

**ORAL MEMOIR EXCERPTS**  
**OF**  
**MARY KEMENDO SENDÓN**

A Series of Interviews Conducted  
4 January - 6 April 1994

Volumes 1 & 2  
Interviews 1 – 12

Interviewer:  
Lois E. Myers

Waco – McLennan County Project

Institute for Oral History  
Baylor University

Copyright 2000

This material is protected by US copyright. Permission to print, reproduce or distribute copyrighted material is subject to the terms and conditions of fair use as prescribed in the US copyright law. Transmission or reproduction of protected items beyond that allowed by fair use requires the written and explicit permission of the copyright owners.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### VOLUME 1

---

BUIOH General Policy, Purposes, and Procedure	iii
Legal Status	iv
Interview Histories	iv
Interview No. 1 (4 January 1994)	1
Interview No. 2 (6 January 1994)	27
Interview No. 3 (11 January 1994)	80
Interview No. 4 (13 January 1994)	138
Interview No. 5 (18 January 1994)	189
Interview No. 6 (20 January 1994)	244

### VOLUME 2

---

Interview No. 7 (27 January 1994)	296
Interview No. 8 (1 February 1994)	349
Interview No. 9 (3 February 1994)	404
Interview No. 10 (8 February 1994)	449
Interview No. 11 (14 February 1994)	498
Interview No. 12 (17 February 1994)	561

### VOLUME 3

---

Interview No. 13 (22 February 1994)	614
Interview No. 14 (1 March 1994)	661
Interview No. 15 (8 March 1994)	710
Interview No. 16 (10 March 1994)	761
Interview No. 17 (15 March 1994)	810
Interview No. 18 (6 April 1994)	860
Index, Volumes 1-3	908

## **BAYLOR UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE FOR ORAL HISTORY**

### **GENERAL POLICY AND PURPOSES**

---

A member of the Oral History Association, Baylor's Institute for Oral History (BUIOH) supports and embodies the goals, guidelines, and standards of archival quality prescribed by the national professional association to ensure long-term preservation of memoirs. It is the policy of BUIOH to select memoirists who have been participants and/or eyewitnesses to topics selected for oral history research. Their tape-recorded memoirs provide links between the immediate past and the present in a very human way. A scholarly, but relaxed, conversational atmosphere exists during the interview. To encourage completely candid recollections, the memoirist is asked to regard the oral history memoir as a highly personal journal. The transcribed historical document which the finished memoir becomes is the raw material used by historians and professional scholars.

The memoirist may choose to have the memoir:

1. Accessible to the community at large
2. Access limited to portions of memoir
3. Free for use after stipulated time span
4. Accessible at discretion of memoirist
5. Sealed until death of memoirist
6. Sealed until passage of stipulated time period after death of memoirist

### **MEMOIR PROCEDURE**

---

Oral history at Baylor follows a prescribed plan which may be briefly outlined:

1. Initial contract with the memoirist
2. Arrangements made for interview(s)
3. Recording of interview(s)
4. Transcribing of tapes in the BUIOH office
5. Editing of transcript(s) by memoirist
6. Finished memoirs: one transcript for the memoirist, one transcript and tape(s) for The Texas Collection. The finished typewritten oral memoir follows the interviewee's stated wishes as reflected in his/her editing of the first transcript(s), with only minor further editorial modifications performed in the BUIOH office in preparing the completed memoir.

## **LEGAL STATUS**

---

Scholarly use of the tapes and transcripts of the interviews with Mary Kemendo Sendón is unrestricted.

Mary Kemendo Sendón retains joint copyright with Baylor University.

The interview agreement was signed on 4 January 1994.

## **INTERVIEW HISTORIES**

---

Mary Kemendo Sendón edited the entire manuscript for clarity and accuracy.

Interviewer: Lois E. Myers

Transcribers:

Sandy Baker, Amy Brunt, Catherine Clark, Sidney Dixon, Eric Fernandez, Angela Giacona, Keri Harshbarger, Stephanie Lange, Arden L. Sterling, Elizabeth Stockton, Elizabeth J. Weiss

Editors:

Jeffrey Crunk, Sandra D. Harvey, Charles Heinemann, Scott Houser, Marcus P. Johnson, Denny Kramer, Kristofer Ray, Carleen Vincent

Final Editor and Indexer: Lois E. Myers

Tapes and transcripts of these interviews were processed in the offices of the Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

like Baylor?" You know, I nearly fell in my tracks. How did he know who I was? I don't to this day know how Dr. Brooks knew who I was. That was the kind of man he was. He knew all the students, you know. But anyway, that was my entrance into Baylor.

