

# **Easter Ellen Cupp**

**First Woman to receive a Ph.D. in Oceanography from Scripps Institution of Oceanography**



Interviews conducted by  
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## INTRODUCTION

Easter Ellen Cupp was the daughter of Joseph Henry Cupp, a contractor, and Mary Jane Cross Cupp. The family lived in Neola, Iowa where Cupp was born on Easter day, March 30, 1904. Cupp was one of four children; her siblings were Blanche Cupp Avery, Florence Cupp Starkey and Leland A. Cupp. The family moved to Whittier, California in October 1910.

Cupp graduated from Whittier High School. She received an A.B. degree from Whittier College in Los Angeles in 1926, and a master's degree in zoology from the University of California, Berkeley in 1928. Cupp worked closely with Professor S.F. Light at Berkeley. She moved to La Jolla in 1928 to begin doctoral research and rented one of the staff cottages on campus. She published several papers on diatoms between 1930 and 1934. She received a Ph.D. in 1934 in Biological Oceanography from the University of California for her work at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography in La Jolla. Her dissertation was entitled, "A Critical Study of Certain Distinguishing Characters in Three Closely Allied Plankton Species of the Diatom Genus *Nitzschia* and their Relationship to Certain Environmental Conditions." Easter Ellen Cupp was the first woman in North America to receive a doctorate in oceanography. She conducted research on plankton as a research assistant to her doctoral advisor, Winfred Emory Allen.

Cupp remained at Scripps as a research associate from 1934-1937 and instructor from 1937-1940. Her book, *Marine Plankton Diatoms of the West Coast of North America*, published by University of California Press in 1943, is a classic in the field. Dr. Cupp was an avid photographer and personally prepared all of the illustrations as well as the text of the book.

Cupp left SIO in 1940 on the behest of Harald Sverdrup. In his 1939-40 budget report to the President of the University of California, Sverdrup wrote,

I beg to inform you that I have requested Dr. E.E. Cupp to seek other employment from the beginning to the next academic year. This action is by no means intended to reflect on her ability or the manner in which she has conducted her work at the Institution, but has been dictated by consideration of the general scientific program of the Institution. Unfortunately the financial situation does not warrant the creating of a new position and much to my regret I found it necessary to discontinue the services here of Dr. Cupp in order to begin studies which at the present time appear to be of greater importance.

Sverdrup specifically commended Cupp as a conscientious and industrious worker and commented that his decision was no reflection on her ability as a scientist. Dr. Cupp felt that her gender was an element in this decision. There is some textual and anecdotal evidence to support her point of view. Sverdrup used the instructor billet vacated by

Cupp to employ Marston Sargent,<sup>1</sup> a biologist studying marine algae, which was not a new research program at Scripps. Financial pressures did not prevent Sverdrup from retaining the services of two other young post-doctoral students, Walter Munk and Roger Revelle.

After leaving Scripps in 1940, Cupp served as assistant biologist for the Naval Biological Laboratory in San Diego until 1943. When that assignment ended, her lifelong friend and Whittier classmate Dorothy Rosenbury told Cupp that a teaching job was available at her school. Cupp taught science and English at Woodrow Wilson Junior High School in San Diego until her retirement in 1967. She was very proud to have taught a number of students who became scientists.

Dr. Cupp died in San Diego at the age of 95 on August 27, 1999. She never married. Scripps biologist John McGowan noted in her obituary, “Easter Cupp’s monograph on West Coast diatoms was, and still is, a major contribution to our understanding of the biology of the California Current. It is accurate; it is precise, and was about 20 years ahead of its time. It will be in use for at least another 50 years.”



Easter Ellen Cupp, 1935

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<sup>1</sup> Marston Sargent’s wife Grace “Peter” Sargent mentions Cupp and circumstances at SIO when Marston Sargent was employed in the billet previously occupied by Cupp in her book. Sargent, Peter. *The Sea Acorn: Scripps Institution of Oceanography the People and the Place, 1936-1942*. San Diego: Privately Printed, 1979.

## INTERVIEW HISTORY

Joellen Louise Russell first met Dr. Easter Ellen Cupp at her residence in San Diego in May 1998. She persuaded Dr. Cupp to be interviewed on tape for the Centennial Oral History Collection.

