Interview Part 2 of 2

JC: Twelve years as a professor, twelve years as a dean, twelve years running the IWL right? Do I have that right? Basically?

MSH: Yeah. I describe my life in thirds to people and all of them did contribute to what I was able to do. I feel it's not just an idol exercise.

JC: When you came in, there was a discussion as a professor. When did the conversation about reorganizing the faculty begin?

MSH: They actually began before I came out. I came in '68 and by the early sixties, these discussions were starting to happen and of course as you've discovered, Rutgers is like no other institution in many ways because it was a congeries of colleges and that was the group that turned itself in to the state university bit by bit and of course, one of them was founded in 1766. It was the eighth of the nine colonial colleges and that meant that the men had loyalty running all the way back and they were slow to change and the federated women's clubs finally and this is starting in the late 19th century. By the time, it was a century and a half really that the men's colleges had been in running order and the woman who was in charge of the Federated Women's Club's initiative to finally get a decent, there was only one other very small college in the state of New Jersey that had accepted women. And so there was a desperate need. Many women in New Jersey wanted to be teachers and they had to go out of state to get their instruction. So, the woman who was put in charge of it Mabel Smith Douglass was a graduate of Barnard [College] and of course her idea was forget the co-education thing, leave the men alone, put together a college for women. Columbia of course was a private institution. We were public. So we ended up anchoring in that very peculiar thing. Now we are the only college for women within a state university setting.

JC: Since you brought up Mabel, it was called a coordinate college, what did that mean?

MSH: It was called a coordinate college but it was hardly equal. And when I came there in '68, the men at Rutgers College would not allow any other faculty but their faculty for the men's college to teach on the graduate level. And of course, Douglass was collecting this incredible array of wonderful woman. Margaret Judson, who was in the History Department, wrote a constitutional history of England that's still in print, or it was the last time I looked. She was not allowed to teach over there. And finally some enlightened men said this is silly. We should allow at least Margaret to teach and once Margaret taught, then it was okay for the rest. So there were peculiarities that were built in to that system. I know anyone who's gone any place to college thinks that their college is special and different than all the rest but when you compare Rutgers to other state universities, we were peculiar in that and we are now the only one that has a college for women. So that part has lasted but ...

JC: Has that been allowed the Associated Alumnae to play such a distinct role?

MSH: I think the associate alumnae were and still are critical to the success. Indeed, in the latest foray in the early 21st century, they were supposed to disappear along with all the other colleges. And the Associated Alumnae which had been there really from the first class which graduated in 1922 stepped in and we talked to, they talked to, I wasn't dean at that point but I watched and listened with great curiosity and enthusiasm. The State Legislature said, “You can't do to it Douglass” and that is why Dick McCormick, who was President then and a good guy, we disagreed about certain things like that, but he finally said, “You know, it was a good thing that I kept Douglass.” We all thought it was a good
thing, but finally, it was that Associate Alumnae, they had not been invited as women's college to join organizations and the foundation ultimately to participate. So they created a separate organization, which became incredibly strong and stepped in not just to save the college but to create programs that made such a difference. So you have student body that acted like they came from a small college even though they were in a large university, and I find still that's very special.

JC: Can you talk about when you did become dean, all of the departments were in one building? Can you describe was it here?

MSH: It was across the way in Hickman Hall. The Philosophy Department, the English Department, the History Department and I think there was three, there was another one, two in there, they'll all kick me when they hear that I left them out. Anyway...

JC: Biochemistry? Science?

MSH: Each one of the colleges had a separate science component and indeed I'm glad you raised that. Douglass students had more math majors at that point percentage wise than Rutgers College did which was all male. That tells you something right there and there was a deep concern at the time that I was dean that if we went along with all of this and I supported the reorganization of the faculty that we would lose that eminence that we'd had in math and science. And I was visited by a parade of chairs of smaller departments. "Don't let this special science presence that they're going to give you one little department. Don't let it be my guys. Let it be some other department." And that was when I with a good advice of a number of my colleagues who knew more suggested that we should take one of our large dorms. There was one for a hundred students and include ten graduate student women there and make it a math science residence hall and that's still going and it worked out very well.

JC: Why did you support, why did you support the unification of the faculty?

