

MC.0356

Interviews of the Margaret MacVicar Memorial AMITA Oral History Project

Martha E. Munzer – Class of 1922

(interviewed by Eleni Digenis)

June 6, 1992

MIT ALUMNAE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview with Martha Munzer

by Eleni Digenis

McCormick Hall, Cambridge, MA

June 6, 1992

Transcribed by Eleni Digenis

Digenis: Today is Saturday, June 6, 1992 and I have an interview for the MIT Oral History Project with Mrs. Martha Munzer. I guess we want to start with your early years and the kind of environment you grew up in and your neighborhood and how it all influenced your life.

Munzer: Right. Okay, I was born in New York City in, hold on let me think, I beat the century by three months, so I was born in 1899 on September 22nd. And I was born in a hospital in New York City to Stella Stetheimer Eiseman, my mother and Samuel Eiseman, my father. I was the third child in the family, an older brother and an older sister and then I and a younger brother, so we were four in the family.

I grew up, however, in an extended family which may be somewhat unusual today. My mother and her sister were very, very close. They were five years apart, but they called themselves twins. When I was born, I was named after my Aunt Martha and one year later Aunt Martha gave birth to a daughter who was called after my mother, named Stella. And, since our mothers had called themselves sister twins, we called ourselves cousin twins. Although we were just a year apart we acted as twins, we dressed as twins, we used to phone each other every day, "Today I'm going to wear the blue

hair ribbon and the high buckle shoes," and so that we were known as twin cousins. And my twin cousin had a sister and two brothers so that we were Louisa Alcott's "Eight Cousins" that grew up together. We had twin houses on the Southern shore of Long Island, in Far Rockaway, and we had houses next to each other in New York City near Central Park's west side, so that we really grew up as one family although we were two separate families. And that has lasted through several generations, so that my grandchildren are in touch with the Wolff grandchildren. They were the Wolff family and we were the Eiseman family and this relationship has lasted through, as I say, two generations so that we are all a very close-knit whole family.

We went to the Ethical Culture School in New York City. We commuted a good deal of the time because we lived on Long Island at least six months during the year. And this Ethical Culture School is a school run by the Ethical Culture Society, which is a religious, humanist, very liberal faith. We were born Jewish, but we did not grow up in the Jewish religion. In fact, none of us knew anything about our roots really because we belonged to this Ethical Culture Society. And this was a very interesting group. It was founded by a Jewish rabbi by the name of Felix Adler, who preached his first sermon in the reformed Jewish Temple in New York called Temple Emmanuel, which is a big temple for reformed Jews. And after his first sermon, he suddenly realized that what he was saying isn't really what he believed and he left the Temple and took with him many of the Temple's followers, among them my grandparents who were called Stetheimer and who

had come from Germany originally. So that my ancestry is German-Jewish. Since I was taken out of the synagogue when my grandparents and my parents left and brought into the Ethical Culture Society, I never really knew, except that I was born Jewish, anything about the Jewish religion and became an Ethical Culturist along with my parents. The Ethical Culture religion is a very, very liberal humanist religion and Felix Adler felt that one of the most important things he could do would be to form a school. And he formed a school mostly for workingmen's children in New York City. And this became such an excellent school that the people who supported it said, "We'd like to have our children go too." So then, it was opened up as the Ethical Culture School and it had a beautiful home on Central Park West and 63rd street, right next to the Ethical Culture Society building which was on 64th street. And I grew up starting in the first grade and graduated in 1918. My children went to the Ethical school and two of my grandchildren also, and I taught, as I'll tell you later, for 25 years there, so that we all seem to be a very special part of the Ethical Culture family.