Joellen Russell interviewed Dr. Easter Ellen Cupp at the Kensington residence Dr. Cupp shared with her friend Dorothy Rosenbury in San Diego on August 15, 1998. Dr. Cupp was ninety-four years old and in ill health. She tired easily, and she had some hearing loss. She also spoke very softly. Miss Rosenbury had recently broken her leg which confined her to her chair, but otherwise she was in good health. The interview was conducted in the small living room of the residence.

Russell conducted a second interview with Dr. Cupp and Miss Rosenbury on August 26, 1998.

Joellen Russell was an SIO graduate student in geochemistry, nearing the completion of her Ph.D at the time of this interview.

The audio tapes of the two interviews were transcribed by Betty Shor in September 1998. The transcript was edited by Joellen Russell, but not by Dr. Cupp or Miss Rosenbury.

Deborah Day  
SIO Archivist

August 17, 2000

## INTERVIEW ONE: 15 AUGUST 1998

Russell: ##<sup>2</sup>This is Joellen Russell and it's August 15th, and I'm sitting here with Miss Dorothy Rosenbury and Dr. Easter Ellen Cupp. We're going to start an oral history of Dr. Cupp and Miss Rosenbury so that we can put this in the Scripps Archives. I'm just going to set this [tape recorder] down in the middle so that hopefully they can hear us all. If you could try and speak up just a little bit so that, you know, because it's not the strongest recorder, that would be great.

I'd like to have answers from both of you since you've been together for so long. I think that's great. Where were you born?

Cupp: Iowa.

Russell: You were born in Iowa. You have mentioned one of your sisters so you had older siblings.

Cupp: I had two sisters.

Russell: Were they both older?

Cupp: Yeah.

Rosenbury: She's the baby.

Russell: You were the baby.

Cupp: Yes.

Russell: So, Dr. Cupp, were there any scientists in your family?

Cupp: No.

Russell: No. You were the first one. Did your parents go to college?

Cupp: I don't think so.

Russell: First in your family to go to college?

Cupp: [not audible]

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<sup>2</sup> The symbol ## indicates that a tape or segment of tape has begun or ended. For a guide to the tapes, see page XX.

Russell: Well, I can understand that. I have a couple of siblings who are that way myself. So, you moved out here when you were six and you moved to Whittier, California. Is that right? Is that why you went to Whittier? Because it was close to home. Whittier College.

Cupp: Yes, I suppose so.

Russell: And you went to Whittier as well, is that right, Miss Rosenbury? Is that where you met Dr. Cupp was at Whittier?

Rosenbury: Yes.

Russell: How did you meet, do you remember?

Rosenbury: On the hockey team, I think.

Russell: What kind of hockey was it? Field hockey?

Rosenbury: Field hockey.

Russell: Did you play other sports, or was it just field hockey?

Rosenbury: Tennis.

Russell: Tennis. Were you roommates at Whittier or did you just become roommates later?

Rosenbury: Not until we went to Berkeley.

Russell: How did that happen? How did you get to move to Berkeley?

Rosenbury: Well, I went to work in a J. C. Penney Store.

Russell: Was that when you were at Whittier or when you were at Berkeley?

Rosenbury: Whittier.

Rosenbury: What did you do while you were at Whittier? Did you have to work too, or was your family able to support you?

Cupp: Family supported me.

Russell: I meant when you got to Whittier College. Did you have to work while you were in school or did your parents help support you?

C: [not audible]

Russell: Did you start in science at Whittier? That was when you first started taking your major science classes?

Cupp: Yes.

Russell: Did your parents support you in doing science? As picking science as a major? Because at the time there weren't many other women doing science? At Whittier?

Cupp: Oh, I guess there were some.

Russell: You weren't the only woman doing science at Whittier?

[no response]

Russell: So what made you think to go to Berkeley? Did you get a scholarship?

Cupp: No. It was just because.

Russell: The school for what you wanted to do.

Cupp: Yes.

Russell: Did you know you wanted to do oceanography then, or were you just going to do biology?

Cupp: Biology.

Russell: We looked at that letter that [SIO biologist W.E. Allen] wrote you to come, offering you the position at Scripps, the original graduate student position.<sup>3</sup> Right, okay. That's already in the Archives. Do you remember who your professors were at Berkeley? I believe some of your documents were signed by a Dr. Charles Kofoid. Do you remember him?

