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Claire Seidenfaden

Oral History Interview

Interviewed by Thomas Kennealy

2017 August 22

Fort Thomas, Kentucky

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- Thomas Kennealy: 00:02      Good morning. My name is Father Tom Kennealy and I'm the archivist at Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio. Today is Tuesday, August 22, 2017 and I'm presently at the Barrington Retirement Home in Fort Thomas, Kentucky. With me is Claire Seidenfaden, a resident of the Barrington Retirement Home, who has graciously consented to be interviewed this morning for Xavier's archival collection of oral histories.
- Kennealy:                    00:36      First of all, let me give you some background on Claire Seidenfaden. Claire enrolled in Our Lady of Cincinnati College, or Edgecliff College, as it was later called, in 1940. She graduated in 1944. In the 1960s, after raising her family, Claire returned to her alma mater to serve as director of alumni affairs.
- Kennealy:                    01:05      When Xavier University purchased Edgecliff College in 1980, Claire came to Xavier to serve as the assistant director of the Alumni Office, a position she held until her retirement in 1992. I might also mention that, on August 18, just a few days ago, Claire celebrated her 95th birthday, and we offer her a congratulations and best wishes.
- Kennealy:                    01:33      First of all, Claire, thank you for joining us this morning. I thank you for your willingness to share with us your memories of both Edgecliff College and Xavier University.

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Kennealy: 01:43 So let me begin at the beginning, if I might. Where were you born and raised?

Claire Seidenfaden: 01:49 I was born at Saint Elizabeth Hospital in Covington, Kentucky and we lived in Newport, Kentucky until I was going to start the first grade, and I remember my dad taking me up to Saint Thomas. He knew Fr. Hillenmeyer so well and we just settled in and it was so crowded in those classrooms, that I had to share a desk with Margie Schroeder. We've been good friends ever since. But it was quite an experience because I walked into that huge classroom. I didn't know a soul.

Kennealy: 02:30 Where did you go to grade school and high school then?

Seidenfaden: 02:33 Well, grade school was Saint Thomas.

Kennealy: 02:35 Saint Thomas, all right.

Seidenfaden: 02:36 Saint Thomas, and I've been a parishioner there ever since 1928. And then, after that I went to Notre Dame Academy.

Kennealy: 02:47 Ah, yes, on Dixie Highway.

Seidenfaden: 02:50 Yes. In those days it was down on Fifth Street.

Kennealy: 02:52 All right. Downtown, I guess. Downtown Covington, I guess.

Seidenfaden: 02:55 Yes, and my three daughters went to Notre Dame.

Kennealy: 02:58 Yes, yes. And your own family then. How many siblings did you have, Claire?

Seidenfaden: 03:03 I had four sisters and one brother and I'm the last of the Mohicans.

Kennealy: 03:08 Last of the Mohicans, and your brother was Bob,

Seidenfaden: 03:12 Right.

Kennealy: 03:12 Who became a Jesuit.

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- Seidenfaden: 03:14 Right.
- Kennealy: 03:14 Yes, and was at Xavier University for a number of years, as I recall.
- Seidenfaden: 03:19 Yes, he was the favorite because he was a boy.
- Kennealy: 03:23 Ah, even in those days there was a certain chauvinism.
- Seidenfaden: 03:26 Oh, I can remember when he decided to go to the priesthood, my father was, at first, very disappointed because he wanted to have a lawyer in the family but after he got used to the idea, he was so proud of him and do you know when they were in this area, he would ask my brother if he was available and if not, one of the other priests, like Fr. O'Connor or Fr. Nieporte. They'd always go out to dinner on Tuesday nights, and he just loved being in their company.
- Kennealy: 04:03 Yes, of course, Fr. O'Connor was president of the University. Fr. Vic Nieporte was executive vice-president.
- Seidenfaden: 04:10 He was a cousin of mine.
- Kennealy: 04:11 Oh, is that right?
- Seidenfaden: 04:12 Um hmm.
- Kennealy: 04:12 Oh, yes. I did not know that. Yes. Their family was originally from Norwood, the Nieportes.
- Seidenfaden: 04:19 Right.
- Kennealy: 04:19 Yes, oh, yes. And so, you knew a number of the Jesuits quite well.
- Seidenfaden: 04:25 Yes. After my husband died, they would come over around Christmas time and help decorate the tree and have dinner and an Irish whiskey.
- Kennealy: 04:39 Well, O'Connor would have liked the Irish whiskey. Yes, yes.