MSH: I thought that it was important because Rutgers was the state university and to have units that were part of it that did not allow their students to take classes on other campuses and in other colleges seem nuts to me because you were punishing the students for the richness that they're supposed to have in a state university. I didn't support it for all the other reasons, the college sense, the fact that ... and we were almost created to work that positively that way even if the wider faculty could serve all the students because their campuses were separated by a town and a river and various other things. So it worked for quite a while.

JC: One of the things I've heard about why it worked was that you as dean just made such an effort to have social gatherings at the house and hold people together. Remember any of those times? Was that a conscious decision?

MSH: When I was first asked when I would be Dean of the college and I was sent in the faculty at that point, I said, "But I don't have to live in that house, do I?" They said, "Oh yes, you do need to." It was stupid because that was one of the best drawing cards. Douglass was the only college that had a residence, had a really nice residence for its dean and her family. And what it meant was that it was easier to recruit faculty to be fellows of the college which was the substitute for faculty of the college. So we still had advisers who were specific to Douglass who worked with the students and the students had the feeling they had their own faculty even though they were affiliated with a larger department in their area of expertise.

JC: Would you give special parties and things at the house? Can you talk about your interaction with the students while you were dean?

MSH: Well, I taught and I had taught and continued to teach in programs. I wasn't teaching solidly through that period. I had a lot of work to do as a faculty member. I did that more towards the end but interaction with students on the campus was helped by the Associate Alumnae who had programs that I would participate in, and then we also created programs for these student's special interest in math and science.
We had done early on because of the arrangement I told you about, but there were other areas that we also worked hard to get faculty members who were interested in them to sponsor the students, to take them on trips. We had a global village that we started and that's now been turned by this President [Barchi] into a wonderful big building and all the rest, but at the time, I was just looking around what did the college have and what could be turned into something. That global village was in fact a few residence halls that were scattered around in houses.

When the college was first created, they didn't want to create big dorms because they thought what if it doesn't survive? A lot of the residence halls are in fact houses still to this day and that worked out perfectly to have a French House, a Spanish House, Black-interest House, all of this thing. My idea was to bring them together as a global village and I had a meeting with the students that I cringe today. I don't know if I said anything when we talked earlier but I wanted to make them enthusiastic about the idea of the interchange that would be possible if we had them all together in one area rather than scattered all over the college. I remember I stood in the middle of a circle of angry young women who didn't want any change, but now you know they realize, their successors realize how valuable the interchange. We have classes in those classes and the students really learn an enormous amount from one another.

JC: How did you break down the silence though? It's very difficult even now to get the Latino students and the black students and the Asian students to all talk. It's very difficult to get biology professors and English professors and philosophy professors to sit in the same room. How do you approach breaking the silence?

MSH: The last group that you mentioned the faculty member, that house created an opportunity, and we had a number of faculty members, particularly those who had taught in England who had run wine tastings. So for the faculty members, many of whom you probably have noticed are quite shy outside of their territory, but if they had a glass or two of wine from a person who they really respected and knew what he was talking about, they would have conversations with people they had never met. And it helped to create the cross disciplinary courses that we had because it's a big university. They didn't even know people in other areas or disciplines and that was one way of breaking that particular issue down.

JC: What did get them to come?

MSH: Wine [laughter]. That's simple, but creating social possibilities you know.

JC: Okay. I wanted to shift to the point how women's studies came about. This was something I'm still not quite clear on. When you came here as a professor, was there a women... what was there?

MSH: There was no Women's Studies Program. The various dates are given for the Rutgers program but it was basically 1969, 1970, 1971, that was the time frame for and we were early at Rutgers. Why were we early? Because we had a college for women within a state university that had people in every department who saw new possibilities for looking at the role of women in their field and of course in some areas it was really critical like math and science. They should have known better, you know. The women's college already did know better as I suggested earlier, but it became possible to say, "Hey, you know, if we make it a little more friendly for students we can attract more women students." But the women's studies area generally still for a while and I was struck at that time how long, I mean we think now and it's true. There is still some residual concern about women's studies and seeing it as a lesser area of discipline than some of the other areas, but then there was open hostility.

