

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
INTERVIEW WITH SPSU PRESIDENT EMERITUS STEPHEN R. CHESHIER
CONDUCTED BY THOMAS A. SCOTT AND KATHLEEN HARPER
EDITED AND INDEXED BY THOMAS A. SCOTT
for the
SOUTHERN POLYTECHNIC STATE UNIVERSITY SERIES, NO. 6
FRIDAY, MAY 16, 2014

Kennesaw State University holds legal title and all literary property rights, including copyright, to this oral history. It is not to be reproduced without permission from the director of the Kennesaw State University Oral History Project.

Kennesaw State University Oral History Project
Southern Polytechnic State University Series, No. 6
Interview with Stephen R. Cheshier
Conducted by Thomas A. Scott and Kathleen Harper
Edited and Indexed by Thomas A. Scott
Friday, May 16, 2014
Location: Cobb Education Consortium, Kennesaw State University

TS: Today the interview is with Steve Cheshier who was president of Southern Polytechnic State University for seventeen years from 1980 to 1997. Dr. Cheshier, why don't we begin by asking about your background? I saw where you graduated from Memphis State for your first degree, so maybe you grew up somewhere around Memphis?

SC: No.

TS: No? Well, could you talk about your background—maybe the schools you went to and mentors along the way?

SC: I was born in Ohio and went through high school there. My family had barely finished high school, let alone gone to college, so I had no idea about college when I was in high school. I was in a very rural part of Ohio, really the Appalachian part of Ohio. Right out of high school I enlisted in the Navy, and I got into a lot of service schools in electronics and technology subjects. Aviation electronics was my area in the Navy. I stayed in the Navy for twelve years.

TS: What years would those be?

SC: From 1958 to '70. Much of that was the Vietnam era, but I was on the East Coast. I was an Atlantic and Mediterranean kind of sailor instead of a Vietnamese waters sailor.

TS: But you were gaining some skills?

SC: I gained a lot of skills. I taught for six years of those twelve. I taught first in the Navy's basic electronics school, then in the advanced electronics school, and finally in the officer's electronics school. At that time it was unusual that an enlisted person would be a teacher in the officer's electronics program. During those twelve years, the six years of teaching were at the Naval Air Technical Training Command at Millington, Tennessee.

TS: So that's when you were going to the University of Memphis?

SC: I was going every night at Memphis State, and I came within six or maybe nine semester hours over that time there of graduating. I was [also] stationed in Norfolk, and I went to Old Dominion. Wherever I was stationed I would go to

college also.

TS: You're the definition of the non-traditional student.

SC: I was very non-traditional. I was married this whole time and had two kids. The vast majority of my work was at Memphis State, now the University of Memphis. In 1970 I lacked only a summer of getting my bachelor's degree, and I was due to go to four years of sea duty. I had a wife and two little kids, so I wasn't anxious to go out to sea for four years. I had gone as far as you could go as an enlisted man. I went through all the levels of that and had no more promotions to look forward to, so I got out. I went back to Memphis State. My wife stayed behind. I lived in the dorm with an eighteen-year-old piano major roommate and finished those remaining hours. I got two degrees actually, one in physics and one in math. Before I got out of the Navy, I had applied to graduate school at several places and had been accepted with a scholarship at Purdue in engineering. So I took that, but I had to obviously complete my summer at Memphis State, which I did. Then in the fall my wife and I moved to Lafayette, Indiana and lived in married student housing while I got my master's degree in electrical engineering.

TS: What year was that?

SC: That was 1970 and '71.

TS: Wow. Ten years later you're going to be a college president.

SC: Yes, really. Actually, to continue that story, while I was in graduate school, right across the street from the electrical engineering building was the College of Technology where they had electrical engineering technology, which was a more applied version of electrical engineering. I became introduced to the faculty there, and they hired me as a graduate instructor while I was doing my master's degree—so I was teaching technology while I was getting my engineering degree. Back then the requirement was not a PhD to be a faculty member. It was a master's plus relevant experience, which could be the military or industrial experience or whatever. They hired me in '72 as an assistant professor, so I moved over there as a full-time professor in engineering technology.

TS: Which was perfect training for Southern Poly.

SC: It was perfect for Southern Poly and also for my Navy background, which was very applied electronic repair for the flight crew. I took care of all the electronics on the anti-submarine planes and that sort of thing. Anyway, I did a lot of publishing, a lot of conferences, a lot of faculty development, a lot of things, and long story short, I got promoted to associate professor, full professor, tenure, and department head by '76, which maybe to this day is the record for the fastest moving from graduate instructor to tenured full professor in four years.

TS: I'd say.

SC: My son [David] is far more capable than I am. He's a chair [in the Department of Communication] at Georgia State. He's been there for fifteen years, and he's a tenured associate professor. Still, they're not making him full professor, and he's done far more than I ever did in my day. But they hinge everything there on writing a major textbook of some kind, which he actually is doing right now on sabbatical.

TS: Were you department chair before you had your doctorate?

SC: I got my doctorate, those four years, while I was going through the ranks. I was driving to the University of Illinois, 110 miles away, four nights a week with Harris Travis, actually. For four years I'm living over there in the summer in the dorm, and over four years I got my doctorate in January of '75.

TS: And the doctorate was engineering education?

SC: Engineering education. It was one of these bureaucratic messes. Purdue had all the courses in the program I wanted for my doctorate, but they had a rule that if you were on the faculty at Purdue, you couldn't get a degree from Purdue because they were afraid the faculty would be your colleagues. So they had exactly what I wanted, but I couldn't get it. The closest place that had what I wanted was Champaign-Urbana, University of Illinois, which was 110 miles away. Four nights a week, winter, all through the winter and snow, we were driving through the snow higher than the car.

TS: You had to be dedicated.

SC: I got to know Harris Travis pretty much during those years. But, anyway, four nights a week for 220 miles round trip—we'd work all day at Purdue; we'd drive over there; classes went from 7:00 to 10:00. Then we'd go to the IHOP after 10:00 in Champaign and eat dinner, and then we'd drive 110 miles back and get back about 1:00 o'clock in the morning or something like that. Then we'd go to work the next day. We did that for four years. Hence my frustration with some faculty at Southern Tech—which I'm going to call it because that's what it was then—who would complain about, "Gosh, I have to go all the way to Atlanta to get my advanced degree; I can't commute like that!" Well, there are commutes and there are commutes. But anyway, I got [my doctorate] in '75, and that allowed me to qualify to be department chair. It was a competitive thing. Actually, the dean at that time suggested that I be a candidate because I had done well as a teacher and had won a couple of teaching awards. So I got that, and for the last four years that I was at Purdue, I was tenured full professor department head.

During those ten years at Purdue I was active in the ASEE, the American Society

for Engineering Education (Fellow); IEEE, Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (Senior Member); and ABET, the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (Fellow). I chaired accrediting teams for almost thirty universities over that time, and in all these national contacts I got to know some people at Southern Poly. David E. Summers, who was the chair of electrical engineering technology at Southern Tech, was my counterpart. Walter O. Carlson became a friend of mine; he was, of course, director during the decade of the 1970s at Southern Tech. I knew a few other people just nationally, but I was very comfortable, I'll say, at Purdue. I had no intention of ever leaving Purdue. I loved it there. My two kids—one had graduated high school and the other one was in high school. My wife had a great job at Purdue, a career kind of job, as I did. So I wasn't thinking about anything.

In 1980, I think January of '80, I had earned a sabbatical from Purdue and went to teach in London at Northeast London Polytechnic University. My wife came over, and we lived in a flat. I rode the double-decker red bus every day to work. It was a nice experience. In the spring I got a call that I had been nominated by one of the people I knew, and I never did know which one it was—whether it was David Summers or Walt Carlson or one of those people. Southern Tech was separating from Georgia Tech, and they were going to hire the first president.

TS: Carlson didn't want it?

SC: Carlson didn't want it. I'm not sure the campus wanted him to continue in that role. He was a Georgia Tech vice president. Those who were anti-staying with Georgia Tech weren't real comfortable with keeping him there. But the Regents did a national search, and that precluded that anyway.

TS: Right. Well, he never moved into Cobb County anyway.

SC: No he didn't. Georgia Tech was his affiliation, his home, his life, everything. That wasn't real comfortably received by some on the campus. So, anyway, I said, "Sure, put my name in." I didn't do anything beyond that. Then I got a call, "Well, you've been identified as a finalist. Could you come to the campus for an interview and bring your wife?" It was a three-day interview. So we came from Europe in April. I don't know if you know April in northwest Indiana, but it's windy. It's grey, the sun never shines, and you never see a blue sky. So they brought us down here right at the peak—dogwoods, azaleas—I couldn't believe a place could be like that in April.

TS: Well, London probably wasn't much better in April, was it?

SC: No, it wasn't. It was dismal and rainy. But we just thought, "Wow, this is amazing." Everybody interviewed us—the mayor of Marietta and the Cobb County Chamber, all the campus people. There was no group they didn't put us before. My wife had three days of separate, parallel interviews with everybody.

We thought, “For goodness sakes, how thorough can this be?” Anyway, it seemed to go okay, but I didn’t think anything was going to come of it. We went back, and I had just finished my sabbatical in July. My wife and I were going to Scandinavia before coming back home. So we’re in Helsinki, Finland, asleep at 3:00 in the morning, and the phone rings in the hotel room. I thought, “Who in the world would even know I’m here?” I just thought it was a crank call.

TS: So that would have been about 9:00 o’clock back in the States.

SC: Yes, it’s like six or seven hours difference I’m sure—right in the middle of the night. So I jump up and go to the phone. It’s Vernon D. Crawford, the chancellor of the University System of Georgia, saying, “We want to offer you the job as president of Southern Tech.” I’m half asleep, and I’m thinking, “What in the world? Why would he call me? If this is real, why would he call me at 3:00 in the morning?” But it was real. He had just lost track that it might be late at night over there. I said, “Well, can you give me till this morning to call you back?”

TS: Till you woke up?

SC: Back then you could only make long distance calls from Finland at the local post office. You had to go to the post office, and they’d set you up for an overseas phone call. My wife and I stayed up the rest of the night and talked about it. I had a commitment, actually. Taking a sabbatical, I had a commitment to come back for a year to Purdue. So I said, “I’ve got to call Perdue and see if I can even do this.” I got a hold of the dean at about 7:00 in the morning, probably, some weird time. He was very nice about it, and he said, “No, I certainly won’t hold you back from this opportunity.” He allowed me to go. So then I called Dr. Crawford and accepted the job and came down here in August when the school year started in 1980. My oldest son was at Wake Forrest, but my youngest son was just starting his senior year in high school.

TS: So he probably wasn’t happy.

