

---

# INTERVIEW WITH DOROTHY KNOUS, CLASS OF 1946

**Kathleen Myers** 00:00

...Myers, member of the Student Alumni Council, and I am talking with Dorothy Knous of the Class of 1946 at ISU at Homecoming activities on October 17, 1981. During this bit of oral history we'll be reminiscing about the way it was in 1946. We hope that those who listen to this tape will enjoy hearing from the persons who have volunteered to record this bit of ISU history and will find it interesting and informative. First, Mrs. Knous, as you think back over the years what are some of the things that are foremost in your memory of what life was like at Illinois State University?

**Dorothy Knous** 00:37

Well, it was a very happy time for me. I enjoyed all my years at Illinois State tremendously and I have many fond memories about what happened here.

**Kathleen Myers** 00:49

What do you remember about President Fairchild?

**Dorothy Knous** 00:52

Well, President Fairchild was a very large man, very tall, very distinguished looking and all of us had a great deal of respect for him. But as far as really getting to know him very personally, I don't think many of us did. We had lots of personal relationships with our teachers but the president was busy with many, many other things. Even though there was personal contact other places we didn't really have that with the president of the university.

**Kathleen Myers** 01:18

Who are some of the professors and university administrative officials that you remember for special reasons?

**Dorothy Knous** 01:24

Well, for special reasons, of course, being a music major, I remember the people in the music department first of all. And, of course, foremost with that would be the head of the music department who was Dr. Emma Knudson. She was the head of the department. She was very kind, especially kind to me. In fact, I think there was one point when I almost thought about quitting school and one conversation with her and I was back on the road again. Miss Boicourt was another music teacher I thought a lot of, and Margaret Westhoff directed our Lowell Mason Club. She was a sponsor of it, I guess I should say. And so I also had her classes and I remember her very fondly. Dr. Isted was my first orchestra conductor and had him in classes and really loved him, too. Mr. Sherrard was my band director and Mr. [Fife?], I had him student teaching, and Dr. Glenn I also had in student teaching. And then very especially with Gladys Tipton who was a very special lady on the Music Department at that time and I, you know, thought a great deal of them. Now as far as the other departments were, I was in Business and I liked Miss Day and Miss Peters and Mr. Koepke and Mr. Admire who sort of saved me in typing. He had such a kindly manner about him that he got me on the right road when I was thinking I could never learn to type. He got me

back into Business and I enjoyed it. Now, for being very, somebody very distinguished, around campus, I remember Dr. Schroeder. He was the Dean Emeritus at the time, and he was a sponsor of Kappa Delta Pi, which was one of the honorary fraternities which I was lucky enough to get into. And so I remember him because of his very special sort of eccentric ways around campus. Dr. Ivens, I remember, because he was—invited us into his home. He was the sophomore representative. And he would, I can remember especially, having a wiener roast in his house and roasting marshmallows and just having an awfully good time. In the psychology department, I especially remember Dr. Marzolf. And let's see, I believe, Dr. Marshall I remember in the History Department, also Dr. Browne I remember very much teaching some special classes, and I especially remember him because at one time, years after I graduated from college, I saw him on the street in Springfield. And when he saw me coming down the street, he looked at me and said, "Hello, Miss Fisherkeller." And I couldn't believe that a man could have that tremendous a memory and just seeing me out of the blue. Dr. Henderson was our—my—philosophy teacher and also was the head of our Kappa Delta Epsilon sorority and I had many good times in her home and she seemed like a very, she was a very special friend. Dr. Connell was my advisor in Newman Club. I thought a lot of her. Mrs. Warren was my house mother and was at Fell Hall as a freshman, thought a lot of her too. And let's see, did I mention Dean Keaton, which of course was one of the most special people on my list, and I had her at the top and somehow or other... I started to the right and I'm coming back to her but she was really at the top. And I remember when I came back for the last reunion that she walked up and remembered me and that made me feel very good. I think probably I told you enough about—well, maybe I should say the PE department. I was very fond of some of the teachers there. That would be Miss Bergland, and Dr. French, and Dr. Frey. I think she became a doctor after I had her. She was Miss Frey. And I had her in school and I didn't think a lot of her, I probably missed some very important people. Let's see if I think about employees. I do remember Miss Allen, who was very special. And Miss Yates, who was my speech teacher. I know there are a lot more, but I know you don't have time to listen anymore, so maybe we better go on with it.

**Kathleen Myers** 05:26

Okay. Students today talk about how difficult it is to complete their education. How do you compare how it was during your years here to the way it seems to be today?

