

## INTERVIEW WITH AUDREY ENARSON

MAY 6, 2002

Q. I'm now with Audrey Enarson, Harold Enarson's wife, and a wife of 60 years as of June 7, 2002. We're going to talk with her very informally about what it has been like to be the wife of Harold Enarson for 60 years, and to stand with him through his two Presidencies at Cleveland State and Ohio State and his long distinguished career in higher education in general. And we'll ask her, invite her to say some things about what she has done independently in her life, to follow her own path, as opposed to being the wife of President Harold Enarson. Audrey, please, give us some comments.

A. Well first, I do want to remind us in this interview that my first exposure to being the wife of a president came at Cleveland State University. That was a small university just started in Cleveland, with great expectations for a public university. So there we were, both of us, under quite a bit of scrutiny. And certainly I was engaged in managing a huge house, larger than any home I've ever lived in, with help, and with parties right and left to acquaint Cleveland with the fact that this was a public university. Cleveland has several very outstanding private schools, and Harold took over the management of Cleveland State. So that was my first exposure to being in the public eye you might say. But I established there, as I did at Ohio State, what seems so important to me, and that is for the many, many people who work at the university to get out into the community, away from their classrooms, away from academia where their roles

are recognized. Let the community know who really is teaching their children, who really is using their tax dollars, and how. So I took that in both instances as sort of my own challenge. It seemed to me I had an obligation to do this, rather than to get tucked into the successful image of the President of Cleveland State or Ohio State. When we went to Ohio State, some dear advisors at Cleveland State said, "Now Audrey, Ohio State's going to be a little different from Cleveland. You better dress a little better. And remember that there are a lot of traditions at Ohio State." Because at Cleveland State, as a new public institution, we were establishing a whole new role.

I have a severely retarded nephew and it meant a great deal to me, to be involved with the disabled community in Cleveland as well as in Columbus. That was one of the first visible signs of my life outside of managing the household, i.e., to become acquainted, in Cleveland particularly, with the disabled community and the community organizations that dealt with services to the disabled people. I belonged to a group of volunteers in Cleveland who went down regularly to visit live-in people in this little house. We would sit around with a supervisor and have conversations with people who were generally mentally disabled. But this came to a catastrophic end because one day I was sitting there talking with this gentleman, and he picked up the coffee table and threw it at me, and just barely missed me. And the powers that be thought maybe I shouldn't do that anymore, in case they brought down the State of Ohio on their enterprise. It was a disappointing thing. Moving to Ohio State, I carried some of that with me, my interest in the disabled community. And I actually became

appointed by the State of Ohio, through the Governor's Office, To the Committee for Employment of the Handicapped, and was privileged to go to Washington, D.C. and heard Barbara Jordan. You're familiar with her. Absolutely a fantastic person. All on my own, representing the wife of the President of Ohio State. You can't get away from that. But nevertheless, I felt very proud to have been selected in that position.

I should switch into managing the house, and managing the various functions. Ohio State really had first of all to find a home to place the President because the old home on the campus was no longer serviceable for the needs that were down the road. So a gentleman and I went around and looked at numerous homes that were for sale to the University. Everybody thought they had the best University home, understandably. But our wise Board of Trustees Chairman, Chairman Shocknessy, did not want the residence to be in Bexley. They wanted it where more of the faculty were concentrated. Not many of the faculty were living in Bexley at that time.

Q. Nor do they yet.

A. Nor do they yet. It's too expensive. So we were very pleased when we found the house that the University actually bought (in Clintonville). It was near a park as you know, ample room for lots of things. Then we had to talk about furnishing the house. That was another expense that came up because not all the furniture by any means from the old house came up to the new house. So again, I had lots of help from the University in making the decisions. What color of the rugs to put down, what color of the drapes, what we should have in the dining room. Find the

dishes. I had a note left from Marjorie Fawcett (preceding President Novice Fawcett's wife) to me telling exactly how many good serving dishes we had and there were very few. So that became my responsibility, always working with the officials who had control of the budget and were able to assist me. But on the other hand, a lot of those decisions were my own. I think I chose a Noritake, good dishes for the University. Then we had to find a way to have them stored and washed after the parties and taken care of. Happily the piano you see downstairs right now (in the Enarson Boulder home) was in the downstairs part of the President's house. And you may recall being down there, I don't know. That was our own piano. But it was used often for entertaining at various events.