I graduated in 1918 and this was just at the end of World War I and for some reason or other the schools graduated early that year, in January instead of June. I can't remember exactly why this was, but it had to do with the end of the war. So that I had a half year before entering Smith College where I was matriculated and even had a roommate assigned. But a lot of things happened before and I never went to Smith College. What happened was, and this should make everybody smile, because I often

wonder what it is that makes you choose a certain path of life, and sometimes it's because your family were all doctors or lawyers and you decided to follow in their footsteps or perhaps you had an inclination for a special field. Well in my case, and please don't laugh, it was because I had a crush on my science teacher Augustus Klock, and if he had taught Latin, I might have become an Ancient Language major. But he was a physics and chemistry teacher and felt that I should become a scientist, so that I came into science because of a "crush" on a teacher. And this may be a very unusual way to come into a profession, but in any case this was my way.

What happened was, since we graduated in January and I wasn't to go to college until the fall, he said, now, "I want you to go and take a course in wireless telegraphy." And these were little walkie-talkie things that they used at that time and not many of you will remember what they were. They had a galena crystal and a little something called a cat's whisker and you fiddled around with it until you heard and what you heard mostly was Morse code. So, I went to Hunter College and took this course in wireless telegraphy and the thing they taught us was not much about wireless telegraphy, but we had to learn the Morse code. And this took some time. And we finally, a bunch of girls, I think about six of us that took this course, finally attained the right speed so that a bunch of us went down to the Army, the Navy and the Marines and said, "Here we are. Ready to save the world for Democracy, by sending that S.O.S. that'll save our ship." Well, they looked at us, and we were young, foolish young girls, and they said, "No

thank you, girls." So there we were with our course and our willingness to save the world for Democracy and none of the military would have us.

So then we decided, "Well, then we'll become Farmerettes." Now this is a word that isn't common today, although people who lived in that time remember it very well. If you were a Farmerette, you saved the world for Democracy by shoveling manure. And what you did was, we went to a farm school and took the place of the men who were fighting the war. This was of course World War I and we shoveled manure all day. And I'm sure that helped save the world for Democracy.

Then at night, I would tinker with my little Morse code thing, so that I wouldn't forget, because I had some idea, "Well maybe, some day I'll do something about it." One of my friends said, "You oughtn't go to Smith College, you ought to go to M.I.T. ." And I said, "M.I.T., they don't take girls." But the idea stuck in my crop and I wrote a letter to the registrar and signed my initials so he wouldn't know I was a girl. The circular came and I looked through it and on the very last page, it said something about "female students," in small print. And I said, "Aah! They must take girls if it says female students." I called my mother and said, "Would you take me to see the dean?" And my parents, although they were Victorian parents, were very liberal and they decided, "Okay, we'll go see the dean." Which we did. And I think I probably wore pigtails at that time, so I looked very young and very female. And he took one look at me and said, "Young lady, this is no place for you." So I said, "Well, if I pass the exams will you take me?" And he

sighed, and I hope he smiled as he said, "We'll have to." And that's how I got to M.I.T.. I took a summer course in calculus and passed the exam so they had to take me in.

When I think back, I think I had very remarkable parents to allow their eighteen year old daughter to go to a man's college in a strange city because we came from New York. There were no dorms for girls, there was no place for a girl to stay, so they put me into a hotel. So I was in a hotel for several years and fortunately met a lovely family who finally invited me to stay with them, which was very much more pleasant. At first I was at the Hotel Hemingway which was on the Fenway and which I think maybe still exists over yonder, and everyday I would walk across the Charles bridge to get to classes at M.I.T..

I'll never forget that first day walking into a class full of men and being the only woman and having every eye turn to me with that quizzical look, "What the dickens are you doing here?" But that soon passed away and I think they accepted me as one of their classmates. Thinking back, socially, those boys in those days didn't care a bit for the M.I.T. girls because we were the "greasy grinds" and maybe their competitors. They liked the Wellesley girls and the Simmons girls, so we were not invited to the Tea Dances which were held at the Copley Plaza which we called the "Costly Pleasures." I did remember that I was once invited to go on a motorcycle ride and I was telling this story at one of our reunions and said, "I remember clinging to my partner for dear life while we just dashed through the streets,

I scared to death." One of the most personable of the elderly gents at this reunion said, "Why that was me." So we smiled and had a very happy recollection of the many, many years ago when this was a great event in my life. And that man happened to be Yardley Chittick who was our class secretary for many, many years. For 70 years actually. So that was one of my early recollections of M.I.T..

