not uncommon and then it seems to have forty or fifty students on these retreats?

Susan Mountin: No, no, I mean some were smaller, some were twenty, twenty-five. Some died on the vine and got cancelled because we didn’t have twelve. And that was our rule, you needed twelve. But it just depended on the partnerships with the faculty and the administration and the various programs. Because they if they got on board and said I’m going to be there, it was amazing. Or if a dean would be there, then students were more likely to come, number one, and it gave a credentialing and an accreditation to the experience, so that it wasn’t just kind of holy rollers on the corner doing this. But it was intimately connected to my life as a student.

Michelle Sweetser: Sounds like you had pretty wide support for many areas. Were there areas where you did not find support for maybe academic areas where it was harder to make a case?

Susan Mountin: That’s a good question, I mean, to do a general retreat for Arts and Sciences was a little tough, and I don’t know if we ever did. And so in some ways, those were the students, that—even though that was the biggest college at the time—that we weren’t connected. I don’t know if we ever did an engineering retreat. But I have to go back to find out to find out if we even tried that. Certainly the health sciences were the easiest. The connections were the easiest. And I think we had the long-standing journalism relationship. And I then I was the chaplain in journalism so I knew faculty, I knew students, and that made journalism really easy for me.

Michelle Sweetser: And where were the retreats typically held? I think you mentioned Holy Hill?

Susan Mountin: Oh my God, any retreat house I could find, and that was always the struggling point, because there aren’t that many, and Holy Hill, the Palatine Place, near Elkhorn. We did some in Williams Bay. There’s a Lutherdale, I don’t know what it’s called now, it may not be called Lutherdale anymore. We did YMCA camps. We did a couple of Y Camps that also had winter facilities. We slept on floors. Just everything under the sun. A place in Sheboygan called Tanglewood for smaller groups. But, you know, oftentimes, we would have more than one retreat going on a weekend.

Michelle Sweetser: Oh, wow.

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Susan Mountin: So.

Michelle Sweetser: So, they were overnight kinds of events--

Susan Mountin: --Yes--

Michelle Sweetser: --where they would go on multiple days and you really get away from the campus— was the goal?

Susan Mountin: Friday night through Sunday noon, usually. That was the common experience.

Michelle Sweetser: So, you mention when you came to the job, it also came with housing. So I knew you were a hall minister—Cobeen—is where you were. So Cobeen was an all-women's dormitory.

Susan Mountin: Yes, my husband was the first male.

Michelle Sweetser: OK.

Susan Mountin: --to live in Cobeen Hall. And then Fr. Zeps replaced me.

Michelle Sweetser: So how many years did you serve as a ministers there?

Susan Mountin: I was the campus minister there for two, but only live-in for one. And then I was there paired with a Jesuit, Fr. George Winzenburg, who was also in Campus Ministry, was director then, then chaplain to nursing, which was also a great connection for us with nursing. And he's now on an Indian mission. He's the president of the Red Cloud School. So we lived there for one year and then bought a house at the end of the year and moved because I had Matthew. But I stayed as the campus minister and Tom was actually doing a post-grad law degree at DePaul and commuting at that point, back and forth. So when he'd go down for classes to Chicago on the bus I would bring Matthew—I mean you want to have a chick magnet? You bring a baby into a women's residence hall! You know? I mean it was amazing. And the students would just—you know, crowd around us. And when I was pregnant that whole year too. I remember once they knew in spring they knew I was pregnant and it just opened up so many relationships for me with those women because they had a gazillion questions about sex and the Church and about everything else. So it was a happy stance, pure grace.

Michelle Sweetser: Yeah. What—can you elaborate a little bit more about the kinds of questions and issues that these students were coming to you in the hall with?

Susan Mountin: Yeah, you know when I think about it a lot of it had to do with relationship issues, but I'll use another example. The student that came very early on because she was having conflict with her mom. And then they had roommate conflicts, so you know, it was all over the map. I think they had questions about sexuality and what the Church was teaching about birth control so we'd have conversations about things like that. Many of them got involved with the other Campus Ministry events, and amazingly, I can't tell you how many of those women stay in touch with me. And that was in 1977, so it's how many years? Is that fifty years?

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Michelle Sweetser: Not fifty, forty!

Susan Mountin: Forty! One of them actually is our youngest son's godmother and we are godparents for her oldest daughter, which is kind of interesting. Barbara Graham from Catholic Charities. I'm in our pastor's grant. Barbara's coming into talk. I've had her come in and talk to our classes. She does work on immigration, and she's a lawyer who does work on immigration for the archdiocese. You know, so connections are so much fun. And I just love being places like at a Brewers game and somebody will come up to me and say to me, "You were my campus minister!" Which is kind of amazing to me. But they remember, you know? They remember that. Which is great. Pretty darn fun. I'm Facebook friends with quite a few of them now. Once that started, they found me.

Michelle Sweetser: That's wonderful.

Susan Mountin: But I think it also says something. It's not about me, it's about time. And the fact that they found something you knew with each other. You know, we still had the dorm Masses in those days, and we used to call them Pajamas Masses. Literally, women students would come to the lounge in their pajamas and curlers at ten o'clock on Sunday night and sit on the floor. It was just fine. And it was ok to be that informal and to pray together.

Michelle Sweetser: So you had an open-door kind of policy in the dorm?

Susan Mountin: Yes, that was the rule. The door was open most of the time. We had a quad, so we had our king size bed that we brought with us that filled the room. I mean literally you could only walk around two sides of it. And then in the other room we brought our living room furniture from that apartment in Chicago and that's where I would hang out with students. And a bath. So we didn't have a kitchen, in those days none of the campus ministers had kitchens, because they were all priests and nuns until me. So I think after that, we gradually started working with Residence Life and now all the hall ministers have at least a small kitchenette so they can take care of themselves. So here we used like a little electric West Bend Dutch oven to cook on when the students weren't around because there was no food. And all the mice and cockroaches would come to the second floor and visit us, because they couldn't find food on the first floor of the cafeteria!

Michelle Sweetser: Now how did things change then in your second year as minister to that hall when you were no longer living there?

Susan Mountin: That's a good question. I mean, certainly your relationships change because you are not hanging around at 11:00 at night for them to come hang out. I think maybe Matthew helped a lot because he was a chick magnet and I was still preaching every other week with Fr. George, and so there was still a lot of visibility. But I think what would happen is if I make contacts and if I kind of tried to do office hours in the evenings then, at least two nights a week, to be there and be present, and I still went to the hall council meetings, and still we did a Cobeen retreat. That's the other things we used to do was also a residence hall retreat. So we did a Cobeen retreat and—but they - the students also knew how to find me in Johnston Hall. So, you know, if somebody wanted to find me or any of the other campus ministers—I mean I think that that was just the reality—is folks found a way to do it.

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Michelle Sweetser: Can you talk a little bit more about your work as the chaplain then for the College of Journalism and what the expectations were of that role?

