

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Frances Greer

COLLECTION: 4700.0902

IDENTIFICATION: Lyric soprano with Metropolitan Opera, graduate of LSU School of Music

INTERVIEWER: Ronald Ross, Jane Ross

SERIES: University History – Women at LSU

INTERVIEW DATES: August 3, 1997

FOCUS DATES: 1921 - 1990s

ABSTRACT:

Tape 1286

Greer's first public performance at age four; born and raised in Arkansas; entry in *President Clinton's Amazing Arkansas*; shows musical ability as an infant; comes to LSU as music major in 1934; auditions for Professor H. W. Stopher; Greer wins scholarship; works singing for Rotary Club while at LSU; LSU Opera; keyboard skills; reading music; Helen Gunderson; Pearl Willis, theory teacher; Pasquale Amato, voice teacher; Louis Hasslemans, conductor; foreign languages for singers; Greer's roles with LSU Opera; LSU School of Music Ensemble; Metropolitan Opera broadcasts; Greer sings in English with Philadelphia Opera Company; Curtis Institute; Lily Pons; Willford Pelletier invites Greer to audition for Metropolitan Opera; Greer and Margaret Harshaw win competition in the early 40s; Greer's first role in *La Boheme* at the Met; voice type lyric soprano; Jenny Cervini, dresser; Greer honored as an "Arkansas Traveler"; Thomas J. Watson, CEO of IBM and fellow Arkansan, visits Greer; Watson has Greer and Mary Tibbit sing several times at United Nations functions at the Waldorf Astoria; baritone Jussi Bjoerling; tenor Jan Pierce; lyric coloratura Eleanor Steber; Greer always learning; Leonard Warren; Robert Merrill; tenors Brian Sullivan and Charlie Kullman; Dorothy Kirsten; Roberta Peters; Patrice Munsel; Regina Reznick; Mack Harrell; John Brownlee; Bidu Sayao; Yarmela Navortna; Greer meets Clark Gable on the Met Tour; Greer begins teaching at University of Michigan in Ann Arbor in the 1950s; love of teaching; Judy Dow Towsley, student of Greer's; Marian Mercer, successful student of Greer's; Greer at Michigan ten years, then marries; memorable teaching colleagues from 50s and 60s; remembers singing in Carnegie Hall; sings at White House; letter from Bill Clinton when Governor of Arkansas; Senator William Fulbright; teaching vs. singing for music faculty; Jessye Norman; LSU in the 30s and 40s; Olga Maestri; 1942 Memphis performance; discusses old programs from performances.

TAPES: 1 (T1286)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 1 hour, 14 minutes

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 68 pages

RESTRICTIONS: None