There were absolutely no recreational facilities for girls at the time, so we few females took our recreation with the boys. This consisted mainly of "smokers," and though we neither puffed nor imbibed, we sang lustily along with the men:

"Take me back by a special train,
To that glorious institute.
I long for the inspiration of
A technological toot..."

As for other recreation - there was none. It was work every day and night including weekends. The only semi-recreation I remember was this. Thanks to my generous parents I had a car, which enabled me to take a few week-end excursions to Concord and the Old Colonial Inn - but always with my books in accompaniment. Yes, perhaps the most important thing I learned at Tech was how to work. It has stood me in good stead ever since.

Apparently I wasn't very much of a feminist at that time because when I had great difficulty flipping the belts in machine shop, I didn't mind at all if a nice young man offered to flip them for me. I had to work very,

very hard. Maybe especially hard for the honor of my sex. And no work has ever seemed as hard to me since then. This was the toughest, and if I could do that, I decided I could do anything I wanted to. This has been a great help to me because I've had some tough jobs, but they've never been as tough as those early days at M.I.T. and I kept saying to myself, "If you could do it then, you could do it now." So my life has been full of a number of things. What happened was that I married two days after graduation. And by the way, our graduation was unusual. I think the only one in which there was a huge tent spread out on the campus. What is that place called? Killian Court, I believe...

Digenis: On Killian Court...

Munzer: Yes. In the midst of the most impressive ceremonies the tent fell down on top of both the graduates and their parents. And I think that's the only time in the history of M.I.T. that anything like that ever happened. But we graduated, we got our diplomas. And as I say, I was married two days later and not to a M.I.T. man, by the way. My husband, Ed Munzer was in the employ of my father, a silk merchant in Manhattan. We met on a blind date when he came to Boston on business. We married and raised a family. I had a son and 22 months later I had twin daughters, so that I had three babies almost at one time and I didn't go to work. I took care of them.

Then, along came the Depression and shortly, my kids were I think

five and seven years old, and my husband lost his job so it became necessary for me to become a wage earner. Engineers during the Depression were a dime a dozen. You could not get a job as an Engineer. And a woman Engineer was less than a penny a dozen. They certainly wouldn't give a woman Engineer a job. So I went back to my old school [Ethical Culture School] and taught Chemistry for 25 years. I loved the teaching of Chemistry although I had never had a single day of preparation by way of pedagogy. I had been eight years out of college so I was a little bit rusty in high school chemistry, but I learned by doing and I had a very tolerant department head, Mr. Klock, and a school which allowed me to learn by doing. The headmaster at the time was the excellent Herbert Smith. After three years I received tenure and stayed for 25 years.

One of the most interesting things that I did in my teaching work, I wanted to connect my chemistry students with real life. In other words, when we were doing the destructive distillation of coal, let's say, I thought, "Wouldn't it be great to have my students see what a coal mine is like and learn something about the life of the people who mine our coal." Well, that was easier said than done. How do you take a class out to the coal mines? So I said, "The thing to do is to write to the bosses' mouth." And the bosses' mouth at that time was the fiery John L. Lewis, who was head of the mine worker's union. So I wrote him and said that I want to take my class to visit a coal mine. Immediately I got an answer from him in very florid handwriting that he would see to it that his union boss would take care of

me.

His union boss did indeed take care of me and I could bring my class to Pennsylvania's Scranton-Wilkes Barre area where they were mining authentic coal. And we stayed at a Presbyterian home mission that the wealthy coal owners had set up as a kind of conscience, something or other to help the miners. So, in those days, which doesn't happen today anymore, we were allowed to go into a coal mine and it was something that I'll never forget in all my life. We had to put on helmets with little lights that the miners wore. And then we went down, down, down in an elevator until we finally reached I think almost a mile down, the floor of the coal mine. Then, we were allowed to walk through the slush at the bottom of this mine and to see the men digging into eighteen inch seams of coal, pulling out the black diamonds. It was something that one could never forget because in the dark, in the damp, for I don't know how many hours a day, these men spent their lives pulling out the coal. And it seemed to me that my students were learning far more than I could ever teach them in the laboratory.

