

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH KATHLEEN ANN FLEISZAR

CONDUCTED BY THOMAS ALLAN SCOTT

EDITED BY JOSHUA AARON DIX

INDEXED BY JAN HEIDRICH-RICE

for the

KSU ORAL HISTORY SERIES, NO. 9

TUESDAY, 6 JULY 2004

Kennesaw State University Oral History Project  
KSU Oral History Series, No. 9  
Interview with Kathleen Ann Fleiszar  
Conducted by Thomas Allan Scott  
Edited by Joshua Aaron Dix  
Indexed by Jan Heidrich-Rice  
Tuesday, 6 July 2004  
Location: CIE/CETL House at Kennesaw State University

TS: Kathy, why don't we start by you just telling us a little bit about yourself, like where you were born, where you grew up, where you went to school, and such as that?

KF: Okay. I was born in Chicago, Illinois, on the north side of the city.

TS: Chicago Cubs side.

KF: Oh, yes, the Chicago Cubs side. I was a Chicago Cubs fan. I can say I still am, but I don't follow them the way I used to. I lived in the city on the south side. My parents lived upstairs from my grandmother. She had a two-flat building. I went to school in Chicago until I finished first grade, and then my father was transferred, of all places, to Chattanooga, Tennessee, not too far from here. He was transferred there for two years, so I spent second and third grade in the South, in Chattanooga. Then he was transferred back to Chicago, but we didn't go back into the city and ended up in a suburb of Chicago called Arlington Heights. So from about fourth grade until I graduated from graduate school, my family lived in Arlington Heights. I went to school in Arlington Heights, grade school and high school, and then went to Loyola University, again in the city of Chicago on the north side for my undergraduate degree; graduated from there in 1969 with a BS in Biology. I moved back home with my parents and worked for a couple of years at KraftCo Corporation, which is the research and development division of Kraft Foods. I remember when I graduated from college thinking that I was just so glad to get out of school. I was never going to go back to school again, and then after spending a year at Kraft, I said, "Gee, I would really like to go back to school." So while I was working at Kraft, I was thinking about going back to school in microbiology and went to night school, picked up a couple of courses in physics that got me back into graduate school, and did some night school classes at Roosevelt University in downtown Chicago, while I was working during the day at Kraft. I'd leave Kraft, travel into the city, take a couple of night classes, then drive home, get home at all hours of the morning, and go back to work the next day. I thought, "This is no way to live, working all day, and then doing school at night." It just got to be too much. So I decided that I would go back to school full time and went to the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, which is about three hours south of Chicago, and worked on my graduate degree there. I actually went there with the intention of getting a master's degree, but my major professor talked me into changing my mind about that, and so for the first year I

- was really stubborn, and I said, “Oh, I’m just going to get a master’s degree.” And eventually I said, “Oh, the heck with it; I’ll just go ahead and get a Ph.D
- TS: So you actually skipped the master’s altogether, didn’t you?
- KF: Right. I was working at Kraft and going to school at night. They had a microbiology section. I wasn’t working in that section, but I thought it was more biologically oriented. I was working in the packaging division, and so I wanted to get into something more biological, and so my first intent was to go back to school at night to get a master’s degree in microbiology, and then to stay at Kraft. A lot of times people say, “Well, didn’t you make positive decisions in a certain direction?” And oftentimes, I make decisions in a certain direction that are loose decisions, but they end up leading me in other directions, if that makes any sense. So the idea was that I wanted to go back to school full time at the University of Illinois—the major professor that I started working under was a microbiologist, and he said to me, “You know, we’ve got this geneticist that we just hired from Michigan State who’s going to come down here.” And I thought, “I’ve always liked genetics most of all my courses in college.” So I switched over to him when he came down to U of I. He actually was brought down there to set up a program in genetics and a program specifically in human genetics.
- TS: They didn’t have one?
- KF: They did not have one; they had one in genetics, microbiology/genetics and a variety of other areas of genetics, but did not have a human genetics program. So he was brought down from Michigan State because his area of expertise was human genetics. By the time I finished taking his human genetics course I said, “This is good, I like this!” So I switched over to the Ph.D. program that he established there in human genetics and continued there, until I graduated.
- TS: Which was 1976.
- KF: Yes. I was there from ’71 to ’76.
- TS: Okay. That’s pretty fast getting through.
- KF: Yes, even though I didn’t have a master’s degree, I was able to complete everything in five years. And then the next step in my career: Let’s see if I can find a job. [laughter] And at the time in the middle ’70s, at least my experience was—I tried to apply for post-docs—for every one person that was applying for a particular post-doc position, there were twenty or thirty people that were in competition. The competition for post-doctoral positions was really pretty tough. The work that I did for my Ph.D. was a project that was really more terminal than most; a lot of people, when they work on a Ph.D. project, as soon as they finish that they can extend it, and they can do more on that particular topic or they can expand whatever they were doing. In my particular case, I did a family study, but because of the way the project was set up, it was kind of difficult to extend. The

families I worked with were in the Chicago area, and the study was really not conducive to carrying with me to another institution, let me put it that way.

TS: What kind of a study was it?