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- Seidenfaden: 04:42 Yes, yes. So it was a wonderful experience for my children to get to know those people and they loved those Jesuits.
- Kennealy: 04:49 Now you would have known, Fr. Pat Ratterman I suppose, who was Dean of Men for a number of years. What about Fr. Peter Buschmann?
- Seidenfaden: 04:58 You know, when you had that on the list... I tried to. I can't picture him.
- Kennealy: 05:04 He was there at that time, had many jobs, director of admissions, and I'm sure would have been a close friend of your brother Bob's too. Yes. But I remember your brother Bob as well. When I first came to Xavier in 1969, he was very kind and helpful to me and I'm very grateful for that. It was a large community, and I was the junior member, and he helped out.
- Kennealy: 05:28 Well, how is it then that you wound up going to Edgecliff College then, or Our Lady of Cincinnati, as it was called at that time?
- Seidenfaden: 05:35 I had a cousin, Bernice, and she went to Edgecliff. She went to a small college down in Kentucky, Nazareth College, and then she transferred to Edgecliff, and we were there for dinner one night with my aunt and uncle and my cousin and she started to talk about Edgecliff, and my dad picked up his ears because I was a senior, and he didn't know where I should go to college. So that's how we got the idea and that's where it started.
- Kennealy: 06:11 It was somewhat rare for women to go to college in those days. You must have been the exception to the rule in that regard, weren't you?
- Seidenfaden: 06:18 Well, you know the enrollment at Edgecliff at that time, you knew everybody. It was wonderful. You knew everybody in the classes.
- Kennealy: 06:28 And you entered there then in 1940.
- Seidenfaden: 06:30 Um-hmm.

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- Kennealy: 06:31 And what was Edgecliff like? Since it no longer exists, I think people might like to know what it looked like. I understand it was about 20 acres.
- Seidenfaden: 06:42 It had the most beautiful view of the Ohio River off the back lawn, just gorgeous, and we had commencements on the back lawn and when we had commencements, Sister Virginia would call whoever controlled the steam boats going up so that they wouldn't blow their whistles.
- Kennealy: 07:10 Along the river, you were that close you could hear the steam boats coming up and down the river.
- Seidenfaden: 07:15 But we had so many activities on that back lawn. We had commencements. We had family days. We had the outdoor Edgecliff theater back there. It was just a beautiful spot.
- Kennealy: 07:29 Now was this behind the Emery Hall? There was the Emery building.
- Seidenfaden: 07:33 Yes.
- Kennealy: 07:34 And that was very near the brow of the hill so this would have been behind that building just overlooking the river.
- Seidenfaden: 07:40 Right.
- Kennealy: 07:42 Yes, and the entire campus then was located on Victory Parkway. Was that Francis Lane that comes up there?
- Seidenfaden: 07:50 Yes.
- Kennealy: 07:51 Yes, okay. So one of the important buildings, of course, was Emery. What other buildings were there when you first enrolled?
- Seidenfaden: 07:59 Well, I remember McAuley Hall, which was another old building. It still exists. It became the music department because it had a very large and beautiful organ room in that and we had dances in there because one side was all mirrors. It was a very classic room.

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Kennealy: 08:22 Was that Maxwellton building?

Seidenfaden: 08:25 Yes.

Kennealy: 08:26 Yes, and so that was the music department, yes. What other buildings? There was a library building...maybe in later years.

Seidenfaden: 08:33 Well, there was a library building when I was there that was up beyond where the science building is now. It was an old home and that's where the library was. And that, of course, was torn down when they started to build Sullivan Hall.

Kennealy: 08:54 And Sullivan was the residence...for students, dormitory. Yes.

Kennealy: 09:00 So you entered in 1940. The school had been in existence only about five years at that time. So it was founded in 1935 by the Sisters of Mercy.

Seidenfaden: 09:12 Yes, it was at the request of Archbishop, I guess.

Kennealy: 09:17 McNicholas?

Seidenfaden: 09:18 Probably.

Kennealy: 09:19 Probably was, yeah.

Seidenfaden: 09:19 And so, he wanted to start a women's college because the school in Sacred Heart, maybe, in Clifton closed and so then they wanted to do this.

Kennealy: 09:32 And what was your major when you went to the school?

Seidenfaden: 09:35 I was a history major.

Kennealy: 09:35 History major and graduated as a history major?

Seidenfaden: 09:38 Magna cum laude.

Kennealy: 09:39 Magna cum laude, congratulations. Very good.

Seidenfaden: 09:42 But ever since then I have just loved history.

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- Kennealy: 09:45 And kept up on it with reading, I'll bet.
- Seidenfaden: 09:47 Yes.
- Kennealy: 09:48 Yes. And you graduated then in 1944. What other programs were there at the time, maybe not just in your time but in later years, what programs would Edgecliff have been noted for?
- Seidenfaden: 10:02 Well, I think they had a wonderful art department. Chidlaw, Paul Chidlaw, was an artist in residence there and he had done some beautiful work. And they did a lot of enameling work and things like that, that was very popular in those days.
- Seidenfaden: 10:24 Of course, we had the sciences and the usual English and... what do I want to say?
- Kennealy: 10:33 The various humanities?
- Seidenfaden: 10:35 Yes.
- Kennealy: 10:35 And sciences.
- Seidenfaden: 10:36 One of the things that we had there that I know didn't transfer to Xavier was a home economics class.
- Kennealy: 10:43 Yes, that's right. That did not come to Xavier.
- Seidenfaden: 10:46 No, but I mean, they had a beautiful kitchen and facilities in the science building. It was beautifully equipped, and I remember when we had the word that they were going to move to Xavier. Well, that stuff in the kitchen wasn't necessary, so the teacher reduced the price on all those things and everybody was welcome to come over, and they paid a little bit for it, but I know some of the people bought refrigerators, and she had a lovely... Miss Koch was the chairman. She was a lovely person.
- Kennealy: 11:29 Now this was a bachelors program then, of the day?
- Seidenfaden: 11:31 Yes.
- Kennealy: 11:31 Okay, good. There was also, Edgecliff was also famous for its theater department too.

