

Audrae Warren Lynn

This tape is of Audrae Warren Lynn being interviewed in her home by Edie Butler on February 13, 1984 for the Humboldt State University Oral History Project. Audrae Lynn enrolled as a business student at Humboldt in 1930, the first year that curriculum was offered. She finished the two year curriculum in 1932. By her own acknowledgement, she did not fully participate in college life or activities and maintained her community activities and friends while a student at Humboldt.

Audrae: Really, I mean, some of the courses I took...

Edie: First tell me what years you were there.

A: I went and started in 1930. I graduated from high school in 1930.

E: Uh huh, which high school?

A: Arcata. And, I went two years...

E: And you were in the business curriculum.

A: Yeah, I was in, took all business.

E: And that was new at that time, or was it...

A: Yeah, that was the first year.

E: The very first.

A: Yeah. And Mr. Wilson was the professor.

E: What did he teach?

A: I believe that's all he taught was just the business courses, which wasn't too much to begin with.

E: What kind of work did you want those courses to prepare you for?

A: Really, I just wanted all around course in business. But, I got accounting and typing and shorthand which I did not like. I think I took an English class, I'm pretty sure I did, because I was never too hot in English and spelling and all these kind of things. It was kind of a beginner's, you know, beginning class. I took pottery and sewing and tap dancing if you can imagine. But we had a lot of fun.

E: Who did you take tap dancing from?

A: I don't remember exactly but I think it was Moni...

E: Monica Wright? Hadley?

A: Hadley. I'm not sure, but I think she taught it some of the time. There was another girl, I believe, but I can't remember her name. And I can't for the life of me remember the pottery teacher. He was excellent.

E: Was that Pop Jenkins?

A: Yeah.

E: What do you remember about him?

A: Oh he, we had a lot of fun. We went out on trips and got our own clay, you know, and things like this.

E: And got it prepared?

A: Yeah, we were always having wienie roasts or popcorn feeds or something. He was always doing something like that. He was a wonderful man.

E: Where were his classes held and where was his kiln?

A: Well, as near as I can remember, the building is like this you know, it would be on the west end. See all there was there then was just the main building and the gym and that's all there was. Right across the street from the main building was the tennis courts.

E: Those were new weren't they?

A: I believe so, I'm not sure right now, but I believe they were. And also down at that end we used to play in what they called the little gym, and we played volleyball. But, out in the back of that building, the main building, was where we went for pottery I'm pretty sure. But you know 54 years is a long time to remember.

E: Yeah, I know. I know. So that would be back where the stadium is now?

A: Well, the stadium was there.

E: Okay so, it would be out where the parking lot is now.

A: Well, I don't know what's down there now. I haven't been there for years. I keep saying I'm going up there and somebody says if you ever do you're going to get lost, so I don't. But, it was right in back of the main building down in a gully like and that was the football field and then the gym was over at the end of the football field.

E: So did he have a permanent kiln set up there?

A: Yes. Yeah, he had a kiln that for a long long time I had a vase that I made. I don't know what ever happened to it. All of a sudden it disappeared. But, we had lots of fun. And it was nice to learn, you know, things like that.

E: What kinds of things did the students make out of the native clay?

A: Well, as near as I can remember, all we did was vases and dishes and things like that on a wheel, you know, that's a pottery wheel. That's the only thing I did anyway, maybe some of the rest of them modeled, but I never did. But I don't remember exactly.

E: The native clay doesn't fire very hard.

A: No and another thing, lots of times we'd make things and when we'd bake them they'd break, you know, or something. Oh we'd have quite a time sometimes, or he did, because we didn't do any of the baking or anything. He did all of that. And I remember on the football field we used to have big rallies. You know football, they'd build huge great big bonfires and all the kids would come and we used to have a lot of fun. Another thing that sticks in my mind is the assemblies we used to have.

E: Where were they held?