Q. Let me ask you, since entertaining was an essential role and occupation for the President's wife, who really established the entertainment calendar? How often? How many? What size party? And was it relentless? Was it week after week? Did it come easily? And were you able to say no once in a while when enough was enough?

A. Well, I think Harold and I worked together quite a bit on that because again, as the new President of a large University, particularly at Ohio State, it was incumbent upon us to establish a sense of belonging to Ohio State. And in order to do that, you have to meet people and have people in. And the house was a great curiosity for the general faculty and the public as such. So early on in my entertainment role there, someone made us a form for me to fill out: the purpose, the date of the party, who was invited, how many came, etc. That was very important. So we both talked over the purpose of the party. I never planned a

party at Ohio State unless Harold and I had talked about it. Or Kathy and people who were working with Harold.

Q. Kathy Wyatt?

A. Kathy Wyatt was my special assistant. She was invaluable. She was just great. She was so thoughtful and helpful. She was really a pleasure. Then I had a budget that I worked under. And I had to be responsible for that budget. So when we had parties, I had to give a rough estimate of how much each menu would cost. Well now I'm a little gal who never had much outside of the family to entertain. And that was a big job. Because we entertained more at Ohio State than we did at Cleveland State. At Cleveland we didn't have much of a budget to work with – not that much money. And we didn't have so many constituencies coming in as at Ohio State. But I kind of got a thrill out of that. I had a room that was my office in that house. We hired a decorator, the University did, to help us make the house presentable. And this man came out and had an interview with me. And he decided purple and red and white stripes should be in my office. That's what they say about old ladies, purple and red go together. And I had a nice desk. It wasn't this desk (the one in the interviewing room), but it was similar to this. This poor thing was damaged in the moving. And that was where people came to talk to me about the work. Then we would walk around the house and see how the entertainment pattern might go. Who would greet whom, where they would put their coats, where they would park their cars, who would park the cars, how we would manage that. You have to remember, we had some pretty large parties there.

Q. Yes, I do remember because I was at many more than one. I remember that what I would call your upstairs living room was replicated on the lower level. And it's still the largest living room I have ever seen in a house where real people live.

A. That's right. And so we had to have comfortable sofas in case the party was small enough. But we also had to have room enough to put up things. That's a restaurant job you know, in managing something like that.

Q. Can you estimate how many events you might have hosted monthly or even annually?

A. Over the years I'll just kind of put it this way, we averaged about 2,800 people a year entertaining in that house. And about 500 at the Overlook Farm. That was a far more informal kind of entertaining. I remember we had a barbecue out there at Overlook. We had the College of Ag people involved in that. And we barbecued pork chops for this group. And it was very informal. Paper plates and sitting around. And then we had a letter from somebody who said they objected to the way the pork chops were cooked. They weren't cooked long enough. They should have been much more thoroughly cooked. Those kind of things always come to mind.

Q. Now Harold, in his conversations and in some of his articles, made the point more than once that being a President of a University like Ohio State was a very consuming, very demanding job. And it took considerable clock hours to do it in the way that he felt he had to. Which meant that you didn't very often see each other except in the morning and evening.