Months later, I got a clipping from one of my students who said, "I found this little clipping in the newspaper about just where we were." At that time, there was an eternal fire that had never been put out in this particular coal mine and there had been some explosion or something which had happened there and she said, "And the part of me that is coal made me think about our trip to the coal mines and I wanted you to see this." And when she said "the part of me that is coal," I suddenly realized that I had

been able to teach my students by seeing something, that was far more important than anything that they ever learned in the laboratory. So that these trips became a part of my course and we went each year to the same mine. And during the height of the Depression when the mines were closed we saw the men, in order to stay alive, dig what were called "bootleg mines," which were terribly dangerous, to earn two or three dollars a day just to keep alive. And, again, I think that the students who had this experience, learned far more than they ever could have learned in the laboratory itself.

Well, after 25 years of doing this sort of thing and teaching chemistry, I was standing in front of my class one day and said, "How long are you going to do this? Are you going to do this until they say, 'Golly, is that old hag still here?'" And I thought, "No. I don't think that should happen." Well, by great good fortune it didn't happen because something else happened that was a key to changing my entire lifestyle, my entire career. And what happened was this.

I used to run a summer work camp for high school students and this one particular summer, in 1952, I ran what was called a "science work camp" and students were allowed to bring projects that they had started in school and take them to this farm where they could set up projects for seven weeks which isn't possible in most schools. So that I had a bunch of young people who were interested in science and were going to have a chance to work out their own projects.

I have a nephew who was a biology teacher at the University of

Chicago and he said to me, "Mardie, if you have a bunch of high school kids in the country for seven weeks, you should do a group project in ecology." I said, "Ecology? What's that?" This was in 1952, I had never heard the word before. And when I think back at my education, I had never had a single course in biology, far less ecology, either in high school or college. I had simply had the hard sciences, physics and chemistry, and knew nothing whatsoever about biology, which says mountains for what education at that time didn't think was important.

Digenis: What else did they teach at the Ethical Culture school?

Munzer: One of the outstanding features of our school was a weekly class in "Ethics" which every student attended. I not only taught chemistry, but I was also in charge of community service activities because our school believed very strongly that in order to have a rounded education, one should be connected in some way with the community. After that, for the last forty years, no student can graduate from the Ethical Culture school, namely the Fieldston school, which is their high school, unless they have earned a community service credit of some kind and that might include work in the school, work in a hospital, work during the summer, or whatever. There's a large variety of choices. But it seems to me that our school forty years ago recognized that the young people in the school should begin to be connected with the community, and should begin to learn what it is to offer as a

volunteer their services in the service of the community. I think that even today schools are beginning to realize this and some schools are beginning to do this kind of thing. We did it, I think probably the first school in our country that officially did it as part of the curriculum, so that every student had that experience of one kind or another, and there were many, many choices. Well where was I?

Why yes. During that summer of 1952 my nephew explained to me that Ecology has something to do with Conservation. "Oh, that's a word I know!" I remarked. So I went home that night and decided to look up the words. One would think that the sensible thing to do was to go to the dictionary, but for some unexplainable reason I went to the telephone book instead and found the name and address of the Conservation Foundation on 40th Street in Manhattan.

I applied myself to the Foundation to get some help with this ecology project. And this miraculously changed the whole course of my life. In 1954 I resigned as teacher and joined the staff of the Conservation Foundation for the next fourteen years.