KF: I did a family study on a condition known as Infantile Spasms, which is an infantile and childhood form of epilepsy. I was looking to see if there was any genetic component to that form of epilepsy. The families that had affected children were from one center in Chicago, and the families I used as my control group were from Chicago and from the Champaign-Urbana area. That kind of a study is difficult to carry to another institution; it's not like laboratory work where all you have to do is just extend what you're doing by taking your samples with you or by getting samples at the new place. It was just real[ly] difficult for me to be able to carry that study with me. So when I applied for post-docs, they said to me, "Well, what do you want to do?" It was hard because I had to either come up with something brand new, or most of them didn't feel that what I had done could be carried over to their particular institution. I was getting a little discouraged with applying for post-docs, and I thought until I could find post-docs, wouldn't it be nice if I could just find myself a job? I remember walking down the corridor outside the department office in graduate school. They had a bulletin board with all kinds of job and employment announcements. I remember flipping through that and copying down a variety of different job openings, and one of them was at Kennesaw College or Kennesaw Junior College at the time, I believe.

TS: It probably was because 1976 was when we became four years. So when you were seeing it, it was still a junior college.

KF: Exactly. I can't remember if it was advertised as Kennesaw College or not, but I know that the conversion had just been voted on in the spring. I was actually hired that fall—right in the middle of the conversion. I remember applying for another job and going out on two interviews. The other one was given to somebody else—that was not a tenure track position. It turned out, it was a position where I would coordinate and run the laboratories at that institution—and then I came down to Kennesaw for the interview. I could tell you some side stories about what Kennesaw looked like at the time if you like, but I remember landing at the airport and renting a car. Pam Rhyne [Professor of Biology] gave me directions to this campus.

TS: That's the year before the interstate opened up.

KF: Oh, yes, I remember the directions involved going past a quarry.

TS: She could have given you better directions than that.

KF: I remember Bells Ferry Road, and I thought that was so funny that all the roads were named something-Ferry, like Bells Ferry, Johnson's Ferry, all this, and then they tried to explain to me that that had to do with the mode of transportation back

- in the old days. Because for whatever reason there were not a lot of roads named F-e-r-r-y up in the north, but I remember going past this quarry and—
- TS: Because y'all build bridges fast, I guess.
- KF: Yes, but I don't remember that! [laughter] But I do remember going past—
- TS: Vulcan.
- KF: Vulcan, and I remember that it was dusty, and the roads were not well paved. It just seemed like I was going out into the boonies.
- TS: Well, you were.
- KF: Which I guess at the time I was, and I arrived at the institution for the interview. They did eventually offer me the job. I remember thinking to myself that I was probably just going to stay here for a couple of years. I'll teach for a couple of years, get some experience and either go to another institution, maybe get a post-doc, maybe apply for some more post-docs, et cetera. And as a little bit of an aside, I remember when I graduated from college my mother looking at me and saying, "What do you think you'd like to do after you finish school?" I said, "I don't know what I want to do, but I know there's one thing I don't want to do; I don't want to teach." So this is where people say, "Well, you must have thought about this all your life." No, no, no. I would take off in one direction, and my career would get jogged off into a different direction. I thought, "Well, I really don't want to teach, but maybe I'll just stay at Kennesaw for a couple years and then just find another job or find a post-doc that might be appropriate" I ate my words on that one.
- TS: You've been here ever since.
- JF: That's right. So that's kind of a fast and dirty summary of arriving at Kennesaw. I came to Kennesaw because I was looking for a job.
- TS: Didn't we all?
- KF: Competition for jobs is not any easier nowadays, but I remember at the time that it was just fierce. There were so many times I'd send out résumés or letters. The standard joke about wallpapering your apartment with your rejection letters was not too far off because there were a lot of them.
- TS: Well, it turned overnight from the wonderful days in the '60s, where those that were just a little bit ahead of the baby boomers in getting through school had plenty of students to teach, and then all of a sudden all the baby boomers hit the job market, and there weren't any jobs.
- KF: That's right. I think I would be classified as a baby boomer that hit the job market when everybody else did.

TS: Anybody born after January 1 of 1946 was a baby boomer.

KF: That's me. I was born in November of 1947, so that puts me right in there with the baby boomers. [laughter]

TS: One of the things that I wanted to ask you, and we've been asking everybody that we've been interviewing is about the influences on you; you mentioned, I guess, really two major professors, first the one in microbiology, and then the one in human genetics but there may have been people—even in high school or earlier—that maybe influenced you toward the sciences or who were particularly good teachers. I wonder if you could just talk about some of your mentors?

KF: Oh definitely. That's very easy to do. I went to an all-girls Catholic high school and, which says a lot just telling you that—

TS: And then went to Loyola?

KF: And then went to Loyola with the Jesuits, the liberal Jesuits. They were quite liberal compared to some of the institutions.

TS: Did you ever get your knuckles cracked?

KF: Not in college, but I won't tell you what happened to me when I was in grade school and high school. [laughter]

TS: I was thinking of the nuns.

KF: Yes, I had a tendency to talk in class a lot; I was always gabby in class, and so I was always being sent out into the hall for talking too much or being put to the back of the room or something. I just couldn't keep my mouth shut. Which might have been a future vision of, maybe she needs to be a teacher because she likes to talk in class all the time. Stand up there. I was wanting to talk, and it just wasn't my turn; I was supposed to be the student.

TS: Get rewarded for talking.