**Dorothy Knous** 05:38

Well, my first thought that was in spite of a terrible war going on, that we had so much fun. We worked hard and we played hard and we worried a lot about the war. But in spite of all this, we just seemed to have such a good time. It seems like the students today are so serious, and so worried about jobs. And I said we were in--graduated at a time when there were many job offers. We had no worries about finding work when we got out of school. And I think probably that that was what made the biggest difference in our attitude towards school.

**Kathleen Myers** 06:13

Okay, what kinds of extracurricular activities are important to you and to other students?

**Dorothy Knous** 06:19

Well, of course, to me as a music student, first of all, I would have to say that the music activities were so important to me, which was Lowell Mason Club, and the girls marching band, which was first

organized—okay, see, this was during the war years. And so the boys were going off to war and they wouldn't think of inviting girls to take the places of the boys in the band then. You know, girls just didn't march. But by the time all so many boys had left that they didn't have a marching band, well, then they were glad to get a girls' band organized. So this was a big thrill for us to have the first girls' marching band at school. Also, in—I was in University Choir and girls' chorus. I enjoyed my religious activities and Newman Club. I enjoyed the sorority activities of Kappa Delta Epsilon. Of course I enjoyed all basketball, football games, and especially enjoyed summer band, which was really lots of fun, because we had the big circus here and the music students play for the circus. And so this was quite an interesting thing for me to get a chance to do. Now, as far as regular activities that were exposed to other people, rather than just music students, I would have to say probably one of the biggest extracurricular things that went on were the big co-op dances that we had at that time when they would bring in the tremendous big name bands from all over the country. And we used to have four of those a year and that was very exciting and we just looked forward to those. Both gyms—they would have bands and both gyms at the same time and you can dance in one place a while and go over and dance on the other. I think that was the only time we ever had something where we had two bands at the same time. Now this happens often today but then, you know, to have a band was the big thing. But of course, the bands had like 20 to 25 people in them. They didn't have like just combos, like we have today, when you have three or four people and a lot of resonator equipment that makes it sound like there's 50 people. And let's see if there were any other thing. Of course, the plays were very special. And the concert series, we had wonderful concert series. The same as they do now. And of course, that was the only time we were really exposed to nice things like that, because they didn't have so many community concert series like they have nowadays.

**Kathleen Myers 08:32**

Okay, what services were available on campus then to students, such as health services, counseling and placement services?

**Dorothy Knous 08:39**

Now our health service was Dr. Cooper, who was over in Old Cook Hall at that time. Her office was down kind of in the sort of seemed like the basement. That building was built on many levels so I don't know exactly whether it was the basement or not. But it seemed like we sort of went down the hall to go there. And she was very helpful to the students. I remember going there when I had insomnia at one time, and I couldn't sleep for days and I would just walk the floor all night, not sleep at all. And she helped me out of that. And other times I had a lot of throat problems. And she was awfully good to me helping then. So that's what I remember particularly about the health service. Let's see, counseling, we had—that time we had a sponsor for every student. And I remember my sponsor was Miss Gueffroy, who was a geography teacher, who was very nice to me. If we had any problems we could automatically go to this one special teacher who sort of looked out for us. But she was very special to me. As far as placement service, Dr. Carrington was the one who was in charge then and I remember the thing that he specially did nice for me was at the time we had—were looking for jobs after we graduated. I was in a camp way up in northern Wisconsin and we were putting on a minstrel show at the time because minstrel shows were very popular at that time. And I had this job offer and I couldn't leave the camp to go for an interview. Now nowadays, this is unheard of, I suppose. But I asked the people who wanted to hire me, the school, if they could hire me without me having an interview with me. And they said this was quite unlikely. But could I recommend somebody who might give special recommendation for me? So I said, "Well, if you would call

Dr. Carrington or the placement service, maybe he could give you some information." And so after the superintendent spoke to Dr. Carrington they hired me without ever having an interview. So I especially remember how neat the placement service was then to help us out that way. Was there any other thing that you need on the—along that line? Special services?

**Kathleen Myers** 11:01

What were prices then for hamburgers, movies, and gasoline and tuition?