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- Seidenfaden: 11:38 Definitely. David Barrie was the one who came here and he began with the Shakespeare Theater and the auditorium, the old auditorium in my day, they used that stage and David Barrie was a very creative person and his assistant was... I don't remember his name but he was a Jewish man. He was very much into his religion and he was wonderful. And they worked so hard because they didn't have any money or any background. And then, after they got started then they went into the summer theater.
- Seidenfaden: 12:23 They had summer theater out behind Emery, on the lawn. We had tables for people to sit on, beer was served, and it was a wonderful atmosphere.
- Kennealy: 12:35 Was it, at one time didn't they build a more elaborate theater that had seating on three sides?
- Seidenfaden: 12:41 Well, that was when, I think, the Corbett's invested some money.
- Kennealy: 12:47 Ah, yes. Ralph and Patricia Corbett.
- Seidenfaden: 12:47 And they turned the old auditorium into a stage and they did. They had seats on both sides and it was just a lot of fun.
- Kennealy: 12:59 Was it, at one point, a professional theater as well?
- Seidenfaden: 13:03 It became an equity theater and we had some wonderful people in it. But, you know, it was a lot of work. Barbara Kaye did all of the costumes and a Jay Debenbrock did all of the lighting. And later on, Jay moved down to Music Hall and did some of the settings down there.
- Kennealy: 13:27 Yes, and what was Edgecliff like in those days, the spirit of the campus? It was small, of course.
- Seidenfaden: 13:33 Well, when I went there. Of course, everybody was from a different school so it was a matter of introducing yourself and getting known. So it was a very personal, ladylike school, as you said. The nuns were just so helpful and so considerate. It was just a warm feeling through the whole campus. Everybody got to know one another.

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- Kennealy: 14:00 How big would it have been? What would the enrollment of the school been? Could you guess, in those years, the 1940s, early 1950s? What would the enrollment have been?
- Seidenfaden: 14:10 I couldn't tell you.
- Kennealy: 14:11 Maybe a couple of hundred? Would it be that small?
- Seidenfaden: 14:13 Oh, yes, definitely. I think our class only had about maybe 25 in it.
- Kennealy: 14:21 Okay. The school was originally called, Our Lady of Cincinnati and the name was changed to Edgecliff, I think, maybe around 1969. Do you... why the change?
- Seidenfaden: 14:34 Well, I think, at that time, a girl's college was beginning to fade. It was going more the co-ed thing. I think they felt that the Edgecliff name sounded more collegiate and it represented the property on which it was all built. That was Edgecliff Point. So they felt that was a good public relations thing.
- Kennealy: 15:02 Was it, perhaps, to attract, well, obviously, to attract more students. They must have felt that a change in name would do that.
- Seidenfaden: 15:09 Especially men, because they went coed.
- Kennealy: 15:12 Was it about the same time they went coed, then?
- Seidenfaden: 15:15 I think they went co-ed in about 1967.
- Kennealy: 15:18 Oh, a little bit before the name change, then.
- Kennealy: 15:21 Did a good number of men come to the school? Was going coed successful for them?
- Seidenfaden: 15:26 It was a very small number, but it was a close group and the guys got along. They were members of the council, student council. They were interested in the theater and what else. Then, when they came onto campus, they were lost because there wasn't a lot of activity such as sports but they formed a basketball team and they had a basketball team which created a lot of sensation.

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- Kennealy: 16:02 Yes, yes. So then, you graduated in 1944 and essentially left the school to raise a family.
- Seidenfaden: 16:11 Well, I graduated in 1944 and I came back that September and I worked as a secretary to Sr. Mary Virginia until 1946.
- Kennealy: 16:26 I see. Okay, and then you left the University for a period of time.
- Seidenfaden: 16:30 Yes.
- Kennealy: 16:31 Tell us about Sr. Virginia, Mary Virginia Sullivan. We hear a lot about her.
- Seidenfaden: 16:36 Well, she was a very charming person. She was, just had a personality that was wonderful and she was very kind and very considerate, very organized, and she wanted to see that college grow. She had a human side.
- Seidenfaden: 16:54 I remember, during the war, so many of the boys came back for a leave, and she would tell the girls, just go ahead and enjoy it.
- Kennealy: 17:05 Ah, good for her.
- Seidenfaden: 17:05 You know, don't worry about your classes and things. And I can remember in the summertime, she loved Graeter's ice cream and so there was a Graeter's up on McMillan and so every once in a while she'd say to Sister Ruth Nastold, why don't you go up and get some vanilla ice cream and some chocolate syrup for us? And we'd have a little ice cream party.
- Kennealy: 17:32 You mentioned Sr. Ruth Nastold. Is that the sister of Fr. Nastold?
- Seidenfaden: 17:38 Yes, it is.
- Kennealy: 17:38 Yes, Donald Nastold, who was pastor of Bellarmine for a number of years.
- Seidenfaden: 17:42 Yes, yes. She was Sister Ignace in those days. But she was the one who was the go-fer. I mean, she did

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everything for the sisters, what they needed. And later on, she became dean of students.

