

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH MARTHA F. BOWDEN

CONDUCTED AND EDITED BY THOMAS A. SCOTT

for the

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Conducted, edited, and indexed by Thomas A. Scott
Friday, 6 September 2013
Location: CETL House, Kennesaw State University

TS: Martha, why don't you begin by talking about your background—where you grew up, where you went to school, and a little about that?

MB: I was born in Cochrane, Ontario, which is about 150 miles south of James Bay. I lived there for only two and a half years. My father went there as rector of the Anglican Church; and he, in a rather conventional way, married the senior warden's daughter. So, my mother's family was all there. We went back to Cochrane just about every summer when I was growing up. That's where the family cottage was. So, I feel very attached to that part of the world. But when I was two and a half, we moved to St. Catharines, Ontario, which is one of the farthest, most south, places in Canada, not far from Buffalo. I lived there till I was nine and started school there. I went to all public schools. Every school I went to was a public school. Then we moved to Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, which is north of North Dakota and Montana—a long way north. So, I did a lot of my growing up and my schooling there. I went to high school there, but it's strange. I was nine when I got there, and I looked around and thought, "No, this is not for me." So, I often say that I treated As in school like frequent flyer points. The more I got, the farther I could go.

I had decided at age seven that I had wanted to go to Trinity College [in the University of] Toronto, which is where my father had gone. So, when I was seventeen years old, my parents put me on a train at midnight in Saskatoon. About two days later, I got off the train in Union Station in Toronto, where my uncle met me. I spent the weekend with him and his wife, then he took me to Trinity College, and I never looked back. That was really where I wanted to be. Not only that, I met my husband there, and we were married just after third year university, before I graduated with my BA, which is why I've always used his name. Besides my maiden name was Short. By the time I was twenty, I was really sick of the jokes. So, I went with my husband's name, which is Bowden. We lived in Toronto. I got my MA and PhD from the University of Toronto. I had my first child two months after I defended my dissertation.

Then, we decided to move here [to metropolitan Atlanta] because my husband's job moved here. I wasn't really sure that was a good thing. I loved Toronto. The University of Toronto is a wonderful place. It has the third largest library collection in North America. It's right behind Harvard and Yale. Just about anything you want to read, you can find it in their collection. It was wonderful to be there. I had wonderful friends. I was deeply involved in music and sang in

about three choirs. I left all that behind. It was very hard. But when I came up for air two children later and looked around, I realized that the university system in the United States was very different from what I was used to, and there were a lot more institutions. I thought I might actually be able to get a teaching job.

When I was at the University of Toronto from 1971 to 1981, I was in graduate school at a period when the word tenure had dropped out of the Canadian vocabulary. The idea of a tenure track job just didn't exist. The few people I knew who got jobs had sessional appointments—usually one year at a time—that involved sometimes moving from Acadia University, in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, to the University of British Columbia on the other side of the continent, and all this kind of moving around. So, I didn't think it was a possibility, and I looked around, and Atlanta had all these places. I became an independent scholar, which I was for seven years. I went to conferences; I gave presentations; I published an article. Then, when my youngest child went to kindergarten, I decided my goal was to get a job. I put him on the school bus, and three weeks later, I started here as part time.

TS: Well that covers a lot of ground in a hurry, and is very revealing in lots of ways. Why don't we go back to those ten years you were at the University of Toronto? That's a really remarkable statement when you think about it: completing three degrees in ten years.

MB: Well, part of it is that the University of Toronto MA is a one-year degree. I always thought of it as a way of testing graduate school. If you didn't like it, you could leave with a degree and your dignity at the end of an academic year and go on to do something else. They've now spread it out across three terms. Even when I was there, you got an extra term if you did a thesis, but you didn't have to. I knew I was going on to the PhD—at least that was my plan—and I did. So, I just did a four and a half course—the bibliography and the four graduate classes. I should say that the University of Toronto's method of teaching is very different in that most....

TS: The British system?

MB: Well, kind of, except that the classes are much larger than they used to be. But most courses take an entire academic year. If not, they're listed as half courses. So, my BA was 20 courses—five a year for four years. This was the 1970s, so, things were kind of fluid. Besides, there's never been at Toronto much idea of general education. I'll get back to that when I talk about my teaching here. So, ten to fifteen of those classes would be in your major—minimum of ten, maximum of fifteen—and the others could be anything I wanted.

TS: So no real required courses, like you didn't have to take Biology if you didn't want to?

MB: No, I didn't have to take anything that wasn't an arts course—and I didn't, actually—if I didn't want to. I took French, and I took philosophy. I took at least one history class. I took a joint English and religion class because Northrop Frye was one of the people teaching it. It was a wonderful class, actually. So, I did a variety. I took classical literature in translation, which was taught by people in the classics department. It was Greek and Roman tragedy and comedy, and the Greek part was taught by a Greek professor. Then, I took German literature in translation, which was taught by somebody in the German department. Those were always interesting courses because they always complained about the translations. But that got me used to the idea that translation was an inexact art. Here were these professors saying, "This is where they're translating, but it isn't...."

TS: It's an interpretation [of what the original text says].

MB: Yes, and it is close enough. So, I took these four full-year classes and the half course in bibliography at the MA level. All those courses transferred into the PhD, where there was a distribution requirement, and I pretty much got rid of my distribution requirement for the PhD in the MA.

TS: What is a distribution requirement?

MB: That is that you had to have at least one class in medieval studies, you had to have one class in early modern to eighteenth century, and you had to have at least one class in modern literature.

TS: Chronology?

MB: It was chronological, basically. A very interesting thing about my undergraduate degree in Canada at that time—this is very Canadian, actually, in the 1970s—was that I was required to take a class in American literature, but not one in Canadian literature.

TS: How did they define American literature?

MB: Pretty traditionally as the United States of America. Not North America, but the United States. Still, I took a course in twentieth-century American literature. The only Canadian course they had was a half course. It was very weird.

TS: Why the discrimination against Canadian literature?

MB: This was at the same period as Canadians were having that crisis of identity—do we have a national identity; do we have a national literature; do we have any history; and does it mean anything to be Canadian. There was a lot of soul searching. There was this kind of envy of the United States that had such a clear

idea of its own history, however warped that idea might be—such a clear idea of Pilgrims and Indians and Thanksgiving.

TS: At least that was the stereotype of what Americans were thinking.

MB: Yes, and they had the Civil War. One of our poets described us as being a civil bore. This whole idea that somehow big brother next door was always more interesting than we were. We came out of that very well thanks to people like Margaret Atwood who said, “Pull up your socks, and let’s see what we’ve been doing.” She wrote *Survival: [A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature (Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 1972)]*, which was very important. But that was while I was in school, you see. That had not happened. So I used that MA to get my PhD coursework done. The other thing that was wonderful at the University of Toronto was that I could take Old English as an undergraduate, which I did out of interest. I had to do a medieval studies course. The major was quite exclusive and prescriptive—what I had to do in that degree to qualify. So, I took Old English, and I was very glad because if I hadn’t taken Old English as an undergraduate, I would have had to take English 1000 as a graduate student. And that wasn’t just an Intro to Old English with some Anglo-Saxon poetry. I would have had to read Beowulf, too, so I was kind of relieved.

TS: It wouldn’t have been so bad, would it?

MB: Well, but old English is hard to read. It looks like German. The person who had an easy time in my Old English class was actually a German major. So, it was tricky.

TS: What do you think about that system compared to the American System where, presumably, somebody who was interested in computer science could totally skip English courses, I guess, while someone in English could skip computer science or math.

MB: Biology or statistics or whatever we inflict on English majors just to make them realize. I think that it had great benefits in that you came out of your major absolutely immersed in it. I mean just incredible. My Eighteenth-Century Fiction class, which lasted the whole year—we read books that I would never on the semester system have time to teach. We spent a full month on *Tom Jones*. I read it twice. It’s a very big book. So, there was this sense of immersion in my field that I think is wonderful. One of my friends at Emory told me she thought that undergraduates from the University of Toronto came out with their BAs better scholars than many MA graduates from the United States. There was that immersion. I sometimes think that the general education program—two full years of it—is maybe too much. In some ways I think that the major itself could do with some more immersion. On the other hand, I do like the idea of this sense of the liberal arts and that you have to look out beyond yourself. I think that maybe a general education class in Biology might have been a really interesting thing for

me to have to do. I might not have liked it, but then I don't really believe that undergraduates are customers. I don't think you give them what they want. You give them what you think they need. So, I think some of that expansion is a really good thing. Toronto now has expanded, actually, and they do have a distribution requirement at the undergraduate level. That is, regardless of what you are doing, you have to take one humanities course, one social sciences course, and one sciences course. So, they have expanded that far.