SC: He wasn’t thrilled at all. He came with me and finished his senior year at Wheeler here. It took him a while to forgive me for that. My wife stayed behind to sell the house. It took about eight months for that to happen, so he and I were living here.

TS: Why didn’t he stay up there if she was still there in the house?

SC: Well, because she didn’t know. The moment the house sold she was coming, so she felt like he needed [to be here].

TS: So she gave up her job?

SC: Yes, she did. She felt like he needed a full year his senior year somewhere. But

up there he was a starter on the basketball team. Down here, they didn't even know who he was, and they already had their team picked. They weren't going to put some new transfer senior kid in to be a starter over all the kids who had been in the school. So things didn't work out well for him. Anyway, he did it. It worked out in the end because he met his wife here, and she's great. We've got two grandchildren now, so it worked out for the best, obviously. Anyway, that's how I got to Southern Tech in 1980.

TS: When you came here for your interview, did you meet with the faculty as well as the community? Was it an open search?

SC: It was an open forum, yes. They would announce, "Today in the ballroom of the Student Center from two to four"—anyone could come and interview me. I was just on for three days, and so was my wife—never together but in different settings.

TS: It sounds very much like the Betty L. Siegel search, which was right about that same time.

SC: It was. It was a year later.

TS: Yes, 1981. It was very open, and the faculty got to ask her anything they wanted.

SC: They asked me everything you can imagine.

TS: But that's not the way they did it in later years. When we interviewed Lisa A. Rossbacher, she said it was a secret search. She didn't even meet the faculty ahead of time.

SC: She was selected, I think, before anyone on the campus knew she was going to be hired.

TS: That's right.

SC: This was so open.

TS: Daniel S. Papp's interview process was more open than the Lisa Rossbacher search, but not as open as the Betty Siegel search. It's almost like the Board of Regents has gone from being very open to not so much.

SC: That's exactly right. I guess in my case it was a big departure because it was the first president, so it was something the campus felt, "We want to get this right." I think they interviewed four or five people—"We want to make sure we get everything out on the table." They were still in the midst of being torn apart from Georgia Tech and mostly being glad they were being torn apart from Georgia Tech. That was still lingering, so they didn't want to compound that with hiring

- the wrong person who would come in and make things worse. In the case of Kennesaw, I knew Horace W. Sturgis for the year or so that he and I were there together. He had been the only president of KSU, so that was a big change after a lot of years of him being the only president.
- TS: He made his retirement announcement at the start of the school year in September 1980 and retired six months later.
- SC: He did. I had a lot of conversations with him right when I arrived just to get advice—you know, what's the community like, what's the right civic club, all these kinds of things?
- TS: He knew a lot about Southern Tech because Lawrence V. Johnson was his mentor.
- SC: Yes. He was very helpful to me, and, of course, Larry Johnson was very helpful to me too. He was another I had known like Walt Carlson and David Summers. I knew Hoyt L. McClure over the years, so I knew a lot about the institution. I know Horace did, and until Horace died [on January 16, 1990] I remained a lot in contact with him and good friends with him and his wife [Sue]. But yes it is different now from all I can understand. My wife and I went back to England and said, "Wow, what a grilling! Can you believe all the stuff they put us through?" It was just amazing. But anyway it worked out and we came and it all started in the fall of '80.
- TS: What's your impression other than that the flowers were in bloom when you came down here? What was your impression of the campus?
- SC: I was very positive about the campus. There were things I thought it needed and things I liked about it. I had visited in some professional meeting or some context for a brief visit somewhere prior to that. At that time the engineering technology community nationally was a very close-knit community, very close-knit. That was the only degree Southern Tech offered—engineering technology. In 1980 when I came it was a one-discipline, truly technical, institute—not a university, not even a college. It was a good technical institute with one degree.
- TS: So they didn't distinguish between civil, electrical, or mechanical?
- SC: No, they didn't. There were subsets of that degree, but electrical engineering technology, mechanical engineering technology, civil engineering technology, computer engineering technology, everything was [under the umbrella of] engineering technology, which were all accredited in the same way nationally. Whereas at Purdue engineering technology was one little school of a big land grant university.
- TS: I meant to ask you while you were department chair there, wasn't it the

Department of Electrical Engineering Technology?

SC: Right, EET, Electrical Engineering Technology. It was in the College of Technology and we had in the college all those same disciplines I just mentioned, mechanical, civil, aviation, and a few other disciplines. So I knew everything that you could know from afar about the disciplines and much about the faculty just from meetings and hearing them on panels and [delivering] papers.

TS: How big was your college at Purdue?

SC: Probably 6,000 or 7,000 students. The department was 1,500 or 1,800, something like that.

TS: Other than that you didn't have all the other disciplines that you had at Purdue, it was probably similar in size?

SC: Yes, actually. Southern Tech was probably twice as big as my department was at Purdue. In a way it seemed even to me to be unusual to go from being department head to being a president. I did have some responsibilities at Purdue for regional campuses out of the dean's office. I was what you would now call an associate dean for extension campuses. I think it was possible back then because Southern Tech was essentially a one-discipline institution, and I matched up perfectly with that one discipline.

TS: This is my ignorance showing, but when I went to the University of Tennessee, we had an engineering school but I don't remember them having engineering technology.

SC: They didn't. They did at UT-Martin.

TS: And maybe Tennessee Tech, I don't know.

SC: Oh, Tennessee Tech had one.

TS: I was just wondering, if you went to a school like Auburn or Clemson, could you study engineering technology? How rare was engineering technology?

SC: No, you couldn't do it at Auburn or Clemson.

TS: What about Georgia Tech?

SC: Well, Georgia Tech you could in that Southern Tech was part of Georgia Tech. Engineering technology started in the Second World War because all the veterans were getting technical training, radar and sonar and all these things, and wanted to extend that when they got out of the service since they had the GI bill. So the discipline called being an engineering technician is a product of World War II.

That term really didn't exist prior to then. Prior to that it was just trades, trade schools and things like that. It got more technical than that, more math- and science-based and so on. So they created the discipline of engineering technology, but always at the two-year level all over the country. There were a lot of these. California, Texas, Florida, New England had a lot of them, Wentworth [Institute of Technology] in Boston and Southern Tech in 1948 in Georgia—the same timeframe as all these others around the nation.

Well, in the early 1960s, a lot of these two-year engineering technician graduates wanted to extend their education to a bachelor's degree. But the traditional engineering schools, due to the influence of the National Science Foundation and Sputnik being launched by the Russians, [were undergoing a radical transformation]. Engineering education had been very applied even at places like Georgia Tech—very lab-oriented and very applied. [In the 1960s] it became much more research-oriented because all the money was for research, which meant you had to have graduate students to do the research, which means you phase down the [teaching] laboratories, and you built research laboratories. In the 1960s these two-year graduates wanted to go on, but traditional engineering schools had become so research-oriented, they couldn't transfer into electrical engineering, let's say, to finish out. Some of the better two-year schools in the country created four-year bachelor of engineering technology degree programs. Purdue was one of the first. I think it started its degree in '64 or '65. Others did this around the country such that by 1970 Southern Tech did it because graduates couldn't go to Georgia Tech and finish out their degrees.

TS: Right. So 1970 they started doing the four-year degrees?

SC: They started offering four-year degrees and became a senior college in 1970. By the time I came to Georgia, there were probably a couple hundred bachelor's degree schools around the country that were doing this—much like other countries, such as Germany and England, that were ahead of us with this.

TS: Okay, you come in 1980, and looking over Richard A. Bennett's book [*Southern Polytechnic State University: The History*] last night, I noticed he talked about how public relations had fallen off at Southern Tech during the 1970s. He says in his book that establishing better relations with industry and the community became almost the number one priority when you arrived in Marietta. Is that the way you remember it?

SC: Yes, a big complaint on campus was that the community didn't know about us, and even industry in some cases didn't know about us. Well, I don't think that was a very valid complaint because Southern Tech always had strong industrial ties. All the graduates were placed immediately into industry, so there were obvious linkages even back then. There were more Southern Tech graduates at Lockheed than any other college or university including Georgia Tech, so the companies who knew they wanted applied engineer types already had good

relations with Southern Tech and were hiring the graduates. The apparel textile manufacturing industry was a strong supporter during the early years I was there. They funded a building on campus. It's still there, the W. Claire Harris Textile Center. So there were always good relationships with industry, and all the faculty members had to have industrial experience back then. They could all come out of industry, so they had good contacts in their companies and so on.

But it was certainly true with the community awareness. I would meet people in the community—and that probably hadn't gone away seventeen years later totally—who had some reason to be on the campus, and they would say, "I've driven past that campus for twenty years. I had no idea all this was back here." There's 220 acres on that campus, and people thought it was the two buildings they could see from the loop. Once you drive in there, it's a big campus—a lot of land, and we were able to develop most of that land. But that was always a surprise, even to the life-long residents of Marietta. That's something that's been good about the Cobb Education Consortium. We have faculty from all public education in Cobb, and one of the things we do with that group is get a bus and tour all of the member institutions, so that they know at least what we're doing in Cobb.

TS: That's great. I'd like to go on your tour sometime.

SC: It's a good tour. We get presentations on every campus. University faculty members who don't have children are required to visit an elementary school. They may not have been in one since they were a student in an elementary school. A middle school teacher may come to Kennesaw State or Southern Poly, and they have never been on either campus. So it's a great thing, especially with the tech colleges, Chattahoochee Tech. Almost no one when we started the consortium in 1992 knew anything about Chattahoochee Tech, a two-year technical institution.

TS: Its growth has been phenomenal.

SC: Tremendous growth. The visibility has increased dramatically.

TS: So you already had the 200 acres when you arrived here?

SC: No, we had two [new] parcels of land over the years that I was there. There was a big drive-in theater on the east side that we acquired, and that's now where the Recreation & Wellness Center is [dedicated in October 1996] and a big parking area. We actually acquired three pieces of property. Between Southern Poly and Life University was the old Georgia Fire Academy, and I worked with [Lauren] "Bubba" McDonald [Jr.] who was then powerful in the legislature to get that moved to his district in central Georgia [in 1986].

TS: The fire academy to his district?

SC: Yes, because people in his district needed this training. They had a jump tower, and they'd set it afire, and they'd get all their training. The people in South Georgia had to come so far north to our campus to do their training that he agreed that it should be in middle Georgia. So he got it moved. Then we got that land with a token purchase, and that's now where the Physical Plant Buildings are of Southern Tech. Then on the backside I was able to acquire the land between what was then the back of the campus, which was just the loop road—that's where the campus ended—all the way over to South Cobb Drive over to Lockheed. Then we built all the athletic facilities back there [with construction beginning in 1991 and finishing in 1995]. A little fraternity row is back there, and there was an approved president's house to be built back there, but then the Regents—right while we were in the middle of [those projects], said, "Only the research universities now can have presidents' homes. We're giving everybody else a housing allowance"—which is nothing like having a president's home, but it helped. Anyway, that project ended overnight. The Regents ruled not because of us, but there were three or four other senior colleges that already had presidents' homes, and a lot of [the other senior colleges] were trying to get them. They said, "No. We're not going to have thirty-three presidents' homes to think about, so unless you're Georgia Tech or UGA or Georgia State or the medical college, [don't plan to build a home for your president.]"