Under their aegis I wrote seven books. It was not science as such, but I was writing for young people about science and about anything else that I wanted to write about. And I had the cushiest job that anybody who wanted to write could possibly have. I was paid a good salary and they found me a good publisher, Alfred Knopf, the top publisher in the country at that time and still a very fine publisher, who were willing to publish my

books. And I got paid a salary and the Foundation got the royalties, which didn't nearly compensate for the salary I got. You don't get a great many royalties for the kind of book that I wanted to write. And, the very first book that I did, the one that I was anxious to do, was called Unusual Careers.

What I want to say first, before I did that book, I did a book with, as a collaborator of Dr. Paul Brandwein, who was the educational director of the Conservation Foundation at that time. And, he wanted to find out what was being taught in conservation in the public schools. And so, I had to look up all the text books that were being used and what I found was that conservation came in the very last chapter. And that in every book conservation was represented by a picture of contour plowing. That was what conservation was, contour plowing, and in an increasingly urbanized society who couldn't have possibly cared about the contour plowing in the countryside. So that it was completely inadequate and I ask you, "Who ever finishes a textbook, especially if conservation is in the last chapter and has a picture of contour plowing?" You could imagine that this was not something that reached the urban student at all. So we discovered this great lack, and this is where we should try to concentrate our efforts.

So I asked the Conservation Foundation, I said, "I would like to do a book called Unusual Careers, which would point out to young people that in the field of conservation there were all kinds of specialties that they might investigate, such as, solar science, air science, meteorology, ecology,

oceanography, so on and so forth." And I wrote a chapter on each of these fields. And girls, you'll be interested to know that the very first solar house that was ever built in this country, was built by a woman from M.I.T.. Her name was Maria Telkes and she built the first solar heated house in this country. I believe it was in 1922, but I may be wrong on that date. It wasn't really built the way solar houses are built now. It was built by chemical means. I forget what chemical was used (it was Glauber's salt), but it was the heat of change of state of this chemical that produced enough heat to produce a solar house. Now where do you think that solar house was located? You would think maybe in Florida where there's a lot of sunshine. But it was near Boston somewhere, in Dover, Massachusetts. The very first solar heated house. Her name was Maria Telkes and she came from M.I.T.. I don't know if that is generally known at M.I.T. now, but this is what happened.

Finally it struck me that one of the great conservation fields was land use and land use planning, because this is a key thing to what happens to water resources, to air resources, to overcrowding, to everything else. And so this last chapter was on land use planning and that took me into the field of planning in general and I became very interested and excited about it. And the Conservation Foundation gave me complete freedom to write anything I wanted. And not only that, but they paid my expenses to go anywhere I wanted and I did want to go to far off places like Alaska and the Indian Reservations, so that I saw parts of the country that I never would

have seen otherwise. And I remember the second book that I did which was called... No, the second book was called Planning Our Town, because I felt young people didn't know much about how a town is planned.

Then I decided to write a book which I called Pockets of Hope. This is my very favorite book. It was during the Depression and I felt that there might be towns in the United States that were pulling themselves up by the bootstraps in some way and were changing their image and doing things, even during the Depression. And the reason I came upon this was that I came upon a story about Ladybird Johnson, in Lyndon Johnson's war on poverty, which some of you may remember about from history. There was a headline in the New York paper that said "Ladybird Johnson is dedicating a research center in Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania." And I said, "Wilkes Barre? That god-forsaken town? That coal mining town that's going down and down and down. How can they possibly have a research center there?" And so I took a train and I went out to Wilkes Barre, and sure enough everything had changed. There weren't depressed coal miners anymore. In fact the coal mining industry was going down. There were new industries springing up. There were two or three colleges there. There was a research center because this was apparently a pocket of hope and not a pocket of poverty anymore. And that struck me so forcibly that I said there may be other small towns in which this is happening in the United States. And I'd like to investigate them. And I'd like to call my book instead of Pockets of Poverty, Pockets of Hope.

The Conservation Foundation, after much deliberation, said, "Go ahead and we'll pay your expenses for anywhere you want to go." Well, as I said, where I wanted to go was far off places. I wanted to investigate not only what was happening to the coal mines in Pennsylvania, but what was happening in the iron and copper country of upper Michigan. So I went there for a story.