Susan Mountin: Sure. That was kind of interesting because it had always been a Jesuit until I became the chaplain and it's because Fr. Lambeck had a sabbatical—Fr. Robert Lambeck—and my second year of working at Marquette and they asked me then to fill in for him, and when he came back he didn't—he said I don't want to do this anymore. And then they asked me to remain as the chaplain. I had office hours, I mean it's hard, in a sense, because I was teaching though, because that's—I should go back to that: I started teaching the very first year I was at Marquette and I was Campus Minister. You want that story first? Do you edit these [laughter]?

Michelle Sweetser: [laughter] Why don't we finish talking about this and I'll make a note about your teaching.

Susan Mountin: OK. You know, do I want to say it was hard? I don't know exactly what I want to say but not everybody in the College of Journalism was necessarily practicing their faith or wanted to practice their faith. You know, it was a different kind of relationship, and I think I found over time that to build relationships with faculty and stop in and see them was really important, because they were a referral source. I also never felt that I wanted the chaplain to only be a problem solver, even though I was a problem solver. I mean, students that were dealing with suicide of a parent, students were usually dealing with relationship issues, which were really, really, really big for everybody. Certainly the vocation questions, like "What do I want to do with my life? What's important to me?" Those are the types of questions students would come in and talk to me about. I regularly hung out in the *Tribune* office and the ad office at the radio station and the TV station. And, you know, just make regular visits to the students that were very engaged and involved. Because they were stretching themselves very thin and oftentimes that would come out with spiritual and emotional kinds of issues. And then the retreats I think were a great launching point into relationships with them as well. And so I did that for almost twenty years, actually. There was a long time, I think, until Fr. Grant Garinger came, and then I think he saw himself in that role. And then I had had Andrew at that point, and I had three kids at home and working full-time and you know, I—but I miss it. I miss it. There was something, because of my professional background, that it was nice to kind of keep my fingers in that pot. But during that time I was also teaching, my very first—let's see, I started work in August, and so it was what, the third week in August, were doing Freshman orientation in the old student union, and a phone call comes in to the room that we're in. And I'm like, how did anyone even find me? That's what I don't understand. And it was Warren Bovee, who was the interim dean or acting dean at that point in journalism. One of the first of their reporting teachers had a medical issue—I don't remember what it was, heart attack or something—and they needed someone to teach her course. And could I teach. This was on Thursday, and I would be starting teaching on Tuesday. And I thought but I have this full time job, blah blah blah, but he says, "You have all this professional background, you could be teaching it easily. You know, ask your boss." So Father Bert Thelen was director of Campus Ministry. Brand new on the job, by the way. And I went to Bert, and unbeknownst to me, Bert Thelen was a 1954 graduate of the College of Journalism. And he's like, "Oh, that's a wonderful idea!" We'd love to have more campus ministers

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connecting with the academic world! Of course you can teach! So I got ahold of the syllabus and started teaching reporting the following Tuesday. And then eventually taught media writing, reporting. We—in those days, there was a bit of a—how can I say—the College of Journalism did not value the way English was being taught for journalism students. So we taught our own English courses for freshman and sophomore year, which had more of a focus on non-fiction rather than fiction writing. And so I taught English I and II-J for Bill Thorn, who was chair of the department at that point, and he's still around. He's one of the few people that's still alive and still around. And then Jim Scotton became—George really was dean and then Jim Scotton became dean, and I sort of along the way taught for both of them and then Sharon Murphy. I think I did magazine editing and writing at one point. I taught that. It was kind of like, whatever.

Michelle Sweetser: So that represents quite a time period of teaching as well, because Sharon Murphy was maybe dean in the nineties?

Susan Mountin: And that's another thing because I was chaplain through the merger.

Michelle Sweetser: Do you want to talk a little bit about the merger of Journalism and Speech?

Susan Mountin: It had its moments of difficulty, it was a very tense time in that not everybody wanted that merger. Very few people wanted that merger. I think the university was being practical about what needed to happen and my guess is that had they not merged, speech would have not survived. That's my guess. And I think the merger was difficult because there was a perception, whether accurate or not, that journalism had more academic salience than the speech program. And so there was a worry on the journalism side that the speech program would affect negatively the quality of the journalism program. And I think there was a worry on the speech side that they would be overtaken by the journalism program. So it was, I suspect, that more than half of my time in those years were the listening to faculty to complain or struggle. You know, we did retreats. I mean, not quite religious retreats, but, you know, times away, to sort through things and reshape the curriculum. But again, it was fun to be involved in a lot of that, to accompany people through their pain and the loss that they experienced, I think was important. Not always easy. And I'm not sure I was always particularly good at doing it. But here they are. And lo and behold—I mean it's a completely different college now, and I haven't been really been connected to it since ninety-nine. It's a long time.

Michelle Sweetser: But I mean, again, that's twenty years of time of kind of serving in that role. You mention briefly kind of spending a lot of time in the student media offices and trying to connect with students there. Did you ever find yourself advising about content, advertising, or whatever, that might, they might have been considering for those publications?

Susan Mountin: That's an interesting question, and I would say no. That wasn't my role. They had an advisor, a good chair at the time who was Mary Pat Pfeil, and we worked pretty well together. But I think I knew what her role was, and I knew what my role was, and my role was their lives, their choices, their values, their principles, you know? And, I mean I'm trying to remember if they ever came into talk to me specifically. They may have come in and talked to me as I was in the office sitting there and may

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have had a conversation about something what was going on, but I did not try to do that. That just did not seem appropriate to me.

Michelle Sweetser: I mean, I knew that they had an advisor, but I could see how potentially it might lead to--

Susan Mountin: Yeah I know my place! [laughter]

Michelle Sweetser: [laughter] Speaking of your place, what was it like to work in Campus Ministry, just as a working professional? I mean just as a working professional I mean, you in many cases were the first lay person to take on certain roles. You're a woman doing work that had largely been done by men. Can you talk a little but about what the experience was like?

