The following is an interview with Joanne Wilson Dale. She attended Humboldt State College as a student from 1946 until 1948 when she transferred to a private nursing school in San Jose. She was a premed major, art minor at Humboldt State. She currently lives in Crescent City. She was interviewed at the McNulty House in Crescent City by Jeanie Allard in May 1984.

Jeanie Allard: Well my son didn’t have anything fancy like that.

Joanne Wilson Dale: Looks pretty fancy. Ours is a little thing like this.

J: Ours is that kind too. And you just have the one son?

JD: No I have a son and a daughter.

J: Oh, I don’t think I have met your daughter.

JD: She lives in Eureka. Floral shop down there, do you remember where the Old Rosary used to be? She runs that. She runs a floral shop down there.

J: I had no idea. Now you went to Humboldt for 2 years?

JD: 2 years. 46, 46-47, 47-48.

J: And you lived on campus the whole time?

JD: Uh huh, Nelson Hall. That was the first year they turned Nelson Hall into an all-girl. It used to be the dining room in the middle, you know, and the boys on one side the girls on the other. But, after the war we got more people up from southern California and we had more students coming in so they needed new facilities. So, they built barracks or something for the fellows and they turned Nelson Hall into nothing but women.

J: It was just women the whole time you were there?

JD: Uh huh.

J: Now was Fran your roommate the whole time or just...

JD: Yeah, both years and a girl from Fortuna was a roommate for one year and a girl from Yreka was the first year_____. There were 3-4 in a room, 2 in a room to begin with but they doubled up on us after that and there was four in a room.

J: Boy, it must have been really crowded.

JD: Two sets of bunk beds and, let’s see, did we each have a desk? I don’t remember that, but I think there were at least two desks in there. It was wall to wall and the closet was the worst thing. You couldn’t, everybody had to have their things, four people in one little closet was a little much.
J: And your cafeteria facilities were right there______?

JD: Were in the middle. There was, well originally, have you ever been to Nelson Hall?

J: Yes.

JD: Well originally one wing, there was a big building here and then there was a wing going that way and a wing going that way and one was ______

J: Did they keep the cafeteria facility there after the men were moved?

JD: It was the cafeteria for everybody on campus. I mean all the boy’s dorms and everything ate there, anybody could eat there if they went to the college.

J: Was it fairly inexpensive to eat in the cafeteria?

JD: You know when you’re young you don’t pay attention to prices but it seemed to me like it was. The food, as I remember, was alright. I don’t think it was anything spectacular.

J: Were you there for the 2 year secretarial course?

JD: Yeah. The first year I majored in premed and minored in art.

J: Interesting combination.

JD: Interesting combination. Then the second year I decided I wanted to go into lab tech work and there was no place on the west coast that you could take any special and get a degree in lab tech. You had to go back to Cook County, Chicago. So, I gave that up. I didn’t want to go that far away from home. At the end of my second year I finally decided, well I didn’t want to be a doctor, so I went into nursing. From there I went to San Jose, San Jose Hospital and San Jose State University.

J: And you graduated from there?

JD: Uh huh.

J: Was there a very large premed program at Humboldt when you were involved in it?

JD: Yeah there was. I would have no idea how many but I know there was a number of us taking all of the science courses and things that had been mostly predominantly male.

J: Dr. Frank who happens to be my doctor was involved in premed at about the same time. I was reading through the yearbooks in preparation for this.

JD: Dr. Frank. That’s his last name?

J: Yes, his first name is Henry. I think, all the yearbooks refer to him as Hank.

JD: Don’t remember.
J: What kind of extracurricular activities do you recall going on?

JD: I recall dances, football games. The football team was terrible. It was when they were first getting started. It was really bad, but they were working on it. I remember square dance things, basketball games, photography, a lot of photography. That’s about all that I can remember going to and participating in. I’m not much of a joiner so I didn’t belong to anything. They didn’t have any fraternities or sororities.

J: Were there other kinds of clubs on campus?

JD: No, I really don’t… girl’s athletic clubs, you know, the same old thing you had in high school but nothing that I was really interested in.

J: Fran had mentioned that she could recall the Newman club starting up and everybody wishing they were catholic so they could belong.

JD: Yes, the Newman club, that was really the only club I remember too. They had, I don’t even know what they did to tell you the truth of the matter, not being catholic so I didn’t…

J: A big mystery. What’s a Newman club? ______. What kinds of special events occurred while you were there? Did you have homecoming?