- Kennealy: 17:59 Now, are you speaking of?
- Seidenfaden: 18:01 Ruth.
- Kennealy: 18:01 Ruth, Sister Ruth Nastold, okay.
- Seidenfaden: 18:04 And then, after that, I think she went back into the hospital work.
- Kennealy: 18:10 And now, Sr. Mary Virginia, what positions did she hold? She held a number of positions. Wasn't she dean at one point?
- Seidenfaden: 18:18 She was dean first and then she was president.
- Kennealy: 18:20 President, for what, maybe about ten years or so?
- Seidenfaden: 18:23 Oh, yeah.
- Kennealy: 18:25 And a force after that, too.
- Seidenfaden: 18:27 Yes, she was well known and I think, made a good impression on business people. At that time some colleges were involved in the OFIC, the Ohio Federation of Independent Colleges and they went together to collect money for the colleges, as a group. And that was interesting because we went up to Cleveland and she went to Columbus, traveled a great deal, and I went with her sometimes and it was very interesting and certainly a big exposure.
- Kennealy: 19:07 Sure. And then, so you returned to Edgecliff in the sixties and, as I said earlier, you assumed the position of Director of Alumni and other things as well, I suspect?
- Seidenfaden: 19:22 Well, you know, the Sullivan Hall was built at that time, so we did a little admissions work and that was one thing, and the development work went with that but not as long, and I can remember Sr. Virginia always saying, when I went back for an interview, I said, I think I want to do education. And she looked at me, and she said, Claire, you've got three little girls at

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home. You don't want to teach all day and then have to come home and be good with them. So that's how she steered me into this alumni work, also, with the help of Jack Moser.

- Kennealy: 20:07 Oh, yes.
- Seidenfaden: 20:09 And he was the one who gave her a lot of information to what was coming in the development work and that's how the alumni association-
- Kennealy: 20:18 Was he associated with Xavier at that time? I know he was in later years.
- Seidenfaden: 20:22 Yes, I think he was.
- Kennealy: 20:23 Yes, and he was in development work. So he was of assistance to you and also Sr. Mary Virginia.
- Seidenfaden: 20:29 Right.
- Kennealy: 20:30 Oh, I see. Okay, another Xavier connection there.
- Seidenfaden: 20:33 Yeah, oh, there are a lot of Xavier connections.
- Kennealy: 20:34 What other people were there in your years, both as a student and later on, that you remember, people who were influential in the school, people who were-
- Seidenfaden: 20:45 Well, Sr. Dolora Brinker became dean later on and she was a big help to Sr. Virginia and she was a very visible person on campus. And then, there was the sweetest little old Sr. Hildegard who was interested in theater and one of her jobs was to sit over in Emery at night when the girls went out with dates to welcome them back, to see that they got back in time. So she would sit in the front room, would doze, and they would all come in. She was a delightful person.
- Seidenfaden: 21:26 There was a Sr. Winifred, who was in biology and made the conservatory into her little area of work but on the front of that was a small room which became our smoker because we didn't smoke on campus and Sr. Winifred said, you're ruining my flowers with all your smoke. But she was so sweet, especially to the dorm kids and every once in a while we'd come down

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to cafeteria and we'd find these wonderful brownies for us. She was really great.

- Kennealy: 22:08 Now there was... were there dorm students prior to Sullivan Hall?
- Seidenfaden: 22:13 Yes.
- Kennealy: 22:14 Where would they have lived back there?
- Seidenfaden: 22:15 Well, when I was in school, some of them lived in Maxwellton or McAuley Hall and then when they outgrew that, they had a dorm over in Emery on the second and third floor. It was a very good atmosphere and, of course, living in that hall was kind of exciting and was a thrill.
- Kennealy: 22:40 Oh, yes. Those were real mansions, lovely mansions.
- Seidenfaden: 22:44 Right.
- Kennealy: 22:44 But then Sullivan Hall was built and that accommodated quite a few women.
- Seidenfaden: 22:48 Oh, a lot of them and it was interesting because when Xavier acquired us, it was an interim where Roger Fortin was dean of that school and in that interim... I lost track of my thought.
- Kennealy: 23:07 You were going to talk about while Xavier was taking control of the school and Roger Fortin was dean.
- Seidenfaden: 23:15 Yes, and then it was a little difficult for the students to come back and forth but I remember that after a while they opened a floor in the dorm for the fellas and they liked being on our campus much more and Roger Fortin did a wonderful job, but it was just a difficult situation.
- Kennealy: 23:40 Well, let's talk about that then, Claire. How did the acquisition of Edgecliff by Xavier come about? What were the causes and-
- Seidenfaden: 23:50 Well, I can tell you, I served on the budget committee at Edgecliff.