TS: I interviewed Jonathan Lewin, last year....

MB: He's British, isn't he?

TS: Well, South African. So, he came out of that system. Part of the interview was his denunciation of our general education curriculum because it requires people to take courses they don't want to take. He mentioned that he took a lot of music courses along with mathematics, but he didn't care for a system where you are graded in areas where you may not have an interest or strength. I'm probably not explaining his argument really well, but he feels very passionately against our general education requirements.

MB: You know there's a University in Canada called King's College. It's actually part of Dalhousie University in Halifax. It has its foundation year, and it's [only] a year. I think our general education pulls in maybe two years, and that's half the degree. My argument would be with proportion, not its existence. But the idea of this foundations year, where you look more broadly at the world of learning, I think, has a lot to be said. For example, our English majors just don't know enough history. I teach the eighteenth century. That is a foreign country. I spend so much of my eighteenth-century classes, essentially, teaching the history that is behind these works. So, I think that that is a big problem.

TS: I used to teach with Dede Yow [professor emerita of English], where we used to do Georgia history and Georgia literature together. I gather from talking to her that there's a debate in the English department over whether courses ought to be taught in a historic context or whether you ignore the context all together.

MB: I'm not really aware of that. What the English department at Kennesaw has done is decided that there are more ways of looking at literature than a period- and geographically-based look, which is essentially what we grew up with. So, you take medieval British literature, and you take sixteenth-century British lit, and you take seventeenth-century British lit, and you take eighteenth-century British lit, and so on to last week some time. Then you study American lit. So, you can do twentieth and nineteenth-century and pre-Revolutionary, colonial, whatever we call it. But that is still period-based and place-based. That for one thing leads you in English to say, "What do we do with Henry James?" Not to mention T.S. Elliot and W.H. Auden—because some people refuse to stay in their boundaries. I always tell my students that the only three people I can think of who were

thoughtful enough to die right on the century mark were Chaucer [1343-1400], Dryden [1631-1700], and Oscar Wilde [1854-1900], and you wouldn't put them in a sentence together under any other circumstances. The periods are kind of artificial, and we need other ways of looking at them. It's just a different context. So, if you look at something in terms of gender, you're looking at social context and social construction. But you do need a little history right?

TS: Well, I think so.

MB: Yes, so, when I taught the gender studies class, it was feminist literary history. It was the eighteenth-century woman writer as a professional writer. But I had to teach a lot of history.

TS: Well that's great.

MB: Which I enjoyed. I've done a lot of it. I consider myself a literary historian.

TS: Sounds like anybody who is studying history needs to take your course.

MB: I welcome people in history, actually, because they just bring a different perspective, and they don't mind writing. So, I think this is a marriage made in heaven—more interaction between English and history.

TS: I do too. What about mentors at the University of Toronto—anybody that stands out?

MB: Well, the person who really stands out is the woman who directed my PhD thesis—and we don't actually say “dissertation” at Toronto; we say “thesis,” which is also the English way. I caught her attention when I was an undergraduate. One of things that happened to me at the end of third year was that two of my professors took me aside, and she was one of them: Patricia [Carr] Bruckmann. She took me aside, and so did Michael [J.] Sidnell, who was in twentieth-century, and said, “Now, I assume you're going to graduate school. Please ask me for a letter.” Now, of course, I was young and inexperienced, and I thought this must happen to everybody, but I guess maybe it doesn't. Patricia Bruckmann was one of the best teachers that I ever dealt with. So, she was a good model as a teacher. This continued well past my degree—not just my undergraduate degree, but my graduate, everything thing else. She really helped me in that way.

Somebody else who I really met as a new faculty member, but he was on my committee, was a man called Brian Corman. Brian Corman was just there in the background and on my committee when I was a graduate student, but since then he has become very important to me. We continue to be very good friends, but he is somebody I go to for advice. He's somebody whose advice I take very, very, seriously. He eventually became chair of the department. He is a University of

- Chicago graduate. Patricia Brückmann went to a Catholic women's undergraduate school in Washington, D.C., and then she went to the University of Toronto for graduate school. So, she's been there a long time, and she's retired now.
- TS: Well, that's good that you were getting people teaching you classes as an undergraduate who were also working with the PhD program.
- MB: Well I don't think that's unusual in Canada. I think that's pretty standard.
- TS: The way it ought to be.
- MB: Yes. In fact I took classes as a graduate student with people who had taught me as an undergraduate. Patricia Brückmann was one of them. Michael Sidnell was another. A woman called Jay MacPherson was another. She team-taught that class that was joint English and religion that I took with Northrop Frye. She was the organizer of the class. I later took an MA class with her called "Frankenstein and Romantic Narrative." I took that class with her in 1975-76. When my PhD thesis defense was announced, she sent me a postcard offering me best wishes. When I saw her the next time, which was in the 1990s, she greeted me with open arms and reminded me of the essay I had written in her class.
- TS: How about that!
- MB: She was just an amazing person. She died about a year ago, and she left me the notes for the book she was working on when she died.
- TS: Wow! Are you going to finish it for her?
- MB: Well I can't write the book. What I'm thinking of doing is writing an article and maybe giving a talk at the Canadian Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, which is the one that she went to and where she was important. Those people were very, very important to me, and other people have been since.
- TS: So, what was it about late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century literature that attracted you?
- MB: You know, I have often thought about that. Today, in my video interview [for CETL], I had to talk about the unifying thread. I told the young man [Alexander Gambon], at my age, if I can find just one thread, that's quite a thing. I mean, there are a lot of threads by this time. But I'd say conversation. The period I chose is a period where conversation was everything. It was the rise of the coffeehouse. People went there, they read their newspapers, and they talked about important things. There were specific coffeehouses that you would go to if you had specific interests. Like "The Grecian" if you were a classical scholar or "Lloyd's" if you were a merchant. They had a little place at the back where you

could hold little auctions. Out of that conversation came the idea of property casualty insurance and Lloyd's of London.

TS: How about that!

MB: It started in a coffeehouse. But what really attracted me, initially, was the sense of parody, really. I was fascinated by [Alexander] Pope's *The Dunciad*, which is a mock epic in which he imitates scholarly publication, which I was just learning about. He writes this extensive poem, called *The Dunciad*, because instead of being about heroes, it's about really bad writers.

TS: So this is all satire?

MB: Yes it's Pope, it's satiric. But I tell my students, satire in the eighteenth-century, and today still, I think, is not just about content, but about form. So, if you want to satirize these bad writers, you put it in the form of a mock epic, and you produce an edition of it that has footnotes, annotations, introductions, laudatory prefaces from people that didn't exist, and which you have actually written, an index, the whole thing. I was just fascinated to see this on the page. There were some places in imitation of scholarly editions—which was a big thing in the eighteenth-century—textual scholarship started with the classics, it included textual scholarship of Scripture, and then people started doing editions of people like Milton. In imitation of this, you would get a page that had three lines of poetry on it, and all the rest was footnotes, some of which were by Martinus Scriblerus, who didn't exist, but was invented by Pope and his friends. Just this idea that this kind of parody of what was serious—I really loved! Then, [*The Life and Opinions of*] *Tristram Shandy*, [*Gentleman*] is a novel which breaks down and never really ends, and is a novel about the impossibility of writing your own life story. He points out at one point that he has been writing for a year. He's covered one day, and he's added 365—one day down and 364 added. This kind of self-consciousness fascinated me. It's where we see the novel, as we understand it, developing.

