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Pat Cross

Rosie the Riveter
World War II American Home Front Oral History Project

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Interviews conducted by
Samuel J. Redman
in 2012

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Pat Cross

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01-00:00:00
Redman: Today is April 3, 2012 and I'm delighted to be in Oakland, California sitting down with K. Patricia Cross. Today Pat Cross resides in Oakland and is Professor Emeritus at the University of California, Berkeley. But we'll be talking about her life a bit earlier, before she went back to college and then on to graduate school. We'll be talking about her life during World War II. Pat, let's begin with the basics, if we could. Would you state and spell your name?

01-00:00:37
Cross: My name is K, the initial, Patricia Cross. K P-A-T-R-I-C-I-A C-R-O-S-S.

01-00:00:47
Redman: Great. And you go by Pat Cross?

01-00:00:48
Cross: I go by Pat.

01-00:00:49
Redman: Would you mind telling me when and where you were born?

01-00:00:55
Cross: I was born on Saint Patrick's Day; it's the reason for Pat. In 1926 in Normal, Illinois.

01-00:01:04
Redman: Will you tell me a little bit about what Normal, Illinois was like growing up very early on?

01-00:01:11
Cross: Well, in the first place, I was born in Normal, Illinois, lived on Normal Avenue, and attended Illinois State Normal University. It was a very normal town of about 7,000, dominated by a teacher's college, which was ISNU, Illinois State Normal University, at that time. It was about 3,000 students. Normal was a typical small university town. I just want to add now it is over 50,000, home to a major university, Illinois State University, and so it's a very different town.

01-00:01:50
Redman: So it's grown significantly since that time.

01-00:01:51
Cross: It has grown and changed, and industry has come in. There was really no industry except the university and the education. And, of course, everybody more or less was in the same curriculum. That is, we were all planning to be teachers. And my father was a physics professor at the University. And I went to what were called the training schools at that time. They were demonstration schools where the students from the college could practice on the kids in the

grade school. I went to the Thomas Metcalf Training School, which was on campus, and we had so-called practice teachers.

01-00:02:37
Redman: Now, I'd like to get back to that in just a moment. But first can I ask about your parents? You've mentioned your father was a physics professor.

01-00:02:43
Cross: Yes.

01-00:02:44
Redman: For the record, would you mind sharing a little bit about your mother? Who is—?

01-00:02:48
Cross: Both my parents came from Kansas, and my mother had a kind of business college education. And in that time, of course, women were at home raising children. She was very musically talented but mostly for her own use. She sang around the house, she played piano, she made sure all of us had music lessons. I played the violin, my sister played the piano, and my brother the clarinet.

01-00:03:20
Redman: A very musical family.

01-00:03:23
Cross: That was the music part of the family. We were in walking distance of the University. And at least in the early years we took in roomers. They were students from the University. Had a room and they had a kind of—I guess you'd call it, you know, a little stove down in the basement and a little refrigerator where they could do what was called "light housekeeping." And they were handy "baby sitters."

01-00:03:48
Redman: I understand that the University of Chicago—maybe about this time, maybe a little bit earlier—and some scholars, like James Dewey, and some other scholars there, were innovating in terms of elementary education, in particular, but in terms of—they created a similar sort of practice, like a lab school on the campus. I assume Illinois State was sort of mimicking—

01-00:04:17
Cross: That is exactly what this was. It was a lab school. It wasn't called that. And it would be called a private school today, although anybody from the community was welcome. There were a lot of faculty kids there. I mean, faculty kids automatically went there. And then eight grades of grade school were followed by the University High School. That's what it was called. U-High. And U-High had students. We did the usual things. But, again, the classrooms were largely run by practice teachers. That is, we had a critic teacher, and then we usually had two students who were practicing on us to teach high school in the schools of Illinois.

01-00:05:07
Redman: So tell me about, from the perspective of an elementary school-aged girl, what that experience was like for you and then in the context, too, presumably of the Great Depression. I assume that your family or these students weren't shielded from the Great Depression. Can you talk about that a little bit?

01-00:05:24
Cross: Well, I think I was only vaguely aware of the Depression. My father had a secure position. It was minimal salary, and my mother was the greatest economist I've ever known. She looked at everything; she shopped where she got the best bargains. And the other thing that was very important about my childhood, my father was a diabetic. He discovered he had diabetes just two years after insulin was discovered. Otherwise he would not have lived, but they discovered insulin. Therefore, my mother became a nutritionist, and at that time the only way to control diabetics was through insulin and very careful diet. And so she knew the value of every kind of food, and she read and she studied. My father really lived a very healthy life under her supervision of diet. So it was a very healthy family situation, yes.

01-00:06:36
Redman: And maybe can you talk a little bit about housing. What your housing was like in Normal in those days.

01-00:06:40
Cross: Well, it was practically all owned and taken care of by the owners. I don't remember that we ever even had a plumber from outside. My father did plumbing, gardening, anything electrical. Of course, he was a physicist, so he knew something about some of those things. But most all people on Normal Avenue, heavily professors, did their own work. The only people I can remember coming to the house were the milkman—it was delivered by truck daily—and the iceman because there were not electric refrigerators. He brought the big chunks of ice into the back and put it in the—

01-00:07:27
Redman: How long might that last you in the icebox? A big chunk of ice that the iceman would have brought you. Would that last a week?

01-00:07:35
Cross: I can't remember how long it would have lasted. I remember the kids all went out and followed the ice truck to get little chunks of ice. That was a big treat. I think he came daily. I wouldn't swear to that. But yes, he brought those very large chunks. He walked around to the back and put it directly in the icebox, which opened to the outside.

01-00:07:58
Redman: How about religion? Were your parents religious at all?

01-00:08:00
Cross: No. More like academic communities. Although we had quite a strong group of Unitarians who went to the Unitarian church from which the Adlai

Stevenson came. He was a Bloomington boy, and the Stevensons were pillars of the Unitarian church in Bloomington. So we kind of went off and on, you know, on Easter. That kind of thing. But I think both of my parents—my mother had grown up as a Presbyterian but she didn't pay a whole lot of attention to it either, so we weren't really—we went occasionally as a family or sometimes I went with my friend who was a very good Baptist, and I went to the Baptist church.

01-00:08:52
Redman: Would you mind talking about the other kids? You said that many of the students at the lab school or the school in Normal, Illinois that you were attending were other children of faculty.

01-00:09:04
Cross: Yes.

01-00:09:05
Redman: Can you talk about what they were like?

01-00:09:06
Cross: Well, let me divert just a little bit to say by the time we got to high school it was half faculty kids and half students from the Illinois Soldiers and Sailors Children's School, which was primarily the orphan children of World War I. They had set up a very large what we called the orphanage then. And so many of the students in the high school were from that segment of society. They were either orphans of World War I soldiers or for some reason under the care of the state. And then we had this other group, which were the faculty kids.

01-00:09:55
Redman: That must have made for a very interesting practice environment for these young educators.

01-00:10:03
Cross: It was. Well, we just didn't mix. The kids from the orphans' home, as we called it, were the athletes. And the kids from the faculty were the bookies.

01-00:10:22
Redman: [laughs] Different groups of students.

01-00:10:36
Cross: Great socio-economic differences, yes.

01-00:10:38
Redman: Right. Great socio-economic differences. Did you find that that was an eye-opening experience for you as a young girl?