And my dad—his shop began to grow. By the time the war came, Camp MacArthur, you know, came to Waco, and that was filled with the Thirty-second Division with Wisconsin and Michigan soldiers. The soldiers began to come to town and have their work done in town. They'd come to my dad's shop. He had a nice big shop where you could sit around and read newspapers and maybe have magazines there where they waited. And he always had that place full of soldiers. In fact, he had one of them come in there wanting to work for him one day. (laughs) But he would work late on Saturday night. He'd work day and night, not only on Saturday nights, but on weeknights to catch up. Then pretty soon, the government gave him a contract to take care of the officers' boots. They all had to have so much done to their boots all the time. Of course, the enlisted men would just come and have their own shoes fixed, you know. But he had a contract for those officers' boots. He made a lot of money during the war. And that was where he really—that was a bonanza for him. And that's where he got his business really established. And of course, I was in high school at that time. That was during the war. And it was a big day, big time for Waco because it—Waco enlarged. The population went up so big, and so many of the soldiers that came to Waco at that time married Waco girls when the war was over. And some of them are still living here in Waco. I noticed two or three in the paper the other day at some reunion. And there was one of those Michigan soldiers that had married a Waco girl. So that was a big time for Baylor—Waco. That army camp was located not too far from here, up on Nineteenth Street. There are still remnants of it out there.

MYERS: Yeah. Oh, I—well, that's interesting. I want to talk more about World War I, and Camp MacArthur, too, later on.

MYERS: Well, you shared with us how World War I affected your family, and—with your Uncle Phillip and some about your father's business and Camp MacArthur. In school there, in Waco High School, were there other effects you felt from World War I?

SENDÓN: Oh, yes, yes. Because, you know, we were—we had to give up a lot. And we had—things were scarce; you couldn't have a lot of things you wanted, you know. And that cut down on a lot of social things that were going on. And then, of course, when the flu epidemic at that same time that I told you about—this funeral procession going up to the Katy station—and we saw that all the time. And then, there were so many other things that happened in high school, but I'm going to tell about that. They want me to do something for Waco High School's group, too, so it's going to be the same thing I'm telling you.

MYERS: Well, good.

SENDÓN: And, of course, there wasn't as much activity in Waco High School as we would have wanted it, but that was wartime. And soldiers were everywhere; they were all over town. You couldn't turn around without running into soldiers. And we had military parades. Every time we had a parade the units would come from the camp, you know. And of course, at home it was my grandmother just worrying all the time when we didn't hear from my uncle. And I wrote—we would write to our uncle in France. And I wrote him a letter one day, and he came home from the war and he pulled it out of his pocket. He was a picture of health when he came home, and he says, "I want to show you something." He showed me this letter—and it was the stationery, you know, where you fold it over double—all through the double thing was a round hole. He said, "Do you know how that got there?" He said, "Germans shot it." He said he had that letter in his pocket when he was in the trenches and a bullet grazed—tore the pocket loose from his jacket and went straight through with a hole—and that's—hole went through the—the bullet went through my letter.

MYERS: My goodness.

SENDÓN: And that was—that was the letter I had written him, but we kept a correspondence; we just loved him. He was the greatest guy.

MYERS: Well, how did it affect your—say, the Losavios and their Italian import business and things?

SENDÓN: Well, his import business began to go down. In fact, we couldn't get much then.

MYERS: Yeah.

SENDÓN: See, we had—he had to go into regular groceries mostly then, because—of course, it came back after the war. But right during the war, it was hard to get anything like that.

MYERS: Yeah. Yeah. How about any correspondence with your relatives back there?

SENDÓN: Well. Well, see, they couldn't—those that had relatives, they had a hard time getting mail because they would open the soldiers' mail. You know, they censored the mails. I know that the Mistrettas had a family back in Sicily. Now, they had—and the Nicosias—see, I haven't kept—I haven't mentioned a lot of Italian names. There's still more to come. But their families were still over there, and my father didn't have—all the Kemendos just got out of there. (laughs) And there weren't anymore Kemendos left, except—they said one cousin was left and he was in charge of a school there. But my dad didn't know where he was or anything, but all the Kemendos were in safe places. And one of my uncles was stationed in Northern Italy during the war. He loved it over there because he got to see a lot, you know; he'd never been back to Italy. But my Uncle Phillip was stationed in France all the time.

MYERS: Your friend that was a German, Lena, how did her German family—

SENDÓN: Well, that was sad, not with Lena, because we never stopped liking each other. There was a German newspaper printed in Waco, by the Schacks, Ad[olph] Schack and son, and they lived on Eighth Street by the German church. You know, there was a German church on Eighth Street, and they put out a little German newspaper [*The*

*Waco Post*] once a week. And Lena would help them sometimes, help them print—fix the print. And the minute war was declared, they shut down that paper. The day we went back to school after war was declared—we had a German teacher named [R. L.] Biesele, had his name over the door—we went upstairs, that name was down, the door was dark, and they had put him out of school. Now, that was so ridiculous. The kids were just mad because he was a nice teacher. Then they accused the principal of being a spy, that he had—he and a math teacher named Werkenthin—he was a German. Well, see—radios were just coming in and they fixed a radio up on top of the high school building, and they said they were sending messages to the enemy. Well, our principal [Eli Thomas] Genheimer was a German, and he came up the next day at school, and the man was so mad I—we thought he was going to have a stroke or something. It was just a rumor; that’s all it was, a rumor. And they finally retracted it in the newspaper and settled it, but, Werkenthin, the math teacher, never came back. So we never did know the real story there.

MYERS: The reaction was really swift to the Germans.

