

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Jo Mechlin Steetle

COLLECTION: 4700.0659

IDENTIFICATION: LSU graduate, Class of 1938; member of the LSU Opera

INTERVIEWER: Ron Ross

SERIES: University History – Distinguished Alumni

INTERVIEW DATES: 5/27/96; 5/28/96

FOCUS DATES: 1930s -1960s

ABSTRACT:

Tape 952

Background information; attending silent movies; father taking a job as director of the Motor Fuel Laboratory; at LSU in the 1920s; attended University Lab. School; describes changes made to campus since she left; sliding down the Indian Mounds in the snow; closing campus when Mike the Tiger arrived; decision to major in music education; participation in high school musicals; participation in student activities at LSU; Director of the Opera Pasquale Amato; Prof. Stopher (Dean of the Music School); teaching music in Plaquemine, Louisiana; creation of University Methodist Church; describes her wedding; having her wedding filmed by Gene Quaw (LSU's audio-visual guru in the 1930s); Stopher's political acumen and organizational skills; discuss Charlie Roberts's dissertation "The History of the Louisiana State University School of Music;" voice teacher Loren Davidson; using skills she learned in Music School in her later life; discusses various operas put on by LSU; staging of the LSU production of *Butterfly*; Frances Greer (LSU student and later member of the Metropolitan Opera); rivalry between Pasquale Amato and Enrico Caruso while by sang for the Met.; Pasquaule's teaching techniques; orchestra conductor Louis Hasselmans; learning the technical side of opera (staging, etc.) at Chateauquay; working with the opera director, Alfredo Valenti, of the Juilliard School of Music; singing on the bus from Louisiana to New York; developing singer's notes

Tape 953

Lists various operas put on by LSU; brief sketch of LSU Opera's touring schedule; job interview in Mississippi; interviewing for position of music teacher in Plaquemine; attending concerts and Southern University and being invited to after concert coffee by President Felton Clark; lists music teachers at LSU; describes courtship and marriage to Ralph Steetle; teaching music to the poor children of Plaquemine; practice of naming sons after Huey Long; Cajun French; Prohibition; convincing members of Plaquemine's boxing team to join the school choir; learning about Catholicism to better understand her students; describes her classes' production of the Nativity; unknowingly casting the sheriff's mistress as the Virgin Mary

Tape 954

Moving from Washington, D.C., to Oregon; decision to go back to work when they moved to Oregon; getting a job as a music teacher with the Holladay Center for the Handicapped; initial emotional reaction to teaching handicapped children; taking special education courses; using music as part of physical and occupational therapy; describes the physical problems of her students; teaching students directions using a xylophone; using music in reading readiness classes; using wind instruments (harmonicas, etc.) to develop the lung capacity of children with cerebral palsy; doing the Hokey Pokey with her students; performing *Amahi and the Night Travelers* using puppets; describes how the student playing Amahl getting out of his chair and walking without pressure from his therapist just prior to the performance; using an electric organ to convince a blind student how to use braille; Christmas programs

TAPES: 3 (T952, T953, T954)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 2 hours, 45 minutes

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 146 pages

RESTRICTIONS: None