Susan Mountin: Yeah, other than the fact that I felt a little stupid and inadequate, at least in the beginning! But you know one of the things—and I've talked about this actually with them—the mentoring I got from Bert Thelen, George Winzenburg, Rick Abert, Mike McNulty, if I go through the list—Sebastian Moore—I learned so much about ministry. Certainly, you learn the theology and the seminary, and you learn something about ministry. You learn about pastoral counseling, you understand that kind of theoretical base. But I learned from them by watching them in action. And just the extraordinary ways in which they related to the students. And faculty and staff, but primarily students. And I'm very, very grateful. And I do let them know on a fairly regular basis that they helped shape and form me. And I think the other place I think I had to learn was the whole Ignatian background. Because that wasn't part of my undergraduate experience at Marquette. I mean I—it really wasn't in the sixties at all. It was in the air. It was, you know—nobody talked about it. And all of the sudden, we're at a, you know, Campus Ministry retreat and somebody's saying well, let's reflect on what we've done this semester and from your own journal on your desolations and consolations. Little did I know, that that's a key part of the Spiritual Exercises. And they didn't even say that, but it was just there and we were doing it. And so we began to assimilate this spirituality and reflection on your work, or Ignatius now would talk about reflection on your experience. And come to know that part of the discernment process is doing that kind of deeper reflection. And it's a really important part of your understanding of ourselves. So I got it in practice from them. And then much later, in my graduate studies, my doctoral studies, studied Ignatian pedagogy and Ignatian spirituality. And went on an eight-day retreat, and all of a sudden I can reflect back and see how they were gently moving me along and teaching me without my even knowing it. So that was pretty good. I think they're great models. There was tension in Campus Ministry many, many times. We had a lot of struggling points. We had struggling points about how to use our resources that were very limited. How to spend our time, whether it was more focused on faculty or students. The social justice issues that were controversial. All the divestment issues with the university. The university's track record on race issues. You know, so we were always struggling with the people who were kind of on the cutting edge of all those issues. And trying to walk with them, and ask good theological questions about what they were experiencing—and support them no matter what. We all were trained at the time of which war? We were trained again in guiding people through conscientious objection. Which was actually one of the key pieces before I came to Campus Ministry, in what Campus Ministry was doing around the country in the early seventies. Because it was during the

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Vietnam War, so I suppose the Iraq War and the Balkan War, I think that's when it came up again, because they were threatening a draft. And you know what would that look like if we needed to accompany young men, particularly in those days. But we were busy, busy, busy, busy working. Way too many hours for having kids at home.

Michelle Sweetser: I want to go back: did you ever feel any push back as a lay minister in kind of doing the work that people—did you always feel valued? I guess--

Susan Mountin: Well, there were some stupid things that happened along the way. Should I put this on record?

Michelle Sweetser: It's up to you!

Susan Mountin: The very first year. It's Baccalaureate. So we're getting ready for Baccalaureate in April, and we do this instructional page to the Jesuits, and the Jesuits I worked with at the time, said, "You know what we've been doing as a practice at our vacant Masses, is we in the Eucharistic prayer there's this little line, 'for men to duh duh duh'—let's take out the word for men." So, that's fine. So, it had been done on a regular basis and I was sending out the instructions for Eucharistic ministering, for all ministers, priests, and the like. And I had signed the bottom of the letter. Well, this instruction piece for the concelebrants came along with it, in which their perception was that this lay woman was telling them to take the word "for men" out of the Eucharistic prayer. I mean I can't tell you—I mean it just blew up, and it wasn't me, and you know we weren't thinking of that fact that these came in the same package to them. So there was a lot of work that poor Fr. George and Fr. Bert and Fr. Abert had to do to sort that through. And I think it—I, it took me a while to regain the confidence of the Jesuits and the Jesuit community after that. "What do you mean this young women was telling us to change the Eucharistic prayer!?" And they were absolutely, legitimately right, you know. So, that would be the big thing, the three years into my preaching and I had also been preaching at Gesu, at the--

Michelle Sweetser: --at the 4:30 Mass?

Susan Mountin: --it was 4:30 in those days, yes, not 4:00, wait, it's 4:00 now, right? It used to be 4:30-- every third week with either George and Rick and Dave Haschka, depending on who was on staff at the time with Father George. And the Pope did Papal letter called *Inaestamabile Donum*, and basically it looked at what they perceived—the Vatican perceived to be a number of abuses, female altar servers and things like that. Using real bread because people had been using something that had been using something that was not unleavened anymore in a lot of parishes. And lay preaching. At which point our—the Jesuits had worked—you know what, Archbishop Weakland, he's really progressive, and we think this is important. In fact it was one of the reasons I almost didn't accept the job at Marquette is because they had written preaching into my job description and I wasn't comfortable with that role, even though I had a homiletics class at the seminary. I really wasn't comfortable at that time. And so they went to the archbishop and said, you know, can we get your permission to continue to have lay preaching because we think it's an important model for the students. He said, "I'm sorry you had to ask. If it would have continued I would never had interfered, but because you asked, I need to be in

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consonance with the other bishops. And I would say no.” So,—and then my dear little friends at the *Tribune*, I think you probably know this—banner headline: “Mountin Prohibited from Preaching.” Which was hilarious.

Michelle Sweetser: Yes, I did come across that article.

Susan Mountin: So a lot of support from the students during that time, and faculty and staff. I mean it was really clear. But it was also clear for me and I remember, actually, one of the nuns that was on Campus Ministry staff who later became director of Campus Ministry at Loyola, Maureen Fuechtmann, and she says to us, at like conferences when campus ministries would get together, “you always have to say to yourself, ‘Is this the ditch you want to die in?’” And for me, even though I really loved the preaching and I think I was good at it, it was not a deal breaker for me. Because in many ways I intersected with students’ lives in much more powerful ways than that seven-to-ten minutes that they’re going to forget anyways.

Michelle Sweetser: So that was written in the job description from the beginning.

Susan Mountin: From the beginning, yeah.

Michelle Sweetser: So it was a conscious choice?

Susan Mountin: Of the Campus Ministry team. For everybody. I mean, it was written in our job descriptions that we are expected to preach. And then it also led then to my master’s thesis on lay preaching.

Michelle Sweetser: Your master’s thesis here?

Susan Mountin: At the seminary. Because when I went to Chicago I was two courses short of finishing, and because of the schedule there, and the availability of courses in the Chicago area, and the availability of courses in the Chicago area, I couldn’t finish. So when I came back, when they hired me it was with the expectation I would finish. So then I did two courses in the summer and one field placement that I had to do for the requirements there, and then my thesis. And then I finished in ’81—no, yeah, December of ’81, I finished the master’s.

Michelle Sweetser: Just mindful of time here: it’s eleven o’clock and we’ve been talking for a while, so I think if its ok with you I’ll suggest we end this session now.

Susan Mountin: That sounds fine!

[Session Two]

Michelle Sweetser: Alright, so this is Michelle Sweetser here, it’s May 11th, 2016, and I’m sitting with Susan Mountin in a second session following up on an interview of May 4th. So Susan, when we left off last week we had talked a little bit about some of your early work in the Campus Ministry area and a bit about your work as a hall minister, working as a minister to the College of Journalism. We wrapped up talking a little bit about your experiences in delivering homilies at Gesu Church Mass. And so I wanted to

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kind of come back and talk a little bit more about your ongoing work in Campus Ministry and your work in Manresa and other programs. So—how long was it that you were affiliated with the Campus Ministry area?

Susan Mountin: I worked in Campus Ministry for twenty-five years. And actually one of the things I had been thinking: “Oh I never talked about doing marriage preparation.” Because in all my years in Campus Ministry, many parts of my job changed over time, but one of the constants was always doing marriage prep. And at one point, Fr. George Winzenburg and I—and this was early on—maybe after ten years, we actually did a survey of all the couples we had prepared for marriage either individually, couple to couple, or person to couple, pastor to couple, and then the young people that came on our retreats. I did over 2,500 couples at one point. So, in the cumulative 25 years, because we averaged about 100 couples a year, if not more, so that was quite an experience and seeing people’s expectations and differences over time, especially, reacting to cultural changes, the idea of marriage and what was happening in the Church. What was happening in relationship issues, things like that.

