

**Oral History Interview with Betty-Jean Frenette**  
**Interviewed By Angela Baker June 15 1993**

Transcription By: Armin Shujaatullah February 12 2000

**AB** Little bit of background information about you. Could you state your full name please.

**BJ** Betty-Jean Frenette.

**AB** And your date and place of birth.

**BJ** May 9<sup>th</sup> 1950.

**AB** Okay, could you describe your educational background?

**BJ** I have a high school plus commercial(?) one year, uh one yeah for that.

**AB** Okay, how long have you been at Saint Mary's?

**BJ** Since 1969.

**AB** 1969, so what capacity, or, did you first come here?

**BJ** What, what was my job?

**AB** Yeah.

**BJ** I worked in the library as a clerk.

**AB** Oh yeah.

**BJ** At the very beginning, and then I just I moved along and uh into different departments [and that].

**AB** Oh, where were you?

**BJ** I-in the different departments?

**AB** M-hmm.

**BJ** I, well, first when first—started I started off in the cataloguing department as a clerk typist and then I went on to acquisitions and I worked in various capacities there and then I became secretary to the head librarian.

**AB** Oh yeah.

**BJ** And then I, which was in the old, hich was in the Bishop Burke building at that time.

**AB** Oh yes.

**BJ** That's the old, the old library.

**AB** The old library.

**BJ** Yeah, and then when it moved, I became secretary to the new librarian which is Ron Lewis, who's still librarian now.

**AB** Ah—and then after that?

**BJ** And then five years—oh, I've been here for almost, I think its been, almost five years, I moved over here to alumni.

**AB** Oh great, so how do you feel—what type of role do you feel that alumni play in the university as a whole?

**BJ** I think they play a very important role in the university. They, it's the community outside you know and and...

**AB** Do they feel a , do many alumni feel a still close attraction to the school?

**BJ** I think so yeah.

**AB** Try to keep in touch..

**BJ** Just by talking to them, and-and they-they, they do they still perceive it as as you know, a-a, like a lot of people have a really have a—good feelings about Saint Mary's and their time spent here.

**AB** M-hmm.

**BJ** Yeah.

**AB** They like to keep in touch with what's happening?

**BJ** Oh yes, they're they're really—a lot f them are very good at coming [on] to our events; and like we have really good turnout to our alumni weekend and an extremely good turnout to our golf tournament which it's it's sold out every year and usually we have a waiting list.

**AB** Oh yeah. So what Is the purposes of having alumni offices and..

**BJ** I think it's to try and keep the liaison going between you know, once when the when the student leaves the university, like still like to keep those ties and-and like I think the alumni office should be perceived, on a friendly—you know so that we keep, keep really good rapport between-between when once a student leaves and then go on to, you know outside and become alumni.

**AB** M-hmm. So it's you think it's a part of Saint Mary's role in the community?

**BJ** I think so. And keep the ties gelled, you know, together at Saint Mary's..

**AB** [I] see. Okay, lets see. Okay so when you first arrived in 69

**BJ** M-hm

**AB** The school was a lot, great deal smaller.

**BJ** Oh for sure, yeah.

**AB** What differences have you seen that size has made?

**BJ** Before, like before, it was more like a sort of a small like community type atmosphere. And now that its grown uh-I mean we still we still have it, we haven't lost it like, you know, maybe some of the other universities—but it's not quite so evident anymore.

**AB** Yeah m-hm so you were in the library before you were here?

**BJ** M-hmm yeah.

**AB** What did you notice in the development of those facilities over the years?

**BJ** The library expanded fairly-really quite quickly. And then then like when we moved in to a new building we just sort of like, we-we like we grew up fairly quickly too—like you know in like especially when we were start bringing in more students then we, uh, we didn't have what the space, and the seating and you know we just, we out grew it. You know a lot quicker than we probably thought we would.

**AB** Yeah.

**BJ** Yeah.

**AB** How 'bout the collections of th-the library itself. They expanded as well?

**BJ** Uh-yeah, but probably not as as as much as they, sh-probably should have because- because of course money restraints and stuff like that and and then of course uh and too space.