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- Kennealy: 23:54 Oh, you know then.
- Seidenfaden: 23:55 And it was one of those things that your enrollment was not going up and you weren't meeting all of your obligations and you were going into debt and it was a financial thing for it to continue and that's how it started.
- Kennealy: 24:15 Did the Sisters of Mercy approach Xavier or did Xavier approach the Sisters?
- Seidenfaden: 24:20 I couldn't tell you that.
- Kennealy: 24:21 Which it would be, although obviously, if there were financial problems and issues then I suspect the Sisters were certainly very interested in negotiating some kind of an arrangement.
- Kennealy: 24:33 This would have been about 1979 because I think Xavier purchased the school in 1980.
- Seidenfaden: 24:43 Yeah.
- Kennealy: 24:43 Eighty. Yes, yeah. What was the mood around campus? Did the students or the faculty or the sisters suspect-
- Seidenfaden: 24:50 There was a lot of upset. A lot of the people who worked on campus were concerned about their jobs. What will happen? Who will be accepted with Xavier? That was a very big concern and the students felt that too and, of course, that spread to the alumni who were just very devoted to Edgecliff, so it was a hard thing for them to accept. But I kept telling them that you've got to get along with this idea because if Xavier hadn't taken us over, we wouldn't have existed. There would be no financial assistance, because Xavier established the Edgecliff Alumni Office and gave us the money to continue our activities. And I said, that's the one way you have to look at this, and I think people eventually adjusted and eventually people never adjusted. There were people who just could not get used to that idea for a long, long time.

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- Kennealy: 25:57 Yes, there was certain bitterness among certain alumni, alums as well.
- Seidenfaden: 26:03 And I can't tell you about the sisters, how they felt. I'm sure it was a loss to them because many of them taught. So what were they going to do?
- Kennealy: 26:15 What were they going to do? Yes. It was probably a very difficult time. So the reasons probably were much more financial, really, to a point where Edgecliff simply couldn't carry on and Xavier-
- Seidenfaden: 26:30 Right, and of course I guess Xavier knew about this, and I guess they felt it was a good opportunity to acquire more subject matter, more degrees.
- Kennealy: 26:43 That's right, a number of programs they really wanted. But as I recall Xavier and Edgecliff did not merge. It was an acquisition.
- Seidenfaden: 26:52 Yes, it was.
- Kennealy: 26:53 So that Xavier could pick and choose and there would be things that therefore they would not choose to keep including faculty, and I presume, staff.
- Seidenfaden: 27:02 Oh, they were all worried.
- Kennealy: 27:04 Oh, yes, because a number of them did, in fact, lose their jobs.
- Seidenfaden: 27:08 Yes.
- Kennealy: 27:08 Xavier did not really take on all the faculty or the staff as a result.
- Seidenfaden: 27:13 I think they were more interested in the people who taught in areas that they didn't have a lot of, like sociology, was one I can remember.
- Kennealy: 27:25 Yes, there were several others. Well, art, certainly would have been another.
- Seidenfaden: 27:28 Yes.
- Kennealy: 27:28 Sr. Ann Beiersdorfers' program.

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Seidenfaden: 27:30 It was Sr. Rosine at the beginning.

Kennealy: 27:33 Oh, okay. All right.

Seidenfaden: 27:34 And then, Sr. Ann Beiersdorfer.

Kennealy: 27:37 But they had built up a nice art department and Xavier had no art department.

Seidenfaden: 27:40 No, that's right.

Kennealy: 27:42 Music would have been another, I think.

Seidenfaden: 27:44 Yes.

Kennealy: 27:45 Who was in charge of nursing? Nursing was one program that came.

Seidenfaden: 27:49 That came much later and I-

Kennealy: 27:52 Was it Casey, an Ida Casey? Does that-

Seidenfaden: 27:56 Ida Casey was one of those people and Eileen Quinn. She came over to Xavier and that department has grown a great deal.

Kennealy: 28:08 Oh, it's huge, one of Xavier's largest departments now, yes. And Helmut Roehrig and the music department.

Seidenfaden: 28:14 Right, he was the one who had the famous... what was the name of their chorus?

Kennealy: 28:21 Oh, Musica Sacra.

Seidenfaden: 28:22 Yes.

Kennealy: 28:22 Yes, yes. He is not in good health at the moment, by the way. I just heard that. He is still doing music but not as well as he really would like.

Seidenfaden: 28:36 He was an interesting man.

Kennealy: 28:38 Yes, yes, one of the characters.

Seidenfaden: 28:40 Yes.

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Kennealy: 28:41 Yes, but actually, if I'm correct, Xavier didn't really purchase Edgecliff right away. They purchased an option to buy in three years.

Seidenfaden: 28:53 Well, that I couldn't tell-

Kennealy: 28:54 You don't remember, yes, and then three years later they purchased it and eventually Xavier sold Edgecliff in 1987. But then, you came to Xavier at the time of the purchase. Is that right?

Seidenfaden: 29:06 I came back to Xavier in 1960. So that purchase was 1980.

Kennealy: 29:12 Yes, but then when Xavier purchased in 1980, you came to Xavier at that point, to work.