A: Well, down in the other end of the building. There was a huge assembly hall there. I don't remember why we had assemblies, this just didn't enter me. But I remember Herb Inskip always played the piano and Cass Nellist and Toddy Thomas would tap dance. They were really good together.

E: What was the first name?

A: Cass, C-A-S-S, that's all I knew. And Toddy Thomas. The school in Fortuna is named for him.

E: Yeah, I just learned that the other day.

A: Yeah, he was a wonderful person. They don't come any nicer than he was.

E: Why was the school named for him? I understand he was from that area, but did he go back and was he a teacher?

A: Oh, he was a teacher, yeah. He was negro, you know, and he had quite a time at first getting a school. I know he had to go out, way out in the mountains someplace and teach. He had students. Three of them belonged to one trustee and the two trustees got mad at each other and this one, to be nasty, said that he wasn't going to have a negro teaching his kids. You know what I mean. He'd been there, I don't know, quite a little while but anyway he lost his school. Then, the next I knew he was teaching at Hydesville, I believe, someplace out that way. Then, I guess he came into Fortuna. But, I kind of lost track of Toddy. I saw him one time a long time after, Oh years after, in town on the street. He knew me right away and stopped and talked and of course I knew him. He had lost quite a bit of his hearing and had a hearing aid. He was an awfully nice person. The kids just loved him. When he was practice teaching he was always coming up through the halls. He had 5-6 little kids following along behind him. He must have been a wonderful teacher. That's about all I can remember. I played a lot of Tennis.

E: Although you said there wasn't a tennis team at the college.

A: No, no. You know, somebody would say let's go have a game of tennis and we'd go down and play tennis.

E: So the courts were handy.

A: Oh, yeah, they were right there. And of course, I drove a car, my dad let me take the car to school after I got up there.

E: Was he, were they living in Bayside at the time?

A: Yeah, oh yeah. We lived there from 1920 something. They bought the store and then the old store building was torn down. Then we moved up to where the post office is now. But I have always been in, you know, business. I worked 26 years for Arcata Redwood. I worked 9 years for Coca Cola, that was the longest job I ever had. Of course, at Coca Cola I did everything. I was the only girl there and I did bookkeeping, and the whole works. Then I went to – the first job I ever had was with Allen and Hensel's. It was Seely and Titlow's then.

E: Is that what's Hensel's hardware now?

A: No. It was up, let's see where, you know where you come up one block and then come where the drugstore is on the corner. There's a drugstore on the corner up above Hensel's.

E: Where it is now? Or where it used to be before?

A: No. Not the one that burned, but across the street there's one on the corner. Used to be, maybe it's gone. I don't know I haven't been there for a long time. I haven't noticed anyway what was there. But anyway, it's up this way then and it's right on the alley was Seely and Titlow's and that was Allen and Hensel's. Then Laurence Allen got out and they went down to where they are now, Hensel's Hardware. Lil Williams and Hensel were in there together.

E: So that was your first job after...

A: That was the first job and Lil Williams taught me billing machines and that's what I did. I did part-time work there, that's all.

E: How did the training you had at Humboldt help you or not help you?

A: Accounting and typing. I always did quite a bit of typing and accounting but no shorthand. That is something I could never do. I know everything, I passed it and everything but I could not take dictation. I just, I couldn't remember what had been said and write what was being said. I just, I don't know why, I just...

E: Well, it comes easier to some people.

A: Yeah, I guess, but it sure didn't to me. I had a terrible time, with the dictating part.

E: At that time were any of those courses offered in the high school?

A: Yes but I took, I had planned to be a kindergarten teacher, so I took regular courses that I could get into college with. Then after I got through school, why you know how kids are, I decided I didn't want to go for 4 years. I wanted to go to work, you know.

E: Why?

A: I don't know. I just don't. My folks wanted me to go on, you know, to be a teacher. I just couldn't see it for some reason or another. So I...

E: You were anxious for a paycheck.