01-00:10:46
Cross: Not necessarily. We just accepted them for kind of who they were. There wasn't any great talk about discriminating or anything of that sort. They were just there, and we were there. Nobody thought we should necessarily include

them in our parties or anything. It was just—no one talked about it. But neither was it any kind of pressure or any kind of discomfort connected with it. They came and went by bus on regular hours, so except for special events—football games— they were not around after school.

01-00:11:11
Redman: Did people talk about the Great Depression in terms of so-and-so's father having work or so-and-so's father not having work?

01-00:11:17
Cross: I don't remember any talk of that but, of course, mostly it was faculty who had work but who were economizing in the general flavor of the country, I guess, yes. And, of course, my parents both came from kind of godforsaken farms in Kansas, so they were—their families, I think, suffered a little bit but they were such large families that we didn't have much contact with them either.

01-00:11:47
Redman: Did your parents have any particular thoughts—did they ever talk about Herbert Hoover? I'll ask about FDR in a moment. But who I suspect for most people of your generation—

01-00:12:00
Cross: Well, all I really remember is they were very staunch enthusiasts about FDR. What era was he any—

01-00:12:11
Redman: So he comes in in '33. So you're born in '26. So when you're about seven years old he would have been inaugurated.

01-00:12:19
Cross: Yes, yes. So I remember that they were strongly in favor of FDR but I don't remember it being dinner-table conversation or anything.

01-00:12:32
Redman: Soon after he's inaugurated he starts doing something called Fireside Chats over the radio.

01-00:12:38
Cross: I remember. And my mother was very enthusiastic about Fireside Chats, and I do remember them listening to that. I don't remember my listening to it or having any particular impression.

01-00:12:50
Redman: But she talked about listening to it, or you remember her listening?

01-00:12:53
Cross: Well, I remember her listening to it. Yes. And both my parents were pretty avid radio—news on the radio was what they got and, of course, the comedians of the time, I guess. But they followed news quite carefully.

01-00:13:13
Redman: [Brief pause to fix audio] Pat, when we left off we were talking about listening to the radio at home, and I was wondering if maybe there were any other programs you might be able to recall.

01-00:13:30
Cross: Well, wasn't *Charlie McCarthy* on at that time?

01-00:13:33
Redman: Okay, yes. And *Amos 'n' Andy*, a lot of people talk about.

01-00:13:35
Cross: *Amos 'n' Andy*. Sunday evening, as I remember, were kind of the comedy programs. And some of the music programs. Now I can't remember what they were.

01-00:13:47
Redman: Things like *Grand Ole Opry* or things—

01-00:13:49
Cross: My mother actually had books on opera. She was never an opera singer, but she was very interested in opera and so—but I don't remember us listening to opera.

01-00:14:01
Redman: How about reading the newspaper? Did your parents get newspapers?

01-00:14:04
Cross: Oh, yes.

01-00:14:05
Redman: Would they get multiple newspapers? Was that the type of news—?

01-00:14:08
Cross: No, the *Daily Pantagraph* from Bloomington. And my very best friend was the daughter of the owner of the *Pantagraph*. And several of the students at University High School came from the parents who worked at the *Daily Pantagraph*. So the *Pantagraph* really dominated the scene. I don't know that people took, or at least they didn't talk about the *Chicago Tribune* or anything like that. Everything was in the *Pantagraph*.

01-00:14:36
Redman: So I'm from the Midwest and people will tell me these old stories about being able to tune into the radio and you could listen to St. Louis or Chicago or Pittsburgh or something. That they would boost the signal at night of these different—so you might be able to hear the radio—

01-00:14:57
Cross: I don't remember that. My father, of course, remember, built radios. He built some of our first kind of radio things because it was of general interest to physicists. And anyway, he was very much interested in sound systems. He,

for instance, was responsible for the sound systems at college graduation. He and his students were climbing trees around the outdoor graduation grounds to put in the loudspeakers and so forth. So he really handled sound. He also ran the university movies. The university put on free movies every Friday night, and my father was responsible for ordering the movies, getting the students to run them. I ran the machines for a while. So it was small town life really at its best.

01-00:15:53
Redman: Even as a young girl, did you start to get a little bit of a sense of what faculty life was like for—?

01-00:16:00
Cross: I don't think I distinguished it from anything else. My friends, for instance, were not by and large faculty friends. The friends I had who were faculty were children of my parents' friends. My friends were more likely to be neighbors. Which were often faculty but sometimes not. My best friend was the daughter of a—he rapidly became a millionaire in Normal, Illinois, over inventing hybrid seed corn. Stiegelmeier hybrid seed corn. They lived in a very modest house, and the money just poured in for hybrid seed corn. They had much more money than I did, but I don't think any of us ever thought anything of it. I was simply unaware of it.

01-00:16:51
Redman: Was there racial segregation to an extent that you were able to notice as a university—?

01-00:16:59
Cross: Yes. There was a little section of town where the black students came from. And there was a black student, her name was Jackie White, and she was in my brother's class. And Sherma Dabney. It's interesting that I can remember those names, not the names of the people on the floor here. And they were quite accepted. We never thought anything one way or another about them. The boys were quite frequently athletic stars.

01-00:17:45
Redman: I wanted to ask about boys and girls, how they got along in those days.

01-00:17:52
Cross: Well, let me see. Some of my good friends were boys. They tended to be neighborhood boys. There was no talk in those days about sex, nor was anybody doing any experimenting, or at least not that I was aware of. They were just friends like my girlfriends were friends.

01-00:18:16
Redman: How about sex ed in school? Was that something that was taught or was that a subject that was completely—?

01-00:18:21
Cross: That was a subject that never even came up to my knowledge. I don't remember anything. I don't even remember having a sex talk with my parents.

01-00:18:29
Redman: So it's sort of find out on your own, *good luck.*

01-00:18:33
Cross: I don't know. And I didn't feel any particular need to bring it up. There didn't seem to be any little clusters of students that I knew that were interested in it. So just completely naïve.

01-00:18:50
Redman: I imagine that for a lot of people, when the war came, and then they moved to big cities or they were drafted into the military, that would have been quite a shock in that—

01-00:18:59
Cross: It might have been. Yes, it might have been quite different, yes.

01-00:19:01
Redman: Well, let's talk for a moment, if we could, about some activities that people would have done in high school. Actually, this is a pretty good segue. What about dating?

01-00:19:14
Cross: Well, we dated. You really needed a date for the high school prom.

01-00:19:21
Redman: Can you talk about prom?

01-00:19:24
Cross: The prom was once a year. It was the senior prom, and you were supposed to have a date. I didn't have a date, so my good friend had to get me a date not from our school who took me to the prom because I didn't have a boyfriend. She was fairly well connected with a boy, a boyfriend. But I don't think sex was part of it at all. It wasn't much talked about. I wasn't much aware of it. I don't think there were girls who were known as "date bait." Although there were girls who were more interested in boys. And I say girls because I don't think it went the other way necessarily. We didn't have boys who chased after girls, or at least not after me! We had some girls who were very interested in boys. Well, I guess some of my friends were pretty good date bait now that I think about it.

01-00:20:28
Redman: Of course, it seems like the idea of homosexuality in Normal, Illinois in those days would have been something that would have been far less discussed than, say, today. But I wonder if there was ever a thought of a gay boy or a gay girl or anything like that?

01-00:20:47
Cross: No, I think in those days we might have called them "sissies." But there wasn't a sexual implication. It was just that they weren't athletic and they did girlish things. But I don't think it had any other connotation.