**AB** Yeah. Okay, what differences do you notice in the nature of the students over the years. You're in touch with..

**BJ** They're younger-a ha ha ha!

**AB** They're younger.

**BJ** No, I'm getting older!

**AB** I've heard that already—yeah.

**BJ** I think the students keep us young.

**AB** Yeah.

**BJ** Um-difference in students. I don't think there really is you know.

**AB** How 'bout in terms of things like age and gender, ethnic origin—those type of things.

**BJ** I think there're more, like more foreign students now. Of course when-when I first came I think it was just, wasn't very long that women had been just coming in to the university. So I think that sort of gap has sort of, you know, closed like there's probably just as many female now as there are male, you know. That was, that was a big difference back then. There was like, a lot of males and very few females

**AB** How bout ethnic origin of students?

**BJ** I think there's a lot more foreign students now than –than there were back then.

**AB** Oh yeah.

**BJ** You very, I don't think, you very rarely saw a-a, like foreign students at that time. Like we've opened our doors to—which is which I feel's a good, good thing to.

**AB** How bout the age of students—just on a general

**BJ** They seem younger, but I do, I don't really know if they are really, when they first come they seem very young and very like very immature you know and stuff like that. Maybe that's just because I've got older, like you know I'm—

**AB** Yeah.

**BJ** Didn't, no—and the gap wasn't, didn't notice it the gap so much you know when I was here in the earlier years—you know.

**AB** So what wa-what was it like to be a staff member at saint Mary's when you first came and has that changed over the years?

**BJ** It was like you know, I-I enjoyed you know where, I of course I'm enjoying working at Saint Mary's I've been here you know a long time. Certainly in looking back, as far as like equipment and stuff like that I mean we've come a long way. Considering like you know when I first started in in the library I was using like a manual type writer and when I first got my first electric type writer I thought 'man, this is high tech' you know, which I mean just like we progressed so much like its just amazing. Like you know especially with computers and everything today it's just changed, like it's changed, well its changed my job totally you know. Because now like I very rarely use a type writer and I-I never dreamt that, you know being a secretary without, you know wouldn't use a type writer—you know what I mean. You know that was just a thing that went along with your job.

**AB** How bout the way that the staff interact socially. Has that changed over the years?

**BJ** Um

**AB** What type of interaction do you have socially with the—

**BJ** I think the morale the morale has changed a lot, like you know with with a, maybe - maybe the size of the o-the university I don't know. But before it seemed to be like a closer knit family and we did, we did a lot of, did things together. Like we'd have staff picnic or that type-that type of thing and I think those, those are good things you know. We sort of got away from that type of interaction together.

**AB** I see. Okay let me see. Unionization took place in [70's] what type of effect did that have on your job

**BJ** I don't think the union had all that much of an effect on my job. I think it's a, I think it-it sort of streamlined things. Like when before unionization, like if you had a good rapport with your supervisor then you know-then usually you got a good raise or whatever you know. But uh, I think things have been more streamlined and-and I think they're fairer and you know that every body's slotting into groups and whatever.

**AB** Did you notice any change in the university before and after unionization?

**BJ** Nothing I can, you know that sort of stands out in my mind.

**AB** Okay. Around the same time—well earlier—In the, around 1970 is when the Jesuits gave over administrative control to... when it became a public institution. What

what type of a, a effects did that transition have on the university. I know you were just here in 69.

**BJ** I don't think I was here when the Jesuits were here. So I can't really... you know, I don't have nothing really to compare. Like when I came it was Carrigan, Dr. Carrigan was [I think] the- the president at that time so there wasn't you know Jesuits. I mean there were still Jesuits around, but they weren't like in administrative roles.

**AB** I see. What do you think the students wish to gain from their experiences here at Saint Mary's, do you think that's changed since the 60's?

**BJ** I don't think so. I mean they're well, I think students are getting more and more educated you know. This is hard, there are hard times now because you know usually when they, you know back back in the 60's—70's you know the-I mean jobs were certainly not as scarce as they are now. Usually you were able to find a job, but these days like it's just—and I find like students are coming back and getting more degrees, and because there just isn't anything you know. There's nothing out there for them and that's some times that can make it more difficult because the more educated they get there's even less of an opportunity for you know, for jobs. Or they have to take a lower type, class job than.. which is not equivalent to, you know the degrees that they have and..

**AB** Okay, so do you think Saint Mary's has something particular to offer students? In comparison to other institutions?

**BJ** I think it still has kept its sort of community feeling. Like you know...when you come when you come on to the campus of Saint Mary's. I think people feel like it's a good feeling, whereas if you go to other-other campuses, like the larger ones, just like you like you feel overwhelmed you know. Just you know.

**AB** Okay, that's about all I wanted to cover unless you can think of any events or anything that stand out in your mind over the years?

**BJ** I guess not, I guess I there's nothing I can think of right now!

**AB** Ha ha ha!

**BJ** Thank you!

**END OF TAPE**