Seidenfaden: 29:18 Fortunately, Jim Sasson asked me if I would come over and join the Alumni Office. I was very excited, a little hesitant, moving from a small college to a university, but that development department was just wonderful. Paul Lindsay and Jim Sasson and Steve Gaylord...so I remember a lot of them.

Kennealy: 29:48 Now, where was the development office and the alumni office located when you came to Xavier in 1980?

Seidenfaden: 29:56 I think when I came over, it was in Husman Hall.

Kennealy: 29:59 Husman Hall, which is the dormitory. The first floor of the residence hall there. Oh, yes and Jim Sasson would have been the vice-president-

Seidenfaden: 30:07 Development.

Kennealy: 30:08 Development, yes, and I guess, Joe Ventura came to the alumni later on though didn't he-

Seidenfaden: 30:15 Yes.

Kennealy: 30:15 But your position was what then?

Seidenfaden: 30:18 Assistant.

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- Kennealy: 30:19 Assistant, because I think they did establish an Edgecliff Alumni Board of Governors for the... and I'm sure you were involved in that as well, yes.
- Kennealy: 30:29 What was your impression when you came to Xavier?
- Seidenfaden: 30:33 Well, I guess I was a little overwhelmed to begin with. But the people in the office were very helpful. Mary Koontz was in there at one time. I guess I felt a little lost for a little while.
- Kennealy: 30:49 Understandably, yes.
- Seidenfaden: 30:50 Yeah, I mean, until you got used to the atmosphere, and your programs were in effect. But we were very successful in fundraising. In fact, maybe in 1963, we were accepted or honored as a women's college that had the highest percentage of donors. So I remember I went down with Jean Kemper to Florida where there was a convention and we received the award, which was a Möbius strip. So I don't know what happened to that. I think maybe Paul Lindsay took it over to his office.
- Kennealy: 31:32 Well, that's significant. That was in 1963. This was Edgecliff. Yes, yes. Well, that's quite a distinction.
- Seidenfaden: 31:41 Well, we did very well, slowly, in building up, but we did.
- Kennealy: 31:45 And now, you would have worked, principally, with Edgecliff alums, I presume.
- Seidenfaden: 31:49 Oh, yes.
- Kennealy: 31:50 And through that period then, how did you deal with the issue of the bitterness, that certain people and certain alums felt relative to Xavier's purchase of the school?
- Seidenfaden: 32:03 Well, as I said, I just kept telling them, be grateful that we have somebody sponsoring us, otherwise we would not be here.
- Kennealy: 32:11 Did they accept that, initially?

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- Seidenfaden: 32:15 I think some of them did. Some of them... see, when we had the fund drive, we were raising money for different things on Edgecliff campus. And then, when 1960 came along we had to think of... yeah, 1980, we had to think of another reason for raising money. We didn't have a campus. So that's when we started the Edgecliff scholarship fund.
- Kennealy: 32:45 Oh, yes.
- Seidenfaden: 32:45 And that's been very successful.
- Kennealy: 32:48 Yes, it has been. That's right. And you were involved in that then, the establishment of the Edgecliff, yes.
- Kennealy: 32:54 Then, at a later date, probably about 2000 or so, there was the whole question of renovating what Xavier called its Alumni Hall and turned it into Edgecliff Hall, filled it with many, many, many artifacts from Edgecliff. How did that come about? Do you remember that?
- Seidenfaden: 33:16 Do you mean the new Edgecliff-
- Kennealy: 33:18 The new Edgecliff Hall on the edge of...
- Seidenfaden: 33:19 As I said, I really think that Jim Jackson was such an enthusiastic person about Edgecliff and maybe kind of talked to Fr. Hoff a lot about it.
- Kennealy: 33:32 Spearheaded that. Yes, Fr. Hoff was there at that time.
- Seidenfaden: 33:35 Yes, and I know that Jim was chairman of a committee and there were about six Edgecliff alumni on that and we were the ones that went over things that we thought Edgecliff Hall should have and what it should be like and Fr. Hoff was just very generous in letting us kind of go ahead.
- Seidenfaden: 33:57 We established an archives over there and we had that hall, the wall in the hall, as you come in, that had the painting on it, and I think Jim planted the seed.

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- Kennealy: 34:13 It is very, very nice and I think a wonderful tribute to Edgecliff. Did that go a long way to making some alums feel better about Xavier?
- Seidenfaden: 34:25 I think so, I think so.
- Kennealy: 34:25 I had that impression too. Yes, yes.
- Seidenfaden: 34:28 And of course the music department was there and that grew a great deal.
- Kennealy: 34:32 Yes, that's right. That was their building and still is.
- Seidenfaden: 34:36 Yes.
- Kennealy: 34:36 Yes, yes. Well, in looking back then on your years of the Jesuits and the people at Xavier that you have known, we've mentioned some already, your friendship with Fr. Paul O'Connor, what was he like?
- Seidenfaden: 34:52 Oh, he was very kind, very down-to-earth, very interested in you. I mean, when you talked to him, you knew he was talking to you too. And he was just, as far as my family goes, he just became part of the family and it was just a wonderful experience. He was very kind. He certainly was a very sharp man. So he and Fr. Nieporte and my brother bummed together.
- Kennealy: 35:23 And Fr. Nieporte, now he was, as we mentioned earlier was a native of Norwood, of Cincinnati, and he was executive vice-president for a number of years.
- Seidenfaden: 35:32 I think so.
- Kennealy: 35:34 He would have been responsible, then, for a number of the buildings on campus, as I recall, things like maybe Alter Hall, the original Alter Hall, probably the building of the chapel. I think he would have supervised a good deal of that.
- Seidenfaden: 35:49 That could be. I'm not too sure.
- Kennealy: 35:51 What positions did your brother Bob occupy?
- Seidenfaden: 35:54 I think he was treasurer. I remember the office. It was in Schott.