A: I guess and I really didn't have a reason to be. My folks were never – you know. I always had everything I wanted, I mean within reason. It wasn't that. It was just, I just don't know, course school and I had to work real hard for everything I got in school and I guess this was one of the reasons probably. Because I was just getting tired of all the hard studying I had to do.

E: Four more years looked like a long time.

A: Yeah. Then too, I think some, I don't know, kindergarten teacher was 5 years I think, wasn't it then?

E: I don't know. I know right around that...

A: I'm not sure...

E: They went to four years. But I don't know.

A: Yeah, I don't know either now for sure. But I was thinking it, that something was 5 years.

E: Well, if the kindergarten curriculum or the teacher curriculum had still been 2 years, do you think you might have?

A: Probably. Yeah, I probably would have but four years when you're a kid seems like an awful long time.

E: How old were you at the time?

A: I was 17 when I graduated. I was 18 when I entered, my birthday is in August. But I was 17 when I graduated from high school. I graduated from Jacoby Creek School, grammar school. My daughter graduated from there and my oldest granddaughter graduated from there. She came down and lived with us just so she could graduate from there.

E: That's a good excuse.

A: Her last year of grammar school.

E: At the time you entered the business curriculum at Humboldt, was the business college in Eureka still going?

A: Yes, and you know I've often thought that, I don't know why because I worked all my life. I have never had any trouble with, you know, getting a job or anything. I have often thought that I probably would have gotten more out of it had I gone there because it was more established and everything. They didn't have a lot of business machines or anything like that, you know...

E: At Humboldt?

A: No.

E: They didn't. But over, that was Cradicks.

A: I didn't know whether Cradicks did or not for sure. But I think they did. But anyway, I'm glad now I went to Humboldt. I had a girlfriend who graduated from Cradicks. I think I knew about as much business as she did.

E: Did they have a 2 year curriculum there?

A: I don't really know but I know I went 2 years. I took, you know, shorthand. First year shorthand I got through pretty good but the second year I had a terrible time with the dictation, it was mostly all dictation. I just couldn't think, I knew how to write everything down that was being said but I just couldn't seem to get up speed enough or something to write as they were saying it. Then I couldn't remember when they started something else and I couldn't remember what was being said.

E: So Mr. Wilson taught all of the classes?

A: Yes, except English. I don't think he did. I think I, I don't remember who it was, but it was someone else I think I took that English class from.

E: That class of course was in Founders Hall, those classes that you had.

A: In the main building.

E: Yeah, upstairs in the second story?

A: Yeah. It seems to me the English class was upstairs. The others were downstairs. Another thing I learned – it seemed like I always got the job of running the mimeograph deals and everything. I enjoyed it, I mean it wasn't hard job to do or anything, I enjoyed doing it. But, he always said you do a lot better job than somebody else did. I've always done quite a bit of that, I mean, where they had mimeograph. When I worked for Arcata Redwood they had a mimeograph machine. I did a lot of it. It's kind of a dirty job, but it's fun too.

E: Since you were in the first business, group of business students, how did the other students who had been in there, well, all of 17 years by then – the other education students... how did they respond to this new addition to the curriculum? This new business degree?

A: I really don't remember. It was kind of separate from the other courses and everything. I don't think they paid much attention, you know, unless they wanted to take some of it or something. I don't

remember them ever commenting on anything like that. I had quite a few off periods. We had what we called a smoker upstairs. That's where I learned to smoke. I never got over it.

E: Where was the smoker?

A: Well, it was upstairs, I guess off of the ladies' restroom. Someplace, I can't remember just exactly.

E: Was it just for women or...

A: Yeah, it was just for women. We used to go up there and play cards – play 500 or pinochle or whatever somebody wanted to play. I spent quite a bit of time up there too because I loved to play cards. I don't know, there are just so many things I should probably remember but I just don't.

E: Well you are remembering quite a bit. What other things did the students like to do? Like go up and play cards between classes. What other kinds of things...

A: I really, I just can't remember. See, I played a lot of tennis, which I didn't have to take gym. I'd go down and play tennis.