TS: Did you want to live on campus?

SC: In a lot of ways I would have, really. We did a lot of entertaining back then, and we did [much of it] in our house, and my wife did the cooking. We didn't ever have a staff that would set up for those kinds of things. So it was certainly a burden on her to prepare for groups in the house all the time.

TS: It's been great for [KSU] to have the Jolley Lodge the last twenty years.

SC: The Jolley Lodge is just perfect. Yes, that would have been a good alternative solution for Southern Tech.

TS: You almost got the Elks Club, which would have been the next best thing.

SC: We tried to buy that multiple times. It was for sale, and at that time there was a mood downtown [at the Board of Regents] in terms of the facility. Frank C. Dunham was the [vice-chancellor for] facilities for the Regents—a very traditional guy. His view, every time I would take the project to him, was, "If you don't need it today, then you don't need it." He was good in a lot of ways, but he didn't seem to have foresight about what you might need five years from now. We could have bought the Elks Club building and the acreage around it—and at that time it had a swimming pool—things we didn't have on the campus—the whole thing for \$400,000.00. It later sold for four or five million dollars, but he didn't see it worthy of a \$400,000.00 loan. We didn't have the money at the campus to pony up \$400,000.00.

- TS: And that's where the Engineering Technology Center is now?
- SC: Yes, and the Baptist Student Union, which are built privately there. That whole back piece of the campus is over there. We tried to buy the Lockheed machinists' union [International Association of Machinists & Aerospace Workers Local Lodge 709], which adjoins that and would have taken us down to the loop—it fronts the loop. Never could quite get the central office to see the need.
- TS: They were willing to sell?
- SC: They were willing to accept offers. I think if it were a good enough offer, yes, they would have sold, but it never went beyond Mr. Dunham actually because he just put the kibosh on it.
- TS: But at least you got three different pieces.
- SC: We got three different pieces of land. I think we had 155 acres when I arrived, and then we got to 225 or something like that. So we added 60 or 70 acres.
- TS: Let me go back to the public relations a little bit. Did you go to all the civic clubs or how did you make contact with the community?
- SC: I joined the Marietta Kiwanis Club, which is the one that all the politicians and civic leaders were in and probably still are. In fact, the campus was moved from Chamblee to Marietta because of the Public Affairs Committee of the Marietta Kiwanis Club, so that was obviously the right civic club to be in. If I had joined another one, they never would have forgiven me for that.
- TS: [Kennesaw State] just gave them an award at the All Boards Day last Friday for their role in bringing higher education to Cobb County.
- SC: I could name a lot of people who were on that back then who were also politicians, I mean, names like Al Burruss, Joe Mack Wilson, Ernest Barrett, Harold Willingham. Now everything is named for them all over Cobb County. It's that committee that got the governor to fund moving the campus from Chamblee to Marietta.
- TS: Right. Well, you talked a little bit about the growth of the campus in terms of geography. What about buildings? You got a new classroom building pretty soon?
- SC: Yes. One of the big concerns was the campus hadn't had a new building for years.
- TS: Nothing but the original eight?

- SC: We still had the original eight, and they had the student center, which was half of the current size. We doubled the size. They had a student center that was newer than the original eight.
- TS: Okay. Kind of like Kennesaw in that regard then.
- SC: Yes. Actually the campus had an efficient, functional, industrial feel rather than a collegiate, college feel. That was a subject of a lot of initial debate on campus. I had been at land grant universities, all big public, state universities, and I liked things that made it feel like an inviting place—you know, plant some flowers around. They hadn't thought of that. Put a globe out there, some kind of emblem, put a bell tower on the library.
- TS: Oh, so the globe went up while you were there?
- SC: Oh, heavens, yes, over much opposition. "What are we wasting money on that for? That doesn't contribute to instruction." When we doubled the size of the library, we put a bell tower on it as an emblem. I don't think they even do it anymore, but the bells would chime out the hour. We put an amphitheater outdoors, down by the dormitories. All these things were viewed as frivolous things to do. I hired a horticulturist, and, oh boy, I didn't live that down, probably all the time I was there, but he still works there today. Lisa Rossbacher told me that that guy has done more to enhance the appeal of that campus.
- TS: What's his name?
- SC: Eddie McCracken. He had just graduated from UGA in horticulture. I thought, "We've got to get some flowers and put some dogwoods and azaleas and [other plants] around here where parents and students will come and see they want to study here." Eddie came in, and from day one he started beautifying the campus. It didn't cost anything in the grand scheme of things to hire him. He was right out of school, low salary kind of guy. The only cost for beautification was the cost for plants that he put in. So he's been there all those years. He changed the visual appeal of the campus dramatically. It needed to feel more like a college, I felt. The same with the academic programs—my whole life had been engineering and engineering technology and science. I have a physics degree, but my heart was in engineering, so I certainly didn't want to downplay that. That's how the institution got its reputation. Everybody nationally in those fields knew about Southern Tech and knew it had a good reputation. The national honor society for engineering technology was founded at Southern Tech in 1953, and there's a key on the campus right now on the mall honoring that.
- TS: What is the name of the society?
- SC: Tau Alpha Pi. The founder nationally was a good friend of mine; he's dead now,

Frederick J. Berger. Tau Alpha Pi has a national Fred Berger Award now to honor him (an award that I helped the ASEE establish).

TS: You got a service award from them.

SC: I got the first distinguished service award that the honor society ever gave. It wasn't because I was at Southern Poly. It was just cumulative up to that point. Fred and I had worked nationally on some joint projects. Fred came down, and I got the award. I put the key there actually, and he came and dedicated the key. I had nothing to do with the establishment of that honor society back in the 1950s. That was people who were at Southern Tech then who did that. It was one of the department heads back then [according to Bennett, *Southern Polytechnic State University: The History*, p. 39, footnote 100, the honor society was created by Professor Jesse J. DeFore, the head of the Physics Department].

TS: While they were still in Chamblee?

SC: Yes. I could give it some thought and resurrect some of those names. Jesse DeFore had a lot to do with the early establishment of Southern Tech as a nationally known school. He wrote an article every month in the Engineering Journal of the ASEE. A lot of people got to know engineering technology back in the 1950s and 1960s by his articles in this national journal. Fred Berger started it nationally, and he always bragged that he created it to be the most selective of all the national honor societies. Tau Beta Pi, which is the national engineering honor society, accepted the top 5 percent. Tau Alpha Pi accepts the top 4 percent, and that was a fine point for him. He wanted to be more selective in grade point average than the national engineering honor society.

TS: Right. You were talking about buildings and programs that you developed. I guess you got your first master's degree...

SC: In the mid-1980s in Technology Management, then [renamed] Technical Management, and then just Management. From 1948 to 1980 the only majors were the disciplines in engineering technology. The only other things offered on campus were core courses needed to support those majors. English was just what you needed to get technology accredited. Math was just what you needed, physics, just what you needed, and chemistry and so on. The people in those disciplines—and Kathy Hall would be one of those people [in Mathematics]—felt short changed that they weren't getting credit for the importance of what they contributed.

TS: Right, they're basically providing a service.

SC: Service courses—they never had any upper division students because all the service courses were freshman, sophomore kinds of courses. They felt as though they were stepchildren on the campus. It was my goal almost after the first year

and seeing how all of our eggs were in the one basket of engineering technology, [to try to broaden our courses of study]. Engineering technology had been in conflict in one way or another with traditional engineering, nationally, for a long time. I was in many national debates with engineering educators about the role of engineering technology.

TS: What were they debating—that they didn't need it?

SC: No, it was whether the bachelor's degree in engineering technology was really something that should properly be called applied engineering or whether it was a glorified technician program. Really, what these programs had become even then was applied engineering because engineering had gotten so math/science oriented. My master's degree in electrical engineering was a physics degree you might say. It was all theoretical. It had almost no labs. It was all science and math, so the bachelor of engineering technology had filled in the applied laboratory side that engineering had had until Sputnik started the change. That was debated well into the 1970s. I wrote papers in the 1970s and debated in the 1970s. One of the papers I wrote in a debate with [Richard A.] Dick Kenyon, who was dean of the College of Engineering at Rochester Institute of Technology, has been republished by ASEE twice, including last year. I mean that's forty years ago. So it's still an issue that lingers in some ways.

TS: But you're saying that what Georgia Tech taught in 1957 in electrical engineering really becomes electrical engineering technology after Sputnik?

SC: Absolutely. In fact, Southern Poly over the years has gotten a lot of transfers from Georgia Tech because students who like ham radio or they like to tinker with electronics and build kits or whatever go to Georgia Tech and places like that—Clemson, Auburn, they all do the same—and find that two years go by, and they haven't studied anything about electrical engineering yet. They haven't gotten their hands on anything, haven't had a lab, whereas the technology colleges from the start of the freshman year [give] some exposure to your discipline.

TS: I went on a tour the other day of the Engineering Technology Center where the kids were working on their race car, and they were having a good time doing that.

SC: Traditionally, in a lot of the disciplines at Southern Poly they have these student club teams. They build race cars. They [engage in] concrete steel bridge competitions. These are national competitions—concrete canoe competitions, the solar car competition—and they win or place in almost all these national competitions against even the MITs, the Stanfords—the big name engineering schools—because they're not teaching the applied side [of engineering].

TS: So all the theoretical stuff is great if you're going to graduate school...

SC: It's essential if you're going to graduate school.