Cupp: I remember the name.

Russell: That was a long time ago, I know. That was back in 1927 or 1928.

Cupp: Yes.

Russell: I believe it was actually before the Depression. But you actually moved down to Scripps in 1929, isn't that right?

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<sup>3</sup> W.E. Allen to Easter E. Cupp, June 18, 1928. Typescript carbon copy. SIO Biographical Files, AC 5, Box 4, folder 151.



Cupp: Yeah.

Russell: When you started graduate school. Now, how did you get together in Berkeley? Who was the first one to get to Berkeley?

Rosenbury: She was.

Russell: Right. And it happened that you came up and became roommates. Well, with someone else as a roommate at first. Right?

Rosenbury: Yes.

Russell: And you were going to do your master's program. So, did you not get along with the first roommate or you just thought Dr. Cupp would be a better roommate?

Rosenbury: No. [laughter] She was a nice girl but her habits were not.

Russell: Then you moved in with Dr. Cupp. Were you living in graduate student housing at that time? At Berkeley? On campus?

Cupp: I think so.

Russell: So you were both going to school at that time? You were working on your master's and you were working on your master's, Dr. Cupp? I think that's what it was in the records that I saw. Dr. Cupp, when did you first hear about SIO? Was it that letter from Dr. Allen? Had you heard about Scripps while you were at Berkeley, or was Dr. Allen's offer the first you'd heard of it?

[not audible]

Russell: I didn't know about that. Can you tell me more? Who was Regina? Does she have a last name?

[not audible]

Russell: We can find it later. She was one of your science teachers. She was a mentor of yours at Whittier?

Cupp: Yes.

Russell: And she was the one who...

Rosenbury: Contacted Dr. Allen.

Russell: Contacted Dr. Allen. That's wonderful. And that's how you were offered the position at Scripps? While you were at Berkeley?

Cupp: [not audible]

Russell: Well, it was a long time ago. Were there any kind of admissions process at the time? Did you have to fill out a lot of forms?

Cupp: I suppose so.

Russell: It's OK. Actually, if there's ever anything, I've got a strong back and arms. If you ever need a hand I'm happy to help.

Cupp: [something about papers]

Russell: If at any point you need a hand getting something down or would like to have help, I'm at your disposal. It's not a problem at all.

Cupp: [not audible]

Russell: At some point, if you feel like going through any of that, I'd be happy to help get things down or help sort. Especially since I'm so interested in this story, of how this all happened. I guess it's because you are the very first woman to ever get a Ph.D. in oceanography, at Scripps certainly, and pretty much, as far as I know, in the world. Were you admitted right into your doctoral program when you got to Scripps?

Cupp: Must have been. [more not audible] advisor.

Rosenbury: Kofoid?

Russell: At Scripps was it Allen?

Cupp: Dr. Allen.

Russell: Dr. Allen. That's right. Do you remember the first day when you moved down here to La Jolla? Do you remember where you lived when you first got here to Scripps?

Cupp: [something about] in the cottages.

Russell: Which is right next to the institution.

Rosenbury: She was up there first.

Russell: First roommate and then you moved in with Dr. Cupp when that roommate didn't work out. So you became better friends at that point? So when Dr. Cupp got offered this graduate position...

Rosenbury: She was already down here.

Russell: You moved first, Dr. Cupp? What made you decide to come down?

Cupp: Well, I was trying to get a job.

Russell: What kind of a place was this cottage?

Cupp: Well, it was a living room [more not audible] and bathroom [more not audible].

Rosenbury: catch pneumonia.

Cupp: For a little while [more not audible].

Russell: Do you remember any of the people who lived in the cottages near you?

Cupp: [not audible]

Russell: Actually, we could hold this up now and maybe start again on another day.  
Would that be o.k.?

C: A good idea.##

## SECOND TAPE

Russell: ##This is the 26th of August at about 2:30 in the afternoon, and I'm here with Dorothy Rosenbury and Dr. Easter Ellen Cupp, and we are going to continue with the second portion of the interview for the oral history. We ended last time talking about what your first impressions were of here at Scripps and how you actually got here. It was my understanding that you received a letter from Dr. Allen, who became your adviser, offering you a graduate student position down here at Scripps and you came down to Scripps and were actually living in housing nearby. And at that point, Dorothy, you came down to stay with Dr. Cupp, right?