KF: Yes. I always said my career is getting paid to talk. I'm trying to remember grade school. I don't recall any one person in particular in the sciences in grade school because the Catholic grade schools were more focused on grammar, English, history, although we did have some science. But the public schools were always being lauded for their science and math as opposed to—at least the Catholic school that I was in. I did feel that I got a very good education in a lot of other respects. When I went to high school, I had two science teachers; one was as a sophomore—I took biology for the first time, and she was spectacular. Her love of science and the way that she was able to just convey it, there was just no doubt that, "I love biology." She was a wonderful teacher, very knowledgeable, very, very good at what she did, very personable and everything. I really enjoyed the subject as well as how the subject was portrayed to me, and I really enjoyed

her teaching. And then, I believe it was my junior or senior year, I had another biology course, an advanced biology course—again, both of these were nuns that taught me.

TS: Do you remember their names?

KF: The one in sophomore year was Mother Roberta—they were called Mother not Sister because of the order they were from—but Mother Roberta was the one in sophomore year and . . . what was her name? They all have their religious names, and then later on they changed to their own names.

TS: Because of Vatican II or something?

KF: Yes, probably something like that, and I'm trying to remember what her religious name was. I have been in touch with her—the one I had in junior or senior year. Her name is Mary Quentin. She taught the advanced biology course and just kind of reinforced my love of biology. She also was an excellent teacher. A little bit on the strict side, but she was very, very good.

TS: What made her an excellent teacher?

KF: Probably her ability to convey the information. I think that was true of both of them, it wasn't just cut and dry; it wasn't just memorization. They gave a certain excitement to the topic and made you want to learn it. Maybe it was just because I liked the subject, I don't know. I had some excellent teachers in history too, but I never liked it. [laughter] It was just something about the subject. I did enjoy my history courses more when I had the better teachers. There was just something inherent about the topic that I liked, in addition to having the two excellent teachers. But those two in high school, in particular, were individuals that I think influenced me, as far as liking science and knowing that if I did anything in college, I would do something in the sciences, probably biology.

TS: What about at college? At Loyola?

KF: Oh, nobody that sticks out in particular. Let me think about that. Not right off the top of my head, I can't really think of anybody in particular that jumps out as being a biology teacher that I . . .

TS: Did you ever give any thought to going to medical school?

KF: I did, and that was one of the things that, I don't know, I didn't feel confident enough in myself. I wanted to be a pediatrician; I thought it would be really cool to be a pediatrician, and to go to medical school, and just work with kids, and then I thought to myself, "You want to work with somebody who can't tell you where it hurts because they can't talk yet?" But if I did go to medical school, at least at the time, that was the area that interested me the most. I think for whatever reason, I lacked the confidence. Maybe it wasn't the confidence that I couldn't make it out of medical school—to do the work that was required—but I had some

- trepidation about having somebody's health and well being in my hands. I think that kind of kept me from deciding that I would go that way. But I did think about that.
- TS: If we do a horrible job in the classroom, nobody dies as a result.
- KF: Well, you know, that's a good way to look at it. Maybe you'll ruin their careers or something, but at least they won't die. [laughter] But you do have a tremendous amount of influence in the classroom, as much as I suppose you would if you were a physician. But yes, taking somebody's life into your hands is a little bit different. I think I was a little bit skittish about that, thinking that I could do a good job.
- TS: So you're not thinking in terms of teaching, so you get a job that's research oriented at Kraft.
- KF: With the intention that I wanted a job. I got my college degree, and I had a job, and I guess something about me missed being in school. Again, thinking all the way back to when I was a kid; kids play all kinds of different games, and I liked to do lots of things outdoors. But I also vaguely remember, when I was a kid, playing school. Do you ever see how silly kids are when, here they are out of school for the summer vacation and, "What did you do? You played school?" Maybe there was something in my genes that said, "You really need to get back to learning and the academic environment."
- TS: Say something about your major professors at Illinois or any faculty member that you would consider a mentor.
- KF: Well, the first gentleman that was my major professor, he was the one that was the microbiologist. He was the director or the head of the "genetics" program. He was a microbial geneticist, and he was the one that was instrumental along with, of all people, a person in the psychology department, who were working on trying to bring a human geneticist onto campus. The University of Michigan, I believe, was one of the first schools to have a program in human genetics. Back in the 1970s, there were only one or two schools in the United States that had a master's or a Ph.D. program in human genetics. So the U of I was trying to bring a human geneticist to campus. And the microbial geneticist was head of the genetics program with the intent of turning it over to the other person. So he was my major professor for a very short period of time. He was the one that I talked to and made contact with, when I first came down there. I didn't do any work in his laboratory; I think I took one course from him at some point in time. The person that was my major professor for the rest of the time I was there arrived on campus within my first year. Again, he was an individual with a degree in human genetics, and he was responsible for setting up this program. Both of us were kind of new; he was new to that institution and new to the program. I'm sure it's very different [than] it is now. I took a couple of courses from him. I took a human genetics course from him, and he was a spectacular teacher. I should say

he still is, although he's retired just recently. But his course in human genetics really took my interest in genetics and put it in that area of human genetics, where I really knew that I wanted to focus.

TS: What's his name?

KF: William Daniel. He just recently retired from the University of Illinois.

TS: What was it about him that made him a good teacher?