A. That's true. That's right.

- Q. I think he mentioned lunches with his wife were a rare occasion.
- A. Really very rare.
- Q. In the time you had together, at the end of a typical day for the President, did your talk center on whatever issues had been on his plate that day? What kind of conversations would you tend to have?
- A. As you do with your wife. I'm sure you just exchange what's happened during the daytime and the people you've met and the problems you've met. And then the joys that you've had perhaps. And then we would discuss the coming events. Football was always the big thing in the fall as far as we were concerned. And then the graduations. Those were important. But it is difficult to establish a husband and wife relationship when you're both branched out with the same goal -- to serve the University, but yourselves at the same time. Important years of our life. We spent nine years there. And that meant nine precious years. We were both healthy. Got along alright.
- Q. Did Harold seek your input on matters of, shall we say, controversial issues that were facing him. Did he sometimes ask you to critique his speech texts and that sort of thing?
- A. Not so much the texts of his speeches, but we certainly talked over some of the problems that he faced all the time. It was just natural to talk over problems. His problems certainly superceded mine. And so I had an ear that I could listen with and sometimes offered some criticism or suggestions. I seemed to have my feet on the ground in some ways a little more than he did, particularly when the medical thing came up (the Practice Plan).

Q. You mean the Medical Practice Plan which he spent considerable time talking about with me today.

A. And he told you that the doctors came to the house one Sunday morning? And that was not a pleasant time in our life.

Q. Was it an intimidating event to have all those people show up unexpectedly?

A. Well, yes, we're not the timid type, but you have to handle it very carefully. So that you don't antagonize. They're already upset, and if you show any snarls, then that makes it worse. So you have to be very careful about that. But I would not sit in. I greeted those people that particular morning and then got Harold. I don't think he was right in the living room when this happened, when they came out on that Sunday morning to talk to him. Those were sad and touchy moments.

Q. Focusing on the campus environment, the geography of Ohio State. It's a very large campus geographically, with a very large component of agricultural land.

A. Right.

Q. How much time did you spend getting acquainted with the physical campus? How much time did you spend down on campus? What did you particularly enjoy about the campus?

A. I'll tell you what my first experience was on the campus of Ohio State University involving the students. Woody Hayes and I were blindfolded and given canes. And we were told to get to the administration building from a certain point on the campus, as a blind person would do.

Q. You were simulating being handicapped?

A. Simulating being handicapped. And this came about from a student group, and I would have a hard time reconstructing the student group. But again, my reputation in being interested in disabled people followed me down to Ohio State. So Woody Hayes and I walked around and did this. We had been told that blind people know where walls are. They can feel it somehow. I didn't believe it, but as I walked around running into a wall or two, I realized there is a barrier there that the body senses. So you don't see very many blind people walking into walls. Of course, they've got their cane. I had to get down the steps from where we started out. And Woody did too. But we managed that. So that was my first experience.

Q. Did you travel with the President as he went on some of his overseas assignments, to the Bowl games and to other places?

A. Oh we went to the Rose Bowl games all the time, and we entertained at the Rose Bowl games. When we went to the Rose Bowl games, right away I began to see that the wives and the children of the players were the ones who were left holding the bag. So we organized a party for the wives and we had babysitting for the kids. They would take them out right after Thanksgiving to get ready for the Rose Bowl. Well by this time, the little kids had runny noses, they were constipated, they were crying all around, and the poor wives were stuck there. So we just started us a nice affair of entertaining the wives and the staff that were connected with the Rose Bowl.