So, just this sense of something new being fun—people having fun. Parody, I think that's what interested me. The other thing I knew at the time—and this is rather strange—but looking back on it, it wasn't just the literature. I'm fascinated by the history where so much happened. The more I studied it, as an undergraduate, I didn't know that this is really the period when science, as we understand it, was beginning to develop. Out of this period came medicine, as we understand it, including inoculation and vaccination for smallpox. This is the period when not just the novel developed, but biography, and all of these other things. Copyright, as we understand in England started with the Act of Anne in 1710. I love the history, but I love the music—eighteenth-century music—Purcell and Handel, who is an honorary Englishman, and Bach, and all the European music. I love the furniture. I just realized that, culturally, it spoke to me. When I was young, I said it was like coming home. I just understood it without really

working at it. The more I learned, the more I wanted to know. When I was in London this summer, I went to the National Portrait Gallery to see my friends. I went to the gallery to look around at all these portraits of people whom I felt I almost knew.

TS: What did you do your dissertation on?

MB: I did it on *Tristram Shandy* by Laurence Sterne.

TS: You've done a good deal of research on Laurence Sterne since then.

MB: Yes.

TS: And I guess he was an Anglican clergyman, wasn't he?

MB: He was.

TS: Now, I have a little better understanding of why you might be interested in Anglican clergymen.

MB: Yes. Now, my father, before he became a parish priest—and the parish he went to in Cochrane was his first—was, in fact, a tutor and a don at Trinity College, and he taught church history. He was on the Doctrine and Worship committee in the Anglican Church of Canada from the 1950s until he retired in 1985. He chaired that committee, eventually. When we got a new Prayer Book in 1959, he proposed the motion that put it through the General Senate. He oversaw the Book of Alternative Services. We have not had a new Prayer Book since then, but there is a Book of Alternative Services, which is a modernized version. He chaired the committee through that. Church history and liturgy were dinner table conversations at my house. My father was incredibly encouraging of me as a scholar.

TS: So why on earth did he go to Saskatchewan?

MB: Because he had a deep pastoral vocation. That's why he went to Cochrane. He was all set up to do his PhD in theology in New York at Union Theological Seminary. He had actually already started. He had done a clinical pastoral course one summer in New York. Then he heard the Archbishop of Moosonee preach, and he decided that he really needed to be in a parish away from Toronto. He was born in Toronto. He didn't drive a car. He had lived in college. I was born when he was nearly forty, and I'm the eldest of five children.

TS: And you're the eldest? Wow! We ought to get his name; we know his last name was Short.

MB: Yes. It is Hedley Vicars Roycraft [Short]. Hedley Vicars was his father's name. His father was named for a well-known evangelical preacher who was an itinerant preacher on the west coast of England. My grandfather was born in Devon and immigrated to Toronto when he was two or three. I mean, needless to say with his mother, not by himself. My mother's name is Elizabeth Frances Louise Short.

TS: Had to have three names then.

MB: I guess so. They didn't do that to me. My mother's still alive; my father died in 1996.

TS: Does she still live in Canada?

MB: She lives in Prince Albert, yes. She's had the same phone number since 1963.

TS: Fifty years.

MB: Yes, yes.

TS: I saw a 1963 movie the other day and was thinking, "That's fifty years ago—a long time ago. Those folks are old folks now."

MB: When I was hearing about the March on Washington [August 28, 1963], and I looked at the dates, I thought, that was when we were driving across Canada to Prince Albert, which is a two-thousand mile drive from St. Catherines to Prince Albert. While all this is happening in the United States, we were driving through Canada.

TS: I've been focusing on 1963 because it's our fiftieth anniversary at Kennesaw State.

MB: Yes, here too.

TS: Ok so you do your dissertation. You were married a long time by that time, but no children yet.

MB: I defended seven months pregnant. James was born two months later.

TS: So you've got some children that are in their thirties by now.

MB: Yes, my eldest is thirty-two. Do you want to know about my children?

TS: Oh, sure, whatever you want to talk about.

MB: Oh, wow. Oh, good. I like talking about my children. My eldest son is thirty-two years old, and he lives in Nashville.

TS: And this is James?

MB: This is James, and he is a lawyer with WallerLansden, which is one of the big firms. He does mergers and acquisitions and securities law. He has an undergraduate degree in English from the University of Tennessee, and he did the MEd with initial certification in Secondary English at Georgia State. Then, he moved to Nashville and had trouble transferring his certification and everything else. Then, the more he thought about it, the more he really decided he wanted to go into law. So, I shouldn't tell this story, but at three week's notice, he wrote the LSAT and got into Vanderbilt. So, he's got his JD from Vanderbilt. He graduated in 2009 and has been working in Nashville ever since. My daughter Frances went to Columbia College in South Carolina, a Columbia, South Carolina women's college. She got a BA in history. Then, she went to the University of South Carolina and got a master of library and information services. She graduated in 2008, which is a really lousy time to graduate as an archivist, because most of those positions are at public institutions, and they were frozen [with the economic recession]. Most of them are still frozen, although she goes on applying. For about two years she worked as a nanny for Mary Lou Odom who runs the Writing Center, and she volunteered here as an archivist. She was at Clayton State, at the National Archives in Morrow, and she worked here.

TS: In our [KSU] Archives here?

MB: Yes, she was a volunteer here two or three days a week. In fact, she did a huge collection. She accessioned a huge collection, which I think was the VP for Academic Affairs—this enormous collection. In fact, [Dr.] Tamara [Livingston] said, when she was finished, that they should declare it a national holiday. It was as a result of that job that she got the job at UPS, because the person at UPS phoned the archivist at Kennesaw and said can you recommend one person, and that person was Frances.

TS: Does she still go by Bowden?

MB: Yes. Yes. None of my children are married. James is divorced. So that's Frances, and she's still in the area at UPS.

TS: I've used some of those Ed Rugg [former vice president for academic affairs] papers before.

MB: She accessioned them.

TS: There are a number of boxes of them.

MB: Yes, and she could tell you exactly how many. I think she saw my initial hire contract. It's a job she was born to do.

TS: There are some things over there that probably shouldn't be public.

MB: Well, she knows that. Our youngest son, David, decided, having been born and brought up in the suburbs of Atlanta, that he didn't really want to live in the suburbs. So he went to Trinity College.

TS: Nobody wants to stay where they grew up.

MB: No, no, which is I think a good thing.

TS: So he goes to Trinity College, where you went!

MB: Third generation because Bill and I went there. Both our fathers went there. Then, there was David.

TS: Your husband is Bill.

MB: Yes, William John. But he goes by Bill. David did the BA in English at Trinity and an MA in English at the University of Toronto. He, again, decided that graduate school probably wasn't for him, partly because he realized that even if he went to the best graduate school on the continent, when he graduated he would have to go to whatever institution hired him with a tenure track job, and it might not be a place he wanted to live. But he would have no control over that. He would have no control.

TS: You go where the job is.

MB: You go where the job is. Whereas, if he went into law, he would have some control, and he had decided that he wanted to stay in Ontario. So, he decided to go to law school. He's at Osgoode Hall Law School, which is part of York University in Toronto. His interest is in patents. He did a summer associateship this summer at a small patent firm, and they have offered him an articling position after third year. It's the British system. What James did [in the United States] was he wrote the bar admission, and he started work immediately at a firm. In Canada you write the bar ad, and you work for eight to ten months in a law firm as an articling student, then you're called to the bar after that year. So, he's got his articling position setup. He's got one more year of law school. We'll have a lawyer on either side of the border.

TS: Well you're in good shape I guess. I believe that Dr. [Akanmu] Adebayo [professor of history and director of the Center for Conflict Management] came to us from [a visiting professorship] at York University.

MB: Did he?

TS: He probably came about the same time you came here.

MB: Yes, he did. I'm quite sure he did in 1992.

TS: So, Bill gets the job in Atlanta.

MB: Yes, he worked for Confederation Life [Insurance Company], and they established an American head office to deal with the American business in 1982.

TS: So you're just fresh out of graduate school?

MB: A new baby.

TS: You've got little children to deal with....

MB: I had to get a driver's license. I didn't drive.

TS: Oh, you hadn't driven before?

MB: I didn't have a driver's license.