E: You didn't have to because you were in the business curriculum? Or because...

A: No, it took the place of, and of course that I did. When it was raining and everything I'd play volleyball up in this little gym that they had, get a bunch together and play volleyball. So as far as being down in the gym, the only time I was ever down there was when they had basketball games or something like that and we'd always go to them.

E: Were there women's basketball games?

A: Yeah, I'm pretty sure there was because, oh Cass Nellist was very very active in gymnastics. I wouldn't say positive but I'm pretty sure they had a women's basketball team. I can't remember where they played or anything like that. I know Humboldt played with different schools and went on trips and things.

E: But those were the men's teams?

A: Yeah.

E: Did the women's teams...

A: I don't remember. I just don't, I don't remember. It just seems to me that they had a basketball, women's basketball team. Cass was real tall.

E: Did you participate in any other extra-curricular activities?

A: No, not particularly. I had a girlfriend and she and I loved to dance. We went to dances four times a week.

E: Where were the dances?

A: Well, there was always Saturday night – a main dance like. At Loleta...

E: At the college?

A: No, at Loleta or you know public dances. Then Wednesday night we went to _____ Hall in Eureka. On Sunday afternoon they had a big dance hall at Clam Beach up here and we went Sunday afternoon and Sunday night up there.

E: So you never had time for other things with all the dances?

A: No and we never went with boys. We always went by ourselves. Because we had a lot more fun. I mean we could dance with whoever asked us. Everybody mixed then. I mean they didn't go in 4, 6 or 8 people and they'd all dance together like that. I mean it was more, you started to go dances like that and you danced every dance with somebody different or practically somebody different. We used to have an awful lot of fun.

E: Did all the other college students go to these? Go to dances...

A: I don't know. I guess some of them did, but I don't remember. Libby and I were the only ones that I know of that went so often. We both loved to dance. Of course, I probably got that from my mother. She was another one that loved to dance.

E: So you'd put a little gas in the car, your father's car and off you'd go?

A: One weekend she'd take her folks' car and the next weekend I'd take mine. I'd stay all night with her if she had her car and she'd stay all night with me if I had mine, like on Saturday nights. So we had lots of fun that way.

E: Were they still having dances at the Freshwater Grange? Probably they still had them at the Bayside Grange.

A: Oh, yeah. They had dances at the Bayside Grange. I can't remember, I remember when I first started to dance that I learned to dance at the Bayside Grange because my folks, course we lived right across the street from them. Of course, everybody in Bayside went and that is really where I first began to dance, you know, with other people. I probably was around 14-15, something like that.

E: Were there dances at the college?

A: There could have been. But I just, we were never interested, I don't know. She took business, too. We just didn't seem to mix as much as other students.

E: Did the courses prepare you for the work you did?

A: Oh yeah, definitely. Because of typing, I typed lots. And I had taken one year of typing and...

E: So the classes did prepare...

A: Oh yeah, definitely. Typing and accounting. Because you had to have that on any kind of billing machine, you know. Know the difference between debits and credits. I say anybody who knows the difference between a debit and a credit they can learn most anything. But we had, as I said the short hand, I didn't, never took short hand, I never took dictation. When I worked for Coca Cola, Mr. Williamson would just say, "Tell such and such so and so," whatever he wanted to say and then I'd just write the letter and he'd read it and sign it and that'd be all there would be to it. Of course that came with typing, knowing how to write a good business letter.

E: How would you change the curriculum if you could have?

A: Well, for one thing I would have had more machines.

E: What kind of machines were new?

A: I can't remember, at the time. But I know they had billing machines because after I got through, I went to work for Lil and I learned billing machines. Then when I worked for Arcata Redwood. When I first worked for them I was working on radio and then they decided to put an IBM billing machine in. They knew I had experience on billing machines so that's what I did for the rest of the time I was there except for the last year and a half when they put in a computer and I was on a keypunch, I'd tell ya.

E: Didn't like that.