However, at Rutgers, one of the advantages is we had the women's college but women's studies was not confined to the women's college and that gets back to partial answer to your question. There was so much excitement about feminism in the late sixties and early seventies that it became overwhelming for those who were against it in the different schools to keep it out. Every one of the colleges even the men's colleges that had four women on its faculty of 300 created a program for women's studies.
JC: So Elaine Showalter had a program.

MSH: She did, she did. She joked that it was in the top right hand drawer of her desk but yes, she recruited a number of ours. She went off later for all of us. She became chair of the department at Princeton and I've remained friends with her over the years, but she did an extraordinary job at Rutgers helped by the fact that our building that had her English Department and my History Department and the Philosophy Department where they were all living together. We joked that we created women’s studies in the elevator, and it was partly true.

JC: I know you've quoted saying that a lot. What I'm trying to get to you is unpack it a little bit.

MSH: Okay. I can unpack the one for Douglass, and I know women who, Judy Gerson for example was at Livingston College. Livingston was started in the 1960s and it was started as an experimental institution that was interested in expanding the numbers of African-American and Asian students. I mean diversity. When the President [Obama] gave the address for the commencement this year for the 250th anniversary of Rutgers, he made the comment that Rutgers may be the most diverse university in the country.

People went wild! But back in the day, when Rutgers was first founded, it was for white, rich, protestant males but what his point was is that the diversity that they shunned at the time the university was or the college was created is now celebrated but it wasn't really celebrated until that period that you're asking me about.

The late sixties, the early seventies. Finally, they say, "Duh, we have an opportunity here being in the east coast, there have been a history of immigration and lots of opportunities and people coming up from the south. Let's take advantage of it." I think we were early to do that. And Livingston College it was its mission to do that really.

That was the story there but I think in general it was in the air than in a way that it's not been since, you know. I think it's coming back. I think we're seeing with young people more of a solid interest in asking those diversity questions and calling their institutions to task for not having, "Well, yeah. You may have a lot of African-American students but look at your faculty. It's just terrible." That kind of thing is happening now in a way that I haven't seen earlier. So, I think we're ready for another push by informed students to get their administrations to do more. I hope so anyway.

JC: So what were the forces that helped create women's studies within Douglas? Is it the first women's history?

MSH: We were the strongest and the first to move, but it was ... at the time I then ... well, when I was dean of the college and we ended up consolidating the faculty, they I say naturally decided that Douglass should be the home. That's the good news. The home of all four Women’s Studies Program, five if you count the University College for older women students. That was the good news. The bad news was we had all of these programs and they gave us two offices in the basement of the language Spanish house.

So, it tells you that even at that point they thought that that's all we needed, you know, and that then fired me and a lot of others up to say, "Look again at what you're going to miss out on if you don't realize how much strength has been amassed in these separate colleges." And if we hadn't had the separate colleges, they would have kept those departments a lot smaller, you know, but each one had its separate college and when they put them all together, there were a lot of people.

That was one thing. The other thing was the women's college itself. We at Rutgers as I said they had in the late sixties only four women on a faculty of 200. Douglass had about a third women faculty. Not half, most places still don't have half but we were ahead of the curve there, and that helped also ratify the existence of our program as well as the others. People could see, "Hey, this is something that's going on. We better be nice to the junior faculty, you know".

JC: Would you say that's your biggest ... what would you say is your biggest accomplishment as dean?

MSH: I have never thought about that question. The biggest accomplishment. I've thought of various things. What we used to do is we threw a bunch of ideas up in the air and most of them landed with a thud,
but there were a few that we worked on. I think certainly emphasizing math science and I've told you how that came through the back door but we created a Douglass Project for Rutgers Women in Math, Science and Engineering and that went beyond the college, lots of programming there, lots of thought went into it and we had a residence hall still there for a hundred undergraduate women. And graduate students lived right there and ran programs in the facility. I think in terms of things that have lasted, Bill Clinton gave them all presidential award and all the rest, maybe I'd site that one as maybe the most important thing. But there were a number of other initiatives that I put my heart in at one point or another and some survived and some haven't but I think the larger case there was the ability that I had to share my enthusiasm for the scholarship that was emerging. You know, people initially said women's history? What the heck is that?

JC: What is women's history?