TS: Well, you can't get along in the Atlanta area without a driver's license. So, you're an independent scholar until David gets into kindergarten?

MB: Yes, actually, I was an independent scholar, but I had to come up for air. In about 1985 I started as an independent scholar.

TS: So you're still going to conferences, doing papers, writing articles and all things that....

MB: Yes, and dealing with three children.

TS: You do everything except teach, I guess, at that point.

MB: Yes.

TS: I noticed in some of the old catalogues, they had you listed as starting in 1993, and then later on it said 1992, or vice versa. So, 1992 was when you started part time?

MB: Part time. In 1993 I got a one-year temporary full-time appointment.

TS: It was not part time?

MB: No, it was temporary full time. Then, I had three temporary full-time appointments. I became tenure track in 1996.

- TS: Okay. In the early 1990s, Bob [Robert W.] Hill was the department chair?
- MB: Yes, he hired me part time. He gave me those three sessional appointments, as I call them, but they were temporary full time is what they were called here. Then, he was the chair of the department the year I applied for the full-time job, although that was the year of the troubles. So, by the time I started my tenure track job, Laura [S.] Dabundo was chair of the department.
- TS: Okay. So, 1996 was the tenure track?
- MB: Yes, the fall of 1996—which is the year that Kennesaw became a state university. It was Kennesaw State College before that.
- TS: So you were teaching at Kennesaw State College for four years, and then a position comes open. Was it a new position?
- MB: Yes. They were able to hire two people in general British literature, which is really interesting because it really isn't a specialty that exists. It allowed them to hire me. They couldn't have hired me as an eighteenth-century specialist because Jo Allen [Bradham] was still here. By and large, an institution like ours without a graduate [program in English] doesn't have more than one person in the eighteenth century.
- TS: So you really had to teach Beowulf, I guess.
- MB: In translation I had to teach it, yes—in the Brit lit survey.
- TS: Who takes British literature? The majors I guess—English majors.
- MB: They do. They do take that. We have surveys in British literature, two of them now, because we have to break it in half; it's a rather long period. The eighteenth-century studies class I teach is really something that is designed for English majors. The gender studies class I taught, which was also an eighteenth-century class, is at the 3000 level. So, you don't have to have our Gateway to the English Major class to take it. That is deliberate for that whole section of classes, which are called cultural studies classes that include gender studies, ethnic studies, and regional studies. Those are deliberately like that because we assume that people outside the department will want to take them. In fact, sometimes they're cross-listed with like American studies or gender and women's studies.
- TS: That's what we did with Georgia history and Georgia literature; the Georgia literature was offered under regional studies (ENGL 3350).
- MB: Yes, and gender studies is 3330.

- TS: I usually ask faculty members, “Why did you come to Kennesaw?” I guess the answer for you was that you were stuck in Atlanta, and a job was available.
- MB: I was here. I was lucky. I was lucky.
- TS: Basically, you came in to teach British literature, generally; and you spend the next twenty years carving out your specialties.
- MB: Yes. Now, when I was part time and temporary full time, I taught mostly general education. We, under the old major, had an eighteen-century novel class and fiction class, and Jo Allen didn’t like teaching that. Gail [B.] Walker did teach it, but she was a nineteenth-century specialist. So, each year that I was temporary full time, I did teach that one class. Occasionally, I taught the Brit lit survey, but the vast proportion of what I taught was freshman composition.
- TS: So, that’s really one of the evolutions of our university over time is that there was a time when we all taught the general education courses. Then, whether it’s a good thing or not, we all worked our way out of those courses, it seems like.
- MB: Or the department worked us out of it because after Jo Allen retired I was the eighteenth-century, and we have a course in eighteenth-century studies that has to be taught every year. So, that’s one of the things I do. There’s been a lot that the English major needs me to do. I’ve always taught the gateway to the major class [originally ENGL 2150—Colloquium in English; later, ENGL 2145—Introduction to English Studies], and we have to offer a lot of sections of it because all our majors have to take it. We keep it small because it’s a writing-based class. So, there’s been that class, and the survey classes that I’ve had to teach because again we have to offer multiple sections. And there’s senior seminar, which I teach regularly, and again multiple sections. The other thing that’s happened is the three-three load [three classes each semester]. So there wasn’t enough time.
- TS: You were doing four-four when you started?
- MB: When we started on semesters, I was doing four-four or maybe four-three.
- TS: We are actually on quarters still.
- MB: On quarters I did three-three-three.
- TS: I always felt like the four-four was a lot more work than the old three-three-three. Even though one was fifteen hours and the other was twelve, it still seemed like the twelve under the semester system was more work than the fifteen when we were on quarters.

MB: Well, especially if you had four different preps. It was way more work. Very often I did a four-three load. But, now, with the three-three load, something had to go. I was the first coordinator of undergraduate English studies in the department when we redid the governance plan. Then I went to two-two. That, actually, was when I stopped teaching general education; not until then.

TS: When was that?

MB: That was, I think, about 2007. By choice, when we went to the semester system, I chose to teach composition rather than world lit. I always felt slightly inadequate with world lit. There was just so much I didn't know, and so much I hadn't studied.

TS: So much everybody doesn't know.

MB: With freshman composition I really enjoyed the smallness of those classes. I continue to believe that those two [composition] classes are the most important classes that the English department teaches. I really like teaching writing. I have been a writer all my life. As an independent scholar, that's what I did. I wrote. I still write. That's what I spend every summer doing, and it's academic writing. So, I really think that it's pertinent to what we teach in freshman composition, and I do believe that those strategies that I have learned to get myself ready are transferable to my students. If I can teach them to write, and to think about writing as something that is work and that you don't just toss off, then, I have given them something they can take out to the rest of their lives. Not just through their degrees, but the rest of their lives. For those three years, I didn't teach freshman composition. Then, when I circulated out of that, the English department always had lots for me to do.

I am actually writing a book about incorporating writing instruction in literature-based classes because that is something that we don't do well—partly because none of us has any training in it. If you're a literature professor, you don't have much of the comp/rhet training. I think there is a lot of compartmentalizing. People think you do this in composition, but the English majors are going to be different. But you know what? They're not. They are still the same people that are at this institution. Composition is not a band aid. I'm interested in the teaching of writing. So, I developed a way of teaching the senior seminar, and I suddenly realized that that would apply very nicely to English 1102. About two years ago, the spring of 2012, I, by my own request, started teaching composition again. I have taught a section of English 1102 just about every semester since. I'm teaching it right now. I'm teaching it next semester, and I love it. I have always loved teaching composition. I really like freshmen. They're so funny. They have so many things they don't know they shouldn't tell you. I just really enjoy them. But also I enjoy the fact that everything's new for them, and you can actually help them.

The other thing that I really know is that I affect those students in important ways. I think in my narrative I said, “If you want a student to come up to you in a fast food restaurant, and say that your course changed her life, you should teach freshman composition.” Because the student who did that to me I had taught in English 1101. It really happened to me, and it was really somebody I’d taught in 1101. So, I think general education is really important for all of us. We also see the students who are not English majors, but everything I learned about teaching writing I learned in those classes. What I wanted to say about composition that I kind of alluded to before is that I had never taken freshman composition. I had never been in a composition classroom in my life until I had to start teaching it.

TS: Because your background was so strong you didn’t need it or....

MB: No, there was no freshman composition at the University of Toronto. There still isn’t.

TS: So, basically, if you needed to learn to write, you did it in the literature courses.

MB: Yes, and then you learned to write about literature.

TS: I guess, in defense of Jonathan Lewin and his argument, he puts a lot of writing in his math classes. He says he doesn’t care whether anyone can figure out what the right answer is. He wants them to know why it’s the right answer, and they have to write about it to explain why.

MB: Yes, we should all be doing that, still, here. That kind of reflective writing—I think it is very important. But I had never been in a composition classroom. I had no idea. I had never been so scared in my life. I was terrified. But it all worked out well because I just kept telling myself, “I write. I know how to teach what I do.” To this day, I think that you can teach someone to write, as long as you have something to read, and it could be anything. I think it would be fun to just tell students to pick up a copy of the *New York Times* every Tuesday and Thursday, and bring it to class, and we’ll use it. We’ll start writing from there. We’ll write about ads. We’ll write about everything. You can teach anybody to write using anything.