Rosenbury: Yes.

Russell: So can you tell me a little bit about what the housing was like there? I think we talked about that last time, but if we start there, it might be easier to talk about what it was like at Scripps in those early days.

Rosenbury: Well, many temporary people had lived in them, and they showed it. But I told you that the one that she got had postcards all around on the ceiling.

Russell: From people who had been living there before?

Rosenbury: They'd put them there for decorations. And they were not in good shape.

Russell: What were your neighbors like? Who were the other people who were living in housing there at Scripps. Do you remember?

Cupp: I can't remember the names.

Russell: Do you remember, Dorothy? Were there other faculty there? Or were there other students?

Rosenbury: There was one fellow that had his wife; he was studying there. I don't remember his name. The people on the other side was a gardner and general roustabout at Scripps, with his wife and I think it was four children.<sup>4</sup>

Russell: Wow! Four kids living right next door

Rosenbury: Well, we didn't mind. I didn't mind. I was gone all day, and she was at work in the lab, so it didn't matter too much.

Russell: Do you remember how you adjusted to that first experience in the lab?

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<sup>4</sup> Carl I. Johnson and his family lived in the cottage next to Dr. Cupp.

Cupp: It was pretty newly built so it was in pretty good shape.

Russell: Did you start right in on your research or did you start doing the research and classes or did you just do classes when you first got there?

Cupp: I don't remember classes, mostly just working myself on my own work.

Rosenbury: You remember all kinds of little bottles that they sent over to look at. Had what plankton?

Russell: She says there were bottles that they used to bring you, which had plankton in them. So, you specialized in diatoms?

Cupp: Yeah.

Russell: And you worked primarily with a microscope? Describing them?

Cupp: Yup.

Russell: I've read parts of your book now. I'm not a biologist. At what point did you start working on your book? Did you start working on diatoms right away at Scripps, or did you get into that later?

Cupp: I did that pretty much right away, didn't I? I think so.

Russell: Were you doing that kind of work when you were at Berkeley?

Cupp: No.

Russell: No, you just started the new oceanographic work when you came to Scripps. What was it like working with Dr. Allen?

Cupp: Oh, he was nice enough to me. He wasn't too happy about some of the people.

Rosenbury: He didn't have a Ph.D. and the others [inaudible].

Russell: Hmm. So he didn't necessarily get along with everybody. But the two of you got along just fine.

Cupp: Yes, we got along fine.

Russell: Did he help you with your work, or did you just decide what you were going to work on yourself?

Cupp: I mostly did my own work, decided what I was doing.

Russell: What got you interested in diatoms?

Cupp: He must have done that. [They were readily?] available to work on.

Russell: I chose my graduate work similarly, meaning my adviser was doing something and I was sort of an apprentice. That sounds familiar to me. Did you feel like you were an oceanographer or a biologist when you first got there? When you started to work? Were you really still a biologist or was it both or was it mostly oceanographic?

Cupp: I think it was mostly oceanographic, wasn't it?

Russell: Did you have social relations with the other people, the other students there? What kinds of things did you do for fun?

Cupp: Played cards.

Russell: Played cards.

Cupp: Went fishing for the the fish that come in.

Russell: Grunion?

Cupp: Grunion. Went grunion fishing, we played cards.

Russell: Was this with other women students or other men students?

Cupp: Men students.

Russell: Men students. Do you remember were there other women students or were you the only one?

Cupp: I don't remember for sure. I suppose I have lists of them some place.

Rosenbury: I think you were the only one, Ease.<sup>5</sup>

Russell: Do you remember lots of other women working on science there?

Cupp: Uh-huh [negative].

Russell: No? Pretty much just the guys. How many other people were working in the labs near you? Were there a lot of people or were there just a few?

Cupp: Just a few.

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<sup>5</sup> Miss Rosenbury often used Dr. Cupp's nickname Easy, or Ease for short.

Russell: Were they all working with microscopes or were they working doing other sorts of analyses?

Cupp: Mostly with microscopes, I think. I won't [guarantee] any of this.

Russell: Do you remember when you first met Dr. Vaughan?