Q. Very interesting. I hadn't heard that.

A. Yea. This was something that we were both proud of.

Q. What kind of overseas trips are most memorable in your recollection?

- A. Well of course India. We went to India when we were at Ohio State. I believe he's touched on that, hasn't he?
- Q. To a degree. He did not talk a great deal in detail about his overseas trips.
- A. He was with a group of educators representing Ohio State in this capacity. I had never been to India, and that was a big thrill for me. I was at that time serving as a national board member of the Girl Scouts. So you get a card from the girl guides, international girl scouts. So I had a card to introduce me to Girl Scout groups in India as we went around. I was a great problem to the people who took care of us because there were little smoke signals going up, and every time I'd come in, I was asked when they could come and see me, and I could come and visit their camps. So I went with them. I had buffalo fudge out there, made from buffalo's milk. But that didn't make me sick. I did get sick in India but not that part. And I really enjoyed meeting the women who were not a part of the higher education group, but just the women who were concerned about their little charges. And other women. They were all very poor.
- Q. Were there opportunities or occasions to get more than superficially acquainted with the spouses of the Vice Presidents? I believe they were all wives because I think Harold's staff was male at that time, until Ann Reynolds came.
- A. I didn't have. I don't remember that I had a particular luncheon or anything for just the wives of the Vice Presidents. What I did have at Ohio State was a VIP luncheon, very important people, and those were the staff people that worked in the offices of the Vice Presidents and of my husband. Without those support people working at those desks all the time, most of the administrators would have

been lost, including the Vice Presidents. Those women were a great help. And so we had a luncheon for those people. And the Vice Presidents seemed to think that was a pretty good idea.

Q. How would you describe your relationship with students? In talking with Harold Enarson, it is very clear that he was a student-centered President, and that he made a great effort to relate to the students. Did you have occasion or take opportunities to cultivate student relations yourself?

A. I tried to. And we hosted several large student groups. Once we asked all of the elected student representatives from all of the branches of Ohio State, their faculty sponsors and the President and so forth of the groups to come to our home.

Q. And by branches you mean the regional campuses?

A. That's right. And they did. And we had coat racks set up down in the garage. We had food that we served to those folks. I didn't know just what students would want to eat, so I made up something from my Girl Scout books. And one was (I told you about this last night) a coleslaw. So here I'm making coleslaw. I bought brand new garbage barrels and washed them out and sterilized them. And then I put cabbage and all the other things in there and just stirred it up with my hands. And Harold came in and said, "What are you doing?" I said, "I know what I'm doing but I don't know why I'm doing it." But we did have food that we thought they would like to eat. And that was important for me to do that. You just have to work with students and get them to relax around VIP persons.

Q. And the student group, was there a fair representation of the international contingent? We have always had large numbers of international students at Ohio State.

Q. We did. Not necessarily those international students who held offices in organizations. I remember so well, however, that we made a point to invite one student representative, and his faculty sponsor, and we invited students from the gay community. The faculty sponsor didn't come but the representative did. Why that person chose not to come, I don't know. But he didn't come. We have pictures back here galore of various student groups, international groups. But within the student body, you found representatives of various races. And I've told you I think about the international party that we had. For the students. Because at Christmastime, when campus vacates, the ones that are left behind are the kids whose homes are far away. And so we invited them. And we had luminaries. Do you remember our luminaries? And they came dressed in their native costumes. And their little kids came dressed in little costumes. And we had baby-sitters downstairs in that kitchen area in back, beyond the living room. And we had a nice warm party for people who enjoyed coming out.

Q. You spent fifteen years in the role of wife of the President at Cleveland State and the role of wife of the President of Ohio State in the very shank of life, during your early years. And in many ways that life put you in a fishbowl and certainly deprived you of the kind of personal life that most husbands and wives have. Even more so than being the wife of a corporate CEO. Because the President's role is, I think, a very public one.

A. A public one.

Q. A public university president's role is so much more involved with the community.

A. That's true.

Q. Thinking back on that reflectively, were you conscious about this deprivation, this intrusion into your personal life, which you could never get back once those years were gone.

A. That's right.

Q. Or were there rewards that compensated for that loss?

A. I might answer that in this way. You remember that I've told you many times I came from a ranch. And husband and wife on the ranch worked together. There is no husband over here and the wife there. It's always an extraordinary compatibility in planning the day's events and what has to be done. They work together. And I took that job, as being the wife of a university president, in much the same fashion. I was by his side as a partner. And he shared his problems with me. That was a great relief I think, for a man in a leadership role, to be able to talk to somebody who would be sympathetic. And not all the time was I sympathetic. Sometimes I would be critical. But most of the time I just felt he was under tremendous pressure, all the time, from any angle. And yet he had to always have a smile on his face as much as possible. Funny thing. When he was at WICHE (Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education) earlier, one of the commissioners, he was the President of the University of Wyoming, took me aside and said he was from the south; and he said to me, "Audra, Harold will be a

university president someday but he's got to learn to control his temper." And that was true and it has been all the way along. He was quick to ignite.