MSH: What is women's history? Well you know it's interesting because at first you look at women's history as stuff we left out. We got to fill in the stuff we left out then the next phase of it is if you do women's history, you discover you got to redo history because of all those contributions that made a difference. I wrote a book on a family and the fact that Western society, Northwestern Europe really had a totally different family structure which was a smaller nuclear household, mom, dad and the kids, that was it and how that meant that the roles that are generally assigned to women and exclusively just taking care of the kids and taking care of the household, you could do that with an extended family where you had women to spare, but these nuclear households had one woman adult, one man adult and kids, that was it. What that meant that women had to do a lot of the stuff that the guys did. And men had to do some child care that they weren't doing in other. It was a way ... they were weaker families in many ways, and yet they were more gender equal families because they were smaller and there were only two adults. One of them a woman that made a difference. I guess maybe one of those things would be if you’re saying, "What are you proud of doing..."

I'm proud of working that out in a book form, Cambridge Press published it and I get letters from people even now. I published it 2004, but I think that it’s important for people to realize that history doesn't only get made outside the household, that the way people acted in their households affected the way they behaved outside their households and that's one of the things that I used to account for a very different pattern of development in Northwestern Europe and women sooner, not soon enough but sooner participation in the wider world.

JC: How much did the fact that all these departments are in one building... I'm jumping time frames, I'm sorry, influence your own thinking because you were trained ... were you an English major?

MSH: I was trained in European political history, believe it or not, and I wrote a book, well it never became a book. I wrote my dissertation on a man called Benjamin Constant who was not only a novelist, he was a Swiss, actually came to France and was involved with Germaine de Staël. They had a long affair and he was just a very interesting character but I wrote about him as a political figure when the monarchy was returned after the restoration in the 1830's. He led the liberal party. So that's what I came to Rutgers with. It was Rutgers that changed me to think about, “What about women? What about families, you know?” Could there be an understanding that the people who have written history, who have imagined that it only takes place outside of families need to explore? So that happened on site. Well in the early days of all of this, the units that we created, there was an institute still is for research on women and some of the others. Where departments were really hostile to the few women that they had or made them feel uncomfortable. They would link up with those year-long seminars and other kinds of things that they could do. It became kind of a way to relieve the awkwardness of not being fully accepted in your own department. And that era is gone now, thank goodness. There's a few older guys and some older women too who think it's all silly that we're having all this interdisciplinary initiative but when you think that disciplines were created at a time and history where people were sure that they were cast in stone, history, then
political science crept in later and all the rest but when you look at the history of disciplines, you can understand that it's just a particular historical moment that leads to what then becomes ossified in the university and what I'm frightened about is the defenders of those disciplines that ought to be allowed to change, you know. It's not that they should go away but they should open their doors more and they should see the cross-disciplinary understandings can lead to answers that they can't do on their own if they just stay within the narrow bound to their field. For me, it's been very exciting to generalize from what we did in women's studies and to see how education itself is much too, well, still I would say. They are too accepting of the traditional disciplines and they should be more willing to see change that is ensconced in a formal program, but it may include two or three disciplines and it will lead in directions that will surprise people. This is what I think more young people are eager and ready to take and at the same time, they're discouraged because they get in to those traditional departments and they think, yak.

JC: [Catharine] Stimpson talked about this and said that there was that particular moment and time in the seventies that there seemed to be an openness to combining disciplines and creative ways that ...

MSH: Yes, yes. I think that we're probably ready for another pretty dramatic change in this generation if we're going to hang on to the brightness of the kids and what you have now which we didn't have was a whole generation that has computer literacy in a way that people are supposed to know much more than they do, don't have and that gives them a real edge I think to think creatively about how their expertise could transform lots of things that we think we understand and we don't.

JC: Okay, back to Douglass Residential College. How did that idea come about?