SENDÓN: Oh, it just went through the whole town. Everybody was mad at the Germans. They wouldn’t even play German music. Well, I thought that was so silly. They said one man had a player piano and he had a lot of rolls with the Germans’ music; he said he took every one of them out and burned them. I said, How stupid, I wish I had those rolls. But that was the attitude, you know. It was taking a—they were so mad inside because we had a war that it—they were taking it out on Germans. But when my uncle was in the army of occupation, he said the German people were such great people.

MYERS: Was there any trouble between the soldiers that were here—stationed here and the German community? I mean, did—or was it mostly the local people?

SENDÓN: Well, I don’t think the soldiers—it bothered them too much. Because I think they had a different attitude toward—they just wanted to win the war and get out. But, you know, they brought a lot of prisoners of war. German POWs came to Waco, and we

were invited to visit—our glee club sang out at the camp. And we were invited to eat there and the POWs were serving the tables.

MYERS: Oh, at Camp MacArthur?

SENDÓN: We got to see them. They had POW on the back of their jackets and they had them out at Camp MacArthur serving food. And that was during the war. Now, you know, Camp MacArthur was named for old General [Douglas] MacArthur's father [General Arthur MacArthur], in San Antonio there. And it was a beautiful camp. Goodness, they had everything out there. And I know when Thanksgiving and Christmas came, they would ask Waco people to invite soldiers to have dinner. Well, my dad would meet them in his shop, and he always would invite them to come for Sunday dinner or for Thanksgiving, you know. And I remember we invited them on Thanksgiving, and they had been training that morning and then they came on and had dinner at our house, and, you know, those boys were so hungry. My mother just kept pushing the food at them and pushing the food. And they went back into the living room after we ate—we didn't have TV or anything—they would just sit there and look at pictures and books, and you know, things like that, and talk. Two of them sat there and went to sleep. Do you know they slept for about two hours sitting on the couch with their heads thrown back. That was the one—I always remember that sight of those two boys. But we had them in our house a lot and I know one of them was an Italian boy from Michigan. And he liked my little brother a lot, and he said, "Do you like to ride a horse?" My brother said, "I don't know. I don't know how to ride a horse." He brought one of the horses from the camp, the cavalry horse, and came to our house, and he took my little brother on that horse, riding him all around South Waco. And he went on back to camp on a horse. But that's how friendly they were. They were from Michigan and Wisconsin.

MYERS: Were there very many Italian Americans?

SENDÓN: Yes. There were lots of them. We met a lot—had a lot of Italian soldiers at our house, and from Michigan, especially from Detroit. There were a lot of them from

Detroit. And a lot of them married Waco girls, a lot of those soldiers. And you know where I'm living right now was the Rich Field air force base. There was a training school for fliers right on this very spot. It might have been right here. And one of the buildings out there on the—in the Lion's park is the office, one of the offices. They kept that as one of the buildings. But, beyond that, that was it.

MYERS: So, there's Camp MacArthur and Rich Field. They're different.

SENDÓN: Uh-huh. They're two different things. And then they had—in the next war, you know, they had Blackland [army air field] and Connally [air force base]. So Waco has had its share. And I remember my uncle came home with a story about the war.

They were honoring the son of some wealthy family here, giving him a posthumous medal and I don't know what all, and my uncle sat there laughing. And he said, "You know, if they only knew what I know." And we didn't know what he meant. He said, "You know, we saw that man. He didn't lead the troops to victory. We saw him shot down by his own men because he was such a tough officer." His own men had it in for him, and when they went up over the trenches, you know, they shot him in the back.

MYERS: Oh, my.

SENDÓN: But then he was honored as a hero that led that detachment out of the—and my uncle—of course, he never told anybody but the family, but that was it. Such funny things come out of those situations. But that was the war.

MYERS: Did your uncles that went—that fought, did they train here? Or did they have to leave?

SENDÓN: No. Phillip trained in Fort Sam Houston.

MYERS: They went somewhere else.

SENDÓN: Six weeks. He was so good looking.

MYERS: What other—you mentioned other uncles that went. Who were they?

SENDÓN: Well, see, they trained in different places. Now, wait a minute. I think one of them trained in—one of them trained out here at Camp MacArthur, and—because he

was older, and they put him somewhere in the United States. I've forgotten; I think maybe it was Tennessee or someplace.

MYERS: What was his name?

SENDÓN: He—his name was Tony [Anthony Kemendo].

MYERS: That's Tony.

SENDÓN: And the one named Gaetano ["Tony" Kemendo] was the one that went to Italy. And he trained—oh, he trained overseas. They just had those boys going so fast they couldn't—you know, it just didn't make any difference.

MYERS: Were they drafted or volunteer?

SENDÓN: Well, my uncle was a volunteer; he didn't want to be drafted. He volunteered. And there were so many boys in Waco who tried to get him to get a job out at Camp MacArthur, you know, like working in a commissary or something, because then you did not have to go to war. But my uncle wouldn't do it. And I said, well, if he had—if he'd done that, he'd be alive today, but he wouldn't do it. He was the one—he joined the infantry I guess it was; yes, the infantry.