TS: I was trying to think, it’s been over fifty years since I was taking freshman English. But it seems to me that even in the first class we were reading novels, biographies, and things like that.

MB: It’s changed now.

TS: Especially by the second class, you did a lot of literature and wrote about it.

MB: Yes, that’s because the second class was, and in a lot of places still is, an introduction to literature. But we don’t do that here, anymore, and I think it’s just

as well. I think that is only, really, useful for students going into the English major. What they really need to know is how to do a research-based argument. To produce an argument that is based on sources that they have to document. To me, that is something that you can take into any major. Then, when you get to your major—psychology, history, philosophy, biology, chemistry—they teach you how to write like a chemistry major. In the meantime, you know how to find sources, how to incorporate sources that you have to document.

TS: So what do we do in English 1101 now?

MB: ENGL 1101 is argument-based writing. That's why I think you can do it based on anything as long as they can read arguments. An advertisement in a paper is an argument; it's a visual argument. How can you read that to know what you're being manipulated to do? When I taught that composition class, I began by looking at just the whole idea of arguing. With whom do you argue? What do you argue about? What is the language you use? I taught them the rhetorical terms. I got them to find an editorial and evaluate the quality of the argument. Not do you agree with it, but is it a good argument? Then, I got them to make their own argument, which they had to do a little research for. Nothing happens in a vacuum. I don't care what your opinion is about something. If you're going to have ideas about it, you have to hear what other people say about it and place yourself in that conversation. We teach argumentation in 1101 and argumentation with more significant documentation and research in 1102. It's fun, so much fun.

TS: It's really strange because I have forgotten so much of my undergraduate education, but I still remember the books we used in what would have been 1101. We did [George Orwell's] *1984*.

MB: Well, that's a good book about language and the misuse of it.

TS: Then, we had, I guess, a biography of Madame Curie that we read. Those are the only two I remember.

MB: That would be a good thing also to teach because that's prose non-fiction with a research base. You look at the way he researched that. That would be good for just about everybody.

TS: Are there many other tenure track faculty members who teach the composition courses anymore?

MB: You know, not in literature. Not in literature. If they are going to pick up a general ed class, I suspect they would teach world lit. They're all in the position that I am. Some of them are hired to teach film and twentieth-century British literature. Well, that's a full career right there. It really makes it hard. They may teach some world lit. Not many of them teach composition, and I doubt if they ever did by choice. I'm wondering how many of our tenure track rhetoric and

composition people are teaching English 1101 and English 1102? For a while, the graduate program kept them really busy, and also the specialized courses in rhetoric and composition in the major—all those writing classes.

TS: I think you've talked a little about your teaching philosophy just by telling what you do. But would you like to talk a little more about what your philosophy of teaching is? What works for you in the classroom? What you're trying to accomplish?

MB: This will be very useful since I have to do post-tenure review in about a month.

TS: I don't think you'll have any problems.

MB: I've been revisiting my teaching philosophy, trying to think about that, and I do believe in conversation. I want my students to read deeply, to respond to their reading, and to write about it. Part of my teaching philosophy is that writing is not just to produce a finished product; writing is the way we learn. If you're not sure what you understand about a text, write about the text. Because writing about it will tell you, and you may find out that you know more than you think you do. I incorporate some kind of writing into everything I teach and a lot of writing. My senior seminar writes. Every Tuesday, everybody in the class produces a two-page response to the reading. In fact, I do that in all my upper level classes. In my survey class, which is rather bigger, and where it is more difficult to do something like that, I hand out note cards, and I give them a prompt and ask them to write about that.

In the first place, I really hate quizzes, and that's part of my teaching philosophy. I don't like the "gotcha" form of teaching. One of my friends in English education pointed out to me that very often the problem with the quiz is that you ask students questions like, "What color dress is someone wearing?" And you haven't taught them what the significance of that color is. Why would they have known? So, I put these prompts up, and I hand out the cards, and I give them five or ten minutes to write. I know it takes time out of a short class, but it's worth it because, for one thing, then they focus. They focus on the material at hand. If they haven't read it, then, they can't write it. So, I have that way of checking. Knowing that I'm going to do this, makes more people read, I think. Then, I pick them all up. Even the people who think they have nothing to say, they have something to say; they've said it.

I have to lecture because the people don't know the background. That's why I put in a lot of history. The English Civil War, they didn't know England had a Civil War. So, I do the background. Then, I say, "Well, what did you say about it? And all kinds of people talk in those classes who might not otherwise because there's always the three or four people born to talk. I want to hear different voices, and I want the students to understand that other people have something to say. So, I want to get them talking; I want to get them asking questions. I like a

really lively class full of people—it's okay to interrupt me—that's okay. I want to know what they want to know. I want them to write about it. I want them to write themselves into that knowledge. The idea that writing and reading are attached and cannot be separated is a foremost part of it. I, really, did this out of strict belief and also my own experience, because when I'm really writing hard, I keep a journal. At the end of every day, I write about what has gone wrong that day and what's going to do better.

TS: How do you find time to do that?

MB: It's a writing journal—it's about what I'm working on. I work things out that way. I know that that works, but since then I have read *Academically Adrift* [Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa, *Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses* (University of Chicago Press, 2011)]. I know that book has had some people who really didn't like it, but I thought it was very instructive. I thought their test was fascinating—the way they tested critical thinking. I was interested to know that the students who showed real improvement from the beginning of their first semester as undergraduates to the end of the second were students who, for one thing, had taken things like English and history. Engineering did very well too. In their classes, by and large, they were doing at least twenty pages of writing. Not a twenty-page essay, you understand, but they were producing twenty pages of text. They were doing significant reading, like forty to fifty pages a week, which if you're doing a novel class is nothing, but they were doing significant reading, and they were doing significant writing.

That, I felt, vindicated what I did. I believe in writing. I believe in teaching students to write at every level because it's not natural, there's nothing natural about writing. They never take enough time, so [I try] to encourage them to take enough time, building in steps, sequences, in a writing project, so, they have to start early or they have to do regular writing. That is, I think, important. I also believe in treating students justly. We're human beings. We can't help liking some students better than others, and really not liking some of the students. I work really hard at not letting that come out. I work really hard at attempting to keep my own beliefs to myself because I do think that can setup a barrier. Students are pretty canny. They'll figure things out whether I tell them or not. So, I believe that the academic classroom is not a democracy—I get to grade—we are not on an equal platform. But I want everybody to be heard; I want everybody to speak; I want everybody to engage; and I want them to leave feeling that they've really learned something. That's not very philosophical, but that's what I believe.

TS: Well, you can grade on whether somebody has made a plausible argument, whether you agree with their argument or not.

MB: Exactly. Sometimes that's really hard to do, and sometimes when the argument is not plausible, they think it's because I disagree with them, but it isn't. It's just

- that they don't have any support for it. I had a run in with a student about that last spring.
- TS: Well, you can't bat a thousand all the time.
- MB: You cannot. We're dealing with human beings, and we are human. I also believe that research and investigation on the part of the professor is a vital part of bringing an effective presentation to the classroom. I think, as a professor, I have to be learning all the time. I can't just be running on automatic. So, I believe that my research always feeds back into my teaching. It, actually, sometimes comes out of it and it feeds back, and it's circular. The one refreshes the other.
- TS: When somebody's teaching a four-four load, they may not have much time to do much scholarship. But on a two-two....
- MB: A three-three is what I am now.
- TS: Oh you're three-three? I thought you had gone to two-two.
- MB: Only when I was coordinator of undergraduate English studies for three years.
- TS: Three-three is really a heavy load when you're trying to do scholarship and service and all that.
- MB: It is, and when you believe that grading writing is part of the teaching. I spend a lot of time grading.
- TS: I cringe when I hear that somebody is using multiple-choice tests in a literature class or history too.
- MB: Yes, philosophy. I just can't imagine. They have to write. They have to write regularly.
- TS: The distinguished professor award is really in large part for the integration of teaching, scholarship, and service. I think you've talked a little bit about how you bring your own scholarship, and if you have students write, they're on the way to doing scholarship themselves, I guess.
- MB: Yes, and I try to encourage them to think of it that way.
- TS: Where does service fit in to that?
- MB: My service has often been related to my teaching. I've been on the curriculum committee; in fact I chaired the curriculum committee through semester conversion and the new major in the English department. I've been on the tenure and promotion committee, which I think of as another way of engaging and

dealing with writing and conversation. A lot of my service outside the university has been to eighteenth-century societies.