JD: Well, let’s see. I don’t remember any big homecoming parades or anything like that. This was kind of an odd time because it was right after the war and most of the people were older than I. Actually the majority of the people on campus were older. They were veterans, older people. They had a good journalism section if I remember. Quite a few people belonged to some club with journalism. But, I can’t remember any big event or anything like that. I don’t think they were that organized.

J: Did you go right out of high school to Humboldt.

JD: I had a scholarship to Cal but I didn’t want to go that far. Like everybody else you take the closest to home.

J: Was there a housemother in the dorm?

JD: Yes. The first year there was a housemother. If I remember right, she was one of the teachers. The second year one of the students was appointed as house mother type. You had to sign in and sign out and you had to be in by a certain hour – 10 o’clock I think it was on weeknights and 11 o’clock on weekends or something like that. You had to sign out if you were going home or anything that you were going to do that you were going to be gone for any length of time.

J: Did you have many opportunities to come home for weekends?

JD: I came home all the time. That is probably why I don’t remember a lot of the activities going on because I’d come home because it was so close. I would stay once in a while if there was an event that I wanted to go to I’d stay, but other than that I’d go home.
J: Did someone come and get you or did you come on the bus?

JD: No I had a car.

J: You had a car.

JD: My brother went at the same time, _____ was right out of the Navy. I’m not sure if it was the first year that I went to school but I know he was there the second. He had a car and when he wasn’t using his car I was using it. So we’d, back and forth. Well, maybe he was there the first year. I can’t remember that far back. There was one year he wasn’t there.

J: Well with your car that must have made you a popular person on campus.

JD: It was an older car. In fact, it was a model A Ford with two seats in it. So you couldn’t do much carrying of people around. I wish I had it now.

J: I’ll bet.

JD: Oh, do I wish I had it. So a car didn’t really mean that much. There wasn’t that many people who even had cars.

J: That’s what Fran had said and she commented that people didn’t ride bicycles.

JD: No. No one had bicycle. I can’t understand that, why didn’t we have bicycles?

J: That’s what she said. I don’t know, you just about fall over them everyplace now.

JD: No, nobody had bicycles. Everybody walked. If you wanted to go downtown you walked downtown. There was no bus service. There wasn’t even any taxi service. The only hardship that I remember was if you did want to go down and catch the bus, Greyhound, to go home. Most of the time I had a ride, either my brother was going home or I was driving or something. Fran would go back and forth with us. Who else? Betty Tyler Gray. Do you know Betty Tyler?

J: I don’t think so.

JD: Lived in the same dorm that I did. And she, Stateline Motel? The Tylers?

J: Oh yeah.

JD: She went to school one year with us and so when one of us got a ride we all got a ride, you know, coming this way. No bus service, as far as inter-town bus service. I’ll bet there wasn’t over 2,000 people in the college. Did you notice in any of your research?

J: I wrote those down someplace but I didn’t bring that paper with me. _____

JD: I could imagine it wouldn’t be much bigger. How many people go to high school?

J: Oh 1200 – 1500, I think. And I suspect that it probably was _____
JD: I don’t think it was much bigger than that.

J: One of the things I read about were work days, where everybody worked on the campus doing gardening and all kinds of things. Or did you go home?

JD: I went home. I remember going to an air show but it wasn’t campus sponsored. Out on Samoa. I guess they still have air shows out there. We went out there one time that I stayed for the weekend. But, I didn’t get into any work. They closed the cafeteria on the weekend too. So if you stayed on the weekend, then you had to go someplace else to get anything to eat and that wasn’t very much fun because you had to walk all the way downtown.

J: Couldn’t have been very convenient, I don’t imagine, because there were no places to eat even downtown.

JD: Well, at the foot of the hill there was a little place that just served chili, which you could take chili just so many weekends. And then you had to walk all the way down... I don’t know whether it’s still there. I haven’t been through Arcata recently. The Varsity was an ice cream parlor sandwich type thing.

J: It’s not there anymore.

JD: It isn’t?

J: The man that owned it, at least when I was in high school and college, has died.

JD: There was one other little restaurant. On weekends you went home or you ate peanut butter and pickle sandwiches or something.

J: Besides this barracks situation for the boy’s dorm, was there any other kind of physical changes on the campus while you were there?

JD: No, not that I can remember. That all came afterward. I didn’t see any changes except from the first year to the second, they did have the, had built the Quonset hut type things for the fellows to move into. Everything was in the same place up in the main building, all the offices were up in the main building of the school. I don’t remember any new buildings being built. They were working on the football field and the bleachers and things like that. It was just a little dinky thing.

J: Was there a gym?

JD: There was a gym and it was the original gym that was there. They’ve probably built a new one since. But, it was down the hill and in the gully and the football field was up from that.