MYERS: Now, was he married?

SENDÓN: No. No, he was not married. He was just thirty-one years old when he went to war. That war was devastating. It really—it ripped up the families and, of course, when Armistice Day came, everybody was shouting. But we were—everybody in the family was happy, too, but we still felt something could happen to him before he gets back home.

MYERS: How did you get the news that the war was over?

SENDÓN: Four o'clock in the morning, we had—we were all in bed, and somebody stopped outside of our house in a car, and they were beating on—I don't know what they had, pots and pans and drum—and tubs and whatever it was, and they were screaming and yelling my grandmother's name. And we knew that something had happened. And—let's see, my grandmother lived right across the street and she came—my dad went

over and got her. And they all came—it was a bunch of us Italians. They came in a car and come to tell Grandma that the war was over. And that’s how we got the news. That was a great day, November eleven. And, you know, I think about it when I see these veterans marching in the November eleventh parade. I still think they didn’t treat some of them right, you know. And you feel so sorry to see these old men so feeble, some of them couldn’t even walk, and they were those young men that went out and just gave up everything.

MYERS: Were there any veterans rights for your uncle that had the mustard gas damage?

SENDÓN: Yes. There were three or four more of them. The ones that got it lived in El Paso; I remember his two best friends. And we never did find out what happened to them, but I’m sure they didn’t live through it either.

MYERS: Did the government help pay them anything? Was there a pension or anything?

SENDÓN: Yes. They gave them their—you see, they were insured for ten thousand dollars. And that’s another story you’ll hear later on. That’s—that was the money that they got. And they also helped—they were going to send him—the government was going to do it—to send him to a hospital in Denver, a TB hospital. But then, when Dr. Wilkes said that—“That’s not TB,” and he said there’s no chance. And you know, he lived several months after that. That was on the Fourth of July that we learned what was wrong, and he didn’t die until the next April. Now, you can imagine what life was like between that Fourth of July and the following—and that was why we didn’t have a big wedding.

MYERS: Uh-huh. This was in about 1922 that he died?

SENDÓN: Yes. That was in ’22. He died in ’22.

MYERS: Tell me some more about Armistice Day and how it was celebrated.

SENDÓN: Oh, they turned out school, and the boys—the kids at school got trucks—people that had trucks just converged on the square and they filled them up with high school students and Baylor students and townspeople. They went all over town, Waco around into East Waco and South Waco, and they were all over town making noises. And they were blowing the whistles—all of the manufacturing companies here used to have whistles that would blow at noon for lunch, and all of those things started blowing all over town. The churches were ringing their bells. And, oh, listen, it was pandemonium. And the two divisions out at the camp came out in full force and marched all the way from Camp MacArthur out to the Cotton Palace. And they had a big rally out there and—oh, I can—everybody came—I think some of the restaurants opened up and were giving free food to all the soldiers that came in. It was just like a—you know, there was an old movie, a comedian's movie way back they called "Hell's a-Poppin'," and that's what it was like, you know. It was just all—it was—you couldn't even hear yourself talk.

MYERS: What did you do that day?

SENDÓN: Well, we were out of school. We had a big—all of the family came to our house and everybody was bringing food. And we went to all of the parades; we went downtown and watched all these trucks that were out. Waco really put on a celebration. And when we went back to school—well, that morning—that next morning we went to school to see what was going to happen. And one of the boys had gotten a great big American flag and he was in the upper study hall and he was waving that flag. Mr. Genheimer was back in favor again, and he made a big speech, and all of the kids that sang songs—then he rang the bell, he says, "Go home." (Myers laughs) And that turned school out, and then that's when they all got in all these trucks. It was quite a day.

MYERS: Well, now, Mr. Genheimer stayed on as principal; Mr. Biesele had to leave. What was the difference?

SENDÓN: Well, we never did know the straight of that. Well, Mr. Biesele just left because he felt the heat. But I don't think he was fired. I just don't really believe that man was fired. But, see, they closed the German department; you couldn't take German anymore.

MYERS: Couldn't take German.

SENDÓN: They put French in.

MYERS: Interesting.

SENDÓN: But it was so ridiculous though because my best friend was a German. And, you know, her father, it kind of affected him because he was, well, he was injured in Germany. But—

MYERS: What kind of business was he in?

SENDÓN: He had that bakery. That was—

MYERS: Oh, yes, that's right.

SENDÓN: You know, there were some of the best bakeries on Austin Avenue.

MYERS: Was he able to keep his business going?

SENDÓN: Yes. He kept his business going. Keton's had a bakery. Koller had a bakery. There was a French bakery and there was an American bakery—four bakers on Austin Avenue. And they had the best food.

MYERS: I appreciate you telling us all this about World War I, and as you remember other things, we'll talk about those some more.

SENDÓN: Oh, yes. There might be some—

SENDÓN: And your grammar school years, also with that, if you think of anything else as we go along. Next time I'd like to talk about—

SENDÓN: I'll think if there's any more, and then I'll have a few things more to say about Waco High School.

MYERS: Yes. We'll need to concentrate on Waco High School. Thank you for today.

SENDÓN: Oh, thank you.