TS: What kind of service do you do?

MB: I have been program chair for a couple of societies on multiple occasions. I've actually told the people for the Southeastern association that I would not be program chair again until everybody else in the group has had a turn.

TS: That sounds fair.

MB: Yes, because I've done it three times this century. I've been president of the Southeastern [American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies] twice. The second time I was president, that year they instituted a two-year term. I've been on the board there. I've been president of the Aphra Behn Society for Women in the Arts. Aphra Behn is a woman who was the first professional writer in England. We're not sure when she was born, but she died in 1689. She was one of the most successful playwrights of the Restoration period. She wrote everything: poetry, novels. Before the word novel was used in the English language, she was writing novels. So, that's the women's studies group at the [American Society for] Eighteenth-Century [Studies]. I have been on one committee for the national organization. I was on the Traveling Jam Pot, which awards travel grants. Actually, I was on another committee for them because they give an award for editing women's texts [Editing/Translation Prize Committee of the Women's Caucus], and I was on that committee for a couple of years, too. That's the kind of service I've done.

I've been on boards; I've been program chair. When I took over as president of the Aphra Behn Society—and I was president for six years—it was floundering. It was in difficulties. I take great pride in the fact that it is now flourishing—just flourishing. I was very happy to see it turn around. They're wonderful people, actually. You never have to ask twice for help. So, that is the kind of service I did outside. I do feel that everything goes together because, of course, when I go to these conferences I give presentations. Sometimes, I give presentations about my teaching. I went to the Laurence Sterne Tercentenary Conference at Royal Holloway University just outside of London this summer. What I talked about was teaching *Tristram Shandy*. That was what I talked about, how I had taught it. Actually, one of my more recent articles has been about choosing women's texts in this eighteenth-century class. So, I do that too.

TS: So you call this scholarship of teaching and learning?

MB: It really is, yes, although I haven't actually called it that. That is, effectively, what it is, although these are, really, traditional scholarly conferences. But one of the things I have done over and over again for the Southeastern meeting is chaired panels on teaching the eighteenth-century. Because, you know what, everybody

wants to talk about that. They want to talk about how you incorporate it into classes, how you do it, what your teaching activities are. Sometimes I've got a call for those and wound up with two panels because so many people want to talk, and the rooms are always full. We picked up something that people really, really, want to talk about. How do we do this?

With the eighteenth-century we, really, have a problem because students have no image of it. They don't have a visual image of what the eighteenth century looks like, and they have lots of misconceptions about what it was like. The teaching moves into the scholarship very easily. The service also grew out of the scholarship, going as an independent scholar to these conferences and getting to know people. It's through those conferences that I met some of the people—all of the people now just about—who, in these letters for my application, described me as a mentor. I didn't realize that I was a mentor to all these people. I've just always been interested in young scholars. I think that comes from being well-mentored myself. I never had graduate students, so I had vicarious graduate students. I was quite moved because I just thought of it as being bossy—the eldest of five children. That came out of that.

TS: Bill Hill, the former CETL director, was always interested in these interviews in people's definition of what master teaching was. To Bill Hill, master teaching was when you teach the teachers, when you're a mentor. It sounds like you've been a master teacher to a number of people.

MB: Well, I think of this as friendship, you know. I'd see these young people, and I'd think, "Gee, this is really wonderful. Our profession is in really good shape." Then we'd always talk together. I'm enough older than they are that they'd always ask me for advice. Mentor sounds so much more formal than I thought I was doing. I knew we were having a drink.

TS: Just handing out advice?

MB: Yes, then I find myself doing it more and more, and, I guess, I'm more sensitive to the fact that I'm doing it. I have found myself telling a number of young people, recently, that it's important to go to conferences for your scholarship and everything else, and that some of the most important things happen at the bar afterwards. It's not just networking and getting to know intellectual people. It's if you go to a conference, and you give a good presentation, and then you're available outside that room for somebody to talk to, that's when people say, "I'm doing a panel on x at this other conference; would you like to give a presentation?" "I'm putting together a collection of articles. It sounds like what you're doing might be really interesting." That's where those things open up, if you do a good job with your presentation, which is step number one. Because, otherwise, they say, "Did you hear that? I'm not going to that panel because so and so is on it."

- TS: Well, I think you've given a beautiful description of the integration of scholarship, teaching, and service, when you talk about what you do at the conferences.
- MB: Yes. I suppose so, yes.
- TS: You're doing sessions on how you teach certain kinds of literature. It's growing out of your service to these organizations. Certainly, it's a form of scholarship. Sounds like you're increasingly doing scholarship of teaching and learning, but you've continued to do the traditional scholarship of discovery, I guess.
- MB: I am. In fact, this weekend my daughter is proof-reading my most recent book. I've said, "I have to have the manuscript. I would like to have it by Monday because I have heard from Cambridge University Press that they want to read it." This is the manuscript that I finished on my sabbatical last year.
- TS: Now what is this going to be?
- MB: Well, this manuscript is on historical fiction. It is called *Descendants of Waverley: The Romance of History in Contemporary Historical Fiction*. I always forget my own titles.
- TS: Sounds like a good one.
- MB: That's close. What I'm interested in is the continuing influence of Sir Walter Scott's novels on present day historical fiction, and, I say, in a genealogical kind of way. I'm not saying they read Scott, and then they write. It's just what he unleashed was an idea of what the historical novel is. And at the center is this idea of romancing history, which is taking the historical record and putting in those things that history forgot to record. But, then, there's the tug because it has to be accessible to the modern reader. On the other hand, it has to be authentic to the period. I think that somebody who knows about a period should be able to read a historical novel without pain. So, that's what that book is about. And it's about the proliferation of the ideas of the historical novel in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century where now we have detective historical fiction, and we have biographical historical fiction, and all these other forms. But still at their heart, you can see them doing this same thing. And that is what I teach my senior seminar on. Okay, so we're back to teaching.
- TS: Great! So, you're looking for a publisher, but Cambridge may be interested?
- MB: Cambridge has seen the prospectus and one chapter, and, as a result of that, she wants to see the whole manuscript. So, I'm putting it in the mail as soon as my daughter and I can get these last typos out of the way.
- TS: Well, tell me a little bit about Mary Davys.

MB: In about 1994, the editor of the University Press of Kentucky—she was just new there—the name is Nancy Grayson.

TS: Nancy Grayson, she was at UGA press.

MB: I met her at UGA Press, and then she went to Kentucky. Then, she came back to UGA. Her MA is in eighteenth-century studies, so I met her through these conferences. When she first went to Kentucky, she set up this “Eighteenth-Century Novels by Women” series, and she invited me to do one. I was interested in it because I had just put together my first syllabus for eighteenth-century fiction, and I realized that there was almost nothing available for those early women—the early women before Frances Burney and Jane Austen. In fact, I had trouble coming up with names of people. I was really interested in that first quarter of the century, maybe the first third of the eighteenth-century. There was Aphra Behn in the seventeenth century and Eliza Haywood in that period too—although there wasn’t very much by Eliza Haywood in print—modern editions—at that point. But I knew there were all these other women. People kept saying all these women were writing novels, and I had trouble coming up with names, and I felt it was a real gap.

So I went to my friend Brian Corman, and I said, “Nancy has asked me to do a novel. Whom do you suggest?” He said, “Well, there’s Penelope Aubin and there’s Mary Davys. I think you would like Mary Davys.” And I loved Mary Davys. She is fascinating. The three novels that I eventually did, because they were small novels, were 1724, 1725, and 1727. She was married to a man [Peter Davys] who went to Trinity College, Dublin, with Swift and Congreve. He died young, leaving her widowed and poor. She left Dublin. She moved to London. She published two novels, then she headed, we think, to York and lived there. In 1716 she came back to London with a play [*The Northern Heiress*; or, *The Humours of York*], which was produced at Lincoln’s Inn Fields. It was successful enough that it went three nights, which was important because the third night was the author’s benefit.