KF: The store of knowledge that he had; it was just a phenomenal amount of information that he had in his head; his ability to, again, to convey--I think all the teachers that I admired were individuals that had this overwhelming enthusiasm in front of the classroom and that ability to convey the information to make it interesting, to challenge you. His tests were just off the wall. I think I still have some of them. I don't think I can answer any of the questions on them now! [laughter] His ability to challenge. He was a very personable, helpful individual. Of course, I was working in his lab, so I could see him every day. He would mentor you if you had questions or if you had problems or if you couldn't figure something out or whatever. He would be there, and his door would be open.

TS: Was that standard procedure that if you're working with a major professor that you work in their lab as a research assistant or whatever?

KF: From what I remember, that's pretty much the way it was. It may be different now because he was brought on campus for a specific purpose. He was the one that was going to be putting this program together because there was really no other lab that would be appropriate for human genetics. There was one other gentleman; I just thought of him. He was a character. He was another geneticist, but he was a fruit fly geneticist, and after chasing fruit flies and jumping up on my desk to kill them—they'd just flown up to the ceiling out of the vials that I had—and my major professor walking in and giving me a dirty look because I had released fruit flies in the lab, I decided I just didn't like working with fruit flies. But Dr. [Dale M.] Steffensen, who was the fruit fly geneticist, was an extremely interesting individual. He had a speech impediment. If you talked to him personally, he would tend to stutter; or sometimes in lecture, he would tend to stutter. He would be looking for a word, and everybody in class was waiting for him to find a word [chuckle], but what was fascinating about him was that if he started to lecture on something that either he loved—you could tell by his tone of voice—or that he knew a lot about and he really wanted to convey to you, that man stopped stuttering entirely. But he was a character. I enjoyed him because, again, he was very enthusiastic about his profession, and about his love of *Drosophila* genetics. He was the kind of person that would get so excited when he was lecturing that he would ramble on using twenty-five cent words, and then he'd turn around to the black board and he would write the word "the" on the black board and then he would turn around and that's all he would write. We're thinking, "Wait a minute, couldn't you write one of those big twenty-five cent

words instead of . . . ?” But he had all these little personality quirks that made his class—I had forgotten about him, but he was fascinating. He was actually quite famous in his field. But I decided that as much as I enjoyed him, I really liked human genetics a lot better. But I remember him specifically. One other person whose name I forget taught reproductive physiology, and he was a fascinating individual. He would walk into class every day with not a note in his hand. That man never walked in with a piece of paper or a notebook or anything. He would come in, and he would start lecturing, and his lecture style was personable, like he was having a conversation with you. He was well organized. He would put things on the board but without a note. I didn’t think he had been teaching that long, but that to me, was a teacher. He came in, and he was conversational. He was personable, and his jokes, and his stories were hysterical. They had a point—but he would convey the information in a humorous fashion, and he was well organized, and just was able to capture the classroom. I mean people didn’t miss his class; he was really great.

TS: Were they all males on the faculty?

KF: No, there were some females on the faculty. There was one female that taught a genetics course; unfortunately, I had a run-in with her, so we won’t talk about her. I really didn’t get along with her very well at all, but she was a very good professor, researcher, and she was a pretty good teacher too, but she and I clashed, we unfortunately had a personality conflict. But yes, now that you mention it, there were a fair number of individuals that, when I first got there, were male. Toward the end of my graduate school years, I remember there were a couple of females that were being hired. They were just starting to hire more females. But in the sciences, there always tended to be a far greater number of males on the faculty.

TS: Well, you left Illinois behind and came to Kennesaw. You mentioned dusty roads; what was your impression when you first got to campus here?

KF: It was small; it was very personable; the people were very friendly; they seemed to enjoy each other’s company and, you know, it was just very laid back. It wasn’t a large institution. If you can imagine, and, well, you know because you were here; it was almost like going to a glorified high school, as far as the size was concerned, because at the time, there were between three and four thousand students. The impressions that I can just pull off the top of my head was that it was small and personable, friendly and the people were extremely helpful. One of my colleagues in the biology department who’s not here any more, she kind of took me under her wing when I came down to look for apartments. She took me to the apartments where a lot of faculty were living, and a lot of people that were on the staff—the Wakefield Apartments over in Marietta. She and I became very good friends. But she was not only helpful with that respect. There was never any hesitation on the part of any of the people in the department to help me out. I had never taught anything before.