MSH: This was after my time as dean but I watched it closely. That was an effort on the part of the institution to show that there was a need for a college for women even in 2005. And the man who is president then, Richard McCormick, a friend of mine who I think was wrong, this particular one he wanted to get rid of all of the colleges and he got rid of four out of the five, but one of the things that happened and for this credit goes to the Associate Alumnae of Douglass College. And of course the support that came from the administration of Douglass and other colleges too who said, "Look, if any college deserves to remain, it's Douglass because of all the pioneering work it's done, the way its demonstrated that women still benefit from what a women's college has to offer." And you know, ironically the seven sisters said, "We're colleges for women so we don't need women's studies." That was their attitude initially. They changed their minds too but at that Douglass, our people's impulse was go off and talk to the legislators about this and what ultimately emerged from that was a bipartisan recommendation. It wasn't a law. It was a recommendation that Rutgers reconsider in the case of Douglass. And for the people who were really pissed by this at the university, a man who was sympathetic to Douglass said, "There are a lot of places that are called residential colleges. And this might make the pill go down easier with the people who think that this is a very bad idea to keep the women's college." So, that's the way it happened. Ugly as usual, but it got the college accepted.

JC: How involved was the New Jersey Federation of Women's Club at that point?

MSH: Well, they're right down the block of course from the campus at Douglass. I was involved with them very much the whole time I was dean, I was part of their programs, annual programs and so forth. And they were part of Founder's Day which was they were our founder, The federated Women's Clubs. That tie continued and I think when I see their literature even now they take credit for, as they should, for founding Douglass College. So, yes, it's a tie that's remained.

JC: There's still a factor that you have to listen to ... that a dean would have to listen to the Associated Alumnae or any? It seems like as a dean at this college, you've got many masters.

MSH: Yes. Tell me about it! [laughter]

JC: You have the state legislators. You have the chancellors, you have the Associated Alumnae, you have the New Jersey Federation of Women then you don't really have a faculty ...
Mary S. Hartman Interview (Part 2)

MSH: Then you have a provost of your home campus. I reported as dean to the provost of New Brunswick. And we met regularly with the other deans. Some of whom were not ... most of whom were not college deans as I was but who were deans of particular faculty units or something like that... That was a fair portion of one's life.

JC: How involved or how much did the provost stick his nose in your affairs?

MSH: How much did the provost...?

JC: Stick his nose in your affairs?

MSH: Only when I started having success. You know, they left us alone most of the time. This is perhaps a bit unfair and provosts varied. Some of them I got along with well and others I didn't. But the truth is that the college for women was not in most cases a priority that was identified and that worked in our favor because we were able to move quite along on a number of issues. I always touched base and things like that with the provost but I didn't overdo it when we were starting to think about a program here, a program there. I didn't rush to the provost and say "What do you think of it?"

JC: You didn't ask permission?

MSH: Yes. That goes back to your point.

JC: The Institute of Women's Leadership, the full name is the Institute of Women's Leadership for Social Change. Talk about the social change part.

MSH: This was a priority that I identified and it was certainly not new with me that despite all the progress that women have made and it's as true today as it was back then when we talked but we created it in '91 but it was the first Institute for Women's Leadership that I'm aware of at that point but there are now scads of them. And I think everyone was impressed by the same data which is, "Yes, women can be this, that." But they make their way up very slowly. Their salaries have not been adjusted and they are often a secret but when women find out what they were, they're shocked because they're doing as much as a guy is doing and they aren't getting much less pay. And so I said, "Well, leadership is really an issue. You look at the Congress. To this day we've got 19% women in our Congress in the United States." If you ask American citizens to guess how many, they will usually say, "Oh 40% women." They can't believe it when they are told that we don't even have 20% women. So, it just seemed that it was the natural, that everyone could get it when they start saying, "Oh women have made such progress since the late 60's and the feminist movement." Why do you need a women's leadership thing? You just run a few of those figures past them and they say, "Yup, I guess you're right." And another thing that's happened is that this generation of fathers and grandfathers feel very strongly that well maybe not all the women but their granddaughter my God, she'd better get an opportunity. Things that their fathers wouldn't have thought of. They think of. They have been closer within the family, watched that child grow and think, "Why should she be denied? Because she's a woman." Again the family has played a role in making it possible for at least imagine that there ought to be more women. Now I don't take a position that I would defend very strongly that leadership will be totally different if women are there. I think there are some ways and it will be and if you understand women's priorities, they're not identical to men's all the time, but I just regard democracy and citizenship is argument enough that there should be fairness.

JC: How does race and class come into the story?