- TS: But not so great if you're trying to get an entry level job.
- SC: Right. The purpose of a bachelor's degree at the Southern Techs of the world is to [prepare students to] graduate and go to work in industry—be productive pretty much from the start. That's maybe a goal they would state, but in reality that's not what happens in the traditional research oriented engineering colleges. It's to go on to a master's degree and even a doctorate and then to go back and be a teacher never having been outside of academia.
- TS: Do you think it's all the federal grant money that's driving that?
- SC: I think that's absolutely what has driven it. After Sputnik—you might remember in 1957 when it was launched it was a rude awakening. Up to that time no one in the world could do anything as good as we could. We had just won the war, everything was booming, and then the Russians put the first satellite in space, and that was a panic. So then Congress, of course, and the federal government said, "We've got to turn this around." And, of course, the ultimate turn around was putting a man on the moon twelve years later. The National Science Foundation was created, and big money was put into turning this around quickly. That got me interested in engineering education. My scholarship at Purdue was from the National Science Foundation.
- TS: I think even in history I had some kind of little fellowship when I started graduate school from the National Science Foundation.
- SC: Yes.
- TS: They must have been giving a ton of money away.
- SC: Far more than than even now because it was just a national pride thing. Back then Kennedy said, "At the end of this decade, we're going to put men safely on the moon and return them home safely." Fifty years later we say, "Let's close down the space shuttle," so we can't even get into space. We have to hire the Russians to put our men and women up on the International Space Station.
- TS: And they're not going to let us do it after 2020 they said the other day.
- SC: I know, pitiful, but anyway. That was an era where science and engineering were really supported.
- TS: Right. Okay, you've done that, but you're diversifying the curriculum. I know that you created an administrative structure after you got there. Was it schools or was it all departments?
- SC: No, it was all departments. It wasn't more than maybe a year or two that [it was

- obvious] that wasn't going to work. The structure all the way up through the history of time until I came was a totally flat organizational structure. There was the director, now the president. He was called the director then and was actually a vice president of Georgia Tech. The director had twelve—let's say was the number—department heads directly reporting to him. That was the whole organizational structure. Twelve department heads each telling the director how to run the technical institution. That was a power group.
- TS: So what happens when you come in? Do you create a vice president for academic affairs?
- SC: Yes. Colleges need a workable organizational structure. Some of that we had to do because under Georgia Tech, even though we were physically separated, all of our development and alumni activities were handled out of their development alumni office. So we had to set those offices up now as an independent college. The business office was the business person at Georgia Tech.
- TS: Oh, and I bet the public relations—why it was hurting—was that it was Georgia Tech that was doing it.
- SC: It was, exactly. All those support things were run by Georgia Tech. We had to set up our own business office. I always told people back then that “in some ways we were thirty-two years old [in 1980] as an institution, but in other ways we were just starting up a brand new institution, starting our business office for the first time, our alumni, our foundation, fund-raising, those things.”
- TS: Did you have a registrar on campus?
- SC: We had a registrar on campus and a director of admissions. We just didn't have the structure. But even then, when we created the business office, the Regents weren't ready to let us name that person vice president for business because we were still the technical institute and we really weren't a full-blown real college. But over time while I was there, we developed a normal structure of a president, academic VP, vice president for business and finance, vice president for student services, vice president for development, and deans, so we had a more normal [organizational structure].
- TS: But it takes time to do that.
- SC: It took time to do that, but it happened over five or six years. The problem with that was if you're a department head, you've gone in five or six years from reporting directly to the president to being three levels down now, and there was a lot of resentment about that. That was a group of—I'll call them—old timers who were used to just having their way. They would go into the director's office and say, “Here's what we want to do”; and he'd say, “Okay, if that's what you guys want to do, that's what we're going to do.” Now it had to be something that you

could sell an academic VP on the need to do, and it took them two levels (academic VP and dean) out of the power structure, so that was a period of trauma for them.

TS: Was it controversial when you brought Harris Travis in?

SC: No, he was competitively selected. They at that point had accepted the fact that we were going to have that position. I would have brought him in just because I knew him like a brother. We had been department heads across the hall from each other in the 1970s at Purdue, and then we'd gone to graduate school for four years together, so I knew his abilities. He is an unusual person. On first encounter, you'd think good old country boy, probably don't see him as an academician. He's got more wisdom and more good advice than most pure academicians by far. So, anyway, I would have hired him outright without even a search if I could have, but I knew that would never work. So I encouraged him to apply. He did, and he got selected through the process. I always felt good that what I had hoped to have as a vice president happened naturally and non-controversially.

TS: So you didn't bring him in?

SC: I didn't bring him in at all. I was glad he came.

TS: A search committee recommended him?

SC: The search committee said, "That's who you should hire." Some of the people on the search committee had known him because he was active nationally also, so they had known about him and probably met him on some occasion.

TS: He has got to be one of the first African-American vice presidents in the system I would think.

SC: I think he may be *the* first, certainly one of the first—no question about that—not counting the historically black institutions, of course.

TS: Right, sure.

SC: In the other institutions he probably is the first, but a very competent guy—nothing affirmative action about that. He earned everything he ever got in his professional life. But anyway, then, ultimately, we were able to have a real organizational structure with calling people vice president and so on. Then we wanted to get some of the service departments to offer bachelor's degrees. I think the first one was a technical communication, if I remember correctly.

TS: That was interesting in itself because it was communication which a lot of folks have, but the technical was unique to Southern Poly.

- SC: It was unique. It was very different. I think they were somewhat instrumental [in helping to create] a national organization for technical communication at the academic level. There's a big Atlanta chapter that I know Southern Tech has been very involved in. Carol Barnum is someone who was a leader in that process.
- TS: So presumably someone who has gotten that degree has taken a number of technical courses along the way?
- SC: Yes. Back in those years every student at Southern Tech was required to take not only math, but physics also. We were the only college in the state for a number of years that offered developmental studies in physics because a lot of kids coming out of high school weren't ready for college physics, or even college math.
- TS: Development studies in physics?
- SC: Yes, developmental studies in physics and math too—everyone had math because all [institutions have] students that are weak in math.
- TS: I've never heard of developmental physics.
- SC: We were the only ones that had it. I think we were the first among the senior colleges to drop developmental studies totally.
- TS: When did that happen?
- SC: In the 1990s, probably, within two or three years of when I left. The Regents were getting more and more comfortable with the two-year colleges being the open access institutions, and the senior colleges requiring students to meet the entrance requirements. We were the one that pioneered that, to my recollection, the first to do away with developmental studies.
- TS: Well, Southern Tech has always had high SAT scores, hasn't it?
- SC: Yes. We were always second or third in the state in SAT behind Georgia Tech and some years behind or ahead of the University of Georgia.
- TS: Wow. Wasn't it 1986 that you went to the three-school system [Schools of Arts and Sciences, Management, and Technology]?
- SC: Yes, first I think we added another bachelor's degree or two even before we added the master's degree. The [first] master's degree program [in Technical Management] began in [October 1985], but I think that other than technical communication we might have added a degree in...

- TS: You added computer science in the early 1980s didn't you?
- SC: No, that was a new one, a computer science bachelor's degree. The computer version of engineering technology was within the electrical department. A lot of schools over the years changed electrical engineering technology departments to ECET, electrical and computer engineering technology departments because they are so closely related. Computer engineering and computer engineering technology are as much about the hardware of computers as the software and especially the computer engineering technology. That's largely a hardware microelectronic kind of study, whereas computer science has been more the software.
- TS: Okay, so computer science was in the School of Arts and Sciences as opposed to engineering technology.
- SC: Computer science was a new degree and was in the Arts and Sciences and then the management degree we had had. I think I want to say we had a math degree about that time, a BS in math, but it was later that we got the BS in physics, and now they have chemistry and biology also. Industrial management is another degree as apart from technology management; that was a different thing. We added a number of degrees, and when we had those broader degrees and a master's degree then we organized into schools. Then it began to look like a college, and not only in the administrative structure, but in the breadth of academic programs far beyond what we had historically had. That's when we changed the name from Southern Technical Institute to Southern College of Technology.
- TS: Which I understand was controversial.
- SC: Very controversial. So was "why do we need a master's degree?" That was extremely controversial.
- TS: It was?
- SC: Oh yes.
- TS: Controversial with whom?
- SC: The faculty.
- TS: The faculty didn't want a master's degree?
- SC: The influencers on the faculty were still this group of department heads from the old days, and that was so foreign to what Southern Tech had been, an industry oriented, get them in, get them out to industry and so on that "we don't want to look more like a Purdue or more like a university."

TS: You were having a fundamental debate over your mission?

SC: The whole time I was there with that element. Now, we had a lot of folks that were very open to change, but another group that any change was argued against and almost vehemently fought. I mean, some of those were not going to be [appeased] until they retired. There was just a mindset of what the institution had been and was not now.

TS: So they think you're creating a liberal arts school.

SC: Yes, "what are we making this into? This is not what we're supposed to be."

TS: Lisa Rossbacher had the same problem in her term, according to her interview.

SC: I'm sure she did. I'd like to believe she had an advantage in that the four or five that I won't name that were constant thorns about every change that was ever proposed were pretty much gone early in her career or by the time she came. I hope she had a more flexible faculty, and I think she did. We had a flexible enough faculty that we got those things done, but there were some who were never going to accept that we did those things. Applying for federal grants, there was a group that didn't want anything to do with that.

TS: Was it because they saw you going the way of Georgia Tech?

SC: I guess so. I won't name names, but just one anecdote: about the second year I was there the director of cooperative education, who was a lady who was very competent, became aware that there was a big federal grant announced to support co-op education. She came to me and said, "We should apply for this." I said, "By all means; apply for it. We'll help any way we can." And we did. But she did the work, really. It was like a million dollar grant.

TS: Was that the IBM grant?

SC: No.

TS: That's a different one?

SC: It was before that. This was the first grant that I'm aware that Southern Tech every got, certainly nothing on the scale of a million dollars before. They might have gotten a few little industrial [grants]. Industrial support was mainly in the support of equipment donations, but in terms of cash money this was a million dollar grant for co-op education, and she got it. Back then we had faculty meetings in a big theater where the whole faculty [attended]. I'd get up and give a report. The whole faculty would be there. In the announcements I said, "We've got just an exciting announcement." This group—I'll call them naysayers—

always sat on the back row in this big theater. I said, “We’ve got some good news. Ms. Doyle, would you come up? Let’s share your good news.” I said, “Regina was able to get a million dollar grant for our college to support co-op education.” Co-ops should be popular by the way because that’s alternating work in industry, and that’s what the college was all about. So that should be something [that everyone would say,] “Hey, great!” “It’s a million dollars and let’s give her a hand for this work she did on this.” Before any hand or anything happened, someone stood up in the back row of the theater and said, “Who told you we wanted that tainted federal money here on this campus?” Talk about a wet blanket. She just sort of withdrew. You couldn’t have embarrassed her more. It aggravated me. Why would you take that view when someone had worked hard to go above and beyond to get something done? Then you throw a wet blanket on it. But that was typical of other activities too, but we had the grant, and it did help co-op a lot on the campus.

TS: Dr. Sturgis used to say the only tainted thing was it t’ain’t enough!

SC: Absolutely! They said, “Oh, there can’t be federal money without big strings attached, and we don’t need those federal people coming in here and telling us what to do.”

TS: I guess you retired before we went to the semester system, and I always thought that was a terrible change for co-op programs.

SC: It hurt co-op programs to do that.

TS: When you could co-op in the winter and summer and go to school in the fall and spring.

