

Speaker 1: As part of the University of Michigan's bicentennial celebration, the U of M Library brought StoryCorps to campus to capture personal stories of those who make up the University's rich history. Missy Fette graduated from U of M in 1999. Her mother, Nancy Fette, received her Michigan diploma in 1966. For this latest installment in our series, the two sat down to discuss how things have changed for women on campus over the years.

Missy Fette: Did you feel when you were college age that the sky was the limit, you could do or pursue any educational or career path that you wanted to?

Nancy Fette: As I look at my friends going into different, or taking advantage of different opportunities, I think, most were teachers, a lot of nurses, social workers. I had maybe one friend who ended up going to law school, and was also a pilot, she was a pioneer of my group. And yet I remember at the University of Michigan how many different opportunities there were there. I had a friend who was in the School of Architecture. Didn't know many people that went off that beaten path for us at that time, but. I'm not saying the opportunity wasn't there, I just didn't know that many people who took advantage of that as opposed to people that you went to school with. I'm amazed at how many engineering friends that you have, you know, degrees in that area.

Missy Fette: Did you have a lot of men in your classes in the School of Ed, or was it mostly females?

Nancy Fette: Well, no, but I just didn't have ... Not necessarily in the Ed school, but I had in my anthropology class, obviously, that's where I met your dad. My English, I was within the School of Education, I had an English major, a Math and I think maybe a Social Studies minor, so I would be in those different classes.

Missy Fette: Was there racial diversity on campus, or was it mostly a white student body?

Nancy Fette: I would say mostly, certainly not as much as when you and Sarah would have gone through. That's how I'm remembering, not many minorities.

Missy Fette: When I think of the 60s I think of, just a very turbulent, tumultuous time. What was that vibe on campus?

Nancy Fette: Oh, very much aware that there was a war in Vietnam going on. Oh, we had protests on the Diag, the big sign sitting out there. Kind of intimidated me to be very honest with you. I'm not saying I didn't go and listen and stand off to the side, but I was not out there marching, or carrying a sign or whatever. It certainly made me aware of what was going on. I mean, there were teach-ins, there were just all kinds of things, just promoting an awareness, let's put it that way.

Missy Fette: What were the social issues of the time? Was it mostly Vietnam related things, or promoting diversity, promoting women's rights, promoting race equality? What were the primary trigger points for the students on campus?

Nancy Fette: Well, that's a good one. I remember the war, to be very honest with you. I'm not aware of women's issues, and maybe I was just in my own little world at the time too. Remember it was a huge campus for me, to adjust, and ooh, I did the best I could. I was often in awe of everything that went on. I kept my eyes open, to be very honest with you, just because I was just very, very eye-opening for me. From the sheltered background that I had experienced before.

Where to you, I mean having come up in a different household, too, different parents with different values, and I think we certainly made you aware of what was going on at the time, talked about it freely at home at the dinner table, would you agree?

Missy Fette: I think by the time I got to campus, in the 90s, I think the student population had changed and was even more diverse. I knew people from all over the country, in fact all over the world, really, of many different religious backgrounds, racial backgrounds, socio-economic backgrounds. And the great thing about campus is that there's a student group or a cause for every group out there. So it seemed very natural that every segment of society was represented on campus when I was here.

What do you think the greatest thing is that you got from your U of M experience?

Nancy Fette: Well, I'd have to say my degree. Definitely number one. My degree to the University of Michigan was I just felt magical before I even graduated. I had people knocking on my door, wanting to hire me. I don't even have my degree in my hand. I'm just amazed that they sought me out, came before I graduated. Another thing I take away from the University of Michigan which I've held onto, my friends. I to this day am in contact with, I don't get to see them as much now that I have grandchildren, but you know for a long time I spent far more time with all my friends from the University of Michigan than the kids that I went through high school with.

Another thing I took away from the University of Michigan, it opened my eyes in so many ways. It made me much more aware of what goes on, not just in the United States, but in the world. It made me very aware of different injustices in the world that, the older I get, really bother me. I'm not saying they didn't bother me before, but enough so that I more so take a stand and I'm more comfortable taking a stand on and acting in accordance.

And you? What do you take away from the University of Michigan?

Missy Fette: Obviously the degree, the education. That's the whole reason for attending. But, at this point in my life as well, the friendships that I made during college are irreplaceable. It's a different kind of friendship than you have at any other point in your life, because you're with, literally with, your college friends all day, every day. And I don't think you can get any kind of friendship dynamic that's any better than that.

Would you say when you came to campus, you had previously been somewhat living in a bubble?

Nancy Fette: Yes.

Missy Fette: And coming to campus maybe burst that bubble a little bit for you?

Nancy Fette: I would say definitely. And I'm glad that it did.

Missy Fette: It was a good, good thing.

Nancy Fette: It was a good burst, yes, yes.

Speaker 1: That was Nancy Fette, speaking with her daughter Missy about the generational differences for women on campus. These interviews were recorded by StoryCorps, www.storycorps.org. For more from the series, visit arts.umich.edu/storycorps.