SENDÓN: Evelyn Hubbard—H-u-b-b-a-r-d. And she always reminds me, she says, “Do you remember when you came to me.” And she said, “I felt so lonesome and so left out, and you asked me to join the glee club.” She—now, she’s singing in a retirement center in Clifton. And they have a glee club out there. The women sing—the men and women together. And she sings—she’s still singing.

MYERS: Wonderful.

SENDÓN: She’s always referring to that. See what had happened (laughs) But anyway, that was the joy of my senior year, that glee club. I really enjoyed that. And of course, then came the eleventh grade. Well, the war came in-between there. That kind of broke the spirit there. When the war came in we had to sort of curtail a lot of things in high school because students were volunteering to do social service work for the camp, and for this and for that, for Red Cross. You know, they were doing—I know my daughters learned to knit like that in the Second World War. They taught kids how to knit and they—and they’d take a knitting thing going everywhere they went. They were knitting sweaters and socks and everything else. But those things kind of came in-between it. But it didn’t spoil our glee club because we did a lot of entertaining. And of course, as I told you—I think I mentioned to you before how during the flu epidemic, how sad it was to see the military funerals going to the train station and everything. But soldiers from every part of Waco—they were invited into Waco homes and became a part of Waco. And of course, merchants just were taking in the dollars like—on Saturday nights, Waco was a very busy town.

MYERS: You said that your sister [Olga] came to high school. She was—was she in eighth grade when you were in tenth grade?

SENDÓN: When I was in the tenth, she was in the eighth. Uh-huh. She was two years behind me.

MYERS: Were there many boys that went off to join the army from high school?

SENDÓN: Yes, there were several. I remember one—one especially that I remember. One name that left the—he was a senior, and he left to join the service. That was Ralph [L.] Coffelt, who became a doctor in Waco. He's gone now. But I remember that one, and everybody was so excited when he left and so excited when he came back. And I remember when he came back, he had his uniform on and he got on somebody's motorcycle and just went up and down Austin Avenue on that motorcycle. He'd just gotten out of the army. That was Dr. Ralph [L.] Coffelt.

But a lot of, you know, entertainments were given in Waco. They had sing-songs out at the Cotton Palace and the army—the chorus out at the army would join. And we'd go out to the Cotton Palace, and all Waco would go out and they would sing all war songs. And the songs that we sang—we began then to pick up these war songs like, “Over There” and “A Long Way to Tipperary” and all of those songs. My sister would go down to Kress—the [S. H.] Kress store. On every Saturday they would put out a new sheet of music, and they had a girl playing the piano there. She would play it for you to see if you liked it. We would go down and buy that music. And my sister would put her name and address on that music. And I have a box of music now, of the war music, that my sister bought all during that war. And then we'd come home and sing them on Sunday afternoons. And one Sunday afternoon, we were singing until late Sunday night. (both laugh) A friend of ours came in and said, “You sure got an audience out front.” Well, my dad went to see. Lined up against our iron fence—we had an iron fence in front of our house—were soldiers leaning over the fence. And my dad went out to talk to them and ask them if they wouldn't come in. And they wouldn't come in. They said, We just wanted to listen to the music. And that was the kind of a thing. You know, they'd just wandered out into neighborhoods, and when they heard that music they just—they were all—I guess there were about ten or twelve soldiers leaning up against the iron fence listening. But my dad asked them to come in and join it, but they wouldn't do it. Of course, we had a house full as it was. But all that music—I have decided to give that

music to somebody if somebody's interested, you know—collector that would be interested in that sort of music.

MYERS: What—if the boys were thinking about joining the army, were there girls in high school who left to get married? Was that common?

SENDÓN: One or two.

MYERS: Uh-huh. Not too many.

SENDÓN: Not so common as it would be today—just one or two. I do remember that.

MYERS: That's interesting.

SENDÓN: A lot of the soldiers that were in—see, the soldiers that came to Waco were the Thirty-second Division, and they were Wisconsin and Michigan soldiers. And when they came back from the army, they came back to Waco and married some Waco girls. In fact, I think two of them married before the men went overseas and went north. But otherwise, a lot of them—and there's still some men here in Waco who were in that division. And they had football games. Thirty-second Division, it was Michigan and Wisconsin. They'd have—Wisconsin would play Michigan and Michigan would play Wisconsin. And they had a little—oh, it was kind of a small football field out behind the Cotton Palace, and they would go out there and play. Well, the merchants were sponsoring this and would sell tickets to it. It benefited the soldiers—did something for the soldiers out there. Well, my dad had the business downtown, and they would come and give him complimentary tickets. Well, we didn't go—the girls didn't go, but the little boys in the family—my brother and some of his cousins—two cousins—and there was more than enough tickets for them. So they'd go down on Clay Street and stand on the corner, and they'd see soldiers walking up. They'd hand them the tickets. They wanted to be sure those tickets went into the hands of soldiers. The kids were crazy about the soldiers, especially the little boys. But those football games—I think they played a Baylor group, even, once out there and a high school group, you know. And on Armistice Day—I've already said something about Armistice Day, but they had a big

