

**Interview with Kay Brown**  
**9/24/01**  
**Interviewer, Jane Stearns**

Jane: Kay, maybe you could tell us how long you have been here?

Kay: In the church?

Jane: Yes, or in Asheville. You haven't always lived in Asheville, I take it.

Kay: I moved to Asheville from Transylvania County, a place called Sherwood Forest, and I lived there up until 1986.

Jane: You lived in Sherwood Forest?

Kay: Yes. And several of us knew about the congregation and we just drove into the church every Sunday . . . I've written this down . . . we drove with a few friends more than 40 miles every Sunday to the UU church. My husband took notes of the sermons without fail every week, and I still have some of them. One of the things that we enjoyed were potluck suppers in each other homes, which stimulated friendships. We had a minister at that point named Bill Hammond and he was very popular, a very erudite gentleman. Didn't have a great sense of humor, but very smart. I can't remember why he left but he was succeeded by Jim Brewer.

Jane: Yes, I remember Jim.

Kay: You were here then?

Jane: I was here the last year before he retired.

Kay: He was a very friendly, outgoing leader who shared his personal life, including some of the tragedy of it with his congregation. We all loved him, and I still do. He recently visited.

Jane: Did you see him?

Kay: Yes, I did. I hugged him. I don't know whether he remembered me but he pretended he did.

Jane: I'm sure he did. Had you lived all your life in Sherwood Forest before you . . .

Kay: Oh, no. I was born in Minnesota. I was born in a little town called Bemidji in northern Minnesota. My father was a great fisherman. We moved from this little town of Bemidji down to Minneapolis and later to St. Paul. When I was in St. Paul I went to school in New England.

Jane: I was interested in when you moved to this part of the country.

Kay: Let me see, March '86. We moved from Transylvania County to here in '86.

Jane: And before then you lived there how long?

Kay: Before I became a UU, the first place I attended was a Congregational Church, and I was baptized in the Congregational Church, and I was with that church until I moved to Detroit where they didn't have much of a Congregational Church, but I belonged to a liberal Methodist Church in Detroit. In my notes it says joined UUCA, the date that I joined this church, and I left that blank, but I'm sure it's in the record.

Jane: How did you happen to join the UU church?

Kay: Well some of the people that we lived with over in Sherwood Forest had discovered our church, and they invited us to go, so we would drive – my husband said, I'm not going to drive 40 miles every Sunday. Just remember that. Well, he was very enthusiastic. He took notes of the sermon every time.

Jane: Do you still have those notes?

Kay: I'll look. I have a lot of his stuff, it's up on a ladder somewhere. Do you think I should look?

Jane: It occurs to me that it might be very useful.

Kay: I am not sure whether I have it, but I have things on a shelf.

Jane: I'll ask Ruth Beard about it. You were talking about when you joined the church and you came every Sunday, 40 miles.

Kay: Yes. In my notes, I say, the congregation was enthusiastic and the minister was stimulating, and we drove with a few friends more than 40 miles every Sunday to go to church.

Jane: You attended the potluck suppers, and I understand you played bridge.

I am going to ask you to tell us a little bit about the kind of music we had back in Bill Hammond's day. I mentioned the organ to you, and you said, oh yes. So could you tell us about the organ?

Kay: I don't have a very vivid recollection of the music during that time. It was the sermon that I remember. But . . .

Jane: There was an organ?

Kay: Oh, yes, there was an organ, and Anita Freeman was the organist.

Jane: Was that a regular part of every service?

Kay: Oh, yes, she was there every Sunday, as I remember.

Jane: Your focus really was on the sermon, that's what drew you to the church.

Kay: Oh, yes. But the music was important too. It made the experience of going to that church that Sunday, it enriched it.

Jane: There wasn't the variation that we now have?

Kay: No.

Jane: You mentioned one of your first impressions of Maureen when she came, something you saw her do or something like that.

Kay: Yes. I don't remember what the occasion was but this child, and she got down to the child's level to speak to her and that impressed me. My career, such as it was, was around young children and so that . . .

Jane: You'd be sensitive to that kind of thing. We talked a little bit about your being aware that we moved toward more social concerns.

Kay: I think that's been changed a lot. I don't think Bill Hammond was that concerned about the world, and I think the focus has changed . . . and I applauded that. I think it's good that we're concerned with the world.

Jane: In connection with that you mentioned that you had seen Maureen at meetings, and what was the term you used, something about her part in it.

Kay: Well, she was involved with other good causes other than the church, in the community. I can't remember, but there would be meetings – I remember there was a black man who was running for office and I went with some of the people here to hear him and to meet him, and Maureen was there.

Jane: Was she active in it?

Kay: I couldn't say whether she was or not. There were lots of other things going on.

Jane: The thing you said before, was "that's where her light shone."

Kay: That's right.

Jane: I think that's the only thing we missed. That was one of the last things you said, and I think we have covered it. You commented about Bill as a minister, and Jim and Maureen, all three very different people yes.