- TS: I was going to ask whether you had done any teaching at Illinois?
- KF: I did, but I did not teach a full course. I was a TA and RA, and we'd teach labs and prep labs, and do that kind of thing, but I never had the responsibility to teach an entire course that was my course. And not only that, and this never ceases to amaze me, if you teach high school, you take all these education courses, but if you teach college, they just want you to have a master's degree or Ph.D., and who cares if you ever had an education course. I had one education course as an undergraduate that I took as an elective, and that was it. So I had to learn by trial and error. But the people that I worked with in the department never hesitated to help me out, help me organize, told me what they did in class, what they did for their tests, how they tested students. I remember it was just very pleasant when I came here and very supportive.
- TS: Who was the one that took you around?
- KF: The friend that I mentioned, Betty Jo Hicks. She's not teaching here anymore. I remember her maiden name was Hicks. She's now Dr. Wallace, and she's at [the] Oconee County Schools in Athens.
- TS: You mentioned Pam Rhyne earlier.
- KF: Pam was here; she was on the search committee. Ed Bostick chaired the search committee, I believe. Bowman [Davis] was here. Mary Lance was here.
- TS: And at that time we didn't have a separate biology department; that would have been the Division of Natural Science and Mathematics.
- KF: Division of Science and Math, and Herb [Davis] was the chairman of that division. The person that I'm assuming that you may eventually get a chance to interview is Ben Golden. Ben and I were hired the same year, and he also is a geneticist. They weren't really looking for two geneticists; I think they wanted one geneticist and some other flavor biologist. Ed Bostick can tell you funny stories about who they interviewed the year that I interviewed, but Ben and I were both hired the same year. It was unusual that they did end up hiring both geneticists. Ben came with ten years experience. He became my mentor because of his experience, not only as a teacher, but because he was also a geneticist. So I came in here as green as can be, and I can't think of anyone in the department that didn't help me out one way or the other.
- TS: Well, up until that time—I assume it's the same in science as it was in the social sciences—we weren't really hiring specialists before we became four years because we were just hiring people who could teach American History or teach World History. If we had started hiring specialists, it must have been the first year when we knew we were going four years.
- KF: Yes. I don't know if they were really specifically looking for specialists. I don't know, maybe they thought, "Well, we've got Bowman who teaches anatomy and

physiology, and Ed who's doing the botany, et cetera, and now we don't have a geneticist in the department." Although Herb [Davis] is actually by training a geneticist. But I remember Herb telling me when I was interviewed, we had just been given four-year status, that starting in that next year they would eventually be adding a junior year and then a senior year and then having the first graduating class. He said that we don't have a genetics class, but that we would be adding a genetics class, and because I was a geneticist, that I could anticipate that down the road somewhere, I would be able to teach in my specialty. I remember that that might have been the very first year that at least some of the division chairs were thinking about hiring people with specific intents to teach specific courses. We did need—with a four-year degree in biology—some people who were specialists in areas that we didn't have.

TS: So when you came here, you would have had two years to teach nothing but the survey classes, the general education classes.

KF: That's right. I don't remember when I taught the first genetics class, but I taught Biology 103-104 first, I think even into my second year. I believe genetics might have been added after that. That was the first specialty course that I taught.

TS: So [the] first upper level class you taught was genetics and not human genetics but—

KF: No, that came later. Actually the course that I developed was medical genetics. My mentor at University of Illinois was actually a medical geneticist, so that was the upper level course that I developed as a second genetics.

TS: Was it a shock to go into the classroom at Kennesaw College?

KF: I didn't know what I was doing! [laughter]

TS: Now we had big classes because just about everybody took biology.

KF: Yes, the classes, at the time, I mean they don't sound big now, but at the time the 103-104 classes were sixty or seventy, maybe seventy-five students. All were taught in what is now the Nursing Building.

TS: That's a lot when you're trying to figure out what you're doing.

KF: Well, I did what most people did coming out of graduate school. I taught at a graduate level. I gave them stuff that I had just learned in graduate school or maybe at least at college in my senior year or whatever, and I figured, "What's the big deal?" And then I realized quickly that you don't teach them the structure of ATP because it's just not necessary for a non-major to know chemical structures. [laughter] So that was my biggest error, teaching them things in a lot more detail than they needed for a non-majors courses. I evolved from doing that the first time around to bringing in a lot of visual aids to help them understand and learn. I changed my teaching tactics along the way and just listened to what other

people said and did—and how they did it—and then gave it a try. If it worked, I said, “Okay, I’ll try that again.” Which sometimes works—remember this—for one class, but doesn’t work for the next class. You probably know that already. “Oh, this is brilliant. The class loved it.” And then you try it the next time you teach the course, and everybody looks at you cross-eyed.

TS: What did work for you? You mentioned using visuals.

KF: I like to tell stories. I like to make analogies to things they understand, especially in the non-majors classes. So I spent a lot of time making food analogies, which they really enjoyed. Try to make things relevant to something they encounter in their everyday lives. And that worked really well for me. I like to lecture in a conversational way—not in a formal way. I’ve had students tell me that they like the fact that I’m conversational and give and take, and that I use a lot of examples. I love to use examples—whether they’re visual or something that I made up or something that’s an analogy to something that they understand. That’s what worked best for me.

TS: With sixty or seventy in a classroom, you can’t really get away from lecturing, can you?

KF: No, you can’t. I’m not good at group activities. There were a couple of times that I tried group activities, but I was never good at that. You know, you put the people into the various groups, and then you go around and make . . . I don’t know; that never clicked with me. And the other thing that I wasn’t big on, although I use some of it, is technology. That’s probably anathema to say, but technology was not something, I mean, I’d rather draw something on the board. Even as silly as it would look, I would rather draw something. I did use movies and videos and that type of thing. When it came to high-powered technology, I did eventually give in: PowerPoint or Internet or whatever because the students are so savvy with that.

TS: But back in the ’70s, who had heard of PowerPoint or the Internet?

KF: Oh no, you had to make up your own visuals, make up your own ways of getting a point across, and a lot of it had to do with using models; I love to use models, something they can see, and I had a good time with that.

TS: But I gather you’re less than enthusiastic about technology in the classroom, PowerPoint and that kind of thing.