parade and the soldiers marched from Nineteenth Street, you know where that is, all the way down to Cotton Palace Park. And they had a parade with the soldiers in the parade. And you could hear those boots on that—it, oh, it was something. And they had some of the artillery, you know, they had horses and different things that they put in the parade. And they had that big parade on Armistice night and everybody went out to the Cotton Palace and that place was full of Waco. I don't think anybody was at home then. And they had a big celebration. They had fireworks. They had a sing-song. They had everything out there. That was November the eleventh, on Armistice Day. I guess it's never been celebrated in Waco like it was celebrated then. And I think of that when I see—I guess my heart gets too soft against soldiers or people that have been to war because we lost two in the war. And I notice—I was at the Hamilton House at a luncheon one day, and Armistice Day they had a parade that started up on Austin and went down Austin and we went out to see it. Well, there was—there were a few, you know, soldiers with their little tri-colored hats on and the medals and some of them with little parts of their uniform. But following the war—the World War II veterans—was a little group from Vietnam, and that was the saddest thing I have ever seen. Some of them were crippled. Some of them were in wheelchairs. And do you know, they just—they were just weakly waving their hands at us. They took them out of the veteran's hospital. And I say that was the saddest thing. It just made you want to cry because those boys were not treated right when they came back. You can't get around that. They were just ignored and they didn't ask for it.

MYERS: Uh-huh. Quite a contrast to Armistice Day.

SENDÓN: That's right. It was such a contrast to the war that made such a big noise.

MYERS: I need to turn the tape.

(tape 1, side 1 ends; side 2 begins)

—Lois Myers. This is side two of tape one of interview five with Mary Sendón.

In thinking about your school years—this is going back into all of your school years

work so early. But anyway, that's before they had labor laws. You know, they put in—had a lot of laws then about children working.

MYERS: What kind of jobs did girls take?

SENDÓN: Well, they would work at—especially in the high school age, when it got to be high school—they could work at the dime store. And a lot of them went to school and worked at the same time. They'd have hours after school. And finally—they didn't do it in my time—but they put in a course called distributive education, and they would allow them to work a half a day and go to school, and lots of them did. But I remember a lot of my friends worked at the dime stores, or they worked in like an ice cream parlor or a snack bar or someplace. Now, that ice cream parlor that I was telling you about, where we always stopped—saved our money to go down and have our ice cream soda, some of the high school girls worked there. But a lot of kids worked. Because I worked, too. I babysat, but I didn't get any money for it. (both laugh) But anyway, I was pleased with that part—when we graduated, we graduated at the First Baptist Church. The day before graduation, or two days before graduation, we had a ceremony that we had out on the campus at the high school. We spent days after school twining daisies and ivy in a rope, you know, like Baylor's ivy—passing the ivy chain. And we passed the daisy chain to the junior class. And that was our celebration before graduation. And all the parents came. We all had on white dresses, and I had a long picture—rectangular picture of that ceremony. And you know, it's just—with age it just crumbles. That tells you how old it is. And then we had our graduation.

But now, in—let's see, there was something else that I was trying to think of that I wanted to tell you about high school. Oh, I told you about the French class that was put into high school. One year, in the last year of high school—and that was because they discontinued the German class—they substituted French. Well, everybody thought the thing to do was to take French because of the war, you know. That was one of the influences of the war. It made French so popular. You just had to have a course in

French. And my dad thought France was the grandest place in the world. I even made a scrapbook of all the materials that came out in the *Literary Digest*. You know, we had a book called the *Literary Digest* before the *Reader's Digest*. And I have a scrapbook of French clippings, pictures of the war, and I have a scrapbook of the Italians with Mussolini during the war. That old *Literary Digest* was a good magazine. And—but the styles, you know, and you were asking about the styles. Then came in this—the flapper age, you know, right after the war and a lot of that came from France. A lot of the haircuts were styles of the short hair cuts because they said that a—in fact, you'd be surprised; there were no hair cuts cut short in high school that I remember unless somebody had curly hair. They were either braided or held—the hair up in big braids. I wore my hair in braids across my head. I had long hair way down below my waist. But then, when the war was over, people began to do things differently. That war really did a—had a lot of influence.

MYERS: Uh-huh. It sure did.

SENDÓN: Even though it had to be done over again.

MYERS: You mentioned the *Literary Digest*. What kinds of things were you reading in high school?

SENDÓN: Well, they—the *Literary Digest* was one on my reading list, you know, for research, the *Literary Digest* and the *Saturday Evening Post*. They were the two things—and they would make assignments that we'd go to the library and look in the *Reader's Index*. And there were books in the library, you know, we could do research from magazines. There are some magazines out there that are not even alive today. One called the *National*, I know, and one called *Scribner's*. And we would go in there and research papers at the public library. But magazines were very important in those days.