01-00:21:09
Redman: They didn't fit the masculine—

01-00:21:10
Cross: They didn't fit the masculine [images of the time]. And my brother wasn't a sissy, but he was kind of an isolate, a social isolate. But he didn't have either the athletic or the sissy title. He was just not very sociable.

01-00:21:27
Redman: Were you pretty successful in school as a young child?

01-00:21:30
Cross: Yes. I was successful both as a—I was popular. I was president of my senior class. I think one of the few girls that was president of her class. And I was in the honor society and I was the salutatorian. My sister was really the brilliant student. She was valedictorian for her class, and she was the better student. But I was a very good student. I made good grades all the way through. But I would say mostly As with a few Bs sprinkled around.

01-00:22:04
Redman: And what year did you graduate from high school? Do you recall?

01-00:22:08
Cross: Oh, I guess it would have been—let's see, seventeen and 1926. About 1943.

01-00:22:16
Redman: So the war had already come around by the time you graduated from high school.

01-00:22:19
Cross: Yes.

01-00:22:20
Redman: First of all, what might you have worn to prom? Do you recall what young girls would wear to prom in those days?

01-00:22:29
Cross: Oh, yes. My mother slaved long and hard over my dress. It was a long dress, and it was an organdy kind of thing. Very dressy. I loved the dress, but it was the only time I ever wore it, I think. But yes. And everybody got a corsage, and the boys called for the girls. They had a car, and they bought either wrist corsage or—I think in those days it was more likely to be quite frequently an orchid, something like that. That was the prized corsage.

01-00:24:09
Redman: I want to ask a question. About food. Is there anything related to eating or food that are any particularly strong memories? Was your mother a cook or anything like that?

01-00:24:27
Cross: She was a cook. She was a nutritionist and a dietician.

01-00:24:32
Redman: So she paid very careful attention.

01-00:24:32
Cross: And she was very careful. We had a huge garden, and we had very strange things in it. Anything that was new, my mother jumped on with enthusiasm. So we raised edible soybeans, and we raised artichokes and parsnips and all sorts of strange things. We canned up to seventy quarts of tomatoes a year.

01-00:24:59
Redman: Tell me about canning.

01-00:25:03
Cross: We did a lot of canning. Particularly because my father's diet was heavily on vegetables.

01-00:25:14
Redman: So you would harvest these vegetables from your garden?

01-00:25:17
Cross: Yes. He would grow them, and we were always growing the very latest. They were just absolutely wonderful. We had the best tomatoes anywhere. We could can seventy quarts from our own garden—

01-00:25:32
Redman: So then you'd be able to preserve those.

01-00:25:35
Cross: Well, a lot of my summers were spent in the kitchen skinning those darn tomatoes. Dropping them in boiling water, peeling off the skins. I have vivid memories of that. And shelling peas on the front porch. Yes, our garden was extremely important. We had rhubarb, we had fruit trees, and we had cherries.

01-00:25:58
Redman: So it seems like a lot of the family activity may have taken place around the activity of harvesting the garden and canning and preparing the vegetables?

01-00:26:05
Cross: Yes. I didn't think of it as a farm family, but now that you mention it, it certainly was around the garden, outdoors. Both of my parents loved the garden. They worked in it, and they had the excitement of ordering the new seeds or getting the new plants. Maybe both coming from farms helped.

01-00:26:30
Redman: Your dad, would you describe your dad as an intellectual?

01-00:26:39
Cross: I think these days he would have been really heavily into electronics. He loved how things worked. He wasn't necessarily an intellectual then, but he ran practically everything around the campus that had to do with any kind of new technology. And at that time there were a lot of new things. Even the movie theater.

01-00:27:06
Redman: You talked about building his own radios and things like that?

01-00:27:08
Cross: Yes. He really introduced free movies at the University. And he hired students to run the movies. And it usually filled the auditorium every Friday afternoon.

01-00:27:21
Redman: So they were quite popular.

01-00:27:23
Cross: It was quite popular, yes.

01-00:27:26
Redman: In the late thirties, I'll say [1941], the US and Britain enter an agreement called Lend-Lease, where we start building ships and airplanes and things like that for Britain.

01-00:27:39
Cross: I was aware of it but not in any way that impacted directly on me and anything that I thought about. I suppose I might have read about it. I don't know.

01-00:27:51
Redman: Then in December of 1941, when you maybe would have been a sophomore or junior in high school, when Pearl Harbor happens, Pearl Harbor was attacked.

01-00:28:00
Cross: Yes, I probably was in high school. I don't have any really clear recollection of it at all. I think as enthusiastic as both of my parents were about keeping in touch with things, both by newspaper and by radio, we were certainly aware of it, and we certainly must have talked about it around the dinner table. But I don't have any vivid experiences.

01-00:28:28
Redman: How old were your brothers?

01-00:28:30
Cross: My brother was two years older; my sister two years younger. So I was the middle.

01-00:28:33
Redman: Were you concerned at all? Do you remember being concerned for your brother or do you remember—?

01-00:28:39
Cross: Yes. My brother went into the service. Actually my parents thought it would be a good thing for him to get in the service and get some discipline. He was kind of a difficult boy. And so it wasn't viewed with alarm. Nor was it viewed as a hero protecting our country. The draft was in full flower, and most men volunteered or were drafted.

01-00:29:06
Redman: The war came on right as he would have been graduating, I suspect.

01-00:29:11
Cross: Barton, my brother, would have been just graduating from high school. I guess he enlisted prior to being drafted. I'm not sure. At any rate, he pulled off some very wonderful jobs in the military. He got a job, I remember, on Mobile Bay where he just took a boat and sailed it around. He was in the Army, just a draftee, a buck private. But he got this wonderful, kind of isolationist job. He had his own boat. Drove it around the Bay. I don't know whether this was supposed to be security or what.

01-00:29:50
Redman: So that's it for him.

01-00:29:52
Cross: Sent us wonderful pictures. And he was kind of a technician like my father. He was very bright.

01-00:30:00
Redman: So did he end up staying in the US during the war?

01-00:30:01
Cross: Yes, he was stateside all the time.

01-00:30:05
Redman: Was he on the West Coast by—or do you know where was he stationed?

01-00:30:11
Cross: He was stationed mostly in the South, Alabama, I think. And he seemed to stay fairly close to that. I don't think he moved around a lot. And somehow or other I don't think he was ever threatened with going overseas.

01-00:30:36
Redman: There's a funny story from the Civil War about a guy who was stationed in Florida for all four years of the war watching an intersection. I think that that happens on occasion.

But let's get back to your story. We talked about Pearl Harbor. I'm wondering if you have any sort of recollections about Germany and the Nazi Party or Hitler as being a threat and the Japanese as being an enemy.

01-00:31:12
Cross: Yes. My real experience with the war came much later, after I came back. I don't remember much as a high school kid, but by the time I was in graduate school, when all of the servicemen were coming back, those were the more vivid experiences. During my undergraduate years at ISNU most of the men on campus were enlisted in an officer-training program, Navy V-12. They were rigidly supervised with the closing hours usually associated with "women's hours." So it was a complete reversal of roles. The Navy had taken over the women's dorms, and most of the women were in rooming houses on their own. I remember that as students we used to walk the men to their dorm because they had closing hours. Some ridiculous closing hours, like 7:00 o'clock in the evening. We'd walk the men to the dorms, and then we'd go home.