Cupp: [no audible reply]

Russell: Did you have any impressions of him? You didn't directly work with him, but did you have any interactions with him?

Cupp: No, we got along all right.

Russell: Was he helpful at all?

Cupp: Yup.

Russell: Pretty much?

C: [no audible reply]

Russell: Let's see. They gave me a list of people that they were wondering if either one of you remembered from those early days or had had any experience with. I can just ask you; it's not a big deal if you don't remember them. Deborah Day, the archivist, was curious if you'd had interactions with these people. The people she lists here are: Dr. Denis Fox.

Cupp: I remember his name.

Rosenbury: I remember what he looked like.

Russell: Do you remember what he did? Was he another scientist like Dr. Cupp?

Rosenbury: I guess so.

Russell: Dr. Martin Johnson? Either of you?

[No reply]

Russell: George McEwen?

Cupp: Yes.

Russell: Was he around?

Cupp and Rosenbury: Yup.

Russell: What did he do? Did you have to interact with him much?

Cupp: Not much.

Russell: Let's see. Dr. Erik Moberg?

Cupp: Yes. He worked also in the building. He drank a lot.

Russell: You're going to get to edit everything when they make the actual transcripts, so not to worry. Do you remember anything about him? No, not even the drinking part?

Cupp: He was a nice fellow, very likable, but he did drink more than was good for him.

Russell: Let's see: Dr. Francis Sumner?

[no reply]

Russell: No, okay. Dr. Claude ZoBell?

Cupp: Dr. ZoBell.

Russell: Do you remember Claude? Do you remember what he was like?

Cupp: Not much.

Russell: Not much?

Cupp: Just the name.

Russell: Was he a biologist too?

Cupp: I think so. Wasn't he, Dee?

Rosenbury: I don't know.

Russell: It's harder because you were the one actually doing the work. Let's see: Dick Fleming? Do you remember Dick Fleming?

Cupp: I remember the name, yes.

Russell: He was a...

Cupp: He was a Canadian, and he lived in the house next door to us for a while.



Russell: Oh, he did. He lived in some of the temporary housing as well. Was he married when he lived next door?

Cupp: No.

Russell: No, he was a single.

Cupp: He had a girlfriend in Canada.

Russell: Had a girlfriend in Canada. It's amazing, you do remember these people, both of you. This is pretty good.

Cupp: Dorothy remembers more than I do.

Russell: I'm afraid I have a hard time remembering my college roommates, let alone, you know, and I'm a lot younger. Let's see. Did you have any interaction with Roger Revelle? Was he there?

Cupp and Rosenbury: Yes, he was there.

Rosenbury: Who was he working for, Ease?

Cupp: I don't know the name. He was working on his degree. Dorothy said he really wrote it.

Russell: Who said?

Cupp: Somebody named Thorp.<sup>6</sup>

Russell: Thorp said that he really wrote it? His own dissertation. Oh, Thorpe said that he wrote Revelle's dissertation? Aha! It was kind of a scandal at the time?

Cupp: No.

Russell: No?

Rosenbury: It was not a scandal. Roger tended to forget things.

Cupp: And he wanted to be a big shot.

Rosenbury: And his aunt was Ellen Scripps, by marriage.

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<sup>6</sup> Eldon Marion Thorp (1907-1976) received a Ph.D. in geological oceanography from the University of California in 1934 for work undertaken at SIO under Thomas Wayland Vaughan. He worked under Revelle in the Sediments Lab.

Russell: You remember. How did you find out, I mean, how did you become aware that Thorp felt that he had written parts of Revelle's thesis?

Rosenbury: He told us.

Russell: He told you. Now Thorp was a friend? Was he a student?

Cupp [or Rosenbury]: Yes.

Cupp: He was [?]. I don't know who he worked for.

Rosenbury: We used to go places with him.

Russell: With Thorp? And Revelle was in the process of getting his dissertation done at the time? Right?

Cupp and Rosenbury: Yup.

Russell: They list three women here who were on campus: Tillie Genter...

Cupp: She was the librarian.<sup>7</sup>

Russell: She was the librarian. What was she like?

Cupp: Very nice, very nice, lovely person.

Russell: Did she live nearby or did she live off campus?