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Kennealy: 36:01 Yes. In the Schmidt building.

Seidenfaden: 36:03 Um hmm.

Kennealy: 36:04 That's right, and he would have lived... and the Fr. Pat Ratterman who I did not know very well. Did you know him personally?

Seidenfaden: 36:10 Oh, he and you remember Fr. McComiskey?

Kennealy: 36:13 Oh, yes.

Seidenfaden: 36:15 Well, I don't know, they just would come over to the campus, every once in a while and just start playing the piano and singing and entertaining and they became very popular figures.

Kennealy: 36:28 Fr. McComiskey was a pretty good musician, as I recall and then Fr. Ratterman was really the dean of men.

Seidenfaden: 36:35 Oh, was that it?

Kennealy: 36:37 And did not have an easy job. Do you remember Fr. Bill Hetherington? Is that a name that rings a bell at all?

Seidenfaden: 36:43 It rings a bell, but not... I know the name but I can't place it.

Kennealy: 36:47 ...with the others as well. And, Fr. Jeremiah O'Callaghan would have been a good friend-

Seidenfaden: 36:53 Then there was another O'Connor.

Kennealy: 36:55 Yes, E.J.

Seidenfaden: 36:57 Because I said, how do we make the distinction? And he said, I love fudge. Call me Fudge.

Kennealy: 37:06 So he became Fudge.

Seidenfaden: 37:07 Fudge O'Connor.

Kennealy: 37:09 Fr. O'Connor was at Xavier many years. I think he worked in the athletic department. He was director of

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athletics for a number of years. Yes, another person from Xavier's past.

- Seidenfaden: 37:21 And I remember how beautiful the campus was. Phil, I think, was it, that was one of the head gardeners?
- Kennealy: 37:31 Ah, Walter Bonneville, in later years.
- Seidenfaden: 37:34 Yeah.
- Kennealy: 37:35 Oh, yes. He was responsible for the campus for years.
- Seidenfaden: 37:38 They were just beautiful and, in fact, I loved roses and when I retired, the college gave me a rose garden and he came over and planted it for me. I had about 12 rose bushes. So it was just lovely to look at them and remember where they came from.
- Kennealy: 37:59 Well, Walter Bonneville, as you may not know, died about a year ago.
- Seidenfaden: 38:04 Oh, did he?
- Kennealy: 38:05 And the University is now creating a garden in his honor, right on the academic mall, in gratitude for the wonderful things he did for the campus for many years.
- Seidenfaden: 38:17 Oh, he was wonderful.
- Kennealy: 38:18 Yes, a very, very fine man, Walter Bonneville. Yes.
- Seidenfaden: 38:21 I think, maybe Phil. That's the name I keep thinking about, was one of the people who did a lot of work with him like the plantings and so forth.
- Kennealy: 38:31 Yes, yes. Well, we always had a saying on campus that we really weren't so sure how hard most employees worked but we knew the ground team worked very hard.
- Seidenfaden: 38:42 Yes.

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- Kennealy: 38:43 Walter kept them plenty busy. Looking back, what are your fondest memories of Edgecliff College, before it became a part of Xavier?
- Seidenfaden: 38:54 Well, you know, Edgecliff came along at a time when the war was beginning and, in fact, it's interesting, we graduated in June. It was D-Day, and I remember I got off the bus over at Fourth and Broadway, and there was the newspaper, a big sign, war has started, and I just about died when I saw that. My husband was on an LST, and I knew he was involved in that, so I bought a couple of papers and in those days, we had to come back to graduation day and have a practice of how we marched in and how things went, and I took the paper, and I gave it to Sr. Virginia. Oh, my goodness. Right away, she said, girls, we're going to say the Rosary. So we prayed and that night, it was chilling because we were out on that back patio, overlooking the river and there was a huge American flag that was flying with a light on it and it just... we sang Star Spangled Banner and everything. It was just a tremendous, almost a hurtful experience.
- Kennealy: 40:11 Yes, yes. Now when was this? This was as the war was ending?
- Seidenfaden: 40:15 No, this was on D-Day.
- Kennealy: 40:17 D-Day, oh.
- Seidenfaden: 40:18 When they did the invasion.
- Kennealy: 40:20 Oh, the invasion. When the Allied invaded the continent, at Normandy. That's right. That would have been in June of 1944, that's correct.
- Seidenfaden: 40:28 June, either... I can't remember if it was the fourth or the sixth.
- Kennealy: 40:33 Yes, and then that was the beginning of the end of the Nazis. Yes, yes. Well, I'm sure that would... well, your husband was in service then?
- Seidenfaden: 40:42 He was... yes. He was in the Navy and he was... the LSTs were those landing boats that would bring troops into the shore, and tanks and that was a new

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thing and I can remember, there was a Fr. Dillon, who was pastor at St. Rose Church, down on Eastern Avenue, and he would come in and tease me and he said, Claire, they're just sitting ducks.