01-00:32:42
Redman: When you finished high school—it's about '43—and you are faced with your campus, sort of your home campus of Illinois State, you know, not being a college campus.

01-00:33:02
Cross: Yes, I'm a little ahead of myself, because after I finished high school I took one year of college at INSU. I enrolled as a freshman at Illinois State, planning to be a teacher, albeit not very enthusiastic about that as a future. Somehow I got a description of an interesting wartime program for women students. It was a six-month training program for "radar engineer aides," conducted at the University of Minnesota. After training we would go to Wright Field in Dayton, Ohio and work in various technical jobs for the war effort. We were not in the military; the program was civil service.

It was exciting for me because it was the first time I had really been on my own. I took the train by myself from Bloomington, Illinois to Chicago to Minneapolis, where I made my way somehow to the dorms and met with thirty other women. Maybe thirty or forty of us. And we were the entering class. I think I was probably the youngest. I was probably eighteen. My roommate was twenty-seven and she had a master's degree in physics, I think, or one of the sciences. And so the group ranged in age but they were closer to my age. They were college kids, really, and they were college girls who had an interest in science, which by itself was a little bit unusual—in those times. We lived in the college dorms. We went to class at the Electrical Engineering School of the University of Minnesota.

And they were all kind of like I was. They came from protected homes. They were all very bright. They were interested in science. The courses were taught to us alone. We weren't just integrated into university classes, and we had our

own section of the dormitory. But we really lived very much like college students.

01-00:35:46
Redman: To what extent—there being other young women who were interested in science and also women with this sort of varied spectrum, say, for instance, your roommate that already had a master's degree in science—did that encourage your own interest in engineering and math and science?

01-00:36:04
Cross: Didn't seem to be anything special. We didn't think anything of it. We must have been selected on some kind of criteria. But I don't remember that we thought we were anything particularly special. We were in this program, and the idea was we'd go for six months of training and then we would go perform our duties. And a lot of the girls were there for the same reason I was. Campuses weren't very exciting. The men were all gone. There was a break in the kind of social fabric of the society. We were mostly away from home. A few of the girls, like my roommate, happened to be older. Most of them were roughly my age. They were college kids, really.

01-00:36:58
Redman: Can you talk about your professors there?

01-00:37:02
Cross: They were the regular staff of the Electrical Engineering School. And I don't remember that we were a particular shock to them or privilege or anything. It just seemed like it was very much like our college classes. Very much.

01-00:37:16
Redman: So you don't get the impression that they were surprised at having young female students, for instance? Many of their students, I'm sure, predominantly are men.

01-00:37:24
Cross: We didn't even feel very special, I don't think, or at least I didn't. Well, and remember, it was the war years. There weren't a lot of men around, so they were probably very grateful to have us. [laughs] And none of us were dating men there. So we must have been rather segregated from the men, but there weren't many men on campus anyway, except for the carefully regulated military education programs like the Navy V-12.

01-00:37:52
Redman: Regarding social life during those six months, were you predominantly studying, or were you able to explore the campus?

01-00:37:59
Cross: We were predominantly studying. We didn't even travel around much. I think we went to St. Paul maybe. We did the kind of things college girls would do and we basically considered ourselves college kids. It wasn't that much

different from when I was a freshman, except that we had a busy and greatly regulated program.

01-00:38:20
Redman: When these young women went into this program, was there a pipeline for a job at the end of it?

01-00:38:33
Cross: Oh, yes. The understanding was we then owed them after they trained us. We took all required courses and they were mostly—I guess they didn't differ a great deal from my physics courses and math courses in college except that they had more technology to them.

01-00:38:59
Redman: That's a subtle point that I suspect is pretty important. Were there more practical applications with—?

01-00:39:05
Cross: It was practical. My assignment when I got to Wright Field was to measure the transmission through radomes. So there was obviously equipment involved in it. And we were trained primarily in that. But most of our Minnesota cohort went to very diverse jobs at Wright Field.

01-00:39:40
Redman: I understand that there was another program called the Curtiss-Wright Cadets Program, that it was also on the University of Minnesota at the time. There would have been a group of young women even wearing uniforms. The Curtiss-Wright cadets.

01-00:39:56
Cross: Yes.

01-00:39:56
Redman: They had to go to Curtiss-Wright plants. This sounds like there were multiple plants or places—

01-00:40:02
Cross: No, our particular group all went to Wright Field. We didn't wear uniforms or anything. Nor did we have any identifying marks or caps or anything else. But the commitment was they were training us for jobs at Wright Field. We were civil service, just like any other civilian worker at Wright Field.

01-00:40:32
Redman: What was your reaction to the University of Minnesota campus?

01-00:40:35
Cross: Oh, I loved it. Because it was something I had kind of hoped for but I was kind of stuck in Normal, Illinois in a teacher's college. And here I was in electrical engineering at the University of Minnesota. That was wonderful. And I think my parents thought it was wonderful.

01-00:40:56
Redman: So they were very supportive of this?

01-00:40:57
Cross: They were very supportive. Particularly my mother; she was something of an adventurer. And she thought the more interesting things we did, the better. She wasn't pushing us to get married or date or anything like that. She wanted us to do interesting things.

01-00:41:13
Redman: Was that part of her reason of being so supportive of your brother enlisting do you think?

01-00:41:18
Cross: Probably. Yes.

01-00:41:20
Redman: Is there anything else that you'd like to add about the University of Minnesota training program, that six months there?

01-00:41:27
Cross: Well, let me see. It was a very rich experience, and I made very good friends. To this day we exchange Christmas cards. So that would have been, what, seventy years of exchange? Well, sixty years of exchanging Christmas cards. And we were really a very good group. As I remember, there weren't little pockets of people off here and there. Everybody kind of—we all had our individual friends. I look at the photographs in that book, and I'm consistently with eight people who are about my age. And I think there were an older group but I don't remember doing much with them.

01-00:42:13
Redman: Sure. It was a pretty normal—

01-00:42:16
Cross: It seemed to me perfectly normal. I loved being in a dorm, eating in the cafeteria, all of those college things that I think I felt kind of denied in my having to go to the teachers' college and live at home.

01-00:42:30
Redman: When you first arrive at Wright Field in Dayton, Ohio, what that experience is then like. Did you sign up for the job and work? Was there sort of a first day?

01-00:42:48
Cross: I think that the various offices at Wright Field probably had some choice of who they took. I was assigned to—I can remember his name. Captain Fred Barrons. And he was a captain in the Air Corps.

01-00:43:11
Redman: Sure. Army Air Corps.

01-00:43:12
Cross: Right, yes. Wright Field was—. Anyway, he was our boss, and I think he had a master's degree, probably in physics or math or some science. I was the only one from our group assigned to that particular unit. And others were assigned other places.

Three of us rented an apartment in Dayton. At this point we were pretty much on our own. We rented an apartment, and we made arrangements for—they had a car pool that picked me up. But my friends worked elsewhere at Wright Field. I was one of the very few who was assigned to what was called the "flight line." I was in the hangar. We measured the transmission of radar through a—at that time they had a huge dome that was on the belly of the airplane, and the antennae stuck out in that dome. Our task was to measure the transmission of the radar through that material of the dome. I'm still kind of amazed. Remember, by this time I'm eighteen or nineteen. I have a group of what was then known as "Section Eight." Section Eight were disabled through war service or—I don't think anybody considered them in any way dangerous or anything. But part of my task was I had three or four of these guys to supervise. And we got along fine. [laughs]

01-00:44:54
Redman: As a twenty-year-old young woman, that seems like a big responsibility.