Michelle Sweetser: Could you talk a little bit more about sort of what those differences might have been with time?

Susan Mountin: Yeah, the one thing that stands out is I think in the mid-to-late seventies, there was still a fairly traditional sense of what woman was going to do in a marriage. And there were few of us that were going to be working, and how that would affect a family. At least of educated people because the reality is that poor women have been working forever and ever to support their families. So it’s more of a sense of having economic privilege that allows you to make a choice. But one of my distinct memories is sitting at one of the retreats and having a couple actually sitting on the floor—because we didn’t have enough chairs in the room—and the woman was starting to talk about how she was going to work and blah blah blah. And then after the babies came she would try and find something part time. And her spouse-to-be looked at her and said, “What? You’re not staying home? Like my mother did?” And it was like they had never talked about this really, really important part of their marriage and what it was going to look like. And you could feel the tension in the room at the time. But I think this probably was early-to-mid-eighties, we began to realize that unless began to talk about roles and relationship, and what was happening as more and more women were taking on breadwinning roles in families, that we had to add something in to the preparation. So that would be one example.

Michelle Sweetser: Yeah. Sure. And most of these students then, were they married at Gesu? Did they kind of go to home parishes in other states for their marriages?

Susan Mountin: Yeah, all over the place. I mean obviously, you know, students could register to have their marriages at Gesu, but Gesu only does two weddings a weekend. So they’re many more people preparing for marriage. And you know, not all of our students come from the Milwaukee area, so getting married back home in Illinois or Ohio or, you know, wherever it might be. But the reality is that once we are approved as a place where people can do their marriage prep, we could do all the paperwork and then basically we would communicate with people in the other dioceses and parishes to get the paperwork registered so that somebody could actually have their marriage in another place. So doing all

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that little paperwork and working with the priests and the diocesan people in other places was part of that too.

Michelle Sweetser: So in the 25 years that would have taken you to about 2001 or 2002?

Susan Mountin: Actually it was—I- I left Campus Ministry to become director of Manresa. We got the grant of December of 2001. And I started in January of 2002 with Manresa.

Michelle Sweetser: Ok. Great. I don't want to jump to Manresa quite yet and, so as- as time moved along, you continued to do the marriage counseling—marriage prep, all the way through those twenty-five years. I know that you did not serve as a hall minister for long. You had your assignment with the College of Journalism and were a minister there for many years as you talked about the other day. What other roles and responsibilities did you have within the unit?

Susan Mountin: It changed at various times. I think my salary line was for specifically focused on - originally on retreats. And then I shifted to sacramental preparation, which not only included marriage, but - although marriage was there from the beginning, because I was the only married person on the staff. And the Jesuits really liked the idea of having a married person working on marriage prep. And then I also did Baptism and Confirmation preparation in many—most of those years, in conjunction with Gesu Parish. We did a joint project. And we'd do the preparation together because people were receiving the sacraments at Gesu until after Chapel of the Holy Family came in and I think—actually I think we only did one or two Confirmations there that I remember and we separated out. At one point the program just got so large. We had too many people and to do an adequate job of preparation we made a decision at that point to separate both Baptism preparation and people joining the church from other Christian traditions from the Confirmation program. And then we started doing Confirmations in Chapel of the Holy Family, because I think at one point we had 75 people—78. It was a big, big crowd, and you especially, when you want people to be able to tell their stories and be in relationship, you know, to understand how their Christian saga, you know, fits in. It was really important that we be able to devote more time to them. So then what happened is, more of the people for Confirmation were from Campus Ministry, were students. And more for Baptism or joining the church, not all, but more, were part of the Gesu situation. So we neatly kind of divided it that way. Even though we in Campus Ministry still accepted Gesu, or people from Gesu, who wanted to be confirmed, because that also was individuals that were baptized and received First Communion, but didn't necessarily go through Confirmation prep at some point in their lives, and vice versa, students who were either going to be baptized or join the church would go to Gesu.

Michelle Sweetser: And was this a once a year thing, kind of on the same calendar as Easter—Holy Saturday?

Susan Mountin: Well for people joining the Church, the first time or being baptized that was always done at the Easter Vigil. But actually Church law is set up in such a way that if somebody is- has had Baptism and Communion, then their Confirmation does not happen at the Easter Vigil because Easter

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Vigil is the fullness of the sacraments of initiation. And I don't want to say unfortunately, but the reality is that we separate those out for somebody who is baptized as a Catholic, generally.

Michelle Sweetser: Well I think that calendar would be hard, given an academic calendar too, because often students aren't here at Easter.

Susan Mountin: Although, if they were being received into the Church, then you know we—they would know, that they still have to be here at that time. And we only have that short Easter break anyways. So it's not like being in school, or grade school or high school when your Easter weekend and Easter go together. And then Confirmation we would just work out. I think we only had a bishop a couple times. I think it was the years in which they were giving faculties for Confirmations to priests. So usually it would be one of the Jesuits then that we would ask for faculties for that Jesuit to do the Confirmation. Pretty fun. And I think the other thing I got involved in—I suppose part of the marriage—*via* the marriage preparation and relationship issues that I spent a lot of time on, was working with students who had had abortions through the Project Rachel program. And I was trained to do that. And also we through—actually a couple of our students who were dealing with pregnancies outside of marriage—we developed a program called LAPPP, which is, at the time was called—they came up with the name: “Life After Pregnancy, Placement, and Parenting.” So in a sense, it was an open invitation to anyone who was pregnant and who wanted to carry her child to term. Women who placed a child, while they were here as students, or had decided, “I was going to parent a child,” and maybe got married and maybe didn't. But my argument was always if— if we really are supporting a pro-life stance, we need to put our money where our mouth is and not say, “Oh, you're pregnant, you need to leave Marquette.” We need to say, “Oh, you're pregnant. Guess what? This is a place that supports life. So let's find a way for you to stay in school, let's find a place for you to live, let's find a place, you know, where you can connect in some way. Let's get the pro-life students involved with offering free babysitting when you're getting ready for an exam.” And you know basically I worked with lots of different people on campus, Financial Aid, Res Life, you name it, to create a more life-supporting environment at Marquette.

Michelle Sweetser: Yeah. That must've been a challenging project on many levels.

Susan Mountin: Yeah, well, and for women who chose to place a child for adoption. You know and I would never give the term give up. Because none of those women would have done that willfully if they had a choice. But placing a child that they loved and really wished they could nurture, was probably one of the most profound things I've ever done.

Michelle Sweetser: Mmm hmm. Yeah. How many women took advantage or participated in these programs?