J: That’s where all the PE was, and you were required to take PE while you were there?

JD: Yeah, but you could take anything you wanted. You could take dance or you could take whatever, but you were required to take PE.

J: When I went later, you were required to take team sports. I’m dreadful at team sports.
JD: I’m terrible at any kind of team thing. I always took dance.

J: Well, I’m dying to hear the story that Homer was telling me that you were going to tell me about.

JD: Oh I was telling him about when they turned the dorms over on whatever side it was, that used to be male facilities. Of course they didn’t change any of the bathrooms and here were all of these urinals, oh I’d say maybe four of them, four or five of them and they’d flush every… so what we’d do if we had any plants in our room we’d go stick them in this thing and they’d get watered. That’s what he was talking about.

J: Sounds rather efficient.

JD: Yeah, I thought it was. We were taking advantage of all that.

J: Did you, in pre-med I suspect you used the facilities of the Library quite a bit. How did you find that?

JD: Pretty good. I can’t remember the name of the librarian, but, she was very helpful in many things. It was limited and also the science department was limited. There were lots of things that you couldn’t take until you were either a junior or senior. In that they didn’t have enough to fill although they let a lot of us that were majoring in pre-med take some of the advanced classes. I got in on a couple of, forget what it was called. Anyway, we made our own slides and things like that. Anyway, that was really interesting. They would give us, I remember one time they gave us bacteria to identify and we were each given this little vial of bacteria and then we had run all of these tests and identify it. Mine happened to be typhoid fever, when I finally identified it. It was a wonder the whole university didn’t have it. But, I can’t remember anything else about that. That was kind of neat. They had a photography lab that you could sign in and spend so many hours in, or you could sign so many a week you could use. And, the music department had little rooms that you could go in and practice piano or whatever you were taking. That was down in the… that was a new building the second year too. They built some sort of a small little barrack down by the school, there was a school that all the teachers took their...

J: College elementary.

JD: Uh huh. And it was down in there in all those, it was kind of a Quonset hut type thing, temporary. It’s not there now.

J: Were most of the music things held there or just these practice rooms?

JD: Just the practice rooms. No, most of the other things were held up in the main big building.

J: Top of the hill.

JD: Top of the hill.

J: Did you have any contact with the college elementary?
JD: Yes, at one time I thought I might, when I was trying to decide which way I wanted to go, I went down there for an orientation type of thing but I decided that wasn’t for me. Actually, I think I would have been a good teacher. Probably what I should have done.

J: I suspect you would have. Did you then work as a nurse after you finished your training?

JD: Yes, I worked in Surgery for 3-4 years after until I had children, at San Jose Hospital and then I worked off and on at different things. After my kids got grown, enough that they were in school, then I worked as a designer in a hobby shop for about a year. Then we moved up here_____ . Basically, I am trained to be a surgical nurse.

J: That’s real interesting. I’d be ghastly at that.

JD: It’s very interesting. I used to work nights.

J: Are there any other things that you can recall particularly?

JD: Gee, no that was kind of two years of try - you know how you are the first two years in college? You’re trying everything. You want to know what you want to do. You don’t know which way to go. I think that everybody should go into the military or something for 2 years until they know, at least know what they don’t want to do.

J: I think so too.

JD: I really think all the kids should, right out of high school, go into something where they… I don’t care if they clean along the road or what they do but, until they find out what they don’t want to do and what they do want to do. Because it’s a waste of time and money, really. Oh, you learn a lot. It really isn’t a waste but it’s a trial and error kind of thing. Very few people know that that’s what they want to do and follow through on it.

J: How did you decide to transfer to San Jose?

JD: Addie Hagan. I don’t if she trained or taught or something down there and she knew us through school, San Jose Hospital school. It was a private school. Private, it wasn’t catholic, it was just a private hospital. It was a distance I thought I could manage.

J: It was two years _____ inability to accept the first scholarship.

JD: Yeah, I couldn’t go that far the first time off. It was kind of a big step to go that far away. At that time people weren’t traveling like they are now. Now, my daughter went clear to New Hampshire, didn’t faze her. I would have been absolutely a nervous wreck if I had to go that far that young.

J: How long did you live in Del Norte County before you went to school?

JD: My mother moved here in 19, well the end of 1939 – 1940. Sam Finley, who was judge here. He was appointed from Yreka. We had lived in Yreka before that. We came there, here then. _____ off and on, I mean, we lived in San Jose for 20 years. That was just a...
J: A junction along the way.

JD: I can’t even remember parts of that.