A: No, the most monotonous job I ever had in my life. I tried to talk them into putting me on at 4 hours, another girl on at 4 hours, and switching jobs. They just wouldn't go for it. They said you're accurate, we want you on the billing machine. So I said okay when I'm 62 I'm retiring and that's what I did. Otherwise I would have worked until I was 65. But, I just couldn't take it anymore it was terrible. You know on a billing machine, I put out so many different things, types of reports you know that they needed. It was always something – well of course it was the same thing every month but it wasn't the same thing day in and day out sitting there like this with a bunch of figures and maybe a few sentences.

E: But the keypunch...

A: Oh, I'd tell ya. They say down below they don't keep a girl on it 8 hours because they get so that they make errors and it's too monotonous.

E: You could have told them that?

A: I could have told them that, you bet your life I could. I tried to tell Arcata Redwood but they didn't believe me.

E: They didn't want to hear it is what it sounds like.

A: Yeah.

E: Were you aware at all of, oh the administration of the college? That was right when a new president was coming in. Anything that sticks in your mind about that?

A: No, nothing. You know, I remember Balabanis and why I remember him I haven't the faintest idea.

E: What do you remember about him?

A: Well, just that he was a nice person and that I couldn't understand him hardly at all. His English was quite broken and probably worse than he is now, or was. I don't even know if he is still alive, is he? I remember, of course I said Monica Hadley. I remember her real well. She was always real nice too. As far as any of the rest of the professors, I just don't remember.

E: It was a time when finances were tight because of the depression. Do you remember anything about the money problems at the college?

A: No, I don't remember a thing. Of course, we had a store and we always had enough to eat. I mean, we had a bad time like the rest of them did.

E: Anything at the college? Anything threatening to the institution?

A: No, I can't remember a thing. I don't remember what the tuition was or anything else. It's just been too long. Of course, I never have had a real good memory. As you know, I worked for everything I worked for in school. If I had a real good memory I wouldn't have had to work so hard.

E: What challenged you the most in your student days at Humboldt?

A: Shorthand. Especially because I didn't like it. I liked accounting, I really did. Of course, I was always real good in arithmetic when I went to school, just plain old arithmetic. I loved it. Which very few people I guess do, but I did. I guess the accounting just kind of followed through. I guess that is why I liked it so well. As far as anything else, any of the others I could have taken or left it, I mean I could type and I got so I was pretty good on it but I wouldn't have wanted to do it for a living. That's another monotonous job, if you're just sitting there all the time typing. I've always liked the work that I've had. I've had interesting jobs except the last year and a half I didn't like.

E: What did you appreciate the least about Humboldt?

A: I really don't think I noticed anything that I didn't like about Humboldt. We had fun and good times. Studying wasn't too bad except for shorthand. I don't think there was anything I disliked. In high school I loved it because of tennis. I just played tennis morning, noon, and night in high school. Every free period I was on a tennis court. I played a lot of tennis up there too even if it wasn't for competition.

E: Did you ever, any talk about getting a team for women together?

A: No, I don't. As I remember, there weren't that many gals up there that played tennis. It just seemed to me I played with the men most of the time. Somebody would come along and say "oh, let's go play tennis." And we'd go down and play tennis. It just seemed to me that there were more men playing tennis then there were women at that time.

E: You had your racket with you every day?

A: Every day. I had it in my car with me. It was just there, period.

E: You were ready. What local events or state or national or worldwide events do you remember happened during the time you were a student?

A: I can't remember. The only thing I remember, of course I wasn't a student then – I was married then – that was the World's Fair in San Francisco. I went to the World's Fair.

E: What year was that?

A: I think it was 1928 and '29 but I'm not positive. No, no it had to be later than that. I was married in 1935. Now I can't tell you. It had to be in the '30s, because I hadn't been married too long.

E: 1938 comes to mind.