Susan Mountin: I think, I think we ran—I'm guessing we ran ten-to-eleven years with that and I think in any one semester the most I ever had was 17. And generally it was somewhere between 9 and 17. But that doesn't count the post-abortion crowd. And that was a whole different crowd of women—and men.

Michelle Sweetser: Oh. And men came to the post-abortion group?

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Susan Mountin: Well, it wasn't a group, that's more individual than anything, but definitely I saw quite a few young men who had fathered babies who had been aborted and went through or knew that their, you know, young women were aborting babies and went through an awful lot that they needed to process.

Michelle Sweetser: And did you ever get push-back from anyone on- on these conversations? Or the support that you provided to students who had chosen the abortion route?

Susan Mountin: That's a really good question. Push back from—I- I think because of the strong role that the Milwaukee Archdiocese had—I don't know if you know, but Project Rachel, the post-abortion ministry that is now international, was actually begun in Milwaukee by Vicky Thorn, Bill Thorn's wife, and she was working in the pro-life office of the archdiocese and was getting phone calls from women who had had abortions or were thinking about it and she began to say, "What do we do for these women?" And at the time Archbishop Weakland was the bishop and he did those listening sessions with women on women's issues, you know, so there was a- a strong support system saying we have to find a way to do this as a Church. And, you know, if Pope Francis were around then, the whole idea of mercy and forgiveness and love, you know, and- and creating space for people, I think it's what—Rembert Weakland did as well. So I actually didn't get pushback from most people. Would I occasionally get hate mail? Yeah. Occasionally from an alum. Like, "What are you doing? Are you out of your mind?" You know, that kind of thing. And sometimes—sometimes words that were not quite so nice. But, I still believed that it was a really important ministry and to walk with a woman who has gone through such a horrible situation for her and who wants to come back into a sense of a knowing that there is a loving God that holds her, is a really powerful place to be.

Michelle Sweetser: Sure. Wonderful.

Susan Mountin: And we would average, oh I'm guessing, when we were really advertising on campus that we were offering a post-abortion ministry, probably at least a dozen a semester. And sometimes it was their roommates and friends, you know sometimes it wasn't the woman.

Michelle Sweetser: Oh interesting.

Susan Mountin: Because I think for many women the effects of the abortion psychologically and spiritually, we know from research don't occur until many years after. And it may be some little trigger that clicks them into something. But the people around them that do know about it are more likely to struggle with it early on, and then the woman, later. Also, staff and faculty, interestingly enough, because they were in that later stage. You know. And something as simple - one of things we found out, that something as simple as going to a party and being served a screwdriver because all of a sudden they remember having orange juice after the abortion. Or a certain kind of cookie, that they served after the abortion. Or hearing a vacuum cleaner. Just a very strange and it's often sensate kinds of things would trigger a response and all of a sudden somebody would find themselves crying or depressed or whatever, and come to see someone, basically.

Michelle Sweetser: So you had faculty and staff seeking out these individuals as well?

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Susan Mountin: Occasionally, yeah, a much smaller number. But definitely yes, there were some.

Michelle Sweetser: And did that service continue, beyond you, or--

Susan Mountin: Yeah I think it's still on the Campus Ministry web page. But, you know, I think I don't see people being as aggressive—or assertive, I don't mean to say aggressive; assertive—about advertising it, you know, it's kind of there: “Oh yeah, if you're dealing with this, you can come in and see so-and-so.” But I was pretty assertive. I worked with the deans, I worked with the chairs. Because if a student, for example, had an abortion or was dealing with a pregnancy, she oftentimes, ironically, never told her parents, but she'd go to her dean. Or associate dean. And so I think working with them as partners on all these issues was really, really important for me, because they were the ones, or the faculty, that were hearing the stories. You know, because I haven't come to class for three weeks, or I start crying and you know what I'm telling the professor and all of the sudden it all comes out, and I haven't talked to anybody. And it's very typical especially in a setting, it's a Catholic setting that the students are not telling their parents. Ever. And you know it's the biggest secret of their life, but they are ashamed. They feel ashamed and feel they can't tell their parents. Which is too bad. I think as a parent I would want to be able to support my son or daughter facing something like that, but, the reality is that was- that's where the pushback came oftentimes, because parents made it very, very difficult for- for the women. I don't where it would be now, because our culture has changed from where it was in the seventies, eighties, and nineties on these issues. Maybe it's more acceptable. I have no idea.

Michelle Sweetser: Yeah, I- I recall once, some reference to that LAPPP program, so I'm really glad that you brought that up because I think that it's, you know, kind of a powerful ministry that isn't really well documented. So when you, in 2002, you started then in- with the Manresa project which was grant funded, it's from the Lilly Foundation?

Susan Mountin: Lilly Endowment.

Michelle Sweetser: --Endowment. And that was really focused on helping students intersect faith with daily life? As I kind of--

Susan Mountin: The Lilly Endowment had done three rounds of grant making on this project and they called it Programs in the Theological Exploration of Vocation: PTEV. And the design—this is on the cusp of the Enron scandal, and a number of other scandals in business and healthcare and education. And there are a couple of—do you want all this background?

Michelle Sweetser: Yeah, go for it!

Susan Mountin: Lilly was concerned about a number of things. One is the paucity of individuals with strong moral compasses and convictions that would act out of their moral background. Number one. Number two: that a number of school across the country begun under the auspices of religious communities or faith traditions, had secularized themselves so much that you could no longer tell that they were ever connected to any faith tradition. There's probably about five reasons actually. They were concerned about leadership for the future. And especially people working out of their faith. And then

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another hope they had was that more young people would think about church ministry as their life work. Based on the fact that if you looked at the statistics over time, there were fewer and fewer young people in seminaries of all religious denominations. And many of the people that were in the seminaries were in their fifties and even older and were in their second career. So the number of under-thirty-five-year-olds in the seminaries was very, very small. And so they hoped that with programs across the country focused on vocation and asking questions about purpose and meaning of life, and, you know—just thinking, and service, and what faith can do that somehow people—they were hoping—that young people would be raised up as leaders, number one, and along the way that some of those would be thinking about church ministry. And actually, there was an effective swing. The Pew Research Center had done some research and a couple of other independent organizations, and after the PTEV programs which ran between five and eight years, depending on the institution, and there were 88 around the country. So that's a pretty big impact. We were one of 88, but actually there was an increase—a significant increase on the number of young people going into seminary right out of undergrad. In every denomination. So they've been—they were very, very pleased with the results. So, but that was a part of it. And the larger questions is: how are we as an institution holding to our mission, our roots, as a Jesuit institution, as a Catholic institution? So that's what happened. That's what it was.

Michelle Sweetser: And how did you come to that project? Was it something that you approached the University about? Did it, were —did somebody ask you to take on this project?