MSH: It comes in all over the place but it's also... it's very hard because when you talk to people who you see as being sort in the way in one way or another, they don't view themselves as racists or sexists. They don't want to be accused of that. Often times it's necessary to make arguments that don't include that because you want to get something done, you don't want to convince somebody that they are nasty racist if that person is going to make a decision that will make a difference for your friends, or for the group that you want, but I think that we've lost a certain amount by that strategy without coming down harder. The real evidence that is out there and exists for racism and sexism. I hear [President] Obama talking about how when he was a kid and he'd be out in the streets and white people sitting in cars would
press a button and lock their windows. I mean Lord, this is the way people understand how it translates into daily life in ways that are cumulative and awful.

JC: What I'm trying to thinking about and trying to get it is this idea that Rutgers University is now the most diverse campus. If I look at the history from Mabel Smith Douglass with white gloves and skirts required at dinner and now where you've got a 40% immigrant and international student body or first generation. How did that happen?

MSH: Well what the argument of the President [Obama] was and I rather liked it in his graduation speech was Rutgers has really been just the image of the nation as a whole. It was founded so early and at that time as we were saying earlier was white protestant men but we have moved along the way the nation has moved along too damn slow of course but the direction has been the right direction. And I think... what was the end of your question?

JC: How does race and class enter into the history of the institution and how has it changed because Rutgers begins as this elite college for the sons of the landed gentry, then the women who are in it and when I was a kid you came to Douglass, you were a member of the upper class then in the seventies it was very much an upper club school but the students that I've interviewed have all been these smart go-get-them women where they're either first generation ... first in their families to go to school, their parents are usually immigrants, they're really concerned about money and how when I talk to them about grad schools, all that what grad school can I afford to get into. I was just wondering how that if you were to think about the arc of that history, what changed? What is it that ... is it something in the institution that's changed? Is it the institution reflecting?

MSH: Well, the institution was not leading enough, not just Rutgers, all of them. When you take a look or most of them let's put it that way. At the embracing of ... when people jump up and down with joy to see a diverse class. Well it's got to be the later 20th century. By that time, we've been through the civil rights movement, we've been through the women's movement and people have had their eyes opened so that at least they know that they can't say certain things in public.

And I celebrate that, I know a lot of people think that's not nearly enough and I agree with them, but that I don't listen to racist comments on a regular basis, it's a dividend as far as I ... it's just that I don't think that there's no racism out there. I don't, I know damn well that there's plenty of racism out there but I like being spared just the way I like being spared the anti-feminist remarks. And it does show progress. I'm convinced.

JC: What do you think is the biggest challenge facing Douglass College today?

MSH: Well. As the only college for women in a state university, I fear a decision that will be made by somebody that does not understand that there is still a need for an institution that takes young women from place A to place D, but to place R, S, T, etc. because we still have racism and sexism in our society.

So, as long as we have a board of governors that has one or two women, that kind of thing, we're going to be in danger of having those decisions and not all women have great decisions about these things either and not all people of color have great decisions about these issues but I still think that, you know, I'm an optimist about this but I do think that our history has moved in the right direction, and I think it will continue to move.

I have been astonished at how quickly LGBT issues were adopted. Now you talked to somebody who's been involved in the organization, they say, "Come on Mary, we've been working for years and years and years." But for a lot of us who are aware of those issues and discussion of them, it did seem pretty rapid. And that's wonderful I think.

JC: Any advice for Dean Litt?

MSH: Oh goodness. I don't have any advice for Dean Litt but I talked to her from time to time, and I guess that I think that it's important to keep on doing what the college has been doing all along working with the alumnae. I know they had a big meeting, a big discussion and there were differences of opinion and they're sorting all of this out and I'm not totally thrilled with all the results because it
seems to be to diminish what the college still needs which is a very active alumnae association which is out there working to create programs and to generate interest of students and when I see some of the results that they've had for example to attract more women students from out of state with the programs in the leadership area, this ought to be a demonstration that is more publicly lauded than it is.

And for that, Dean Litt she actually as far as that's concerned has a president [Barchi] who's more supportive than a lot of us had back in the old days and that's wonderful. I don't know whether the next one who comes along will be doing that but I'd like to see some more concrete ways in which the institution. It's still a little embarrassed that women's studies is one of its star programs. You know, it shouldn't be. It should be embracing that.