SC: The other thing I liked about ten-week courses is that you could try more things. In technical fields the technologies are changing so constantly that you need to say, “Here’s a new technology. You don’t want to devote a semester to it, but let’s do a quarter and see how that develops.” So you lost that ability too.

TS: I think probably it hurt the engineering schools more than anybody when we went to semester systems.

SC: It did because of the changing technology and co-ops—those two reasons.

TS: I was one of the old-fashioned folks, I guess, but I resented the change to semester system for years.

SC: I guess it was better for students in that they had one less billing cycle per year. It made it seem like things were cheaper.

TS: Better for the registrars I guess.

- SC: It made it a lot better for registrars. Those who write up class schedules, things like that.
- TS: But the billings were higher for those two semesters compared to three billings a year on the quarter system.
- SC: They were, but it wasn't sold that way. It was sold, "Oh, you only have two billings a year."
- TS: Right. Well, was it a fight to get new buildings for the campus?
- SC: A big fight. That was one of the early on biggest things. For all the years we were a unit of Georgia Tech, our building requests had to go on their list. To get funded through the Regents, it would have to surface to the top of Georgia Tech's list. That never happened. I called it benign neglect.
- TS: So no new buildings when you got there?
- SC: No new buildings. Over the history they always submitted buildings they could justify and needed, but Georgia Tech always had buildings they needed. They were never going to say, "That little Southern Tech out there needs to be our first building priority so the Regents will do it."
- TS: Dr. Rossbacher said they built the original eight buildings for a million dollars.
- SC: Yes, out of the governor's emergency fund.
- TS: Really? That's the total amount of money?
- SC: Yes. The legislature wouldn't even allocate anything. The governor [Marvin Griffin] was convinced by these Marietta Kiwanis Club people to just dip into his emergency fund and build the whole campus.
- TS: That's right!
- SC: There was no allocation. He just did it himself.
- TS: Actually, I think he gave them two million dollars.
- SC: Yes, but some of that was land development, and then the rest was those eight buildings.
- TS: Right. So nothing happened until independence from Georgia Tech?
- SC: Right. Then I was able to submit buildings directly to the Regents along with all

the other thirty-four institutions. Then it would be the Regents who would determine where our buildings should be on the list.

TS: Right. So it takes you about five or six years to actually get a new building? It used to take three or four years to build a building [after the funds were appropriated].

SC: It did. The first one we got was the Al Burruss Academic Building.

TS: Is that the one with the theater in it?

SC: The big theater is in the student center. But there's a littler auditorium in the Burruss Building. That was the first one. Then—I'm not sure of the order—we greatly expanded the library. Even there, it's funny. When the Regents funded the library, the funding didn't include any money for bookshelves. Imagine building a library, and there's no money for bookshelves. We had to go out and raise private money to put bookshelves in the library that the state built. Then the student center...

TS: That library still looks small over there.

SC: It is small, but you should have seen it before.

TS: I know, they were showing us where you could tell where the original building was.

SC: Yes, and even the part of the original building where there's the glass brick on the wall there facing the sycamore circle—that used to be an open breezeway. There was a big dogwood tree that grew up right up through what's now—there's a dome there now and it's enclosed in the building now. When I was inaugurated, that was all open where you could see all the way through to the dorms from the other side of the library. That was enclosed, and then the big curved part was all added. Then we did the student center, and that one was very political. It surfaced to the top...

TS: Oh that's right, I remember that.

SC: It surfaced to the top of the Regent's list, the very top, in year one. Both houses of the legislature funded it, but the governor vetoed it because he was in an argument with the Cobb delegation about something totally unrelated. The second year it came again. It went to the top of the Regents' list; both houses of the legislature voted for it; the governor vetoed it a second time. So the third time, I think we had to lay off a year, and then it came up [and was approved in 1991; it was completed in 1993]. The student center was named for Joe Mack Wilson because he helps us in a lot of ways.

TS: Joe Mack understood the politics of getting things done for his district.

SC: He sure did. He was a real friend of the institution, so it was rightly named for him. The same is true with Al Burruss for our first academic building. He was another friend of the institution.

TS: Right.

SC: We were the first public college in Georgia that the governor of the state authorized to allow private developers to build on state property.

TS: That's the Elks Club land?

SC: No, that's the student apartments on the main campus. The Elks Club, we had to convince private developers [in 1983] to put up the student housing complex there because we didn't own the piece where they put those houses.

TS: And that was the College Commons Apartments, but you're talking about on the campus itself, the state property.

SC: Right. We had two dorms when I came here—just traditional military barracks type dorms.

TS: Which ones are they?

SC: Howell and Norton; they're still there.

TS: Yes, I went through Norton the other day; it looked pretty depressing.

SC: Yes, and they've been remodeled two or three times, so imagine what they were like. But it's like college dorms used to be—just an open hall, a community bath and showers, and two people in a cramped little, no frills room, just like military barracks almost. We had just those two, and having a statewide mission from the start, I felt like we had to be able to house more students on campus.

TS: So where were the new dorms built?

SC: They were built partially on that drive-in theater property that we bought.

TS: That's what I was thinking. They looked pretty attractive.

SC: They were very nice, and still are; they're still being used. They've gone to other models now, but our authority became the foot in the door that's now been done all over the state. Kennesaw State built all their dorms with this authority.

TS: Was it your foundation that was building them?

- SC: Yes, it was the foundation, but they couldn't do that because they didn't own the land, prior to this authorization.
- TS: So they're the first in the state then?
- SC: The first in the state. [Editor's note: Minutes of the Board of Regents indicate that the Board endorsed the idea of a public/private partnership to build residence halls on the SPSU campus in March 1995. After the developer failed to arrange independent financing, the Central Office Staff in February 1997 issued a Request for Proposal, asking developers to submit proposals. At the 9 July 1997 meeting, the Board of Regents approved the concept and a contract for a ground lease agreement at SPSU with the specific terms and conditions of the lease to be finalized by the Board at a later date.]
- TS: So, basically the Southern College of Technology Foundation signs a contract with the Board of Regents that they build them, they administer them, and the state...
- SC: The state gives a ninety-nine year land lease.
- TS: Ninety-nine years?
- SC: I think that's the first. I don't know what it is now, but it was a long time, longer than the dorms would ever stand. Then they built at least two more phases at Southern Poly, and I know Kennesaw has built a bunch of dorms.
- TS: Well ours were built with the understanding that when the bonds were paid off, the property would belong to the state—the residence halls would go to the state.
- SC: I think that may even have developed in the first case. I don't think it started that way. I think it was a ninety-nine year lease. Lawyers were just so involved in how to do this. I think, actually, it did sort out that the state would own them after everything was paid for and the private developers were out of the picture.
- TS: What year would that be?
- SC: Oh, gosh, I'd say late 1980s. It was a big, not only Regents debate, but involved the state legislature too because they had to change the law that this could happen. So that was a big milestone. By the way, a total aside from that, another piece of property we tried to buy but never could get was the Greyhound Bus Station, which would have given us frontage on both the loop and Cobb Parkway.
- TS: Oh, yes, and the Greyhound buses would have to go on campus to get to their station.

SC: Yes, and I always resented that. That would have given us a prime front door to the college. We did get the billboard above it, so we always have ads on there. But [the purchase of the Greyhound property] never happened sort of like the reason the Elks Lodge never happened: “Oh, you don’t need that. It’s only an acre or two. What’s it going to do for you?” But it was the frontage that would do for us. It would give us a front door to the public for public visibility. Then, another very hard one was the Recreational & Wellness Center. The Regents weren’t going to build a recreation center for us because we were the only college in the state that didn’t offer physical education classes, “so what do you need a recreational center for? That’s for PE and you don’t offer PE, so you don’t need it.” I tried a hundred ways to get private funding for that, and finally the environment changed downtown, and they allowed us to build a Recreational & Wellness Center without PE. We still don’t have PE to this day. That’s historical because that went all the way back to Chamblee because all the students were veterans, and they didn’t need PE. So that history continues to the present day; there’s no PE.

TS: So you got a swimming pool, I guess.

SC: We got a swimming pool and two basketball courts in there and a racquet ball court and weight training, just a general purposes wellness center.

TS: Right. When did all the athletic facilities develop on the other side of campus?

SC: The only athletic facility when I arrived was the gym, and it’s an old fashioned basic gym. It’s still the same, unchanged. It’s where we had graduation, and maybe they still do, I don’t know. When I first started, we had graduation outdoors—the Sycamore Circle—that’s where we’d set up chairs and had graduation. One year right in the middle of my awarding degrees the skies opened up and it was just torrential rain. The folding chairs were flying in every direction. The students were all in caps and gowns. I think that’s the last time we had an outdoor graduation. Then we moved it to the gym.

TS: I remember us having June graduations in an un-air-conditioned gym.

SC: Yes. We’ve had NAIA [National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics] basketball, so that’s what that was for.

TS: Before you came they had basketball [at Southern Tech]?

SC: They had basketball, and actually they had tennis and golf when I arrived. We kept those. Golf was the first to go because we just couldn’t support it. You had to depend on the local country clubs to give you free green time for all your golfers, and they got tired of doing that. Tennis lasted a long time. In fact, I’m surprised they did away with it. That was done away with after I left. Basketball was always the big thing, and baseball. They had baseball before I arrived.

- TS: Did women's sports start while you were there?
- SC: Right at the end women's basketball.
- TS: Is that because you didn't have very many women students?
- SC: Twenty percent. We never had any equity in sports under Title IX. We satisfied that because we were a male institution pretty much.
- TS: Well, it's still around 20 percent isn't it?
- SC: Yes, I know. They used to tell me when the college moved from Chamblee there were no women until like 1970, and then there were two women who enrolled in 1970. It was almost the same with minorities. Now it may be 20 percent each, something like that.
- TS: Right. There was one woman student very early on in the first class in 1948 [Barbara Hudson Purdy, AS, 1950].
- SC: She would have been a real pioneer because even today and certainly all the years I was there, Georgia Tech and Southern Tech were the only two of the thirty-four institutions that were predominately male. All the others had more females. We built physical plant buildings over the years; I'm trying to think what else might have been added. We remodeled every one of the eight original buildings. They all had just open breezeways, and we enclosed those and put faculty offices with an inside hallway.
- TS: Oh, and the president's suite wasn't there when you arrived.
- SC: The president's suite wasn't there. That building was totally changed. Yes, the president had a little cubby hole. It was non-functional, so that changed. Like I say, all the interiors of the technology buildings were all renovated over the years. We did a lot because having access directly to the Regents where our list got right to them and not channeled through Georgia Tech really opened up things.
- TS: I wanted to ask you, that million dollar grant I was thinking about from IBM for quality management; how did that come about and was it controversial?
- SC: It was controversial. It came about because that was an era when the buzz word in industry was TQM, Total Quality Management, and Six Sigma, a lot of these techniques that industries were adopting to improve their processes. It all goes back to a fellow named W. Edwards Deming [1900-1993] who was an American. When I was growing up—I was a kid when World War II ended and a young adult in the Eisenhower years after that—in those years anything made in Japan was viewed as junk; it was laughable. We even said, "Was that made in Japan" as

a derisive term. If it doesn't work, it was probably made in Japan. The Japanese asked different leaders in America—and we were leading the world in manufacturing in those days—to help them improve their manufacturing. No one would do it, but Edwards Deming did, since his innovative quality improvement techniques were not being accepted much here in America at that time. He went over there and totally taught them how to make quality merchandise. They listened, and they did it, and it wasn't long before “made in Japan” meant quality. There's a Deming award, a big national award, for quality improvement.