01-00:44:58
Cross: Yes, yes, yes. And there weren't any advances or anything that I remember, any uncomfortable situations. I was pretty much in charge. They did some of the heavy work. I measured. I have a very vague recollection of what I actually did.

01-00:45:14
Redman: So were you testing the materials that they would put to protect the radar?

01-00:45:21
Cross: Yes. And all I did was really take readings and turn in the reports. I gave them to Captain Barrons, and he had his crew, and he presumably as a scientist himself knew what to do with them. But I remember I dated very heavily for the first time in my life in Dayton, Ohio. A guy who I certainly think my mother would not have approved. And I think all of the girls dated off and on. But they were usually guys from the field. I don't remember any incidents or anything. It was very, very much like a college scene.

01-00:46:12
Redman: A lot of the young people—

01-00:46:15
Cross: A lot of young people. We had our own apartment. We kind of did our own thing. We were much more independent than college kids, so—

01-00:46:24
Redman: One of the things you mentioned was carpooling, and I'd like to know more about rationing, how rationing might have worked out for three young girls living in a house.

01-00:46:35
Cross: We lived in Dayton, and Wright Field was I don't know how far away. Maybe twenty minutes by car.

01-00:46:48
Redman: So people had to carpool to a certain extent?

01-00:46:50
Cross: So people had to carpool, just as you would in any company. And the guy who drove us was an employee, a civilian employee. And he picked up two of us at our apartment, and then he brought us back home again. So it was a carpool. I don't remember any talk of—you know, I remember talk at home about gas rationing and coupons and all of that kind of thing. I don't know whether he had a special dispensation because of Wright Field. Anyway, we paid him weekly.

01-00:47:30
Redman: Of the rationing experiences, was there anything that was particularly hard for your family to get? Some people talk about shoes or meat or stockings.

01-00:47:49
Cross: I don't remember that. I do remember coloring the oleo to make butter.

01-00:47:54
Redman: Can you talk about that? For someone who hasn't experienced that—nowadays, margarine is falsely colored yellow.

01-00:48:02
Cross: Yes.

01-00:48:02
Redman: I think we're sort of ignorant of this.

01-00:48:04
Cross: For some reason or other, you bought—margarine was white and you bought little packets. And everybody insisted on coloring the margarine. Butter wasn't even a choice. I think about half the time I did the mixing of this powder, sprinkled this powder into this white lard-like stuff.

01-00:48:30
Redman: And did it taste all right? Was it a good substitute or was it not?

01-00:48:32
Cross: I don't think I noticed it particularly. We just assumed it was butter. We knew it was oleo. But, of course, by the time I got to Minnesota I was kind of

removed from that. I do remember my mother cutting coupons and doing rationing and all of that sort of thing, which was kind of a big planning event.

01-00:48:56
Redman: But your mother was good at things like that?

01-00:48:57
Cross: She was very good at it. Yes.

01-00:48:58
Redman: So that was not a problem?

01-00:48:59
Cross: And so it wasn't a problem.

01-00:49:01
Redman: But then when you got to the University of Minnesota, I presume to a certain extent those sorts of things were taken care of.

01-00:49:06
Cross: They were taken care of automatically; it was like living in a dorm.

01-00:49:10
Redman: How about that apartment in Dayton? A lot of places, when there were new defense plants popping up; it was really hard to find housing. Was that a problem for the participants?

01-00:49:25
Cross: Well, somebody must have helped us. It was a very modest little house. We didn't have the whole house. And the three of us, three girls, had the second floor, and we had a kitchen and all. It was kind of in—21 Point View Avenue was the address. [laughs]

01-00:49:47
Redman: You do remember that? That's remarkable.

01-00:49:51
Cross: It was a neighborhood of what I would call workmen, small houses, small yards. Modest but not poor.

01-00:50:12
Redman: Let me ask one final question about the work, the actual job there. Were you working on radar systems for only bombers, fighters, or for all types of aircraft?

01-00:50:26
Cross: I think it was primarily bombers. The pictures I have in my folio are mostly bombers. I think at that time the jet fighters were just coming in, and they were very exciting. Now, there's something called a P-80, and a P-80 was the very newest thing. So all of us around the field were very much intrigued with the new things coming in. I was primarily concerned with these old big

bombers and just—it wasn't a particularly exciting job, but it was interesting just because of the other things going on. And, of course, Wright Field celebrated all kinds of parades and anything like that.

01-00:51:13
Redman: So you were intrigued, you might say, by these big bombers. But as the technology just continued—and, of course, the war itself seems to only rapidly increase the pace of the technological innovation.

01-00:51:27
Cross: Yes, yes.

01-00:51:28
Redman: So the P-51 that comes out; I understand the nickname is the "Cadillac of the Sky." It looks like this gorgeous plane and then side by side with these kind of clunkier big bombers. But then jets to come out at the end. It must have been a remarkable transition.

01-00:51:45
Cross: It really was, and we were fascinated with the jets in the sky as they came in and landed. In fact, I blame part of my hearing trouble on that experience at Wright Field, which was constantly planes taking off. We also had the added privilege of being right near the machine gun firing range. And so these machine guns would go off periodically. It was very, very noisy, as I look back on it. Even at the time, I thought it was very noisy.

01-00:52:19
Redman: But things like hearing protection would have been unknown in those days.

01-00:52:23
Cross: I didn't think anything of it, nor did anybody else. And I didn't develop hearing loss until I was retired. So it wasn't a thing that I took home with me.

01-00:52:39
Redman: Certainly. This is the last question on this tape, but were there any other sort of safety considerations that jump to mind?

01-00:52:50
Cross: I don't remember that we were overly concerned—

01-00:52:55
Redman: You obviously must have had identification to enter and leave.

01-00:52:58
Cross: Yes, of course, that, but I don't remember that it was even as much as an airport is now. It was pretty casual. I think anybody really could have gotten in if they really wanted—

[End Audio File 1]

Begin Audio File 2 cross_pat_02_04-03-12.mp3

02-00:00:00
Redman: Today is April 3, 2012 and this is my second tape today with Pat Cross in Oakland, California. When we left off we were talking about your time at Dayton Field in Ohio as a radar engineering aide. We were talking about some of the major technological changes and innovations that were coming onboard. When talking with people who worked in World War II during those days, I ask about women entering the workforce. You'd talked about how the campus environment was changed in terms of the gender ratio, that so many men went away. But on the other hand, uniformed men came to campuses. How about the factory? How about the airplane plant? Or, sorry, the fields there.

02-00:01:05
Cross: Well, you want to stay within the war years?

02-00:01:09
Redman: Sure.

02-00:01:10
Cross: Because the things I have such vivid impression are the return of servicemen *after* the war.

02-00:01:17
Redman: So we'll talk about that towards the end of the interview. So when you come back between '48 and '58, when you get your bachelors through your PhD. I'll ask about that. Because the GI Bill does all sorts of interesting things to campuses that I'd like to ask you about.

02-00:01:31
Cross: Yes. That's much more vivid to me—

02-00:01:34
Redman: That's fine.

02-00:01:35
Cross: —than the kind of war years but—

02-00:01:35
Redman: So we'll just jump through what you remember about the remainder of the war years here. Can you talk about patriotism in those days? Wartime patriotism?