She stayed in London for a couple more years, and then she went to Cambridge and opened a coffeehouse with what was left of the take, I think, from the author’s benefit. She wrote these novels. They’re smart, funny, scintillating, wonderful, wonderful novels. So, I produced this edition [*The Reform’d Coquet, Familiar Letters betwixt a Gentleman and a Lady, and The Accomplished Rake* (University Press of Kentucky, 1999)]. The other thing that I felt very strongly about was, it’s one thing for us to talk about these women writers, and for those of us who can go to the Bodleian [Libraries, University of Oxford], or wherever, and read them, then, that was fine. But we really can’t consider this scholarship until people who can’t go there can read them and also until we can teach them. So, the whole idea of this series, and this one that I did, was that I can teach it. So, it’s paperback, very annotated, long introduction, because there’s still things we

- don't know about her life. I don't think she wanted us to. We don't know what her maiden name was, for example. So, that is what she did, and she's really smart, really funny, witty, such a pleasure!
- TS: So your book includes the whole novels?
- MB: The three novels. One of them is only sixty pages long. The concept of the short story and the novella didn't exist in the eighteenth century. If it was prose fiction, it was a novel. One of them is about a hundred pages long; one of them is about sixty, maybe; and another one is about a hundred or so pages long. The book is about 325 pages.
- TS: So, you did a long introduction to it?
- MB: Yes, that included what I knew about her biography.
- TS: Lots of footnotes?
- MB: Oh, yes. There are hundreds of footnotes. Then, I had to do a chronology. So, I did the introduction, and it also included analysis of the three novels, and then a chronology. I had to include a bibliography of other things to read about Mary Davys. Then, I got permission to publish these two letters that were published in the *Grub-Street Journal*, one of which was satire on Mary Davys. It is 1731, I think. And one is her response. That response that was also published in the *Grub-Street Journal* is the only letter that we have that we know that she wrote. The only thing we have that we know she wrote that isn't a piece of fiction or a poem or a play and with a constructed identity. This one, more than anywhere else, she's speaking in her own voice. This is the only thing we have. So, I said, "This is really important. It's really hard to find." This is before things were online, but that wouldn't help us here anyway because we don't have ECCO. The Eighteenth-Century Collections Online is something Kennesaw doesn't have.
- TS: Maybe we need to get it.
- MB: Yes. But I said, "This is really important." And I was given permission to put those in an appendix.
- TS: Well, I know you did a paper on Susanna [Annesley] Wesley, the very remarkable mother of John and Charles.
- MB: I did, very remarkable people, yes. That came out of the book on the eighteenth-century church [*Yorick's Congregation: The Church of England in the Time of Laurence Sterne* (University of Delaware Press, 2007)]. That's what that came out of.
- TS: She had nineteen children for one thing.

MB: And eleven of them, I think, lived to grow up.

TS: She seemed like she was a lot more interesting than her husband [Samuel Wesley] to me.

MB: Yes, it was a difficult marriage. I think he was not an easy person to get along with, although he had a very interesting young life.

TS: Didn't somebody burn down the church a time or two?

MB: That happened. Before he became all-serious and a clergyman and everything, he and his brother in law, John Dunton, who was married to another one of the Annesley girls, Susanna Wesley's half-sister, they founded this newspaper and there was one other person there, I forget who it was, which was very funny. It was a newspaper called the *Athenian [Gazette]*, and they purported to be this group of superior people who could answer any question you wanted. It was John Dunton, Samuel Wesley, and this other guy. They were more or less just out of college, and they were making up questions and answers. It was wonderful. I mean, he did have that in his background. I don't know where it all went.

TS: Spent too much time on a commentary on Job, I guess.

MB: Yes, which is a vexed problem in the eighteenth century.

TS: Well, I was always able to work John and Charles into my Georgia history since they spent a couple of years here. Then John had to go back home and explain about Sophia Hopkey to his mother.

MB: Yes.

TS: Okay, you're doing an incredible amount of work it sounds like.

MB: Yes, but it is good work. It's good work. I enjoy my work.

TS: Good. I like to ask everybody what keeps you at Kennesaw State. Of course, I guess family considerations are one of the things that keeps you here, but maybe I'll let you answer it in your own words. What keeps you at Kennesaw?

MB: What keeps me at Kennesaw, quite apart from, as you say, the family requirements, because, my husband is still working here....

TS: He's going to retire someday, I guess.

MB: Yes, he will, but by then it will be too late for me to go anywhere. What I have found at Kennesaw is that I don't think I would have had the latitude to do what

I've been doing here if I were at a traditional Research I intuition. I would have been more productive, I think, as a scholar. These books wouldn't have taken eight to ten years to write. On the other hand, they couldn't have because the pressure would have been on to produce them more quickly than that.

TS: But you wouldn't be teaching a three-three load.

MB: I wouldn't be teaching a three-three load.

TS: Or having all the service requirements.

MB: No, but then I'd be supervising PhD dissertations. That is work. It's a two-two or two-one load for a reason. What I found is that Kennesaw allows me to do things that I would have never done anywhere else, I don't think—so, to develop a place for myself to expand my interests in this way. I wasn't tied down to doing a particular type of research when I got here. I could really do what interested me, and then I could pull it back into my teaching and pull it back out again. I think it's been enormously fruitful. I also think that I've seen such a vast array of students. When I first came here the average age of the undergraduate was twenty-seven. And I still like to teach a five o'clock in the afternoon Brit lit survey because I get what I call the grownups in that class: people coming from work. These are people that, for one thing, I think, they raise the tone of the class. I'm really interested in them. My mother was a teacher, and she got her teaching certificate back in the days when you went to teacher's college for one year after high school, and then you were a teacher. Then she went back to university to get a degree because she was sub teaching in Saskatchewan, and she was told that she could do more and better sub teaching if she got a degree. So she got her BA when she was about sixty-five.

TS: Oh. How about that!

MB: Yes. And for a lot of that she had to drive to Saskatoon, which is ninety miles away.

TS: Talk about a non-traditional student!

MB: Yes, with a thermos of coffee in the car because where she was driving through a Saskatchewan winter to go down to these classes in Saskatoon. I'm interested in that. Her mother never went to university, but read all the time. Read all the time in the library. The children's part of the library in Cochrane is named after my grandmother because she was so committed to this.

TS: What's her name?

MB: Her name was Elsa Louise Shirley. So I am really interested in these people who made this really difficult commitment to go back to school when they have other

things in their lives. That's something I've had here that I've really enjoyed. I do enjoy the traditional freshmen because, as I say, they're just so goofy and cute. But it's nice to have a grownup in the room.

TS: You've alluded to the fact that our student body is getting younger.

MB: It is. It is getting much younger.

TS: Ever since the residence halls opened up.

MB: Yes, and I think the HOPE Scholarship also affected that because of the way it affected places like Tech and UGA, in part. That's not a bad thing either. I like to see kids on bicycles and sitting under trees playing guitar, stuff like that. But if you teach in the evenings you get what I thought—I really dislike the idea of them being nontraditional students, because they were our tradition.

TS: Right, they were our traditional students.

MB: Yes. But I think Kennesaw has offered me things that I don't think I would have done elsewhere. Some of the teaching challenges I have had have pushed me into other kinds of scholarship. The other book that I've got half-finished on teaching students in literature-based classes how to write better—that came out of the things that I had to do. I didn't walk into a position where all I was teaching was graduate and undergraduate students. Some semesters and certainly some quarters, all I taught was composition. I don't consider that a bad thing. I have been known to be rather short with people who say that teaching composition is beneath them. They came here because they were told they would never have to teach composition. "Get out and teach composition. You will learn a lot."

TS: You've got a twenty-one year perspective, now, on the changes at Kennesaw State. Why don't you talk about how you see us changing from the way we were when you arrived to where we are today?