Susan Mountin: Well, here's what happened. Fr. Wild happened to know one of the program officers at Lilly, and he found out that Boston College got this grant, and it would have been then 2000, and he talked to the program office, and he said, how come Marquette wasn't in it? Well, as it turned out, there had been an invitation that somehow ended up in Fr. Wild's trash. At which point they re-invited Marquette to apply. In the first year they invited fifty schools, second year, fifty schools. And then the third year was an open invitation to any religiously-founded school in the country. So we were in the second round, which was nice, because we only had to compete with fifty other institutions. But they began by inviting us to apply for a fifty-thousand dollar planning grant. Now, having been director of Campus Ministry at the time, I knew that that was bigger than my annual budget, and that was a little overwhelming. But actually—and it was someone, Fr. Wild had passed it on to Barbara Armstrong in the Advancement Office, or somehow she ended up with it—and she doggedly pulled people together to say, "If - would we do this?" And we met, and we met, and we met, and we met. And we'd sit around a table and finally we got to a point that we were about a month from the deadline for applying the fifty-thousand-dollar planning grant. And we had talked about a gazillion ideas, and things that we might do if we were going to do that. And she said, well is anybody willing to take this on? Because as an Advancement officer, she couldn't. And everybody else looked at their toes and looked down at the desk. And finally I just said, "Marquette cannot lose this opportunity. This is —to have money for humanities and money for our faith development—that money doesn't happen, generally." We kind of joke that Lilly is the Church's one foundation, because they consistently give money for faith-related and religiously-affiliated projects. And I looked, I think Steph Quade was at the meeting, and I said, "Stephanie, would you be a partner in this?" And she agreed. And then I said, "and we need to get—" — Phil Rossi had been chair of theology at the time he was on the committee but he wasn't at that

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meeting. And I said, "If I can get Phil Rossi to be a partner, can the three of us make this happen?" And Fr. Rossi said yes. And so from the very beginning, the project—even in the planning stages had a ministry piece, an academic piece, and a student affairs piece. Our three-legged stool. And I also think it gave us the broadest reach into the campus as a result, and helped shape the program. Then over the course of the—we got the planning grant. We wrote it, and got the planning grant, and then we had seven months with the fifty-thousand dollars to develop the two million-dollar grant. And - and worked really hard on that, got more than I'd say—somewhere – at some point somewhere between fifty and seventy-five people at the institution across many, many different departments and areas involved. Eventually we had an overnight retreat and did - had a couple of talks on vocation and discernment and tying it into Ignatius and our religious heritage and all kinds of things. And then started with ideas and ideas and ideas and ideas and people just generated hundreds of ideas. And then we used the funding after that over the course of several months, to meet on a regular basis with this fifty—these fifty people from all different areas, and we kept winnowing down the ideas, you know, to say, "realistically, what can we do, even with two million dollars over five years, what would that look like?" And eventually came up with what we did for the grant. Through those lunches. Now being good Marquette fashion, when we're used to in ministry particularly – can I put this in this interview? - having a budget of paper clips and rubber bands, you know, a very limited budget, we ended up with \$37,000 left over of the \$50,000—we didn't know how to spend any of that money. [laughter] And God bless Lilly, they let us keep that in addition to the \$2,000,000! [laughter]

Michelle Sweetser: Thrifty!

Susan Mountin: We were. And we also had money on the table when the two—the five years finished and they let us keep all of that. Because you know, the endowment doesn't want that money back. And it's just a nightmare for them with the IRS. You know, we had to explain how we were going to use the left over funds, that kind of thing. And then this wonderful organization, you know along the way we were so busy getting our programs up and running, they invited us to apply for another half million for a sustainability grant that would carry us another three years. So fund- but that had to be matched in some way by the institution or other funding. Well, we were able to pull that off as well. With the - the Jesuits helped in a big way. And Marquette did help, not so much in actual dollars but in kind—employment, and things like that. And some cash. And so eventually the project ran until the end of 2009. So it was a long swing. 2002-2009.

Michelle Sweetser: And do you feel it was a successful program?

Susan Mountin: Yes, yeah I think it had far-reaching effects that are still felt. We still have faculty on this campus—again the three-legged stool I think is a really important structure to begin to think about. But Student Affairs, lots and lots of programming—speakers, retreats, workshops, leadership programs, things—places where we were asking those deep questions for students. And there- some of those kinds of things are continuing. So you know how do you affect the culture? I think is the real question. We did fund the First Year Reading Program and sadly that's one of the things that's gone by the wayside with the budgets cuts, and I think the lack of vision, once the grant ended on how to maintain that program. And then the academic piece was working with faculty to help them think about readings and projects,

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assignments, things that they may use in their classrooms to help the students kind of discern their own vocations, their call, what their discipline has to do with the larger issues that are going on in the world—justice issues, you name it. You know that fall into Jesuit education. And we still have courses that are listed as Manresa courses but they're being taught by people that never developed that course for Manresa, which is kind of interesting. So I'd get calls every so often: "Hey, this is a Manresa course, what does that mean? Tell me about this." And then when the grant ended, the provost at the time, John Pauly, I had said to him, "Do I?" —because I had given up my salary line in Campus Ministry, I said - "Oh John, do I need to go looking for a job, there's something open at Stritch." And he said, "No," he said, "I'd like you to take the faculty development piece and we'll turn that into a full-time position." So that's pretty much what I've been doing since 2010. And then the ministry piece has gone through some transitions, but that's specifically—I was working with young people who were thinking seriously about church ministry as their life work. And would do a formation program with them plus a field placement in a parish, or a religious setting of some kind. And then we met once a week for two hours. We did prayer, we did reflection on their experience, you know, kind of in a good Ignatian fashion. And they had some responsibilities. They got a scholarship, a small scholarship to do that but it basically covered the amount of hours they were spending in a congregation so they didn't have to have another part-time job. You know, it freed them up to give that kind of time. And that's a pretty amazing set of results, because we actually have five Jesuits out of that program, or either - one ordained at this point, and no - actually it's six. And four in the pipeline. Two, no - five in the pipeline, one will be ordained next year. And then there're two more: we have a diocesan priest that was in the program from Rockford diocese, and one, two, three, four ordained women in Protestant traditions. One ordained man in a Protestant tradition. And a whole slew—more than two dozen—young people who have either done graduate degrees in ministry or theology, and or are working in church ministry positions as lay people. And I keep track of as many of them as I can.

Michelle Sweetser: Yeah, makes sense. Great. How has your work in the Manresa for Faculty been similar to or different to what you did under the first Manresa iteration?