02-00:01:46
Cross: Not much. Well, I think, actually, or maybe it's just my memory, but it seems to me that we talk more about "serving" our country today than we did then. It was just kind of assumed that the men were going away to war. I don't think people thought of it in patriotic terms, or at least I didn't. It was something that men had to do in those days. And most of the men I knew, of course, were

getting a college education out of it. They were not necessarily the men who were going overseas and fighting. What we saw were the guys who would not have had an education otherwise who were into the officer training on university campuses and who were getting this wonderful education without a lot of threat of going overseas at the time.

02-00:02:48
Redman: So you saw a lot of these young men who were coming to college campuses and taking officer candidate school or language training or engineering or things like that?

02-00:02:58
Cross: Who had never entertained the idea of college before that time. So it was a great privilege.

02-00:03:06
Redman: How about feelings of dissent? Were there people that wanted to stay out of the war, get out of the war? Does that seem to disappear?

02-00:03:19
Cross: Not like today. Or like my days as Dean of Students. No. There certainly must have been, but they were not in my social realm. And I don't think we had much talk of service to our country or criticism of the war. We were kind of doing what was expected. We were typically middleclass, going along routes that were neither terribly political, nor terribly economic. We were kind of the great middle class.

02-00:03:57
Redman: Can you talk about perceptions, if you had any, of the Japanese or Germans or Russians as an enemy or as a group?

02-00:04:10
Cross: Well, we certainly thought the Nazis were really awful. And certainly we must have thought that about others. It's not really something that stands out in my mind.

02-00:04:24
Redman: But the Nazis, the evil of the Nazis—

02-00:04:25
Cross: The Nazis stand out in my mind as really, yes. That was beyond.

02-00:04:30
Redman: Because it takes a while for Americans to learn about the depths of the Holocaust, and really not until the end of the war do the images start to come in in addition to the text descriptions of what was going on in Europe, I understand. And stateside, I want to ask about the internment of the Japanese, the order to send Japanese to relocation camps. That was an order that was issued along the coast. I'm wondering if you heard about that at all at the time.

02-00:05:11
Cross: Well, obviously we were aware of it, but it didn't hit us like in California. In Illinois and in Ohio, we would see it through the newspaper and the news items, yes.

02-00:05:34
Redman: How about war bonds?

02-00:05:36
Cross: Oh, yes. Well, war bonds.

02-00:05:39
Redman: Can you tell me, what's a war bond? Why would someone buy war bonds?

02-00:05:42
Cross: Well, I think I bought mostly $25 war bonds. It was as an investment. I think it was also expected. I don't think you made the decision about, "I'm going to buy war bonds."

02-00:06:01
Redman: So it could come out of your paycheck, for instance?

02-00:06:04
Cross: Yes. That was something you did. You automatically bought war bonds. I think probably, now that I go back, food rationing had much more impact on the societal things. What you could get at the grocery store and so forth. But I don't think I regarded shortages of many things as particularly depriving or anything. It was just something that was.

02-00:06:33
Redman: How about songs? Do you remember any popular songs? There was an old song, I understand, that talked about men, that was "they're all either too old or too young."

02-00:06:47
Cross: Yes, yes.

02-00:06:48
Redman: That's sort of an idea that we've been talking about.

02-00:06:52
Cross: Now, let me see. What were some of the songs? Was Bing Crosby—?

02-00:06:57
Redman: Sure.

02-00:06:58
Cross: No? Well, Frank Sinatra.

02-00:06:59
Redman: Frank Sinatra early in that—okay.

02-00:07:02
Cross: Yes. I think I remember it as a *music culture,* and I still love some of those songs, contrary to today's music. [laughs]

02-00:07:16
Redman: Let's talk about when FDR dies. A lot of people are obviously very saddened by that, and your family had for a long time been supporters of FDR. He was probably the only president that you'd ever known, so when he passes away during the war did you have any particular feelings about that at that time or anything?

02-00:07:41
Cross: Oh, I remember it was a very, very big national event. I don't think it had personal impact, but we were glued, of course, to the television. My parents followed his funeral to where he went in Georgia or where—

02-00:07:58
Redman: I don't recall, yes.

02-00:07:59
Cross: And they particularly liked Eleanor. My mother loved Eleanor. And they liked FDR, too, but Eleanor was really a very unusual woman in those days. My mother liked unusual women, which is probably where [laughs] I took my encouragement.

02-00:08:18
Redman: We talked about how many people had to move during World War II and your experience of being able to see Chicago and then Minneapolis for the first time and then moving to Dayton, Ohio. What do you think that wartime migration of people did to the country?

02-00:08:42
Cross: Well, again, I don't think I was really aware of migration. It was more to me like a college girl going off to a dorm. And even when I lived with my fellow students in Dayton, Ohio, it wasn't as part of a community. It was just three kind of college kids during a break in the war. So I wasn't aware of any big migration. There certainly must have been one in Dayton, Ohio, with the enormous influx of workers to Wright Field.

02-00:09:14
Redman: How long were you at Wright Field in Dayton, Ohio?

02-00:09:18
Cross: Probably about a year.

02-00:09:18
Redman: So at the end of the war, the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Were you still in Ohio at that time?

02-00:09:35
Cross: Well, let me see. I guess I must have been because the war was pretty much over when I came back home. A newspaper event.

02-00:10:17
Redman: Do you have any sort of recollections about what your thought was at the end of the war? The direction sort of now that your life would take you? Obviously you come back to Illinois.

02-00:10:29
Cross: Well, I came back to Illinois and remember the war was almost more vivid when I came back than it was during the war. One of the men without a leg and on crutches was one of our friends. A lot of the men at college were coming back from service. They were looking for wives. They didn't want to fool around. And when I wasn't terribly interested in getting married, it was pretty irritating. [laughs]

02-00:11:00
Redman: So they were off to the next thing.

02-00:11:03
Cross: Because, also, the thing that had really happened socially was women had begun—I had been a minor supervisor of people, and I wasn't terribly interested in settling down with a man, to cook and raise kids and so forth. I'd had a taste of independence, of being on my own. The men who came back from the war were understandably interested in marriage and children. I did more dating then, but the men became serious so fast that it was frightening, or at least to me.

02-00:11:42
Redman: I understand a lot of pressures on women—you would have been a unique circumstance because you were college aged. But I understand a lot of women had conflicting feelings in those days as the war was ending. They really loved their independence. They loved their new job. They loved the accomplishment, the sense of pride that went along with that work. But on the other hand, there was a pressure, both from the men and often a personal desire, for them to have children or do something else. Can you talk about maybe some of those tensions that were swirling around in those days?

02-00:12:20
Cross: Yes, the tension on me was very clear. I was still very much a career woman. While I dated a lot, and even had a number of proposals, I wasn't interested in settling down to raise a family. Until I really fell very much in love with a guy who had not been in the service, who died unexpectedly, I suspect because of radiation. He was a physicist, and he worked as a grad assistant in the laboratory, the Betatron at the University of Illinois. He enlisted and got required military service out of the way before we were married. And he died after a short illness. Nobody could ever explain it. Perhaps from the radiation

at the Betatron. But I was madly in love with him, so I had a very difficult time.