Cupp: She lived in San Diego. This is Tillie here. [showing a photo]

Russell: A picture. Okay, I see that. Was she married?

Cupp: No. She wasn't too well. We liked Tillie a lot.

Russell: Did you do things socially with her?

[no reply]

Russell: It doesn't sound like there were a whole lot of women on campus anyway.

Rosenbury: No, there weren't.

Russell: Did you feel isolated by the fact that there weren't any women or did you just hang out with the guys or how did that work?

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<sup>7</sup> Tillie Genter was the Secretary to the Director. Ruth Ragan was the Librarian at SIO.

Cupp: Well, we had each other and enough to keep us busy, I guess.

Rosenbury: Ruth Ragan was somebody's secretary. Whose secretary was she?

Cupp: I'm not likely to remember that.

Russell: Whom she worked for?

Cupp: She had light ebony hair, was a secretary in Japan,<sup>8</sup> and she was quite interesting.

Russell: The other one they had is Katherine LaFond. Do you remember her?

Cupp: Oh, yes. She lived in the other side of us, and she was very nice. I liked her very much.

Russell: So who did you usually play cards with?

Cupp: Oh, Dorothy and I don't remember all their names.

Russell: Were there a bunch of were they all men or were there some women, or was it just the two of you?

[not audible]

Russell: Were these people who lived in the housing nearby you? Where did you used to meet to play cards?

Cupp: The Library.

Russell: In the Library. What was the Library like at the time?

Cupp: Well, it was upstairs in the old building there. And it was nice. We used to play I've forgotten what game we used to play with the Library cash money. They came across the corridor there to the Library upstairs, so if there was somebody in there, the money all disappeared [not audible].

Russell: Do you remember the card games?

Cupp: Not very much.

Russell: What kind of hours did she keep, Dorothy? Was she working all the time?

Rosenbury: You worked what was it? She'd go early [not audible].

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<sup>8</sup> Ruth Ragan worked for the Y.W.C.A. in Japan for many years before coming to SIO as Librarian.

Cupp: Most of the time, I think.

Russell: What time did you get home usually in the evenings? Did you make it home for supper, or did you come home later? I know I have a hard time getting home for dinner sometimes.

Cupp: We got home for supper, I think. I probably had to [not audible].

Russell: What time did you get home from your teaching job downtown?

Rosenbury: I started work at about eight o'clock and then we'd usually leave around five around three, but there always would be [exceptions]. You know how that goes.

Russell: Oh, yeah.

Rosenbury: So, then I had to drive from here clear out there, which was twenty miles, fifteen miles. [not audible] I got there faster if I went the twenty mile way. I'd go up Murphy Canyon, then Costa Mesa. So I wouldn't get home until about 4:30 or 5:00, depending on the meetings. I had no set time to get home.

Russell: Did you usually beat Dr. Cupp home, or did she beat you home?

Rosenbury: She'd walk home. You would get home before I would, wouldn't you, Ease?

Cupp: I think so. I just wish I ...

Russell: So, did you both cook or did you take turns? I know with my roommates we pretty much cook separate because we're not always eating at the same time. Did you eat together?

Rosenbury: I think I mostly did the cooking.

Cupp: I agree with you.

Russell: She was teasing. She said I might as well agree with you, and she winked.

Rosenbury: We had for cooking a 3-burner thing about that big [gesturing], with three burners on it, on top of something. That's what you had to cook on. Oh, and the hot-water tank, you had to turn it on if you wanted hot water. Then you had to remember to turn it off. It was primitive.

Russell: So, did all the students stay in the housing next to campus or was there a waiting list or something? Or was there just enough room? I remember reading the letter from Dr. Allen saying that there was going to be housing for you, but that they needed to know

when you were coming because it was usually temporary housing.<sup>9</sup> So, were there other students in the housing there, or was it just like the gardener and people like that?

Cupp or Rosenbury: Some students.

Russell: The other students, did they take classes with you, or were all of you just working individually on your projects?

Cupp: Mostly individually, as I remember it.

Russell: So that's what you did for a Ph.D. So you worked individually for your professor on research that he was interested in, and that's how you got your Ph.D.

Cupp: Yup.

Russell: How did you decide when you were done with your Ph.D.?