KF: Well, I use a lot of PowerPoint now; the students seem to like that. I shouldn’t say use a lot of it; it depends on the course I’m teaching. Some courses I’ll use it and some courses I won’t. I developed a little bit different teaching technique depending upon the course; in one course I might use PowerPoint, and in another course I might use class notes. It just depended on the course itself, what I felt the nature of the course was, if you will. It would be different from cell biology course to genetics to medical genetics; it just varied from course to course.

- TS: When you first started at Kennesaw, everybody would sign up for a lab at a particular time in the same course.
- KF: Yes, that only lasted for about a year or so, and then my friend Betty Jo and I were recruited to write a lab manual. I don't know if we volunteered for this or if it was assigned to us, but they were using a lab manual for the non-majors course that was written by Herb Davis. He wanted to redo that manual and redo the labs so Betty Jo and I spent many, many a night eating M&M's (and anything that was sweet) while writing. One night we'd eat M&M's, and another night we'd maybe eat a whole pie. Another night we'd eat nothing but potato salad. This is what got us through writing these labs. She and I co-authored a lab manual for Biology 103 that was used for a good seven or eight years. It went through about six editions. Those labs were based on a new approach called the open lab, where the lab would be open from the morning till the afternoon, and even into the evening. Students would come in and do the same lab, but they would come in and do it at their own pace. They could come in, and do part of it, leave and come back, and finish it. As a matter of fact we're still using that open lab approach in the Science 1101.
- TS: Well, it makes so much good sense that you wonder why nobody thought about it before.
- KF: I can't even remember whose idea, if it was Herb's idea or one of the other faculty members that was in the biology department. But somehow, some way, we had heard about these open labs, and we wanted to try them. So Betty Jo and I were responsible for rewriting that lab manual and eating a very bad diet while we were doing it. At the time, we were two single ladies, and so we didn't have to worry about going home and cooking for the kids or anything. We just ate everything evil that we could possibly think of to get us through all of the discussion, arguments, writes and re-writes that we did when we wrote that lab manual. But we had a good time. I'm still friends with Betty Jo. She and her husband and her daughter live in Athens.
- TS: Well, it didn't take long before you won the Distinguished Teaching Award in 1984. You'd only been here eight years at that time or were in your eighth year when you won the award? Obviously, your flexibility must have paid off.
- KF: I guess so.
- TS: Would you talk a little bit about what a master teacher is and how you would define a master teacher?
- KF: You're going to put me on the spot. From my perspective, I think you need to—and again, this is sort of things I try to do in the classroom—I like somebody who is personable, and I try to be personable with the students. I like to make sure that they know that when I walk into a classroom, number one, that I know my topic, that I know my subject, that I know it well, and that I show an inordinate amount

of enthusiasm, even if it is the eighty-fifth time that I had to teach a particular thing. That got harder as the years went on. I'd walk in and think, "If I have to talk about this topic one more time..." But they're hearing it for the first time. That to me was part of being a master magician or master teacher. I wanted to make sure that they always—in their evaluations or comments—made a comment that number one I knew my subject, that if I didn't know something in my subject that I would be willing to say that I did not know. Then, I looked it up. Not that I just didn't say, "Oh, I'll get back to you on that." But that I made sure that by the next class that I did get back with them on [it], that I did clarify it if I didn't know something. To me that's very important in a teacher. Being enthusiastic, being personable—I never cared if the students interrupted, and maybe that's the wrong word, if they asked questions during lecture. With my brain the way it works, I want to finish a thought; I would just go like this [motioning] and tell them to hang on for a second. [I would] always make sure that they had an opportunity to ask questions. And I like that; I would prefer that the students are interactive. I know that some people don't want to be interrupted. They don't want questions to be asked. But to me at least, in my interpretation of a master teacher, that would be important. Being available outside the classroom is critical. You can do just so much in the classroom; there are people that don't like to ask a question in the classroom. They feel embarrassed or they feel that it is a stupid question or whatever, and so I think it's important that you're available, not just to answer questions about the particular subject that you're teaching. Maybe we shouldn't record this—but I like to advise. There are a lot of faculty [members] that don't like it; they don't enjoy it. They think it takes up too much of their time or whatever, but I enjoy advising students. I love to sit and talk with them, and I love to play matchmaker between the student and a career or a student and what they want to do. I just had fun doing that. And so, to me, that's part of being a master teacher, helping the student not just with the subject you're teaching but, if they're a biology major, pre-med or whatever, that you help them with career decisions. You talk with them about different options, not just pie in the sky—I'm going to be a famous doctor-type of thing. Well, not with a 2.4 average. So you've got to be realistic with them and be able to help them out in making decisions. So I enjoyed that.

TS: What was your impression of the majors in biology at Kennesaw?