02-00:13:30

Cross: I was working on a doctor's degree by this time. I got my master's, and then there didn't seem to be anything exciting to do, and I kind of went on to my doctorate. But the most interesting thing, I think the real changing point in my life: I was working as a research psychologist. I was doing a lot of statistics. IBM had just come in. Computers were big. I was working for a research psychologist, and I was primarily a statistician. Even then I knew it was terribly boring. But it was a well-paid assistantship, and there were labs, of course supported by the government, all over the campus of the University of Illinois. And these were labs that had to do mostly with the rising importance of statistical data. So I always had an assistantship.

One day I was walking by the Dean of Women's office, and the door was open. She looked like a nice friendly person. I walked in and I said, "You know, I'm not sure I'm in the right profession. I'm finding myself *really* bored with these assistantships, and I'm not sure I want to be a professor. Tell me about university administration." And so she told me a little bit about university administration and I thanked her very much and left. Six months later she called me, and she said, "I remember you from our conversation." And she said, "My Dean of Sorority Women is getting married." Of course, if she was getting married, she was resigning her position. She certainly wasn't going to do both. And she said, "I wonder if you would be interested in talking to me about being Dean of Sorority Women." I said, "I've never even been in a sorority. I don't know the Greek alphabet or anything about them." She said, "Well, come talk to me anyway."

I really wasn't very happy with a doctorate in psychology, statistical psychology. I went in and talked to her, and I said, "I'm still not sure about sororities." And she said, "Well, okay. I want you to come talk to our Dean of Men." I talked to him about fraternities and so forth. So I was beginning to think more and more about a change. I was really on kind of a fast track toward a research psychology job. That fall she offered me a job as Dean of Sorority Women. Well, what then? What did I do with my skills?

I put sorority rush on IBM machines. Which was the first time that had been done in the country. Well, that swept the country, so I became rather well known as that assistant dean at Illinois who introduced this new technology. That was a huge change in my career at that point.

02-00:16:44

Redman: And you continued to do research in terms of educational psychology, learning ability—

02-00:16:56
Cross: It wasn't "learning" at that time at all. It was social psychology. Largely "population sampling" and "Pavlovian conditioning."

02-00:17:00
Redman: So if you would, in brief, when did the education aspect of it come in?

02-00:17:06
Cross: Well, when I became Assistant Dean of Women.

02-00:17:09
Redman: So that really sparked your interest in higher education?

02-00:17:14
Cross: That sparked my absorbed interest in higher education. But I went ahead and got my PhD in social psychology. I didn't switch to education, which was probably a good thing because the degree in psychology as a research degree had more prestige to it and accounted for some of my other appointments, which would not have been as possible if my doctorate had been education.

02-00:17:43
Redman: I recognize the next few questions I'm going to ask you are absolutely enormous. But I feel like we should, since we're having a good conversation about higher education and some of the changes—in those days between. We talked a little bit about the GI students that were coming back. And one thing that I think is my distinct impression of something that happened at Berkeley and elsewhere is that a lot of these young GIs—we sort of think about them in US history as coming back and maybe getting bachelors degrees and then doing something else. But for a number of these young men, I think it vaulted them onto higher degrees.

02-00:18:21
Cross: Yes.

02-00:18:22
Redman: Professional degrees, masters, PhDs. Was that the case with the young men in your cohort?

02-00:18:29
Cross: Well, that was of course the case with all of the men that I was dating. They were in graduate school under the GI Bill. They were very bright, dedicated to going on. And in most cases they were being paid, of course, by the federal government, so that helped. But also there was a lot of work available. I had plenty of work, both as a research psychologist and the Dean of Women's Office then. So money was not a big problem. Continuation was. Part of the thing that drove me out of psychology was the competition was just very bitter and very nasty.

02-00:19:19
Redman: I've heard that before about psychology.

02-00:19:23
Cross: It was very popular during the war, and so they were very selective. The only reason I got in, I think, was because they were becoming very mathematical at that point. It was dominated by Pavlov and "conditioning" and all of that. I got accepted because of my math/physics background. But then the competition was brutal. At the time of our prelims I think there were twelve of us who took prelims. They failed six. Those six got together and offered themselves to the University of Pittsburgh as a group. Went ahead and got their doctorate at the University of Pittsburgh. Really thumbing their nose at Illinois.

02-00:20:12
Redman: So it was bitter in those—

02-00:20:18
Cross: It was very, very nasty competition. And, of course, there were very few women.

02-00:20:26
Redman: Was that a draw in terms of your desire to get out of the research in terms of—not get out of the research world; that would be inaccurate—but to move away from that into more of a university administrative type of position?

02-00:20:43
Cross: I think part of it was. I was driven out of it by the kind of nasty things that I felt. I did not enjoy my graduate study in psychology at all because it wasn't a holistic kind of thing, of thinking what you could do with the knowledge. It was very much, of course, in the era of "conditioned responses." And the atmosphere was bad. I think part of my interest was escaping in any way possible out of this future as a statistician.

02-00:21:27
Redman: Now, what about teaching? In terms of your own personal teaching and pedagogy, did you fall in love with the activity of becoming a teacher or—?

02-00:21:37
Cross: Not really. [laughs] What I did, of course, by the time I got my doctor's degree in psychology, now I had a nice academic degree. And I had six years of experience in Dean of Women's Office. So when I got my doctor's degree I could have been an assistant professor of psychology maybe at a salary of $3,500 at a state college, or I could go to a major university as dean of women at 6,500 annual salary.

02-00:22:18
Redman: Seems like a no-brainer.

02-00:22:20
Cross: There was a lot of difference. And by this time, after six years as assistant dean, I was really very interested in university administration. I was offered a job at—and, again, it wasn't like today where you could be grateful if you had an offer. It was where do I really want to go? And University of Pennsylvania

and Cornell both offered me jobs on the spot at my first interview. I chose Cornell because, in part, I didn't want to live in the city. I liked Urbana and I liked Ithaca. So it was really a very plush time to have that kind of choice. Dean of Women at—

02-00:23:27
Redman: And combining that with a statistical and math background, focus on women, and a PhD in psychology. It seems like it was a perfect moment to—

02-00:23:36
Cross: Well, it made me very acceptable to faculty and students and the like. At the University of Illinois—I should say this because you're interested in the history of discrimination issues. At the University of Illinois, when I came in, we had two rush periods. We had what was known as Chicago rush, which was primarily Jewish and black sororities. We had four Jewish sororities and two black sororities. And then we had twenty so-called "general" sororities. White.

And the Dean of Women, I must say, it was more her, but I went along with it. She said, "This is ridiculous to have this segregated rush." Presumably it was on the grounds that the Chicago school systems graduated at a different time, so it was called Chicago rush, and downstate rush held at different times during the summer for recent high school graduates—. So she said, "Let's offer only one rush period."

02-00:24:47
Redman: That was a big change.

02-00:24:49
Cross: It was very bold. During the campus discussions of integrated rush I began to get visit after visit from national sorority officers. I finally said to the Dean of Women, "Is this usual?" And she said, "No, I think there's a reason." Finally, one refreshing woman in "sensible" shoes stormed into my office, and she said, "Here's why I'm here." And she laid this note on my desk that said, "Get down to the University of Illinois and find out what that new dean is doing." And she said, "So what are you doing?"

02-00:25:51
Redman: So people were curious and maybe afraid of potential implications or maybe imagined implications.