Then someone told me, "Now you ought to see an Indian Reservation." I said, "Do you think I can find a pocket of hope in an Indian Reservation?" And I went to the New York headquarters of Oliver LaFarge's Indian organization. Maybe it was called "American Association on Indian Affairs" in New York. And telling them what my problem was, I said, "I want to find a pocket of hope in an Indian reservation. Do you think you can help me?" And they did. They sent me to New Mexico to the Santa Clara Reservation of the Pueblo Indians. And this was a pocket of hope. They were really doing all kinds of things, among them the creation of a picnic center for visitors and a guided trip to ancient ruins. I was there, by happenstance, on what they called "Homecoming Day," in which young people away from the reservation came home again. And I was invited to have dinner with the Chief of the tribe. Out there in the pueblos, there were three different groups, the Indians, and then there are the "Anglos" - the Americans, and then there are a great many Spanish speaking Mexicans. And they all are connected in some way with the pueblo. And on Homecoming week, at the dinner which was provided by the Chief, we

had some kind of cornmeal prepared by the Indians, we had jello prepared by the Anglos, and we had some kind of a Spanish dish prepared by the Mexicans. It was a great conglomeration. And then something else that struck me as very interesting. I saw a kind of a canopy spread out and I looked into it, and there were sitting two Indians in front of statues of Roman Catholic saints and then a priest kept walking by and it was just astonishing to me to realize that here these Indians were content, apparently, to have the Roman Catholic religion thrust upon them. To worship and still to keep their Indian culture, so that it was a fascinating experience and something that I won't ever forget.

The Conservation Foundation had a project in Alaska so that they wanted me to include that, to see if I thought it was a pocket of hope. So I was able to visit Alaska and get a very, very interesting story. I'm a swimmer. Have been a swimmer for ever since I've been a young girl and I still swim every day in Florida. But, Alaska, I had my bathing suit along, and we took a boat, on an intercostal waterway that stops at the various little, old towns in Alaska. I think this one was called Ketchikan, and then you had about two hours in which to explore the town. So I said to the taxi driver, "Could you take me some place where I could have a swim?" And he said, "A swim lady? They don't swim in Alaska." So I said, "Oh I bet somebody swims." And he said, "Yes, you're right. The Indians swim." So I said, "Well, take me to the place where the Indians swim." Which I did. And I had a swim in the cold Alaskan waters along with the Indians. And

this was quite an experience and I think they thought I was a bit crazy, but anyway. It didn't really matter. And then I did a story on what I'd discovered in Alaska.

Then I wanted a story of the Deep South and I wanted it to be, if I could find it, a story of black and white cooperation, as a pocket of hope. And if you think that was easy to find... It took me a year to find it, but I did find it. In Tennessee, about 40 miles east of Memphis, in a small watershed called, the "Jackson Creek Watershed," in western Tennessee. And this was also one of the things that I'll never forget. When I got there, there was soil erosion like the Grand Canyon of Arizona. Just unbelievable erosion because in this small watershed the blacks lived on the top and the whites lived in the lush valley below. And the blacks planted their corn and cotton in up and down rows, and there was such terrible erosion, as you can hardly imagine, so that they were flooded out about two or three times a year. And the whites were in a bad way because of the floods. The blacks were in a poverty stricken way because their soil was washing away. And they finally realized that they all lived on one watershed and unless they treated it as a single unit they were all going to have to leave. And someone had told me about this and I was able to find them and spend about a week down there. And, by the time I had gotten there, these deeply eroded places were filled with lob-lolly pine trees, that the people up and down the valley had planted themselves and these trees were holding the soil. The Department of Agriculture did a terrific job. When we blame the

Department of Agriculture for its backwardness, I must say that this is one of their great pluses. Although it was a small watershed, they built dams and reservoirs so that the floods had stopped and so that people were able to stay to farm and to earn a living.