- Kennealy: 41:14 Oh, my. That was encouraging to hear.
- Seidenfaden: 41:16 Well, he was kidding. But you'd see a lot of them come down the river.
- Kennealy: 41:20 Yes, yes. Well, was your husband involved in D-Day at Normandy?
- Seidenfaden: 41:24 Oh, yes.
- Kennealy: 41:24 Oh, my.
- Seidenfaden: 41:25 He was one in the first group that landed and brought troops and tanks in. And then they would take any wounded and take it back and then reload and come. So they came back and forth quite a lot. But after that, he was moved then back down to Italy, where there was an invasion in Italy. So he went from Italy back over to the Pacific.
- Kennealy: 41:54 Oh, my heavens, to fight the Japanese. So did he actually see action, then, in the Pacific as well?
- Seidenfaden: 42:03 Yes.
- Kennealy: 42:03 My, my, my, what an experience. When did your husband die, then? When did you lose him?
- Seidenfaden: 42:08 July 11, 1960.
- Kennealy: 42:09 So 1960. Yes, yes. So he's been gone quite a few years and I understand today is his birthday.
- Seidenfaden: 42:18 Yes.
- Kennealy: 42:19 Yes, so we'll certainly have to say a prayer for him.
- Seidenfaden: 42:22 So I mean, the atmosphere of the school was just a family kind of affair. You know, everybody knew everybody's boyfriends, everybody was friendly with

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the faculty and received a lot of help from them, and they entered into a lot of activities with us.

- Kennealy: 42:42 That's right and little wonder that the alums were so loyal then. They have very, very fond memories and really remained very much involved.
- Seidenfaden: 42:52 Definitely.
- Kennealy: 42:52 Yes, and any fond memories of Xavier and your years there, that you-
- Seidenfaden: 42:58 Well, I remember moving quite a bit when we moved to Xavier.
- Kennealy: 43:02 I'll bet, yes.
- Seidenfaden: 43:03 Because I think from Husman Hall, we went over to the Schott Building for a while.
- Kennealy: 43:08 Oh, yes. Development did move into Schott as the Jesuits were moving out. Yes.
- Seidenfaden: 43:12 Yeah. And I can't remember where we went from there.
- Kennealy: 43:16 And now they're in Alumni Hall, the new Alumni Hall, which is on the other side of Dana Avenue, yes.
- Seidenfaden: 43:23 Oh, that's right. Now I know.
- Kennealy: 43:25 Yes, the old Coca-Cola plant.
- Seidenfaden: 43:27 I wasn't involved in that.
- Kennealy: 43:28 Yes. Well, before we conclude then, anything else that you would want to mention that you think of interest that we haven't covered so far?
- Seidenfaden: 43:39 Well, I don't know. I think it was so exciting on campus when the new library was built and then when the new dorm was built. That changed the complexion of the campus-
- Kennealy: 43:57 Now, you're speaking about Edgecliff.

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Seidenfaden: 43:58 Um hmm.

Kennealy: 43:58 Yes, okay.

Seidenfaden: 44:00 Completely changed the composition of that campus and they had about 200 students in that dorm, I think.

Kennealy: 44:08 Sullivan Hall, yes. I would imagine so. So, the library was built somewhat later as well, then.

Seidenfaden: 44:14 No, it was first.

Kennealy: 44:17 It was first. Okay. And was that Brennan Hall?

Seidenfaden: 44:18 Brennan Library.

Kennealy: 44:18 Yes, that was the library and Sullivan was the dormitory. Of course there was an administration building there.

Seidenfaden: 44:25 Well, that was the old building in which the college started.

Kennealy: 44:31 Very good. Well, thank you very, very much. This has been a wonderful interview.

Seidenfaden: 44:36 Well, I hope it helps... gives you the information you would like.

Kennealy: 44:40 It certainly does. I think we've got a lot of information here-

Seidenfaden: 44:42 I think there are a lot of things we could still talk about.

Kennealy: 44:44 Well, who knows? We may come back and do this again. But I do want to thank you very much and this will conclude our interview and, as I say, unless we come back for more, this will at least serve posterity well.

Seidenfaden: 45:00 Well, as we all say in the Edgecliff alumni now, Edgecliff lives.

Kennealy: 45:06 Forever. That's right.

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Seidenfaden: 45:06 That was our slogan.  
Kennealy: 45:09 Well, let's conclude on Edgecliff forever.  
Seidenfaden: 45:11 Okay.  
Kennealy: 45:12 Thank you, Claire.  
Seidenfaden: 45:13 Thank you.  
End of interview

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