02-00:26:01
Cross: Well, actually, I think the most threatened sorority houses were more the Jewish houses. Because the Jewish girls were not that discriminated against. So the other houses, the general houses, would take their best Jewish leaders. The blacks didn't care much one way or the other. They knew they weren't going to pledge the "white" sororities.

Let me take just a moment to talk about the sorority system at that time. University of Illinois was the largest "Greek System" in the country. We had twenty-seven national sororities. All new pledges, entering freshmen, were required to live in the sorority house their first year. The national and local sororities provided housing and full dormitory needs and supervision for some 1500 women students. My job at the tender age of twenty-seven was to work with the resident "house mothers" who were usually upper-class widows, hired by the national and local chapters to 'manage' what were really small college dorms of twenty to sixty women.

02-00:27:23
Redman: Some of these changes that you made on campus really caught the attention of national sorority and fraternity organizations but then also other deans and administrators, I presume.

02-00:27:39
Cross: Oh, yes.

02-00:27:39
Redman: So that led then subsequently to the offer to go to Cornell and beyond.

02-00:27:44
Cross: Yes. Well, the experience at Cornell was also kind of interesting because, again, the social trends. I was the first female dean of students in the country. Now, that's odd because you'd ordinarily think of counseling as a female occupation. I came as Dean of Women, and one year later I became Dean of Men and Women! I want to just tell you because it was such a dramatic incident. It was the beginning of the student uprisings, and the Free Speech Movement here in Berkeley had spread around. Campuses were just kind of—"unrest" was the right name. Unrest. And so the campus was in this period of unrest. At Cornell as well as nationwide.

The Dean of Men at Cornell was an older man, not terribly popular with the new movement, and so they kicked him upstairs, to Secretary of the University, and decided to recruit a younger man for Dean of Men. I spent my entire time at the professional meetings that spring looking for a compatible Dean of Men. When I got back, the President came to my office and said, "We'd like to talk to you." I said, "Oh, wonderful, because I have this wonderful list. I have these two wonderful assistant deans that I think we can get at Cornell as Dean of Men." And he said, "Well, come up to my office and we'll talk about it." I went up, and I gave him these wonderful credentials. And he said, "Well, we've already made a decision. We've already selected the Dean of Men, and it's you." I couldn't even absorb it.

02-00:30:14
Redman: How do you even process that in those days?

02-00:30:17
Cross: In those days, there were deans of men and deans of women because there were women's hours and all of these things. Women had house mothers, women's hours, and an assortment of regulations that did not apply to men.

02-00:30:28
Redman: Did they combine your title then into Dean of Students?

02-00:30:31
Cross: Anyway, I went away and I thought, "I don't know."

02-00:30:37
Redman: So you were unsure at first.

02-00:30:39
Cross: Well, what would be the men's reaction to having a woman as their dean? A few campuses had begun to do it the other way. But the Dean of Men was promoted to Dean of Students and the Dean of Women to Associate Dean of Students.

02-00:30:56
Redman: In those days. Sure, yeah.

02-00:30:57
Cross: And to this day that exists to some extent. At any rate, it was unusual enough to get my picture in *Newsweek* magazine [May 2, 1960] under the caption "Boss of 8,000 men." Well, that didn't help a whole lot either. But if I had survived the racial and religious integration of sororities at University of Illinois I was likely to survive the integration of genders at Cornell.

02-00:31:26
Redman: So you'd gone from being the boss for three section eight guys and—right, right?

02-00:31:31
Cross: Yes, yes.

02-00:31:32
Redman: To 12,000 young Cornell students.

02-00:31:36
Cross: It was 8,000 men and 4,000 women. And it went relatively well. Again, there were certain people who were very much opposed to a woman. And one of the men, one of the full professors, had the gall to suggest to me, he said, "Well, now who's going to serve on our discipline committee? The Dean of Men serves there." I said, "I guess I will." He said, "Men do things that we wouldn't want to talk about in front of you."

02-00:32:08
Redman: That was taken for granted that there was—

02-00:32:12
Cross: That was taken for granted that this would be unseemly conversations to be on the discipline committee that handled men and their various—

02-00:32:20
Redman: I wish I could talk to you about this all day because this is really interesting. But unfortunately I'm going to have to summarize this in one question. Can you talk for me for just a moment, by way of summary, what you think in terms of for—as being a woman who is a scholar who—and also an administrator who's attracting attention in this regard on a campus and being very successful and bold and making these—do you think the perception of you as a woman, as a young female scholar at that time, that must be extraordinarily different from what people go through today? Not to say that there is no discrimination today because that would obviously not be the case. But can you describe some of the changes?

02-00:33:07
Cross: It was really very vivid. People can't even imagine it today. What the perception of a woman in charge of men's programs would be.

02-00:33:27
Redman: You'd mentioned the marital statuses. When a woman became married, that she would—that was her ticket for retirement essentially.

02-00:33:34
Cross: Yes. Now, remember, Cornell's a little bit later.

02-00:33:39
Redman: So now we're in the fifties and sixties.

02-00:33:40
Cross: But the women's movement had not yet really taken place. It wasn't really being talked about a lot, so this was a shock. And it was something of a shock to me.

02-00:34:01
Redman: So for the benefit of this being at the Bancroft Library and UC Berkeley in the future, can you talk for just a moment about how you ended up at Berkeley later on?

02-00:34:13
Cross: Yes. Let me see. I had left administration, and after several other research and administrative and scholarly jobs and good opportunity to publish and serve on national boards of higher education, I was a professor at Harvard. I was very happy at Harvard. And once again I have to point out that at the time we had one of the very first deans at Harvard as Dean of the School of Education. And I was the chair of the largest department at Harvard, the Ed. School—APSP [Administration, Planning, and Social Policy]. So I was very happy at Harvard.

But Berkeley came courting and asked if I would come to Berkeley. I was looking at the snows of Harvard, and I was pretty close to retirement age. I was within five years of retirement when Berkeley came, and they said, "We are going to get an endowed chair." So at any rate, I came to Berkeley primarily—well, I was a little bit concerned about the role of higher education, but I was assured of future and—which didn't happen. So higher education really did not get full play at Berkeley. Elementary and high school had become the big reform issues. I enjoyed my time here, but it was not a role-changing kind of model.

02-00:35:45

Redman: Is there anything else that you'd like to add about your time in California? You've now ended up in Oakland, and you've got a fantastic view of the lake and a lovely place. Instead of making you think of that that, what I like to summarize with people, I like to ask, go over—we've talked about the Great Depression, elementary school, and life near the campus, and then going away to the University of Minnesota, then to Wright Field, and then back to Illinois State and the University of Illinois. Can you maybe think just for a moment for me about World War II in the place of your life? We've talked about turning points today quite a bit. It seems like that in some ways was a big turning point and in other ways it's sort of set up for other later turning points in your life.

02-00:36:36

Cross: Well, I guess I would say it was a turning point among many turning points. The huge turning points were more in my role as a female. I happened to be on that particular wave of change. The big thing about my war-years experience, I suppose, was getting out of Normal, Illinois, being exposed to all of this kind of environment, these new things. I might not have gone on for my doctorate. I might have been a high school teacher forever. So that was a big change. The women's movement had far more impact on my career than the war or anything else, really.

02-00:37:23

Redman: So subsequently we're going to have to come back and do a women's movement conversation. With that, I'd like to say thank you so much for sitting down.

02-00:37:31

Cross: Well, you're a wonderful interviewer.

02-00:37:32

Redman: Thank you so much.

[End of Interview]