**Dorothy Knous** 11:06

Well, you know, when I thought about this I couldn't remember an answer but then I remembered that when I was in school I had taken great pride in keeping track of every cent I spent all the time I was in college and I had never thrown this little book away. I still had it. So I went out and dug this little book out and I had the most fun looking through it and discovered that you could buy a coke for a nickel then. Movies were 30 cents. An ice cream cone was a nickel, a hamburger was 15 cents. But you have to remember now that this was in an era when I worked at the library for 40 cents an hour. And I worked accompanying gym classes, and I had to go clear across gym—the campus—to get to the gym class. And when I get there, I get paid 25 cents an hour. And the class only lasted 40 minutes. So I didn't get paid a quarter because I didn't play for an hour. So you have to think about it in terms of that, then it doesn't seem like so bad. As far as I see, you have a question here about gasoline. This was the era of gas rationing. And I'm sure you don't know that we ever had anything like that. But that was during the war. And so nobody had cars, it was a very rare thing driving a car. And if you had to have stamps to buy gas, or a gallon gasoline, which you can only get if you had to travel someplace very special. But I do remember, I think the gasoline at that time was 10 gallons for a dollar if you had the stamp to buy it, but you couldn't get it unless you had a stamp. And then let's see, I see the question here about tuition too. Tuition, will you believe it, was \$17.50 a semester if you had a scholarship, and I had a scholarship, so that's all I had to pay for tuition. And that included our activity fee and included all our books. Can you imagine that?

**Kathleen Myers** 13:04

No!

**Dorothy Knous** 13:05

When I think of what—they pay that, more than that, for one book now. And so this was why it was a tremendous advantage at that time to go to the state school. I see with this "et cetera" on here. Would you like to know what my room and board costs?

**Kathleen Myers** 13:21

Yes.

**Dorothy Knous** 13:22

'42-'43 for room and board and everything I spent the whole year was \$305.68. And 1940, I have written down the other years. Let's see, in '44, it was \$399.80. In '45, it was \$432 and in '46, it went up quite a bit because I bought clothes and things and being a senior, we had extra expenses that year. So that was the great big expense of \$626 which now seems like a drop in the bucket when you think about what you people pay for everything now. And incidentally, that little fee that we paid for our registration that

also included these dances, and we could go to movies once a week. And we could also go bowling all the time. So this one little fee included all that, which, you know, seems almost unbelievable now.

**Kathleen Myers** 14:27

What was the typical mode of dress in 1946?

**Dorothy Knous** 14:31

The typical mode of dress—skirts, sweaters, and would you believe that anklets were suitable for every activity? Even student teaching in music we didn't have to put on hose, we could wear anklets. But let me tell you this, this was during the war. And there were any hose at that time, because all hose was made out of nylon, and all the nylon went into parachutes. And so do you know what we wore on our legs then? Do you know what we wore for hose then?

**Kathleen Myers** 15:00

No.

**Dorothy Knous** 15:01

We wore leg makeup. And we had to sit down and put newspapers on the floor and get the old bottle and shake it up, pour it out in our hand and then rub the sloppy goop up and down our legs. And then we were ready to go. And it looked like we had hose on. We had the color and everything. No seams, of course. And that was in a time when you had hose, they had seams in them. But this is one of the reasons why they let us wear anklets, because there weren't very many hose at that time. Now in church, we always dressed up for church, we always wore hose, and hose or leg makeup, heels and hats. That was in the era when you didn't go to church without a hat too. And as far as going on dates, then we always dressed up except if we were going to a ballgame. Then we might wear slacks, and we only wore slacks after school hours. There was no such thing as wearing slacks to class, except one time I remember I could wear slacks to class and that was when I was taking cello and the skirts got very short that year. The skirts were way above the knees. So if you think about skirts being above the knees, and you think about wearing a cello, you know why they let us wear slacks at that time. And then let's see, for going on dates, I was thinking about this, this was the era completely before blue jeans. Nobody wore blue jeans then. You only wore blue jeans if you worked on a farm. That was about the only people that wore blue jeans at that time. So you see that the years have changed many, many things.

**Dorothy Knous** 16:40

Okay, what was the most important national event that happened in those years?

**Dorothy Knous** 16:43

Now, the most important national event, of course, was the World War II, which was going on all the years that we were in school. Now this ended the summer of '45. And I do remember that the biggest thing was that when VJ came, which meant Victory Day over in Japan, and the war was completely over, that everybody had to do something to celebrate. And we literally ran from Blooming—from Normal clear up to the center of the town of Bloomington and ran around the square. And then ran back to Normal because we were—had all this pent-up emotion we just didn't know what to do with. And the streets were full of people doing that. People by the hundreds were just rushing pell-mell towards Bloomington and not knowing what they were going to do when they got there. And they

got there, all we did was turn around and come back. When we got back we didn't know what to do so we bought watermelons, sat outdoors or stood outdoors, I guess on the—in the front yard of our home and cut up the watermelon and ate it with our hands, something we'd never done before. They'd only did that down south. We always eat watermelon with a fork, but we sliced the watermelon and we stood out there and just ate that watermelon with our teeth. You know, we were so emotional. We just had to do something extra. Now one of the other students told me that we had a great big dance after that, that it was just a mob over in Cook Hall. And I sort of remember that, but the main thing I remember was the great big run in Bloomington with all the other students side-by-side.