The very last day I was there I said to my soil conservation guide, "I'd like to visit one of the blacks at the top of the watershed, without you because they would be freer to talk to me." So he understood, and he took me to an old farm family who were called Womack Johnson. And they lived on the top of the watershed in a small shack. And the shack was so ramshackle that I suggested maybe we could sit on the porch, which we did. I think they probably had been squatters after the Civil War. They lived on the top of the watershed, and as I said they hadn't learned how to plant their corn and cotton and they had to move during the Depression to earn a living. And Mr. Johnson said, "When we got home, we decided we wanted to give our children something that wouldn't wash away like our soil." So I said, "What was that?" And he said, "An education." And one of them was a manager of a little motel, another was a trained nurse, another was a policeman. The five of them had all succeeded in raising their standards and were earning good livings. And I looked at this old dilapidated couple and I said, "And what about you?" "Oh," said Mr. Johnson, rocking in his rocking chair, "We manage." And later on this soil conservation man sent me a picture of the Womack Johnsons looking over the foundations of a cinderblock house that their children were treating them to. And it was, you

know a very happy thing for them. And I included this picture in the book and a picture of the old couple and sent them a copy. And I got a letter, almost illiterate, but what it said finally, from what I was able to make out -- of course for them to find pictures of themselves in a book was something -- and they said, "Next to the Bible, this is our favorite book." So that's the story of the Womack Johnsons and the Jackson Creek Watershed. So this was an exciting book to do and what I tried to point out in it, was what were the ingredients that made it possible for these particular towns to do something about their own image and to change it around, and during the Depression, thinking that this might be a model for other communities in the country.

Then my publisher asked me whether I would be interested in doing a book of history, a living history series on the TVA [Tennessee Valley Authority]. And so I went down to the TVA and spent a week there and got a story in the days when the TVA was still a very idealistic experiment. It was an exciting story and of course lots of things have happened and have changed the idealism of the TVA, I'm afraid, but it was a great experience for me. As a matter of fact they are reviving this history and have chosen this particular book, The TVA Story, as one of the books that will be republished. Which gives me great joy because I must say that all my books are now out of print, although they can be found in public libraries and at M.I.T.. I think M.I.T. has most of my books here.

So then, this is really an aside because it is not a scientific story. My

daughter said to me, one of my twin daughters, "Mom, why don't you write the book that's in you?" So I said, "My gosh, what have I been doing all this time?" And she said, "Oh, I don't mean land use and conservation... something about yourself and what you've learned." And I thought maybe that would be fun to do. And I wrote a book when I was 78 years old and it was called, Full-Circle, Rounding Out A Life, because I thought my life was rounding out, but I couldn't have been more mistaken. It was just beginning. Interestingly, this book... You know how publishers get blurbs to put on the covers of their books, so that means they send the book out in galley form to people who might want to write a little blurb. So, my book, in galley form, came down to my former headmistress, Victoria Wagner, of the Ethical Culture school, who had retired and who was living in Davie, Florida at that time. And she was in a creative writing class; she was writing a book on the history of Davie. She came to class one day and she said, "I've just gotten an interesting galley from a woman, one of the early woman graduates of M.I.T., and I would like to read a little section of it to the class." And a gentleman in the class piped up and said, "Is her name Martha?" And she, surprised, said, "Why yes." And he said, "If she's the same Martha, we knew each other in World War I in 1918, 60 years ago."

[BEGIN TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO]

Munzer: This gentleman said, "Is her name Martha?" And she said, "Why yes," in great surprise. And then, of course, he said, "Well, if she's the same Martha we knew each other in World War I. In fact," he said, "Since I've

been writing my memoirs and reading them to the class, the class knows all about Martha because I've been writing about her. And as a matter of fact I've been looking for her ever since 1918, and that's 60 years ago."