Then that triggered American industries to say, “If Deming's principles would work where he could turn Japan around that fast, we ought to listen to him here and apply his teachings here.” So they did, and that's where Total Quality Management and all these processes, Six Sigma and all these techniques to improve quality, began. In 1948 Bell Labs invented the transistor. In 1958 Sony produced the first transistor radio. They would take advantage of our research, and still do. We didn't make any use of it. It was just a Nobel Prize winning discovery—the transistor—but “what do you do with it?” Well, the Japanese said, we'll make it into a radio, and everybody was carrying around these little portable transistor radios and boom boxes, and all the things today—the flat screen TVs—they continued all this. In the 1960s no TV was made *outside* of the USA – today, no TV is made *inside* the USA. It goes back to Edwards Deming, but American industries, the better ones, listened later, and American manufacturing has been in a slow recovery ever since. Now we have good manufacturing processes here too in many companies.

TS: So it makes sense on a technological college campus to pay attention to this.

SC: We had a degree actually in Quality Assurance, a master's degree, while I was still there. We had a bachelor's and then it grew into a master's—I think the first online master's degree among the senior colleges, I believe that was the first one in Quality Assurance. IBM was a partner in helping us with the curriculum, and then we got a grant from them to make it a total quality campus. That's when the resentment started to come in because that meant that every department had to do something, had to improve in some way, and some of that was painful. But it happened. We got through all those things, sometimes kicking and screaming.

TS: Let me ask you—you had maybe the first African-American vice president in the system. Southern Polytechnic has had a really good record in recent years in that about 25 percent of the students are African-American nowadays. Did that start happening while you were there?

SC: Yes, I think it did. We were very aggressive in recruiting both women and minorities. In fact, I wrote a mini-thesis in my PhD program—I started to say it was a combination of engineering and engineering education, and I had to write theses to cover both areas. In the education side, back in 1975 when I graduated, I had written a mini-thesis on why minorities aren't enrolling in technical

- education. I had done quite a big study on trying to identify the factors and so forth.
- TS: They didn't have the math skills?
- SC: No, it was a lot of things, but a big factor was the professional role models they had were doctors and lawyers and ministers, not engineers and scientists. So anyone who had the collegiate ability to want to go on to college saw themselves as "I'm either going to be a minister, a physician or a lawyer." That had to change to get them thinking, "I could be a scientist; I could be an engineer; I could be a technologist"; whatever they wanted. In addition to their professional role models being physicians, lawyers, or ministers, engineers and scientists just weren't something they had in their extended family where they related to them as role models. That was a big factor. Other factors were family situations, parents who hadn't had a lot of education, and in a lot of cases poverty home environments—a host of problems that still exist in varying degrees all over the country today. But we did put a conscientious, pretty significant, effort into trying to recruit minorities and women.
- TS: I bet all those trips with Dr. Travis over to the University of Illinois helped a lot.
- SC: It helped a lot. And I hired our first black dean, [Robert J.] Bob Yancy in the School of Management. He helped us a lot too in that role model recruiting of minorities. So we had the first black VP and the first black dean in short order pretty much.
- TS: Do you know what the percentage of black students was when you retired?
- SC: It was in the twenties, low twenties, maybe 21 or 22 percent.
- TS: So not a lot different than it is right now?
- SC: No, pretty similar. The same goes for women. It was like 25 percent I'll guess.
- TS: It was 22.0 percent for African American and multi-racial students and 21.5 percent for female students in the spring of 2013, the last data published on the SPSU website.
- SC: I guess it would be fair to say we were in about the same range as currently in both cases, not a big difference up or down.
- TS: What about faculty in general? You mentioned a dean and vice president. Did you make a major effort to bring in black faculty members?
- SC: Yes, we did with every search, and we didn't bring in enough, but we did bring in black faculty. In Architecture, I know, we hired a couple of black faculty. The

- head of the Physics department, Philip Patterson, is black.
- TS: It sounds like your percentages are if anything better than they are today.
- SC: Even back then, I think I've read in some of the brochures that this is still true, among national engineering technology programs, then and now, Southern Tech graduates more blacks and women, I think, than any other—other than Howard University. Other than the black universities, but discounting that, we still produce more blacks than any other university in these fields.
- TS: Yes, I think SPSU is number one in total number of African-American technology graduates, and two in women. Even though there aren't that many women there, there aren't a whole lot of women anywhere in engineering technology.
- SC: Nationally. It's been a real challenge. I couldn't tell you how many times. It's four or five at least in my seventeen years that at graduation the valedictorian, top scholar award went to a woman in a technical discipline. So they did better than the male students, but you just couldn't get them to think of themselves as, "I want to be an engineer" or "I want to be in technologist." But if you could get them to come, they'd do better than the males, took school more seriously.
- TS: Well, what are you proudest of in your seventeen years at Southern Poly?
- SC: Well, a lot of things, really, but I think the key role that my administration played was bridging the gap for the institution from its very narrowly focused early years as a very focused technical institute to a university. I think the growing pains we had to go through in seventeen years were necessary to change that whole culture from an industry-oriented, initially two-year technical institute to a diverse, multidisciplinary graduate program, inclusive university. I think that was a big accomplishment. That was not without a lot of growing pains in the process.
- TS: I know it took you one month longer than Kennesaw to get the university status because of a dispute over the name. Could you talk about that a little bit?
- SC: Yes. This probably wouldn't have been good in the long run, but the obvious name to me that we should change to from Southern Technical Institute [in 1986], just because it fit national names a little better, was to Southern Institute of Technology. I proposed that to Chancellor [Vernon D.] Crawford, who was a Georgia Tech guy; he had spent his career at Georgia Tech. That was the first name change. The name change in 1996 was while Stephen R. Portch was chancellor. The name change that I was proposing and that the faculty had liked also was [still] Southern Institute of Technology. Well, the central office [Board of Regents] said, "There's no way that we're going to have a Georgia Institute of Technology and a smaller institution named Southern Institute of Technology, implying you have a broader geographical influence that our flagship institution does." So we quickly killed that.

I was aware of a number of polytechnics. My sabbatical in London had been at a polytechnic. I had accredited Cal Poly [California State Polytechnic University] Pomona, Cal Poly San. Luis Obispo, and Arizona State had created a polytechnic [campus—Arizona State University Polytechnic] and Worcester Polytechnic Institute, RPI [Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute], VPI, a lot of polys—poly meaning many technical disciplines. So we advocated that, and they liked that better. Actually Lisa Rossbacher came from Cal Poly Pomona. So that was a good name. My problem with it was what to call it. Southern Polytechnic State University is too big of a mouthful to talk about, so I would have just called it SPSU, but I know Lisa liked Southern Polytechnic, so we never quite lined up on what to call it. When I left, I didn't care what they called it. But that name then made sense because at that time all—how many ever number there were—senior colleges became state universities, and they added “state university” to all their names. Kennesaw State College, for instance, became Kennesaw State University.

TS: So you were only in your mid-50s. Why did you retire in 1997?

SC: I was 57 years old. Since I was a young man, I've had so many interests that I always wanted to retire early. I'm the total opposite of Betty Siegel. Betty will never quit. She won't retire, and she wouldn't be happy if she retired. Her life is tied up in her professional activities, and she loves it, she thrives on it, and she's a master of it. She loves it. That's not me. I'm the opposite of that. I've always wanted to retire. I've got grandchildren. My wife wanted to retire early and did from Kennesaw. So I always had that as a goal. But I have to admit it was made easier after seventeen years of just the constant battles for change. Everything was a fight. Even if you always win, you just get tired of fighting. When I say that, I don't mean to diminish a lot of strong supporters who were there that supported every change, saw the need for change, and saw the need for the institution to grow and the culture to change. But there was always a nucleus group that you had to bring along kicking and screaming. I had enough of that. But for the record, I was not asked to resign, was not forced out, and the faculty didn't run me off, none of that. I just went down to the Chancellor one day and said, “I'd like to talk about me retiring.” I actually planned to go out with the Olympics, which was '96, but I couldn't put my retirement package together for then.

TS: You had to get thirty years.

SC: I had to get thirty years. Of course, I only served seventeen, but fortunately the Lord blessed me in that the ten years that I was at Purdue, they were not under a state retirement system, so I could buy most of those years for credit in Georgia. As I served one, I could buy one, so I could piece together actually eight of them. I couldn't do it when I was a graduate student at Purdue. But for the eight years that I was a faculty member, since they didn't have a state plan, I could buy those,

so I bought eight years that way—very expensively I might add since I had to buy them based upon my first salary in Georgia, which was my presidential salary.

TS: Indiana didn't have a state plan?

SC: TIAA-CREF—everybody was on TIAA-CREF.

TS: My goodness. I can't believe Georgia's ahead of Indiana.

SC: Yes. Although I served twelve years in the military, then and I think now, you could only buy up to five years, and they had to be during a time of national emergency also. I had five certainly that was during the Vietnam era, so I bought eight at Pu

rdue, five military, so that's thirteen, and seventeen made my thirty. So I had to go that extra year till '97 to put together a retirement.

TS: So did you come straight from there to the Cobb Education Consortium?

SC: Yes. I was one of the founders.

TS: Actually you taught one year you said.

SC: I taught one year in the Physics Department, and that was just to decompress, really. I needed a year to decide did I want to fully retire or did I want to partially retire. In 1992 I moved up to Jasper to Bent Tree, which is a mountain retirement area. It's a fifty mile commute down to Southern Tech. That year I taught that commute got old. You come in for two hours of classes, and you've driven 100 miles round trip to do that. So I thought, "No, teaching is not going to work well living where I live." I just taught that one year, and that was only part time. When I was the president, I was one of the founders of the Cobb Education Consortium. The first group that invited me to a lunch when I came [in 1980] were [the Kennesaw College president] Horace Sturgis, Lee Leverette who was the Marietta-Cobb Area Vocational Technical School [future Chattahoochee Technical College] director, the Cobb County School District superintendent Kermit Keenum and the Marietta superintendent Loyd Cox. This group invited me to lunch and gave me a key chain that said Cobb Education Consortium. It had a picture of an outline of Cobb with little stars for every institute. I said, "What is this?" "Well," they said, "we get together once a quarter and have lunch"—just a social thing, but it was good because at least you got to know your counterparts.