**Dorothy Knous** 17:08

What were the most popular forms of entertainment on campus in 1946?

**Dorothy Knous** 18:18

Well, I think that the Homecoming events were tremendous. We worked awfully hard for those, and we look forward to that one. It seemed like there was so much more activity and connection with Homecoming then than there is now, so many more floats. I couldn't help but notice the name of the [inaudible]. And so we had to work awfully hard on those floats so that was one of the big things. Of course, the co-op dances that I already mentioned when we had the big name bands. And then we had many, many dances, many, many formal dances, which seem to be sort of a thing of the past now. It was, everything was just very, very dress up. So this seemed to be the most popular thing with the students. Hiking, skating, and biking were all kind of popular too. But the big things were these other things that I mentioned.

**Kathleen Myers** 19:06

What do you remember about the towns of Bloomington and Normal?

**Dorothy Knous** 19:09

Well, it's hard to believe, but Normal is so much, much bigger than it was then. Normal was kind of like a ghost town at that time. The business section of the city had sort of moved out from Normal and moved into Bloomington. So Bloomington was the great big town and Normal was just like the little brother of Bloomington. And so many empty stores is what I remember. I remember walking down through the business area and one street particularly, it was just one story after another that was completely vacant and you just don't see that sort of thing in Normal today. Oh, everything is just big and busy and humming. So that's the main thing that I remember, Bloomington seemed to me very much like Springfield, I had come from Springfield and I was very much at home shopping in Bloomington. Like the stores even that had the same name. I remember that there was a Roland's there and I was always very fond of Roland's in Springfield. And so it was just very easy for me to go into Bloomington and shop and find things that I would be happy with.

**Kathleen Myers** 20:12

What about the use of tobacco and alcoholic beverages, then?

**Dorothy Knous** 20:16

Well, smoking was only permitted in the lounges on campus and yet, that was the only place that you could smoke. You wouldn't think of walking down the sidewalk and smoking a cigarette. And also the use

of alcohol was completely prohibited. In fact, we even had to sign pledges that we wouldn't drink alcoholic beverages while we were students. And being a very serious student, I found that hard to break. So it's quite different the way the things are on campus today.

**Kathleen Myers** 20:45

What did you like most about ISNU and what did you like the least?

**Dorothy Knous** 20:49

Well, I sort of had a hard time to think about the thing that I liked least because they were just very happy years. For me, I loved all my classes, and I loved working at Millner Library. Probably the hardest thing for me was adjusting to all the business classes that I had. I had minored in Business, because I thought if I would start to teach and I might not be happy in it then I might have to resort to the business world. So I thought therefore I better be a little prepared for it. So I had sort of gone into business not really wanting to do all these things, but I hadn't had any typing or short hand in high school and so it was very difficult for me to catch up with the students who had come into college with two years of business and there I was with none. So that was probably the thing that that made me probably the most unhappy while I was in school was the difficulty I had with all the business courses.

**Kathleen Myers** 21:46

Okay, what were the campus boundaries then?

**Dorothy Knous** 21:49

Now let's see, on the west it would have been University Street. The north it would have been College. On the east it would have been School. And on the west it would have been Beaufort, but I'm not so sure you name that Beaufort now. Is still Beaufort? It has a different name when you go the opposite direction though, doesn't it? Doesn't Beaufort change names right there about the time it goes by the viaduct?

**Kathleen Myers** 22:16

I don't think so.

**Dorothy Knous** 22:16

Oh, oh, well, I was I was thinking it did. So that's, that's where the boundaries actually were then. It seems very small in comparison to what the school has grown to be now.

**Kathleen Myers** 22:26

What buildings were here and for what purposes were they used?

**Dorothy Knous** 22:30

Of course the most impressive of buildings, of course, was Old Main, which only—you people will only know by pictures of it. Of course, during those years Old Main was torn down. Of course, we remember that with probably great sadness as we saw them take the big bell, or ball I guess I should say, and knock down the building. That was a very sad time for all of us, because we had lots of classes in there and dearly loved it. Cook Hall was the old building. And I'm wondering isn't Cook Hall still here? I thought it was but I haven't seen it. When I come back to the Union building, I'm going to have to take another look for it. Of course, that was where we spent most of our music classes so I spent an awful lot of time in here.