MYERS: Well, you mentioned reading Dickens a lot when you were younger. Were there any special authors you were reading when you were in high school?

they placed him to read. Well, he was reading Poe's "Raven." And all of a sudden, he said, while he was reading, he heard a tapping, a tick on that glass window, but he didn't stop, he just went on. And you know the line where it says, "And a something came a tapping at my chamber door?" Well, he went all the way through and finished, and he said he noticed that the audience was kind of tense. And when he got through, they told him that a bird, a large bird, was pecking on the window outside where he was standing, that came as soon as he started reading and was pecking on the glass. And as soon as he finished reading, it flew away. And you know, that was written up in the *Dallas News* how that happened. But they were wondering how in the world he kept his composure, when he knew something was going on behind him.

But my uncle could read excerpts from Shakespeare. And he sang—we used to sing together all of the time. He would always come on Sundays. And he'd always have to come. We'd sing duets because he had a beautiful voice. And he really should have gone on the stage. They said he would have made a good character actor. He was big and had a lot of curly hair. But my father sacrificed to send him to that school. The purpose was to correct his speech, but it turned out to be an entertainment feature. And I have clippings from the *Dallas News* about a barber and a—what did they call him? He was a barber. He had a barbershop in the Adolphus Hotel all the time he was in Dallas. And they said he was a barber and something else. There was some word they used because of his reading ability. And sometimes they would come into the barbershop and ask him—while they were shaving—to read something while he was shaving.

MYERS: That's interesting. Well, thinking about World War I there and Waco, as we've talked about some all ready—do you recall anything about the sale of Liberty Bonds? Did you—

SENDÓN: Oh, yes. Yes. There were big programs. In fact, they would come and get high school students to go and perform with groups that would go out and try to sell. And people would give programs. They'd get maybe some actor or somebody that would

come and give us a kind of a little show and then try to sell Liberty Bonds. And they would have parades, you know, to start it off, and then, they'd go somewhere where the program—my grandfather bought a lot of Liberty Bonds. And I remember when he died there were some Liberty Bonds that had to be taken care of. But those were—and they would have some—every week there was somebody selling Liberty Bonds. That was a big thing. And that was to help the war. And they had posters, you know, with the Statue of Liberty and Uncle Sam all over town, holding Liberty Bonds. It was just well advertised.

MYERS: Anything else about World War I, or downtown Waco, things you can remember?

SENDÓN: Well, I remember (laughs) once—you know we had a Camp MacArthur. Also, we had a training school for airplanes here. And I remember once—it was very unusual for us to see a plane go up, you know, one of those old-fashioned planes.

MYERS: Oh, I'm glad you got to see that.

SENDÓN: And they—it was during the—well, I guess it was during the Cotton Palace one time. They thought they'd pull a funny stunt. They thought it was funny. They had a dummy dressed like a soldier, and they let him out of the plane. And everybody was just screaming and yelling because they thought a soldier had fallen out of the plane. And it turned out to be one of their—

MYERS: (talking at same time) A stunt.

SENDÓN: —you know, entertainment stunts that they'd let this soldier fall. But we didn't hear too much about the planes in those days. It was mostly Camp MacArthur. And Camp MacArthur was so full of people, it was a huge thing. The land that was sold out there—the farmers just went to town selling their land out there. But the main thing I remember, were the mini parades that they put on and, of course, their—like I said, during the flu epidemic, it was pretty bad out there. They had so many soldiers out there one year that they had to set out pup tents. And some of the soldiers had to live in tents.

And we had this big snow. And there was a picture came out in the paper of the soldiers in the snow. And it got so bad that some of the Waco people began to take some of the soldiers into their homes and try to find places for them to get out of that bad weather because they had said—in addition to the Thirty-second Division, they had sent soldiers from other places who had come to Waco—and they didn't have space for them.

MYERS: We're at the end of this tape.

(tape 2, side 1 ends; side 2 begins)

This is side two of tape two of interview six with Mary Sendón. Let's talk about the Cotton Palace.

SENDÓN: Well, I'm going to go back a little bit to my mother's time from the things that they've told me about the Cotton Palace. The first Cotton Palace opened November 8, 1894. It was started—see, Waco had the cotton industry in the palm of its hand, I think. And it was the largest marketplace for the cotton. And they decided that something had to be done to celebrate that, to make it well known in Waco. And they said that they had had a lot of little country fairs, you know, and they thought of that idea of having a country fair. I think that is what it first started out to be. They conceived the idea—now this is still—this is the first one, 1894. They conceived that idea among, oh, four or five businessmen or the wealthier men who could put up some money. So they started collecting money for some kind of a fund. And they elected some directors. And of course, those same men became the directors. And they all—they just had a kind of a meeting hall that they put up first in Padgitt Park. Now, that Padgitt Park was donated to Waco later by the Padgitt family. And it wasn't the big thing that the Cotton Palace was because they had to buy more land later. But they said that the Padgitt Park would be a good location for it because we didn't have too much location on this side of the tracks. And so this was on Thirteenth and Clay. They put up this small building; they called it an exposition hall. They put up the building. And the only thing they had that year, I think they said, was the parade. And then, they had a king and a queen in the parade, like

SENDÓN: (speaking at the same time) Oh, yes, all—in fact, that’s how we used to go. We’d get together and go as a group. We’d come home from school, and my mother would have a lunch fixed. We would go out to the Cotton Palace and take our schoolbooks. We’d find the best seats in the house, and we’d do our homework out there at the Cotton Palace. That’s why we sort of grouped together so, you know, if we wanted to study together. We’d do homework, have a bite to eat, and then it was time for the ball to start. But that’s how we took care of it. We always had good seats. We managed to find the best seats in the house.