Susan Mountin: That's a good question. You know I think in the grant itself we were much more focused on this purely vocation component. You know, somewhat discernment, you know, but again those questions of "How do I figure out what to do with my life?" You know, "I'm interested in being a mathematician, is there vocation in being a mathematician?" It was fairly narrow, I think once I moved into the other faculty development piece I had to broaden it quite a bit. And so the broadening is much more in terms of the Catholic intellectual tradition, a little bit more on the vocation of the faculty member themselves as a teacher in a Jesuit Catholic school. And I think I broadened it in a sense of being more attentive to where the Jesuit- the Jesuits are going internationally. The things that are of concern to them, you know certainly the justice issues is a really important window anyways for a lot of our faculty. That's one of the things they really like about Marquette and they see coalescing with their own academic interests. But I would say, I have to be much more open at this point because even our faculty today compared to our faculty thirty years ago—fewer Catholics, many, many, many fewer individuals who have *any* experience in a religiously-shaped school. And not having a vocabulary or a language or understanding anything about a Catholic intellectual tradition. And many of them are open

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and want to talk about that. And some aren't. And so, you know, it's like what kind of windows and situations can we create in which people can have those kinds of conversations? Not to indoctrinate them, but to give them space and freedom. Ignatius - St. Ignatius is very big on freedom. But it's a freedom that grows out of a sense of your gifts and talents given to you by God and a sense of gratitude so that you're free to act in light of that, as opposed to license. It's not license; it's freedom. Which are two theologically very different things. Does that make any sense?

Michelle Sweetser: It does. [laughter] How was your faith supported and built during your time here at Marquette, both as a student and then I think as a working professional?

Susan Mountin: Wow. That's an interesting question. Well, I've always been kind of a church mouse, no question about that. Faith has always been really important to me. In many ways the church has been another one of my parents. My parents were active in the – in the church, so that's not surprising, but I think the church was able to also—and people- leaders in the church were able to step in and fill in gaps that my parents weren't able to fill in because of their own education limitations. So it's been important thing for me. I think one of the things I realized is as a student, being Catholic and Jesuit was kind of more in the air. It's what we breathed. You know, because you walked out on Wisconsin Avenue and there would be three or four Jesuits walking through in their cassocks, and you know, most of my theology faculty were Jesuits. They were my teachers, my mentors, you know, and certainly going to Mass and things like that were always an important part of my life. But it wasn't until I started working in Campus Ministry almost ten years later, that somehow the whole Ignatian heritage, and the spirituality that goes with Ignatius—I was exposed to through my Jesuit colleagues. And I- I have learned so much from them in a really positive sense. Everything about the spirituality, about different ways to pray, about being attentive to things in my own life, you know. And opportunities to go on retreats myself, and to keep growing in that fashion so that I could share that with other people. Very much I think my- the Jesuit mentorship was really important. And then the reality is, my marriage—I married a seminarian, someone who had been in the seminary for ten years who bailed out when he had to take the class on how to say Mass. And said, "Ooo... I like this priesthood stuff but I don't think I can do this." But, you know, regular attendance at Mass is just a really important part of my marriage and has been for a long time. We don't go to Mass every day, but we go to daily Mass several time a week. Our friends all go to daily Mass. So it's- it's us, but it's also our social setting in which that foundation and grounding is really important to who we are. And that's not for everyone, and I wouldn't expect it to be for everyone. It's kind of a hybrid version of faith, but it's our version of faith.

Michelle Sweetser: Kind of speaking of faith a little bit more: you've been pretty much working in ministry or doing something connected to the church since you graduated. Have there been times that your faith has been questioned?

Susan Mountin: That's an interesting question. I don't want to say that I've never had doubts. In fact one of my first moments of doubt was when I was maybe about nine-ten years—can I go back that far?

Michelle Sweetser: You can, absolutely.

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Susan Mountin: Oh my God. And all I remember is, we —there was like Benediction or something going on and I'm up in the choir because my mom's singing in the choir and I look down and here are all these priests in there, and the acolytes, all male at that point, and I mean because I was nine, in their little lace dresses, you know. And all the incense and the bells and everything going on and I remember looking down and saying, "Wow, if there's no God, this is a really stupid thing." And- and yet that was a really important piece of my life that I reflect on often. Because if anything, there're times in which the horrors that we've faced in the past years, are such that I want to scream, "God, where the hell are you?" And sometimes have done that. [pause] Sometimes have done that in my prayer. And then something happens that's just amazing afterwards, and I know I am not the cause of it, but I've asked some really tough questions of Jesus on the cross, when I've been at Mass, like, "Are you *really* here?" And, "I'm not seeing evidence—help." And, you know, sometimes there is an answer and sometimes there isn't. But I do think that whole idea of faith for me is the leap of saying, "Well, I don't know, and it's not that I'm hedging my bet." Because I did have a grandfather that got baptized at the age of ninety-one, hedging his bet, that just in case there was a God, he'd better get baptized. But, more, I see more evidences of the presence of God than not. In people's lives. In - in their acts for justice. In their charity. In the wonder of creation. I mean that's where I go back to Ignatius—the starting point of the spiritual exercises is "Let's go take a walk outside." And watch, see, smell. In- in being a gardener, in planting the little tiny seed, and trying to figure out how this seed knows to become a carrot. Or a cucumber, you know a minute little thing, that somehow has within itself the potential of a particular kind of life. Or the recognition that— [pause] Michelle, in all of God's history there has never been another person just like you! How does that happen, you know? I mean and when I do that kind of careful reflection, I can't come up with a reason other than a supreme being and his divine influence, that somehow is- is part of the whole functioning of our world. Or the fact that we are sitting here and talking to each other and there's heat on and lights and —like how do you go from being a cave man to this? You know, it just—it doesn't make sense to me without having a sense of some supreme being. So but I need to have the doubt now and then, too, because I think that's the leap that we take.

Michelle Sweetser: Right. That was really powerful. [laughter]

Susan Mountin: Oh I don't know—it is! It's just who I am!

Michelle Sweetser: That's all the questions that I had written. I wanted to give you an opportunity if there's anything you'd like to add, or if there is something I've have missed. Because you have a long presence, you've been here a long time, and I don't know necessarily know all the questions to ask either.

Susan Mountin: We haven't talked about Dorothy Day!

Michelle Sweetser: Dorothy Day! Please, go right ahead!

Susan Mountin: You know, I've often said you know I've backed into everything I've ever done. I never wanted to be at the *Catholic Herald*. Backed into that job. It was where I was supposed to be. I never really wanted—had a dream of going to *U.S. Catholic*. Backed into that. Backed into Campus Ministry.

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The Dorothy Day piece. Well here I am on a committee, with, I don't know, Phil, the archivist, and a raft of other people. Pat Carey from the Theology. Bill Thorn. I'm trying to remember who else was on that committee. And we were planning the Dorothy Day centenary. And I'm teaching journalism in those years for Bill Thorn, yet, after that very first, you know, jump into teaching five days after I got called and asked to teach. And we were at the very end of planning the national - international conference—I guess it ended up being international—and everybody—somebody at the committee said, we never thought about an academic focus for the Dorothy Day centenary year. What are we going to do? And everybody was like, "I already have my courses, I already have my courses, I already have this." And Bill Thorn who was the chair of the journalism department at the time, looks at me and says, "Well, Susan, how about instead of teaching reporting, you develop a course on Dorothy Day." And I said, "Oh, sure, I guess so." So I sat down and read and read and read. I had kind of a summer to do that, and develop the course. They put the course on the books, but one of things I was convinced of after reading her life, is that it couldn't be just a journalism course it needed to be theology, it needed to be history. So eventual- the course ended up being cross-listed, which is a pretty amazing thing to have happen at Marquette at the time. However, they couldn't figure out how to pay me. So I never got paid to teach the first year.