MB: Well, I suspect somebody who came here in 1992 when I did and hasn't been here again until this fall might have difficulty finding their way around the campus. Just the building alone is extraordinary, and the size, the growth, has been enormous. I don't always think well-planned for. Sometimes it has resulted in real problems staffing classes and having classes at manageable sizes and things like that. But it has changed enormously. Another thing that has changed in the English department, and I suspect I was part of this, is the requirements for scholarship. I didn't need a book for promotion and tenure. Probably, just the articles I had published were enough, but I [wrote books] because I was interested, not because I felt I had to. But I had it.

Now, I know some of our faculty are worried about approaching promotion and tenure if they don't have a book. I don't think they need them, but they do need

to have some really substantial articles. Giving presentations is no longer enough. I think in many ways that's been a good thing. After all we're offering more graduate programs than we used to, and we need to have a faculty deeply engaged in scholarship. I have said, probably, too many times already, I think that scholarship and teaching are very closely aligned, and that the scholarship is important if your teaching is not going to get stale. With the three-three load, we're really not at the point where undergraduate faculty can be expected to produce a book, especially, if they have to teach in the summer for financial reasons, given how long it's been since we've had a raise. Some of our faculty approaching tenure and promotion have never had a raise.

TS: I don't think we've had raises since 2008 have we?

MB: Yes, or maybe 2007. That means faculty coming up for tenure and promotion this year may never have had a raise. So, they are teaching in the summertime just to pay the mortgage. I do think that that is a problem that has a solution, although the solution will cost money, and maybe fewer and fewer of us will be teaching general education on the tenure and promotion track. More and more of that will be done by lecturers because that's the way you reduce the teaching load. I am glad now to be in an institution where the scholarship is really encouraged and valued, but it is still problematic. So, that is something that I have seen changing. Of course, change is always uncomfortable. So, the growth has been in some ways uncomfortable. I used to say, "Unless we get more classrooms, we'll have at least one section of freshman composition meeting in [English professor and Writing Center director Robert G.] Bob Barrier's van." Where are we going to put people? I was, actually, rather taken aback to see the plans for the next set of expansion for Kennesaw because they expanded, I think, business and the Student Center and everything else, but they didn't add one single more desk in the English department, and the English department is required to teach three required classes in general education. If you increase general education, we already have over a hundred sections of freshman composition, English 1101 only, in the fall.

TS: Where did you teach them all?

MB: We teach them morning, noon, and night. We're slowly developing online sections, although that is very tricky. One of the things about online is the significant rates of attrition and failure. Again, online is not the answer to everything, and I'm not sure it's ever the answer to freshman teaching because they tend to get themselves in trouble there, especially the traditional students. I think they need to be here to learn how to be college students. So, we are addressing it in that way as well, but very limited, very careful choice of the people who teach them. The online thing, I think, again, is a fascinating idea, very good in some ways. Some classes, I think, lend themselves to it. I am concerned at the thought that everything should be taught that way because I'm not sure everything lends itself. For example, the gateway, and we may even have an online version of the gateway course, but to me, I need to have the

students in the classroom, so, in the first place they can meet each other because they become a cohort. Not a formal cohort, but then they run into each other in other classes, and that bonding starts in that classroom.

TS: If there was ever a course that needs to be taught in the classroom, I would think the gateway course is the course.

MB: Also, you're teaching them how to be English majors. I think I have to model that as a person, and it's something that I really feel that I need to see them face-to-face to do. Something that I think—some of the technical classes are probably good online because that's the way they're going to do it. So, that's a big change that I'm not sure we have figured out. I don't really think we've figured out how to support scholarship sufficiently yet either. That's another problem. I do think that Kennesaw really has done wonderful things. The rare books collection! Oh, my heavens! That's amazing that we would have something like that here. It's one of our hidden treasures. We don't trumpet it enough because we have good people working there and wonderful things in it. I take my eighteenth-century students to [the Bentley Rare Book Gallery] every class I teach. My senior seminar students and my gender studies students all go to see what we've got. So that's a wonderful thing that we've done.

TS: Well, what should we have talked about that we haven't?

MB: I think we've talked about quite a lot, haven't we? I even talked about my children.

TS: Well, why don't we bring it to a close then? I think you've answered all the questions that I've had to ask.

MB: Well, thank you.

TS: I very much appreciate you taking the time to talk to me.

MB: Well I have enjoyed it. Thank you for asking me.

INDEX

- Academically Adrift* by Arum and Roksa, 20
Adebayo, Akanmu, 12-13
Aphra Behn Society for Women in the Arts, 22
Atwood, Margaret, 4
- Barrier, Robert G., 30
Behn, Aphra, 22, 25
Bowden, David, 12
Bowden, Frances, 11-12, 24
Bowden, James, 1, 10-11
Bowden, Martha F.
 Childhood, 1
 Father, 1, 9-10
 Mother, 1, 10, 28
 Undergraduate student at Trinity College, 1-4
 Husband, 1, 12, 27
 Graduate student at the University of Toronto, 1-4, 6-7, 9
 Children, 1-2, 10-13, 24
 Move to Atlanta, 1-2, 13
 Independent scholar, 2, 13, 23
 Part-time and temporary full-time faculty member at Kennesaw State, 2, 13
 Gender studies, 6
 Mentors, 6-7
 PhD thesis, 6, 9
 Attraction to seventeenth- and eighteenth-century literature, 7-9
 Paternal grandfather, 10
 Tenure-track professorship at KSU
 Hired to teach British literature, 13-14
 Upper level classes, 14-15, 31
 Love of freshman composition classes, 15-18
 Gateway to the major class, 15, 30-31
 First coordinator of undergraduate English studies, 16, 21
 Work on book about teaching writing in literature classes, 16
 Teaching philosophy, 19-21
 Service to the campus, 21-22
 Service to the profession, 22
 Mentoring of other professionals, 23
 Scholarship
 Conference paper on teaching *Tristram Shandy*, 22
 Scholarship of teaching and learning, 22-23
 Scholarship of discovery
 Manuscript on *Descendants of Waverley*, 24
 Edited volume of Mary Davys novels, 25-26
 Yorick's Congregation, 26

Integration of teaching, scholarship, and service, 22-24
 Reasons for remaining at KSU, 27-29
 Bowden, William John (Bill), 12-13, 27
 Bradham, Jo Allen, 14-15
 Bruckmann, Patricia Carr, 6-7

Canada
 Crisis of identity, 3-4
 Comparison of US and Canadian systems of higher education, 4-5
 Canadian Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, 7
 Cochrane, Ontario, 1, 9, 28
 Confederation Life Insurance Company, 13
 Corman, Brian, 6-7, 25

Dabundo, Laura S., 14
 Davys, Mary, 24-26
 Dunton, John, 27

Frye, Northrop, 1, 7

Grayson, Nancy, 25

Hill, Robert W., 14
 HOPE scholarships, 29

Kennesaw State University
 General education, 4-5
 English Department
 Shift toward more cultural studies classes, 5-6, 14-15
 English composition classes, 16-19
 Transition from quarter system to semester system, 15-16
 Nontraditional students, 28-29
 Growth in buildings on campus, 29
 Increased focus on scholarship, 29-30
 Online courses, 30-31
 Bentley Rare Book Gallery, 31
 King's College (Dalhousie University), 5

Lewin, Jonathan, 5, 17
 Lloyd's of London, 7-8

MacPherson, Jay, 7

Odom, Mary Lou, 11

Pope, Alexander, and Pope's *The Dunciad*, 8

Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, 1, 10

Saint Catharines, Ontario, 1

Shirley, Elsa Louise, 28

Short, Elizabeth Frances Louise, 1, 10, 28

Short, Hedley Vicars Roycraft, 1, 9-10

Sidnell, Michael J., 6-7

Southeastern American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, 22

Sterne, Laurence, 9, 22, 26

Tristram Shandy, 8-9, 22

University of Toronto

Trinity College, 1-4, 9, 12, 17

Graduate school, 1-4, 6-7, 9, 12, 17

Walker, Gail B., 15

Wesley, Samuel, 27

Wesley, Susanna Annesley, 26-27

York University, Osgoode Hall Law School, 12