

Interview with Elspeth Gibbs

February 23, 1984

Northern Michigan University

Interviewer (INT): Interview with Elspeth Gibbs on February 23, 1984 in Jamrich Hall of Northern Michigan University. Ok. The general topic of this is life her life at Northern, the things that she's experienced so far. To start off I'd like to ask a couple of personal information questions, really short ones. When were you born?

Elspeth Gibbs (EG): November 14, 1957.

INT: Ok, and where are you from, I believe Wyandotte?

EG: Wyandotte, right, just south of Detroit.

INT: So, suburban area?

EG: I consider it a suburb of a suburb. It's all within the Detroit megalopolis.

INT: Yeah. Ok. How about your family, how big is your family, like brothers and sisters?

EG: I have an older brother and a younger sister.

INT: Are they in college, or are they done with college?

EG: No, my sister went one semester but I'm the only one that's _____ complete college.

INT: Ok. When did you first come to Northern?

EG: To start school? Um... 1982? Yeah, 1982, August.

INT: Did you come here for a visit before that?

EG: 1982 I came to look around and see _____.

INT: How soon – you were born 1957 so I'd probably assume you didn't come here directly from high school.

EG: No, I, the first year out of high school I didn't go to school, after that I'd been going to college off and on since 1977.

INT: Have you been here continuous through, since '82?

EG: Yes. Just home for breaks, not even all breaks, but, I've been here.

INT: All right. Why did you choose to come to Northern?

EG: It was the only university in Michigan that offered an outdoor recreation program.

INT: And that was, did you, well, you visited in March, so you knew a little bit about the area and what did you have to say?

EG: Like, when I -

INT: _____ before.

EG: Oh, before I came and saw it in March? I can't remember, I know I'd been in the U.P. but I don't know that I'd actually been on campus, I don't remember being in Marquette before then, specifically, but when I came home from Alaska my parents had been up here on a vacation and they picked up a college catalog for me, that's probably, that's how I discovered outdoor recreation as a major at a, but I, after that I checked out other universities and they didn't have the program, so I came here.

INT: Ok. I guess, well, actually with that question on why you came here you started getting into more or less the more specific questions, I was wondering if you could tell me some of your impressions of Northern and the city of Marquette, the area, which is all intertwined more or less, if you will, when you got here.

EG: Yeah, well my first impressions when I came here in March just to check it out, I came up with a girlfriend and as we drove into Marquette our first impression was just we thought it was ugly, but since I've been here I don't find it ugly anymore, I just find it interesting, and the campus I liked because it wasn't real big, I didn't want to go to a big university, and the people, right away, were really nice, the admissions counselor, I can't remember his name, seemed very interested and I went right away to talk to the professor who's now my advisor, Jean Kinnear, and she was just really friendly and really interested in me and interested in me joining the program and just real helpful. So that was real impressive, a lot of personal attention.

INT: This professor you mentioned, could you spell her name?

EG: K-I-N-N-E-A-R. Ph.D.

INT: Alright, do you live in the residence halls or do you live off campus?

EG: I did the first year I was here. First two semesters. Third floor of Magers. And I, well, I chose that because it was an upperclassman floor, supposedly people were supposed to be 21 and older. I thought they would act 21 and older but they didn't, so I couldn't wait to get out of the residence halls.

INT: Not a very good experience.

EG: It was fine until about Thanksgiving, and the last three weeks were unbearable, and the whole next semester, even though I got my own room and new suitemate and I are now very close friends, it was still not good at all. I felt too live to live in a dorm situation.

INT: What kind of things went on there, like, it sounded it wasn't a very good experience, maybe parties all the time or?

EG: No, it was pretty quiet party-wise. There was a big, you know, group of girls that I thought acted like children and that really irritated me, but, you know, for the first couple of months when I was enjoying it, it was a different experience for me because I'd always gone to community college, so it was fun to have a group of people there, readymade, so to speak, to join in intermural sports and to do different activities like, um, I'm trying to think of an example... Well, we had, threw ourselves a Halloween party and, it was just fun, it was like readymade people, we'd go down to the dining room together, so it was a nice social, social interest for a while.

INT: What about activities like _____Fest or Homecoming? How were those in residence halls?

EG: Well, at first I thought I could really get interested in it, I was ready to sign up and do everything and then as it approached, it just got old for me really quick, I mean, it was fun at first, I think because it offers, like, a unique experience that was offered to me on a platter, things to do, then I think I just started to feel like I didn't, I outgrew it really quick, I mean the excitement was fun right at the beginning, but then it just started to seem just like college hullabaloo for me and I just, I couldn't get all that excited about homecoming, you know, it just made me feel, for a while it just made me feel like I was in high school again, and I'd been out of high school too long, so it just, you know I lost interest in it before it was even over.

INT: So then you next year, which I guess is this year, you moved off campus. Where do you live, like the general area?

EG: Now I live in the Presque Isle Place apartment building. But this summer lived on Front Street, you know, house apartment.

INT: Do you find it's different off campus than on campus?

EG: Oh, a lot different. In some, it's – for me I like it better because I now have, you know, my own circle of friends so I find things to do, I don't, you know, I find I don't need a whole lot of programmed activities for me to find enough to do, and so... I feel like I'm a real person living in an apartment rather than in a dormitory.

INT: What kind of things do you, well, what are the kind of things that you get to do now, socially, say?

EG: You mean different than when I was living, as compared to living in the dorm or just -?

INT: Oh, ok, alright, like, apart from like schoolwork and other real obligations.

EG: What do I do socially...? Well, there's a particular friend I see when I can and then I go to movies on campus or my roommates and I just do things together, I guess I don't, my studies keep me really busy, I don't, I have to plan my time really carefully and decide what my free time is going to be and what it isn't. And until this week I stuck with that very well. [Laughs]

INT: Now you said you majored in, you're majoring in outdoor recreation, right? What's that, what's your program like to you? If you can describe some, maybe not so much like the specific

_____ in the program, but things associated with it, things that make you like it, or make you _____.

EG: Mostly they've just been courses in science, I guess, for the most part, it's a lot of, the instructors I have stress practical experience, you know, like _____ class, Outdoor Rec Services, which deals with interpretation, we had to give an interpretive walk, we had to create an interpretive self-guided trail, just, you know, just real practical experience, which is good. Other classes have taken me canoeing, I've kind of, you know, canoed the area and I've done some camping in the area.

INT: What areas have you gone camping to?

EG: M_____ Creek area, which is out near Champion, I believe. And we went and canoed the Escanaba River and the Au Train River.

INT: Are those in classes or did you ever get to go on your own?

EG: The only time I went on my own, and that's in quotes, was, I spent the summer supervising the Outdoor Recreation Center and I was responsible for programming trips, and so every time I decided, "well, in July we're going to take this trip on such and such a weekend, I had to go scout it. So myself and three other people, so we'd be two canoes, we'd go scout this trip, so I was being paid for that experience, but it was still more fun than anything and, one of the trips, only two of the program trips even went through due to lack of interest, so, I was on my own but I was also paid.

INT: Yeah.

EG: Good deal.

INT: Yup, that sounds like a good deal to me. Have you been involved with many other special projects connected with the recreation department?

EG: Working for the center, which I quit in the fall, and we tried forming an outdoor rec majors club last year but it didn't last.

INT: Hmm. Lack of interest?

EG: Yeah. It's a very small major, there's not many people in it.

INT: How about the people you work with in the department, say professors and instructors and your fellow students, how, oh, say a little bit about them.

EG: Well, I can think of some –

[Interview ends abruptly]