KF: Overall, I think we've had a very strong group of students. Certainly there are people that come to college intending to major in the sciences that are really not suited or they think they'd like to go to medical school, and that's just not realistic. But, overall, I think we've had a good group of students. We've had students who have gone on to medical school, dental school, pharmacy school, and have finished their [academic] careers and are practicing in the community. The students overall were relatively well prepared for college, with, again some exceptions; I can tell one story, although this is not maybe characteristic of the Kennesaw students. In my first or second year of teaching, I had a student who was not doing particularly well in the non-major's biology class. So I tried to figure out why because this person was concerned that she didn't do very well. I

said, “Well, did you do this, did you do that?” And she looked at me and she said, “Well, I don’t understand why I did so poorly. I studied for a whole hour for this test.” And I remember days in high school when I would be studying for days for a test; I was taken aback that she thought studying an hour was a long time. So once in awhile you have a student like that. They just either did not have good study skills, or they just did not know how to study. That it was different in college than it was in high school. The students who did have a rough time in biology were usually pretty open to coming to talk with me, and I would give them some recommendations. There were students who didn’t know how to take notes, for example; they had no idea that they needed to take notes, and they would run the gambit from somebody who didn’t know how to take notes to somebody who tried to write down everything that you said. You have a student raise their hand in class and say, “What was that third word in the second sentence you just said?” And when you are a veteran lecturer, “I don’t know what I just said, I just know I covered this topic, and I can’t tell you what the third word was.” [laughter] I’m getting off the track, but, overall, I think the students have been quite impressive. I think I can make the general sort of leap to the fact that I think they have improved over the years, and that may have, in part, to do with Kennesaw’s reputation, which has changed over the years. Its reputation has become more widespread, as far as people knowing about the institution, knowing that the programs are good programs. It takes awhile to get that through to the community that we’re not just a college, we’re not just a university here, but we are an institution that is providing excellent programs, and we have excellent teachers, and the students that graduate from here go on to professional school or they get good jobs in the community or whatever. It takes a long time for that kind of information to get out into the community. I would go out on a limb and say that I think the students over the years have become better students, better class of students, if you will, students that have changed quite a bit from the 1970s when I first came here.

TS: I just wanted to ask you—you found the students to be fine, although getting better as time went on—was it a culture shock to come from Chicago to Cobb County? Of course, you had been in Champaign-Urbana for a while, but was it a culture shock to come south?

KF: In very few respects. I couldn’t find anybody first of all that was born in Atlanta; every time I would ask somebody where they were from it wasn’t Atlanta, it wasn’t Marietta. I remember the first time I asked Tom Roper where he was from, and he said he was from Georgia and Atlanta, and I said, “Oh, gosh, I think you’re the first native I’ve ever met!” [laughter] Maybe that was the culture shock, coming down and expecting the South to be similar to the South when I was a little girl in Chattanooga. The South of the 1960s or even the 1950s was sort of the slow, laid back, Southern drawl; I remember my mom complaining to us that when she’d go to the grocery store when we lived in Chattanooga that everybody was so slow that it took them so long to do things. Being from the city, and Chicago in particular, it was quick, quick, quick, fast, fast. The students couldn’t get used to the speed at which I lectured. They were always telling me to

slow down, and I did try to do that. They knew right off that I was not from the South. But maybe it was more of a culture shock for them than it was for me. I expected to find more native Georgians, native Mariettans, and I didn't seem to meet as many native Southerners as I did people that were transplants like myself from different parts of the South or from the North. I was warned, if you will, that I was entering the Bible belt, that I had to watch out for things like teaching evolution, big bad evil "E" words—and I have a couple of funny stories to tell about that. Maybe that is not so much of a culture shock, but I guess it just still kind of blows me away that there's that kind of overwhelming conservative approach to science and the teaching of science. I tried to be careful in the classroom when I taught evolutionary concepts in the non-majors class to make sure that they understood the concepts: I wasn't asking them to accept them, that was perfectly fine with me. But when I ask you on a test to define something, what a word means or what a concept is, you need to be able to do that from a scientific viewpoint, whether or not that was something you personally accepted. So that was a little bit different to me, having to realize and understand that there were individuals that might have had—a different belief is not the right word—but a different acceptance of things that I just took for granted as scientific concepts.

TS: Well, when you were in Chattanooga, it would have been illegal for your teachers, at least in the public schools, to teach about human evolution, at any rate.

KF: Definitely, and I remember very distinctly being in second grade and going out to a store with my mother, a department store. I always was short; I'm still short now, but I remember we were at the elevators, and I wanted a drink of water. I went up to a water fountain; I started to take a drink of water out of it, and my mother stopped me. She was very calm about everything, and she said, "No dear, you don't drink out of this water fountain." One said, "Colored," and one said, "White." It was maybe the closest one there or the shorter of the two, whatever it was. I remember her telling me that she didn't want to cause any disturbance if I drank out of the "wrong" water fountain. That was back in the 1950s, and it just kind of blew me away because I don't remember having that kind of experience when I was in Chicago.

TS: Well, you didn't have that experience in Chicago.

KF: But that was not when I was here at Kennesaw; that was back in the '50s. But then coming here it seemed like there was a fair amount of progress, maybe since I had been in the South in the '50s.

TS: Well, I grew up in Tennessee, and I think there was one huge advantage of making it illegal to teach evolution, and that is when I took biology in the tenth grade it was a fascinating subject simply because our teacher didn't teach us anything about it. So in the tenth grade I went out and got a copy of Darwin's *Origin of Species* to read.

KF: That's a tough thing to read in the tenth grade! [laughter]

TS: Well, I know, but who would have read it if it wasn't illegal, forbidden.