North Hall was for—we had our English classes. Of course the science hall was there, the library. The Milner Library was brand new when I came to school. I think it had just been completed the year before. So at that time, that lovely beautiful colonial building across from Fell Hall was just a very pretty sight. And of course, I loved moving between the two because I worked in the library. So going across to Milner was a special time for me. The Metcalf Training School of course was here. We all spent a lot of time in there as we did our student teaching. The Industrial Arts Building and McCormick Gym. Of course Capen Auditorium in connection with the Industrial Art Building and of course that was the only auditorium on campus at that time. And I think that probably covers buildings. Although, there was a Home Ec building I forget about that. The Home Ec house, which I was thinking—is this not the building that was the Home Ec house? For—where is Fell Hall?

**Kathleen Myers** 24:10

Fell Hall is in the Quad.

**Dorothy Knous** 24:11

Oh, okay, then I'm wrong.

**Kathleen Myers** 24:14

Okay.

**Dorothy Knous** 24:14

I had the feeling when I came down the street here that this was next. This building was next to where Fell Hall was, and so maybe this was the old Home Ec building. No, my mistake.

**Kathleen Myers** 24:28

What was the most humorous event that happened while you're here as a student and what was the least humorous?

**Dorothy Knous** 24:33

Well, I think the funniest things that happened was when we had a group on campus called the Blackfriars and they were all men, and they would put on the most tremendous shows each year. It was something to really look forward to, people came from far and near to see those. They would put on tremendous shows where they would do the girl—dressed up like girls. And of course, we see that lots on television now, but in those days, that was a rare thing for boys to dress up like beautiful girls. So the shows that they put on were really, really funny and very, very interesting. And also, the things that they did that were very humorous is when they had their initiations, their initiations into that republic. And they did awful things to the students and one of the things that some people would have thought was funny, but I thought was terrible at the time, was we had one very handsome boy, who had a beautiful mustache at the time. And they took him out in front of the whole student body and shaved off half of his mustache. And he was so handsome. His name was [Bob LaRue?]. And he was such a handsome boy and I almost cried. I couldn't believe they did this to him. But that was their idea of fun at the time. Now, when you come to the least humorous, this I almost hate to say, but I think it's good for people to know that these things happen. I sort of hated to answer this in a way, but the most terrible thing that happened while I was in school, was that I had two very good friends who were expelled a semester from school for one sip of wine. They were put out of school and sent to Dekalb for a whole semester, and I get

goosebumps thinking about it, because I thought what a terrible thing it was to do to them. The one girl had come from a teetotaler family. She'd never had a drink before in her life. And she just taken this sip of wine in fun and came back to the dormitory acting silly like she was drunk. And somebody told the house mother on her and of course she was called before the board, and they said they couldn't do anything about it because we had this pledge not to drink and they felt very sorry about it but they actually expelled her from school. And so coming from a family who never drank, I imagined that this was a terrible, terrible thing in her family as well as it was in my life. And because she was such a good friend that I felt so sorry for her that this should happen to her. And of course, now with the things they permit on campuses, it just seems unreal, that this could have happened then.

**Kathleen Myers** 26:59

In summary, are there any special memories that you have which we haven't already covered?

**Dorothy Knous** 27:04

Well, the thing I think—probably one of the things that was important is how close house mothers were to the students, the people that lived out in private homes and rented rooms to their—to children that came from all over. And they sort of made us their—I call them children, because these mothers just made us their children. And that was one of the saddest events that happened while I was in school was that our house mother died. And I still recall very vividly all the experiences that we had. And I also remember what was so wonderful about it was that she had a daughter-in-law, who moved—who gave up her home, and moved into our house so that we girls didn't have to split up. And I don't think people are that close to house mothers and fathers anymore. But this lady was a widow and she was the wife of a minister and the minister had died many years before and she was so good. It just, take us to her heart. She'd entertain us. She had breakfast for us many times. And this is one of the—was the most special memories I think I had of school. Another thing I would think—would like to say—that the curfew hours were enforced pretty rigidly for us when we were in school. And of course, this caused a lot of interesting experiences. But I do remember that actually the students really liked it because we had these rules, because we had these rules, and we were made to live by them as—sort of made boundaries for us. It made life a lot easier for us. I do think that this is the difficulty our students have today is that they don't have enough rules. And so because nobody says you can't do this, or you shouldn't do this they're never sure what they should do or when they shouldn't and I think this makes their life much more difficult. I really do. I think our life was much easier for us.

**Kathleen Myers** 28:57

Okay, thank you.