When I say I was one of the founders, I mean of the new format begun in 1992, which we mark as our official beginning. That "social only" format went on until 1992, and by then it was Betty Siegel and me and Roy Nichols [Marietta superintendent], Harlon D.Crimm [Chattahoochee Tech], and Kermit Keenum [Cobb superintendent for the first several months of 1992]. We were doing the

same thing, just social meetings, but we had board meetings twice a year just to talk to each other about common problems and so forth. The main thing we said, “We’ve got to work on articulation,” because students going to Chat Tech had no academic future. They transferred to Southern Tech or Kennesaw, and they lost all their credit, nothing transferred. So we said, “We’ve got to have seamlessness here in our Cobb County education.” We accomplished that over time. But we said, “Look, the personnel that we represent through all levels should be getting together like we do, and we should be working on projects, and we should be doing things.” So in 1992 we created the CEC Leadership Academy, which is the heart of what we do. It is a two- year activity, sixty people involved, faculty, and staff from all institutions.

I was involved as one of the CEC CEO board members until ’97. The CEC part time director was a friend of yours, [Robert L.] Bob Driscoll [Kennesaw’s first dean of the Bagwell College of Education], and before him M.L. Anderegg [simultaneously an assistant professor of Special Education at Kennesaw State]. Anyway, Bob Driscoll was the executive director my last five years on the board. So 1997 comes, Bob Driscoll became ill and had to go on a medical leave. The board said, “You know about this. You’ve been one of the people involved from the beginning. You’re retiring right now. Why don’t you just help us for a year until Bob comes back? Slide over and be the part-time—it’s not a full-time job—part-time executive director?” I said, “Well, that’s a good way to stay in touch and not overburdening myself with a lot of commitments.” So I did that, and he never came back. [When he recovered,] he went to Reinhardt to be dean.

So seventeen years later, I’m still doing it on a temporary basis. It shocks me to think that this year I have done the Cobb Education Consortium as long as I was president of Southern Tech. I never thought when I was 75 years old I’d still be doing something like the Cobb Education Consortium, but here I am. But I enjoy it. It’s great. It’s part-time, and it keeps me involved with people and with issues. We’re developing sixty faculty members with leadership skills. They’re working on great projects, and it’s been very fulfilling. So I’ve been involved with CEC on both sides of the equation from the beginning.

TS: So you’re going to do it temporarily for a few more years?

SC: Every year I think, “Well, is the board going to put up with me one more year?”—and so far so good. I always worry because this year we’re losing Lisa Rossbacher, and we’re losing [Cobb County superintendent Michael] Hinojosa. Every time we have those kinds of changes I think, “Oh, gosh, it’s a whole new sales job to get commitment from a new person who has no clue of what we’re about or what we’ve done or who we are.” Of course, Sonya [Fowler] is our only full-time employee, and she is really great. I’m part-time, and we’re dependent on contributions from the member institutions to keep it alive.

TS: I guess with the consolidation you’ll have one fewer.

SC: One fewer, and we already dropped one when Chat Tech consolidated with North Metro. North Metro was a separate two-year tech college, and they had their own commitment and sent people to the Leadership Academy. Chat Tech also had a commitment, but they merged, and Chat Tech is now dropping down the number of academy members because they merged. I believe that KSU will continue the historic participation commitment of KSU and SPSU in the merged university.

TS: Do you have any opinion on the consolidation of Southern Polytechnic and Kennesaw State?

SC: Yes. Actually, way back when, and I couldn't put a year on it, but in the 1980s Betty Siegel and I got together and said, "You know, there's a lot of reasons that we should be one institution." We both agreed there was logic to that.

TS: And we were about the same size then.

SC: About the same size then before Kennesaw went into an explosion mode, but, yes, same size. Kennesaw's first classes were held on the Southern Tech campus [in Fall Quarter 1966]. The programs totally complemented each other and still do. We both agreed, "Yes, it made sense." But then when we got into a little bit of discussion, it never went too far because it didn't take too long to see that logistically there were just going to be challenges being ten miles apart that weren't going to work. At least, we couldn't see how they were going to work, so we just dropped it. Then, from that I took the position that it was never popular with the faculty at Southern Tech. The natural role for Southern Tech in addition to what it had historically done was to be the capstone baccalaureate institution for the thirty-some two-year technical colleges in Georgia who are under a separate board, as you know. We'd be a natural capstone for Chattahoochee Tech students just to come across and finish out a bachelor's degree. All over the state we could be viewed as the capstone.

The people in that system liked that idea a lot, so much so that we created, at the Regents level, a new bachelor's degree, the BAT, the Bachelor of Applied Technology, that was tailored to accept all the credits from SACSCOC [Southern Association of Colleges & Schools Commission on Colleges] accredited two-year tech colleges, so they could move right into Southern Poly and get a Bachelor of Applied Technology. It was a generic technology degree, and they still have it today, but it was never really marketed because, at least in the early years, the faculty thought that would hurt the reputation to be viewed as where the "trade schools were coming for their education," even though the COC-accredited tech colleges are certainly not trade schools any more. They are quality two-year colleges. So that never took off like I hoped it would, but they're still trying to make it happen. And it should happen; it makes sense.

But back to your question about this merger, my biggest regret about it—and I'm

only seeing it as an outside observer; I'm not living it every day like Dr. Papp and Dr. Rossbacher are—but from an outside point of view, it seemed very inappropriate to me for this to be decided and announced without a lot of thought and study from the two institutions. It is sort of like the way, as we talked earlier, that Dr. Rossbacher was just hired and then announced. This was [a case where] someone downtown says, "This makes sense." So they announce it. Then you guys live with it and make it work. I think it would have been so much smoother had they said, "We're considering that this looks like a match. You two complement each other. Let's take a year and put a joint task force together from the two institutions." Maybe put a few community leaders on it.

That's how they've done, by the way, the other consolidations that they've recently done in the system. This is the first one they've just announced and said how it's going to turn out and how it's going to be named. All that's been a community decision in the other ones that were done. Then, say, over a year, come up with a way to make it feasible. Then there could have been some input, and people would have thought about it. But just to say, "It's a done deal, and in a year from now you're together, and Dr. Rossbacher, you don't have a job any more after that year"—that seemed a little harsh to me as a way to do something like that without really thinking of all the ramifications of it. As a result, and this is just probably human nature, since KSU is now so much bigger than Southern Poly, it's pretty hard for people at Southern Poly not to see it as an absorption more than a partnership. I'm sure they feel that all the key positions are going to be current KSU people, not any Southern Poly people added into the cabinet.

TS: So far.

SC: Except where it has to be. The dean of Architecture has to be a Southern Poly person, and computer engineering as examples. But they don't see much else that's going their way. As a result, there are a lot of desertions occurring to out of state institutions, and a lot of good people are leaving. I hate that part because I think we thought there could have been a way to accommodate everything and still achieve the goals that the Regents think they're going to achieve. It seems that they're on a merger kick right now and there are going to be more they are saying.

TS: This is number five.

SC: I'm skeptical with any of them that there will really be any long term real cost savings. That's the purported reason for doing it, but I don't think that's likely to ever happen. You still have to have someone heading up the other campus because you're so many miles away. You still have to have the libraries. You have to have admissions people. You save a few staff positions, probably make more people mad than you do save anything, but over ten years it all sorts out and it's forgotten. The thing I regret maybe most of all, to get back to the question, is there's a very proud alumni heritage of sixty-five years of excellence of Southern

Tech that I hate to see lost. Ten years from now someone coming through will never know there was a Southern Polytechnic State University. The campus will be Kennesaw State University at Marietta. The entrance sign will not say Polytechnic.

They have a “solicit comments” on the merger website. I said, “What would at least make sense is the big entrance sign, which now says ‘Southern Polytechnic State University,’ yes, change that to read ‘Kennesaw State University,’ but in smaller letters underneath put ‘Polytechnic Campus’ or ideally even ‘Southern Polytechnic Campus,’” because all the technical stuff (STEM disciplines) largely is going to be down there. But I’m afraid it will just be Kennesaw State University, Marietta Campus, and Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw Campus, and some high school kid or parent or community person ten years from now will never know there was something called Southern Tech or Southern Polytechnic or all the history of how it struggled and developed.

Larry Johnson tells a story—Rich [Bennett] may have it in his book—where the funding was so unpredictable in the beginning that one year he went down out of his own pocket to pay the lease at Chamblee for another year to keep the institute alive. I mean, all the growing pains and struggling for funding and having to depend on the governor’s emergency fund to even build the [Marietta] campus in the first place, all the struggle for buildings when we could never get them through the Georgia Tech bureaucracy. I think for those who were in favor of separating from Georgia Tech, their big argument was, “Now we’ll be able to flex our own muscles and spread our own wings and have access to the Regents directly without being a stepchild.” I’m sure there are some of those still around who see what is happening as “now we’re going to be a new stepchild, and we’ll have to worry in ten years about breaking away from [KSU]”—or even some going really full circle and saying, “If we had to merge, the logical merger would be back with Georgia Tech.” Although that didn’t make sense in 1980 [when] Southern Tech didn’t have any engineering programs like Georgia Tech, now Southern Tech does have a full range of accredited engineering programs including graduate programs, so they’re at the level, at least at the undergraduate and master’s level, of the programs at Georgia Tech. So you could say that’s where the compatibility should have been, but I don’t think that was even ever considered. Who knows how it would have been received if it was. It’ll be interesting to see how it all plays out.

TS: I would have thought that a Southern Polytechnic/Georgia Highlands merger would have made sense because they’ve got 1,000 students on campus right now, even living in the dorms.