A: That's probably what it was instead of '28. That was an experience I'll never forget. What I saw, I mean I didn't see an awful lot, we were over there twice. You just can't cover everything. It's just impossible, there were some things that I would have liked to see that I didn't get to. One thing that really stood out was the Japanese building. It was beautiful. They had a little bridge going over a creek, you know, and waterfalls. When you got inside – all those beautiful, beautiful things. It was really, really something. As far as when I was in school, I just don't remember. Like I said we had big rallies, bonfires and all that. I can remember that.

E: What was the relationship like between the college and Arcata, and the rest of the community?

A: Well I think it was fine in those days. I don't think there was any – there's one thing that I don't approve of – of course, maybe I shouldn't say anything. But, I do not think that when a student is going to Humboldt that they should vote in this district. I think they should have to get their vote from their own home town and vote in that district. To me it isn't right. Even if they are living here in an apartment, I mean to me, they go home when school is out and all that. I don't believe that the students should vote in the district. If they are going to be living here year around that's a different proposition but just to be here when school is going and then they are gone – I don't think it is right.

E: When you were a student, voting age was 21.

A: Huh?

E: When you were a student, voting age was 21.

A: Yeah, yeah.

E: And most people were commuters and they did live at home.

A: Yeah, in fact, I don't think that there were too many that were away from here. You know what I mean. I think it was more local people that went to Humboldt State than the way it is now.

E: Yeah.

A: Definitely. And I have always thought it was wrong that they should be allowed to vote here when they are not really living here. They're just going to school. Of course maybe I am wrong.

E: That's your opinion.

A: Yep.

E: What do you think is important information about the college that should be recorded?

A: Well, I think this is wonderful, I really do. I think there should be a history of the college from the time it started right up to date. I don't know, I think it's nice to have something like that to look back on and things that you don't remember and maybe you read about them you could remember. It's like even the yearbooks when I went to high school. Every once in a while I get them out and go through them and wonder who is this and who is that.

E: Did you have any yearbooks from college, from Humboldt?

A: No, no.

E: Did they have them?

A: I don't think so, I don't remember but I don't think they did. Not that I know of. I don't remember ever seeing one. Do they now?

E: They might again. I know they did for a time in the later '30s, I am not sure about the early '30s. Then on up to the '60s.

A: I think it is wonderful because you know you really forget people if you don't once in a while go back and look and see. Of course in my books they are scribbled all over from people signing pictures and all that. I think it's nice to have something like that, brings back old memories to you. Of course they won't mean anything after I'm gone.

E: Well, they might, I mean the kinds of things that were important to the students.

A: Yeah, they were. They were really important.

E: That matters.

A: Yeah, I think it does. I wish I could remember a lot more things that went on up there but I just can't...

E: It sounds like you kept your friendship circle with people who you knew before you went to school. You were there shorter than the other students and so you didn't plug into what was going on there.

A: No, I didn't. There were probably a lot of things. I can only remember one play that I went to. I don't remember it but I remember in the auditorium I was telling you about. I can remember, they had a play there. So, there must have been a course in this but I don't remember anything about it.

E: Yeah, there were groups.

A: In high school of course I always went to all the plays and everything. Ms. _____ was the teacher, she was excellent when it came to plays and drama and all that. I took PDJ which was public speaking, journalism and dramatics from her the last year so I could get out of Shakespeare and all that stuff. I tell ya, I had the worst time in that class. I always had trouble getting up and talking before anybody. The only reason I got through that class I know, was because of the scenery and all that. I painted scenery. Every time she got stuck on something she'd call on me to come and help, you know, scenery and all that stuff. Which I liked, it was a lot of fun.

E: So you weren't tempted to check into the dramatic program or anything?

A: No, I wasn't interested in getting up and acting before anybody.

E: Anything else that you remember?

A: No. Just as I say, I raked my brain for about two days in there, trying to remember things. That's all I got, you know, was just when I started.

E: But once you got talking you had a lot more information.

A: I probably, yeah, you probably did. At the time when you are trying to think about these things, I don't know, your mind kind of goes blank or something.