Q. And I assume you helped him to try and curb that.

A. I tried to calm him down sometimes.

Q. I did not ask Harold this, but I assume it was difficult for him to go many places without being recognized as the President.

A. Oh always.

Q. And being approached in that role. Were you able to be a little more incognito as you tried to pursue a personal life? Were you always recognized as Audrey Enarson?

A. Not just from the street, no. But again, that was one of my advantages of my attempt to integrate with the community outside of Ohio State. In a way I was kind of staying away from the Vice Presidents' wives. I didn't want to get too involved because once you do that, some personal problem comes up, and then it's hard to get away from that, when you're married to a man who might want to fire them or something like that. But I enjoyed being out in the community. I was quite able to function comfortably. But, even as the wife of the President of Ohio State or Cleveland State, still I felt that I had some identification of my own.

Q. Did you join community groups?

A. I was always a lifetime member of the YWCA. I've been in there for years. I was a member of the Columbus Symphony Orchestra Board, and there I pulled a little rank; and I never knew whether I did it right or not. But at that time I was getting more and more aware of older community people, who were not even

thought of as possibly being able to play an instrument. Their young instrument players were the important thing. I believe the director of the symphony was named Evan Whallon.

Q. I don't recall that.

A. He lost his wife to cancer, but before all of this took place. As a member of the Board, I had asked him, "Why couldn't the symphony involve older people in playing instruments, have some section do something." They would still be giving to the community and refreshing themselves. He didn't think much of that because it just didn't seem wise. But that was the one time that I felt that maybe I'd pressed upon my position a little bit more than I should have. Because he did make an attempt to do something by making it possible for older people to try out. That had not been done.

Q. You have three daughters who were young enough to be at home in your Cleveland days, but not any longer when you were serving in your OSU Presidential wife's role. But certainly still young in their life. And I assume that the schedule that was required of the President and therefore of you, kept you from as much familial life as you would have liked to have had.

A. That's true. I think that the girls and I had a good rapport. But it is difficult to be the daughter of a President and an official family. Lisa was the one that had to take the burden on that. She was the youngest one. And there were lots of times, particularly when we went to Cleveland, and she went to Shaker Heights High School, and someone said, "What business does your father run?" That's the way that that went.

Q. Shaker Heights was like Bexley, right?

A. It was like Shaker Heights was like Bexley. Elaine played the piano and she was able to work with the Shaker Heights chorus and had access to community life that way. But our official life was hard on them.

I could tell you a little story. This has nothing to do with Ohio State necessarily, but not very many people realized we had daughters at home when this incident happened, when we were at Cleveland State. And one was upstairs in a room we had designated as a guest room. She heard a little noise outside. She peeked out the window and kids were throwing toilet paper up on the trees. Big deal. And I'll tell you what she said: "What the fuck are you doing?" And they disappeared. They thought I said it. They didn't know she existed.

Q. Well, one final question: As you look back over the 21 years that you've been gone from Ohio State, back at that time when you and Harold were a team and the President and Presidential wife, were those happy years reflectively? Were they years you felt were well spent?

A. Yes. They were vital years of our lives. I mean, that was the crux of our lives, certainly of my career, having now been a housewife here in Boulder for 21 years. You had to make an adjustment to that. And having him around all the time too. But he's been very active outside of this community. But yes, those were important years in my life, and his too I think. They certainly stand out as we look back on our careers.

Q. Thank you very much. It's been a good rounding out of a very, very successful interview session with the Enarsons.

A. Well thank you very much. Thank you.