Cupp: I did write answers, they were given on file.<sup>10</sup>

Russell: Was there an exam? We have a defense now where we get up and we give a talk for about an hour and they ask us questions.

Rosenbury: You had to go to Berkeley, I remember that.

Russell: She had to make a trip up there? Is that when she was finishing?

Rosenbury: In order to get her degree.

Russell: In order to get her degree, she had to go to Berkeley?

Rosenbury: Uh, huh. I guess Kofoid and some others asked her questions.

Russell: That sounds familiar. We don't have to go to Berkeley. We get examined right at Scripps now, but because it was part of the UC system, I assume that's why you had to go to Berkeley?

Rosenbury: I remember that where we stayed our rooms were up over the, I guess it must have been the dance hall. Somebody, I forget the name of the orchestra, played "I'll Never be the Same" all night.

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<sup>9</sup> W.E. Allen to Easter E. Cup, June 18, 1929. Typescript carbon. SIO Biographical Files, AC 5, Box 4, folder 151.

<sup>10</sup> Dr. Cupp defended her dissertation for the degree of doctor of philosophy on Tuesday, May 8, 1934 at the University of California, Berkeley, in the Life Sciences building, Room 5096, according to the printed program for the examination which is in SIO Biographical Files, AC 5, Box 4, f151. According to this item, the doctoral committee included Winfred Emory Allen, Chairman, Dr. Charles A. Kofoid, Dr. William A. Setchell, Professor Alva R. Davis and Dr. Claude E. ZoBell.

Russell: So you came with her for her big exam?

Rosenbury: Yup.

Russell: And that's how she got her Ph.D. was finally that way. Did anything change after you got your Ph.D.? Or did you keep working on the same project? Do you remember, Dorothy?

Rosenbury: I guess you just kept on working, didn't you?

Cupp: I kept on working. It was boring after a while and I quit, and I began teaching school. Is that how you remember it, Dorothy?

Rosenbury: She kept on doing some kind of work, I don't know what. I was teaching in town here. After she quit out there, she got a job teaching where I was teaching.

Russell: Were you at the same school?

Rosenbury: Yup.

Russell: Well, actually, we're through the second page. So if you like we can stop and we can try it again in a week or so.

Rosenbury: Go ahead.

Russell: Or would you like to finish off, because these are the last set of questions? Would you like to do it next week or do it today?

Rosenbury: Finish it up.

Russell: Would you like to?

Cupp: I guess so. If my memory is still working.

Russell: It's good to have you both, because I think we remember more together than you remember apart, and since you were there right up to when she went to get her [degree]. I think it's interesting to have both perspectives. Especially on the social aspects because with you living right there at Scripps you met a lot of these people.

Rosenbury: I was wondering if when she went up there it was for her master's or for her doctoral when you had to go to Berkeley. Which was it?

Cupp: I think it was the doctorate. Were there two things? I don't remember going for two things.

Rosenbury: No, I can't remember your going up again.

Russell: You have actually preempted a couple of the questions I was going to ask, which was: what were the requirements for doing your dissertation? You basically told me already. And what was the process for selecting your dissertation topic, which was you came to work with Dr. Allen and he was already working on diatoms.

Cupp: Yes.

Russell: And then you did have a formal defense of your dissertation. You went to Berkeley to answer questions, I gather, and Dorothy went with you.

Rosenbury: I didn't go with her to the questions.

Russell: But you kept her company in Berkeley above the dance hall.

[inaudible]

Russell: Do you remember what it was you wanted to do when you got done with your work at Scripps? Did you want to just continue working, or were you planning what kind of plans did you have long term when you were at Scripps? Did you always plan to become a teacher?

Cupp: I must have planned then to become a teacher. She was teaching.

Rosenbury: Well, you'd gotten as far as you could get out at Scripps.

Cupp: Yup.

Rosenbury: They didn't hire women.

Russell: How did you know they wouldn't hire women?

Rosenbury: Well, I had this very excellent professor at Berkeley, and she would [hire?] what she could get because she was a woman.

Russell: She couldn't get any advancement there. Because it says in the record that you were both, that you became, after you finished your Ph.D. at Scripps, you became a researcher at Scripps, which we knew because you wrote your book at Scripps.

Cupp: Yes.

Russell: After you were done with your dissertation, and after that you became a lecturer at Scripps, that you were actually teaching other students at Scripps.