SC: I know, I know, they do. It seems that a little more forethought would have paid dividends. It really would have. But these things work out somehow. In the years to come all these growing pains will be forgotten, and KSU will be a big 40,000-student comprehensive university. That’ll be great for Cobb County, so

- you can't argue that that's a bad thing.
- TS: Well, we're doing our best with this oral history project to try to preserve as much of the SPSU history as we can.
- SC: I know, and I appreciate that. I was out and gave a little talk a couple of weeks ago when [SPSU] rededicated the globe. It had gotten vandalized, and it got put back and repaired.
- TS: Yes, I was there this morning, and they said they were doing some kind of work on the landscaping around it.
- SC: Well, one of the things I liked when I was there for the rededication of it was they set it now on a rectangular marble base, and on each side they have one of the four names that the institution has had. That'll be there hopefully for a long time where people walking by say, "Oh, this used to be Southern College of Technology" or "this used to be Southern Technical Institute, STI," which is why the campus newspaper is the Sting. The hornet is the mascot, and the first letters in Sting are STI. Those were always in capital and then lower case ng--STIng.
- TS: Oh, I hadn't thought about that!
- SC: And of course, there will be no more Hornets or no more Southern Poly athletic programs after this year. It's ironic that next week, Southern Tech is in the NAIA World Series. We're playing for the national championship, and what a way to end the athletics at Southern Tech would be as the World Series baseball champs."
- TS: That would be great.
- SC: Yes, they're creating a little athletic hall of fame. They're trying to preserve the history. But some of those Chamblee grads, who are mostly deceased now, I know would just be livid about their institution losing its focus and its identity and all that—but most of them won't be around to worry about it.
- TS: Well, what have we left out?
- SC: You've been pretty thorough. I'm sure on the way home tonight I'll think of about ten things I wish I had have mentioned, but it was a good experience. I loved my years there in spite of the ups and downs. I always told friends—they would say, "How do you like being president of a college?"—I would say, "It's the best of all jobs, and it's the worst of all jobs, depending on what day." And that is really true. There were days I loved it. Things would happen. You'd get something done. You'd get good support from whatever the campus constituency was, and you'd take a leap forward. Another day you're just pulling teeth all day long to try to get anything done, or dealing with some crisis. But the pluses

outweighed the minuses for sure. I have nothing but good feelings that I left Indiana, came to Georgia, and retired from that position. I'm loving staying a little bit involved with them through this Consortium, even now. So it's been good.

TS: Do you want to ask anything else, Kathleen?

KH: I was interested in one thing. It's a little off the topic of the merger. What was your motivation for writing a book on *Studying Engineering Technology: A Blueprint for Success* (Discovery Press 1998)?

TS: Oh, we didn't ask about that! Good question!

SC: I was asked nationally to do that. A friend of mine, Raymond B. Landis, had written a book called *Studying Engineering: A Roadmap to a Rewarding Career*, and it had gotten adopted in I'd say most engineering schools. There was a need for it because of high school students coming in as freshmen and wanting to study engineering but not really knowing what that means. What does it mean to be an engineer? What are my studies going to be like? What kind of jobs am I preparing myself for? How do engineers think and solve problems? And just everything about engineering.

His book became very popular. I got to know him nationally through these meetings. He approached me one time and said, "There are three hundred and some baccalaureate engineering technology programs now. We need to have a parallel book to my book for those schools. Would you write one?" So I did. It's called *Studying Engineering Technology*, and the cover even looks like his book because some schools like Purdue have both engineering and engineering technology, and used them different ways. It got widely adopted. It's now probably a thing of the past in most places. It's been so many years. Orders have gone down every year as new people take their jobs and programs change and all that, but it was popular for a number of years.

KH: I found Chapter Two online, and I was reading through it. In my opinion, I think it should come back because I didn't know half of that about engineering technology.

SC: Well, I don't know if this library here might have a copy. I doubt that Kennesaw would have a copy of a book like that, but it would be interesting if you have that kind of interest just to read the whole book because it covers all aspects of it—something about women in technical fields, minorities, everything. It's a paperback. It is book length, but it's a paperback. I don't think it'll come back.

TS: You can still get copies because I checked Amazon.com, and they had it.

SC: Can you? I felt good about it. It met a need. It wasn't the great novel of all times

or anything, but it was a book that met a need.

TS: Did retiring as president allow you to finish the book?

SC: No, I was certainly writing it while I was president. [After my presidency], I continued to go to some national conferences and work in the booth where the publisher was hyping the book. It's been around seventeen years, I guess, if anyone is still using it. I edited several technical engineering type books also over the years and did a lot of textbook reviewing. I think one time when I had to put a resume together, I had editorially reviewed several dozen textbooks, and I had written and published 75 papers and given like 125 speeches at regional and national meetings. The number shocked me. You do it one at a time, and then I thought, "Gosh, I really did do this." But over the years all that catches up with you and you just realized, "Wow! I've done a lot of that kind of stuff." I had mentioned [doing] ABET accrediting, a little SACS accrediting too, but mainly engineering related accrediting on behalf of the IEEE, accrediting technical programs all over the country. I think I either chaired or served on accreditation teams at some 30 colleges and universities.

TS: Anything else?

KH: No, all my questions have been answered.

SC: Well, I've talked a lot.

TS: This is great! Thank you very much.

SC: Well, it's probably more than you needed or wanted to hear.

TS: This is exactly what we wanted to hear.

KH: Yes.

SC: A lot of the information will go with me if it isn't written down. A lot of it is just my impression of how it all played out.

TS: Well, thank you very much.

SC: You're welcome. I enjoyed getting all this off my chest!

INDEX

- Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET), 4, 40
American Society for Engineering Education (ASEE), 3-4, 14-15
Anderegg, M.L., 34
- Barnum, Carol M., 19
Bennett, Richard A., *Southern Polytechnic State University: The History*, 9, 14, 37
Berger, Frederick J., 14
Board of Regents, University System of Georgia, 4-6, 11, 17, 19, 23-24, 26, 28, 31, 35-37
Burruss, A.L. (Al), 12, 24-25
- California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, 32
Carlson, Walter O., 4, 7
Chattahoochee Technical College, 10, 33-35
Cheshier, David, 3, 5
Cheshier, Stephen R.
 Family background, 1
 Service in the Navy, 1, 33
 College at Memphis State, 1-2
 Marriage and family, 2-7, 32
 Master's degree at Purdue University, 2
 Purdue graduate instructor, 2
 Purdue engineering technology professor and department head, 2-3, 8
 Doctorate at University of Illinois in engineering education, 3, 29-30
 Professional activities at Purdue and SPSU, 3-4, 39-40
 Sabbatical leave and teaching in London, 4, 32
 Nomination and interview process for Southern Tech presidency, 4-6
 First impressions of Southern Tech, 7
 Role in acquiring additional acreage and facilities, 10-13, 23-28
 Community engagement, 12
 Establishment of the globe on campus, 13
 Recipient of Tau Alpha Pi distinguished service award, 14
 Creation of graduate programs, 14, 19, 29
 Efforts to broaden the curriculum, 14-15, 18-20, 31-32
 Participation in national debates over engineering technology, 15-16
 Establishment of a new administrative structure, 16-19
 Role in promoting diversity at SPSU, 29-31
 Conversion of SPSU from a technical institute into an inclusive university, 31-32
 Decision to retire, 32-33
 Role in founding the Cobb Education Consortium, 33
 Executive director, Cobb Education Consortium, 33-34
 Opinions on the consolidation of SPSU and KSU, 35-38
 Book on *Studying Engineering Technology*, 39-40
Cobb Education Consortium, 10, 33-34

Cox, Loyd, 33
Crawford, Vernon D., 5, 31
Crimm, Harlon D., 33

DeFore, Jesse J., 14
Deming, W. Edwards, 28-29
Doyle, Regina, 22
Driscoll, Robert L., 34
Dunham, Frank C., 11-12

Fowler, Sonya, 34

Georgia Highlands College, 37
Georgia Tech, 4, 6, 8-9, 11, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 28, 31, 37

Hall, Kathleen (Kathy), 14
Hinojosa, Michael, 34

Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), 4, 40
International Association of Machinists & Aerospace Workers Local Lodge 709, 12

Johnson, Lawrence V., 7, 37

Keenum, Kermit, 33
Kennesaw State University, 7, 11-13, 25-26, 31-37, 39
Kenyon, Richard A., 15

Landis, Raymond B., *Studying Engineering*, 39
Leverette, LeVerne Lee, 33
Life University, 10

Marietta (Georgia) Kiwanis Club, 12, 23
McClure, Hoyt L., 7
McCracken, Eddie, 13
McDonald, Lauren "Bubba" Jr., 10

National Science Foundation (NSF) and support for academic research, 8, 16
Naval Air Technical Training Command, Millington, Tennessee, 1
Nichols, Roy, 33
Northeast London Polytechnic University, 4, 32

Papp, Daniel S., 6, 36
Patterson, Philip E., 31
Portch, Stephen R., 31-32
Purdue University, 2-5, 7-9, 16, 18, 21, 32, 39
Purdy, Barbara Hudson, 28

Rossbacher, Lisa A., 6, 13, 21, 23, 32, 34, 36

Siegel, Betty L., 6, 32-33, 35

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), 35, 40

Southern Polytechnic State University

- National search for first president, 4-6
- Campus culture in 1980, 7
- Origins, 8-9, 37
- Impact of national trend toward four-year engineering technology colleges, 9
- Ties to industry, 9-10
- W. Claire Harris Textile Center, 10
- Recreation and Wellness Center, 10, 27
- Campus expansion, 10-12, 25-28
- Attempted acquisition of Elks Club, 11, 25
- Engineering Technology Center, 12, 15
- The campus globe, 13, 38
- Creation of Tau Alpha Pi national engineering technology honor society, 13-14
- First master's program in Technology Management, 14, 19
- Student projects in national competitions, 15
- Controversies over administrative reorganizations, 16-18, 20-22
- Gender and ethnic diversity, 18, 29-31
- Creation of Technical Communication program, 18-19
- High SAT scores, 19
- Elimination of developmental studies, 19
- Computer science and computer engineering technology programs, 20
- Name change to Southern College of Technology, 20, 31
- First large grant for co-op education, 21-22
- Independence from Georgia Tech and new building construction, 23
- Al Burruss Academic Building, 24-25
- Expansion of the library and student center, 24-25
- Expansion of campus housing, 25-26
- SPSU Foundation, 25-26
- Attempt to purchase the Greyhound Bus Station, 26-27
- Athletic teams and facilities, 27-28, 38
- Beginning of women's intercollegiate athletics, 28
- IBM grant to make SPSU a total quality campus, 28-29
- Online master's program in Quality Assurance, 29
- Name change to Southern Polytechnic State University, 31-32
- Consolidation with KSU, 35-38
- Bachelor of Applied Technology and relationship with technical colleges, 35
- The Sting* (campus newspaper), 38

Sputnik, 9, 15-16

Sturgis, Horace W., 7, 22, 33

Sturgis, Sue Cowan, 7

Summers, David E., 4, 7

Tau Alpha Pi, 13-14

Tau Beta Pi, 14

Travis, Harris T., 3, 18, 30

University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, 3

University of Memphis (formerly Memphis State), 1-2

Willingham, Harold S., 12

Wilson, Joe Mack, 12, 24-25

Yancy, Robert J., 30