Well, what happened was that my friend wrote me and we discovered that we were the same two people. And so that weekend he was up in New York and eventually brought me down to Florida in 1978 and we had seven and a half happy, happy years together, after the 60 years. We were both grandparents, and I was a great grandparent so that we did each have our own individual families, who were most happy that this had happened to us. His name was Isaac Corkland, whom everybody called Corky. I had first met Corky in 1919 when he was a young lieutenant going overseas and I was his YMCA hostess in New York. Corky was a wonderful man and he found a beautiful home for us in Lauderdale-By-The-Sea, which is an extraordinary little town, no high rises, two-story buildings so that it's beautiful in contour and wonderful in breezes and good air. And close to the water; I'm four blocks from the ocean and one block from what's called the Intercostal Waterway, where the boats come from the North down to our section of the country. This was a lovely home. Believe it or not it's one of the few homes that has a fireplace in it and to have a fireplace in Florida may seem absurd, except that we do have two or three real chilly nights and I have the pleasure of having an open fire maybe once or twice during the season to remind me of my northern home. This little home is connected with a swimming pool, so that I'm able to have a swim everyday, rain or

shine. Sometimes when I have a strong arm to hold me up I have a swim in the ocean, but I don't go in the ocean anymore alone.

When Corky died, there was a question, well what should I do? Should I stay here or should I go to a senior citizen home? And I was then in my 80's and investigated a lovely home inland and liked it. It had a swimming pool, which was a necessity, and there were some people there whom I knew and were very fond of and I signed up.

Then one day I was walking in Lauderdale-By-The-Sea. I don't know whether I remarked this or not, but almost since I went to Lauderdale-By-The-Sea I applied to become a member of the Planning and Zoning Board. I got a very nice letter back that I was really over qualified, but they would love to have me serve. I wasn't over qualified at all, but anyway. I knew very little about the techniques of city planning and I've served on that board since I was in Lauderdale-By-The-Sea and have enjoyed it very much. I've made some sad discoveries that even in a small town, half a mile by a mile, with about 2600 residents, this tiny town is riddled with dirty politics. And this was really a sad discovery for me. I just couldn't believe it, but it was so. I seemed to be somehow in the middle of most of it because people would call me from all sides and I would learn what was happening. And believe me it was dirty. Well, I served on that board until just recently when it struck me that it was time to give somebody else a chance. Not that I wasn't still able to serve and interested in serving, but I thought the time had come and I have just recently resigned and I think that it was a right move.

When the newspaper asked me, "Well, I guess you were getting too old to want to do it anymore." I said, "Oh not at all." I said, "I'm still very much alive and kicking and able to serve, but I think that it's time to give somebody else a chance. And I'll be doing something else." So, and I am still doing something else. The something else is very interesting.

I had written a book after the year of the last one for the Conservation Foundation. That was a history of the town where I lived. It was called Lauderdale-By-The-Sea, A Living History. And one day I went down to the annual meeting of the Friends of the Everglades, which is the organization run by Marjorie Stoneham Douglas, who wrote The River Grass and who really started the movement to try to save the Everglades. So at this meeting they mentioned, "Wouldn't it be nice for us to have the history of our organization?" And so I wrote a letter and said, "Well, I've just written a history of my town and I would be glad to write the history of the organization if you'd like me to." Well the letter got lost and I never heard from them for a couple of months and I said, "Well, it was an idea that didn't happen," when I suddenly got a phone call, "We just found your letter and do you mean that you would like to do our history?" And I said, "Well I wouldn't have written it unless I had meant it and I would be delighted to." So this is what I've been doing for the last year and a half; interviewing the old folks that knew the story. And I have very fortunately a very lovely "boyfriend" in quotes, who has a car and drives me to all of these interviews which are miles away. And who then tapes them, which is a great help to

me when I try to write the stories. I've just, before coming to my reunion at M.I.T., finished the last chapter. And that means that the book is "done" in quotes because of course it will be changed and corrected, but at least it's down in first draft and that makes me very happy to feel that this I've accomplished. This is my tenth book and I say to myself, "Enough books. Now stick to articles." But people reminded me that I've said that before, so I just don't know, but I still have a lot of articles that I would like to write and maybe this is what I'll be doing when I get back home.

[END OF INTERVIEW]