Rosenbury: She never lectured, but, what was that [?] that taught science at Hoover? She was your student, she liked to be your student.

Cupp: [not audible]

Rosenbury: She came out and she was a student.

Russell: And, Dr. Cupp, you started teaching her about diatoms? How to use a microscope?

Cupp: I think so, as far as I remember. I think she remembers more about what I did than I do.

Rosenbury: Do you remember how you decided to write your book?

Cupp: I had to do something to stay there and that was it. There needed to be one on the diatoms.

Russell: Yes, a book was necessary on the diatoms, and you were the expert.

Cupp: Yup.

Russell: So you wrote it. They still use your book at Scripps. I know, Freda Reid called me to tell me that she still uses your book and that I should impress upon you that they very much value your work, even today.

Cupp: I guess somebody sent some copies to various places in Europe. I have letters from several people there.

Russell: They asked me to see at some point if you had any of the original slides from your book that you used to do your drawings. I know it's been sixty years, but... The last thing that I wanted to ask you about was how you left Scripps, because there was a letter in your file from Dr. Sverdrup, and he basically tells you that they no longer have a place for you and that you need to find a new place to work, and I was wondering how that came about. Do you remember?

Rosenbury: She was a woman! You're a woman.

Cupp: Yeah.

Rosenbury: [not audible] better than she did him.

Russell: Really. What kind of interaction did you have with Sverdrup before you left? Do you remember anything about him?

[no reply]



Russell: Did you meet him, Dorothy?

Rosenbury: Yes, we used to go to, they had teas for the group, and he'd go to those teas and he had his own dog and he would go around and sniff over the sandwiches and the cookies and things and help himself. Mrs. Sverdrup was very nice, but I never liked him. He was a stiff old guy.<sup>11</sup>

Russell: Did Easter come home and tell you about her meeting with Sverdrup when it happened?

Rosenbury: No. At least not that I remember it.

Cupp: I knew I was through and that was it.

Rosenbury: You must have read it right away.

Cupp: Yeah. I talked it over with...

Russell: Who did you talk it over with?

Cupp: Who was it I worked with out there?

Russell: Allen. You talked it over with him? Before you talked to Sverdrup or after you talked to Sverdrup?

Cupp: Before and after.

Russell: And what did he say?

Cupp: That it was a good idea to get into something else. That I would have a more permanent job. I felt I was ready for a job then. So I went to work then in San Diego.

Russell: Did you keep living in the off-campus, at the housing nearby or did you move into town?

Cupp: I moved into San Diego. We found a nice duplex and it was thirty-five dollars a month.

Russell: Sounds pretty good.

Cupp: I had enough of it out there or something. So we went to San Diego.

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<sup>11</sup> Miss Rosenbury may be confusing two directors, Thomas Wayland Vaughan and Harald Sverdrup here. Vaughan was over sixty when he retired. He had a German shepard named "Spooks" who lived on campus and was a nuisance at parties. Sverdrup was vigorous and middle aged when he arrived at Scripps in 1936. He did not have a dog.

Russell: Was that a big transition from doing primarily research at Scripps to teaching young people?

Cupp: Sure.

Rosenbury: And the woman she had, whose place she took was not a good disciplinarian. [not audible]

Russell: But she got used to it.

Rosenbury: She had to straighten out these classes that she took, because they hadn't had any discipline. She was a nice person, but as a teacher she left a lot to be desired.

Cupp or Rosenbury: I can't remember her name.

Other: Dorothy Burns.

Cupp: I have some notes [not audible] look through them.

Russell: If at any time you find your notes or would like to add to this, we can. I'll call back of course in a week or so.

Cupp: I'll look through them again.

Russell: This was really interesting. I'm very pleased. I think this was great. I'm really happy that we got through all of it and that you were able to tell me about how you left Scripps, because I wasn't sure whether it was a good thing or a not-so-good thing. It sound like in some ways it was difficult, and in other ways it was kind of a relief to have a permanent job.

Cupp: It was a more permanent thing.

Russell: Did you miss your research?

Cupp: Oh, I was always interested in that. I was glad to be on something [not audible].

Russell: Why don't we end it there, unless there is something you wanted to add .

Cupp: No, not now. I'll see if I can find anything else.