Michelle Sweetser: Really?

Susan Mountin: Really. They were still mucking around with it and my husband wanted me to quit and just say screw it. And I was like, well you know, I have twenty-two students taking this course. So I kept teaching it for free. But eventually it morphed into a theology course and then I taught it for many, many years. But I think she opened up my life in a interesting way. I think before I studied Dorothy, I always had a dream—you know I'm married to a lawyer for gosh sakes. I always had a dream that we had to be in this kind of a house, in this kind of a neighborhood, and you know, have this stuff. And then I delved deeper and deeper into the life of this woman who lived a life of voluntary poverty and all of a sudden my whole expectations for what I needed to be happy disappeared. And, and were different. And I find that both enriching and challenging at the same time. Because I did live in a suburb and my kid did go to the best schools and had all kinds of opportunities and I occasionally feel pretty guilty about that. On the other hand, it's again where God planted me in some way and their lives are pretty profound in what they are doing right now and I suspect they wouldn't be free to do what they are doing now had they not had those opportunities. But I'm still grateful that I know more about this woman and the Catholic Worker movement that I had inklings about when I was an undergrad, but never had gone in in deep fashion until later. So, a really important part of my life. And it tapped into my parents' desires and interest in racial justice and justice issues and worker justice and it's not that those things had never been part of my life, it's just that she embodied so much of the values that they lived. So it was kind of a confirmation of their lives in many, many ways and I've been grateful for that.

Michelle Sweetser: Did you find that students in your class responded to her in a similar kind of way?

Susan Mountin: Oh my God, they love her. Except - I mean one of my favorite ones—the first year is a student came—and this is a spring semester course—the student said, "My mother wants to know why I'm taking a class on Doris Day." [laughter]

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Michelle Sweetser: Oops! [laughter]

Susan Mountin: Which is pretty funny! Yeah, I mean yeah, they self-select for Dorothy. So they knew something about her. And they were involved in hunger and homelessness things or justice issues, so they're very open. I think what was different is when they no longer because they changed the theology requirements then we no longer have the third level specialty classes. That then I started teaching Christian discipleship and morphed that course to include probably a third of the course on Dorothy Day at which point people hadn't chosen that, but all of a sudden were exposed to learning this model of being Christian. And for a number of students from very privileged backgrounds it was quite a challenge. You know, to look at the issues she looked at in- through the lens - and part of what I always said to them was that this isn't about trying to convert you. However it is about understanding the lens through which she looked at these issues and- and claiming that you understand it. You don't have to believe it, but you have to understand it. So how can we help you with the learning process to understand why this woman believed what she did and did what she did? Because most of us aren't going to live with poor, we are not going to live lives of voluntary poverty, and we are not going to be on picket lines and doing civil disobedience. That's just the reality. Maybe one of you. Maybe even none of you. But what does that mean for someone to live out that kind of conviction? It was pretty fun to teach.

Michelle Sweetser: Good. Good. Other things?

Susan Mountin: I don't know. Let's see. I don't know. [pause] Women in the Church?

Michelle Sweetser: Oh, go for it!

Susan Mountin: I think—I was the first lay woman to be hired in Campus Ministry--

Michelle Sweetser: --yeah--

Susan Mountin: --and I remember when I was at the seminary doing my master's, having my seminary profs say to me, "You're going to have to do twice as much work to get half the acceptance." And I think that's in some way still a reality for women in ministry today. And for a lay woman in ministry there is a real challenge. And you know in some ways, with good Pope Benedict, we stopped back from the edge that the church was on in terms of a fuller acceptance. I know I never intended to be ordained, or like, if that had been open to me, I wouldn't have gone that route. That was not my desire. I really just wanted to be a better reporter for the *Catholic Herald*. But- but I think I faced challenges along the way as a woman, and I think they're important for all of us as- as believers, to understand the role women can have in faith formation, because we have it in our homes with our children. And not to have the same really important influence in the larger church I think is a real loss to the church, not to hear women's voices preaching is huge. You know, now, now, certainly there are wonderful theologians and practitioners who have found many ways to have their voices heard. But, I think we still have a long way to go to figure out this question. And I'm not sure I totally agree with the arguments about why we haven't ordained women. At the same point I've often felt I've felt that if ever decide to ordain women, I want the first ten thousand that are in line and tell them no! [Laughter]

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Michelle Sweetser: [Laughter]

Susan Mountin: In the sense that, you know, I don't want to flip us from a patriarchal structure to a matriarchal structure. And I know that there's a sense in the church right now, that that's what's happened. That you know, and I don't think it is the case. But - there is a fear that—and - and I suppose that anybody that's in power, fears relinquishing that power because, you know, the people that are moving in will have power over them. But it seems to me in good ministry it's not about power over or power under, it's about companionship and leadership with. And that's a very different model. And it's – it's a model that men can do well and women can do well. It's just that when you get into hierarchy and those kinds of power questions sometimes everything's up for grabs. I don't care if you're male or female. And so whatever would have to be done would have to be done very carefully to protect a more positive model of people working together. And I mean the thing I'm grateful for is the seminary taught me that. I—I still, my education I mean—my Ph.D. here, not so much—but my seminary training was invaluable. On ecumenical issues, which has prepared me very well to do the pastor's program that I'm doing now with the current Lilly grant. And the whole idea of men and women, ordained and lay people, working together for Jesus. I mean it was phenomenal. You learned a lot, did a lot, and I just valued that opportunity.

Michelle Sweetser: Is it your sense – I mean - that women coming into Campus Ministry now would have maybe less [pause] struggle, or do you think it's still on par with kind of what you experienced when you first started in the seventies?

Susan Mountin: Wow, I don't know. I mean I don't know if I can speak for them because I haven't spent too much time with them. However, I do have a son who is doing graduate studies in theology at St. Johns in Collegeville, with the good old Benedictines. And I was up there and I actually gave a talk on Dorothy Day to the grad students. And then, one evening hung around with the students to talk about their struggles in that place with the patriarchal struggle and the hierarchical struggle. And you know, so it's still there. And if it was in the seminary when I was there in the seventies, they kept it pretty well hidden, because I think the teaching faculty there was so gung-ho about wanting this to happen, that it kind of pulled people along the way. And it doesn't mean to say that there weren't obnoxious men that I studied with that were naysayers and—obnoxious! But they were, and they played some terrible, terrible, practical jokes on me.

Michelle Sweetser: Oh no--

Susan Mountin: Yes, yes, they were not always nice. But the flipside is, generally in the priestly community, at least with the men I've studied with, I find a tremendous amount of support not only for me, but for other women that they work with. So, there you go!

Michelle Sweetser: Alright! Well thank you!