MYERS: That’s good.

SENDÓN: Now, the Cotton Palace—I think it was the Egyptian that I’ve always thought was the most beautiful of all the courts. Shortly after that, Camp MacArthur came to Waco, and the atmosphere changed for the Queen’s Ball. The first Queen’s Ball that we had at the Cotton Palace after the war started was just completely military. Brigadier General W. G. Haan, then head of Camp MacArthur, headed the 1917 Cotton Parade. I always thought, We’ve got this German in our midst! (laughs) But anyway, he was the regular commanding brigadier general there, out at the camp. And he not only led the parade, which was entirely military, but they had a lot of the soldiers marching in the parade, and some of the equipment that they used in the war and everything. He led the parade and then that night led the Grand Ball at the Cotton Palace. Of course, he was escorting the Egyptian lady. (laughs) But she was really—she was very real. Helen Williams was her name, and she looked like the Goddess of Liberty, you know, that type. She had that stance and she made a good showing. And then a lot of the escorts for the other girls were military, also. [Ed. note: In 1917, General Haan led the Cotton Palace Parade, but the queen was Florrie Neale Cooper, The Silver Queen. In 1918, General John L. B. Hartman, then commander of Camp MacArthur, led the parade and escorted the queen, Mary Gorman, who represented Miss Columbia, Goddess of Liberty. The

Egyptian theme occurred in the 1920 Cotton Palace, with Helen Williams serving as queen.]

In addition to—during the week before the Queen’s Ball—of course, the Queen’s Ball had a special day in the week; it was always on Friday. And then they had soldiers out on the field. We had a little—what they’d called a football field. It was very simple. (laughs) I mean, one side was for the people who bought season tickets; the other side was for the college groups. And Baylor had the bleacher side, very weak bleachers. I remember how those bleachers used to sway all the time when they’d get up and yell, and it just worried me. (laughs) But they would have sham battles. You see, we had Michigan and Wisconsin, and they’d put on sham battles out there and you could hear that for blocks. And we didn’t even go—maybe that one night we didn’t go, you could hear them from our house, and it was real—you could hear the bullets. You know, of course, they were false bullets, but it was a real battle that they put on. And that was one of the big drawing cards during that time because everybody was war-minded. And of course, that was the field where Baylor played football. And that’s where we won our ’24 championship, (laughs) so it was a famous spot.

Toward the last, before the Cotton Palace closed, they—well, wait a minute; I’ll have to tell you about the queen. The [1918] queen didn’t wear a regal costume like a queen. She was dressed as the Goddess of Liberty. And it was some kind of a flowing garment. She had a tri-colored hat on her head and a flag somewhere, but it was not the elaborate scene we had had before, but this was the military theme.

MYERS: I visualize these costumes as having a lot of sequins and so forth on them—the early ones.

SENDÓN: Yes. Right.

MYERS: But this one was more simple?

SENDÓN: (speaking at the same time) This was very plain. It was just, well, it suited the situation, the war situation. And the Goddess of Liberty, she had all of her things that

she held, and a wand in her hand. It was a pretty show. They sang—before the ball started they had a few minutes of singing the national anthem and that sort of thing. And that took care of that. After that, and until the war was over, there was always a little bit of the military in the Cotton Palace. Now, when I was in high school, say, along about 1918 to 1919, of course, it was over, and then they had to go back to the countries. They had France, Germany, Spain, and other countries represented with the special themes.

One funny thing that happened—now, this is getting a little ahead of myself—but after my husband came to Waco in 1919—he had a strong voice that would reach a long way. He could stand up in the First Baptist Church balcony and they could hear him up and down stairs. He had a very strong voice, and it carried. Well, Mrs. Padgitt, who was one of the leaders of the women in the Cotton Palace events, heard him speak at a luncheon. As soon as he came to Waco, he was speaking at all the men’s luncheons and they thought he was something different, I guess. And Mrs. Padgitt heard him speak. So she came to him one day and said, “Professor, would you like to have a part in the Cotton Palace festivities?” And he said, “I didn’t know what she wanted—I knew I couldn’t do it, because I had a heavy class load.” He was teaching a heavy load that year. And he said, “What do you mean?” She said, “Would you like to be our page?” Well, you know, the page had to get the names of all of the people and the homes that they came from and had to learn how to pronounce all of the names. That would have been a tremendous job. He would have been speaking the whole evening, you know, until all that thing was over. (laughs) He was a very witty person, and he said, “Mrs. Padgitt, if you ask me to be king, yes. But page, no.” (laughs) Well, Mrs. Padgitt thought that was the funniest answer. She wasn’t upset about it, but she just went everywhere telling how she got turned down and what he said, “King, yes. Page, no.” But that was when they had the Spanish court, and everything was in Spanish. I think he helped them a little bit on the side to put the Spanish titles with the names, but everything was in Spanish style. It was a beautiful scene. And of course the Spanish music was played.