KF: Forbidden. Of course, the forbidden fruit is always.... But I tried to understand that there were people that not only had different religious beliefs or beliefs about science in general, but thought a scientist was evil or something, I don't know. I can tell you one interesting experience with the group of non-majors in the Biology 104 class, where we taught evolutionary concepts. I had a gentleman in the class who was probably in his early thirties. He always asked good questions. I could tell that this wasn't really his bag, and he wasn't really in acceptance of the concept. But, he was an excellent student; he did well in the class. I can't remember exactly what words he used; I knew it was his evaluation because he was the one in the class that was having the most trouble with evolution. He wrote a comment on his evaluation that he thought I was a good teacher and that I did a good job and all that kind of stuff. Then he said that he was praying for me that I would find Jesus Christ. I thought, "Wait a minute, he never asked me what my religious affiliation was." His assumption was that because I was teaching evolution in the classroom, that I must be a non-religious individual or maybe an atheist or an agnostic or something. I thought that was kind of interesting. I felt they needed to understand, "What do scientists accept or not accept about this concept?" As long as they knew where I was coming from, and I knew that they were certainly able to have their opinions, then I never really had any problem in the classroom with evolution. Out of all the culture shocks, probably the biggest was coming down here and finding that not everybody talked with a slow, Southern drawl and took forever to walk from one place to the other, or were laid back and sitting in the sun, shooing away flies and drinking Coca-Cola. Overall, there really wasn't that much of a culture shock.

TS: It sounds to me like you're saying you can teach unpopular things in the classroom, as long as you show respect for your students.

KF: Oh, definitely. And that maybe is part of what being a master teacher is. I have to respect who the students are, and what they believe. I guess one of the things that I found most fascinating about the students in general was that the age of students at Kennesaw was above the average for typical college students. There were students in my classroom that were thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy years old. The average age of the student was twenty-seven. It fascinated me that they were going to school, and I'd find out sometimes by accident, that they had a family. Now, I wasn't married when I was in college; I wasn't married when I came to Kennesaw. I didn't get married until I had been down here for a couple of years. Going to school was going to school; you didn't have a family, you didn't get married, you just concentrated on going to school. And here, I had students in the classroom who didn't look like they were a day over twenty-one, and they would say that they had a family and they had kids and they had jobs. I thought, "My God, how in the world are you doing what you do, going to school full time, getting A's and B's, and doing an excellent job. Yet, you're working on

the weekends, or you've got to run home and pick up the kids from school, and you've got to make supper for them, and you've got to take care of them." I was in just in awe of them, in absolute awe of what they were doing because they wanted to continue their education, they wanted to get their education. You can't call that a culture shock, but that's not the kind of student that I went to college with. Everybody lived in the dorm; everybody was single. Nobody had a family, and few had jobs outside.

TS: Why don't you talk a little bit about the intellectual climate at Kennesaw State [University]. You talked about the classroom; was scholarship encouraged at any time in your career at Kennesaw State? Did it become more encouraged as time went on? What was the attitude towards things beyond the classroom like scholarship and service when you came here in 1976?

KF: When I came in '76, the number one focus of the institution was teaching. I mean, that was the supreme thing. That was what you were asked to do. [KSU] was a teaching institution. That's what we prided ourselves in—teaching. Number one was teaching; number one was teaching. Service, serving on committees—on department and college committees, committees in the division or within your group—that was encouraged. We were encouraged more at that time to talk about the community service that we did. At some magical point when I was at Kennesaw, if you put in an annual report that you had done community service, it was, "No, you can't talk about that because that's really not appropriate any more." I was kind of sad to hear about that because I think that is a lot of [who] I am as a person and as a professional—the community can see me as being an academician who is dedicated to the profession and who does a good job with it, but also as someone who wants to be involved with the community. It takes away some of that myth of academicians being in an ivory tower. We are also interested in our community. In the beginning, if you put down service to the community, as well as service to the college, that that was encouraged. We didn't have a scholarship area; we called it professional growth and development, you remember that. What we were asked to do was to go to professional meetings in our particular areas. We were encouraged to go to those meetings, and we were encouraged to bring any information from those meetings back to the campus and incorporate that into our teaching. So the most important thing about professional growth and development was that we didn't stay stagnant within our area. I would keep abreast of anything new in the field of human genetics or medical genetics. I knew the latest that was happening out there, even though I wasn't performing the research. I brought that back to the classroom, and I brought it from either the journals that I read or from a national meeting. I made contacts; I networked with people that were outstanding in their field and were giving the presentations. I gathered that information, and I could demonstrate that I incorporated that into the classroom. Again, the teaching aspect was most important. I don't know when exactly, [but] the word scholarship replaced professional growth and development, maybe within the last ten years. The biggest problem that I have with the use of the word scholarship is that it means different things to different disciplines. Where you all, as historians, can do

wonderful scholarship by doing the very thing that you're doing whether it's oral histories or working with the community, publishing books, et cetera. With all due respect, you can do that with a tape recorder; but if I had to do scholarship as a geneticist, I would need laboratory space. I would need equipment; that's hundreds of thousands of dollars. I would need supplies, and I would need to get into an area that maybe I hadn't been in since I had been in graduate school. So there's a different expectation for scholarship, and I think that part of the struggle that Kennesaw is having is understanding this. I think they admit that there's a difference in scholarship in the disciplines, but in reality, it's not recognized. Maybe we—

TS: We've got to do it anyway.

KF: Yes, but it's done a little bit differently in the sciences than it is in music or in history or in English or any of the other areas.

TS: Well, it's even divided in history because those of us who do like Southern history, we're near the archives that have the records. But if you're doing Nigerian history, the archives are across the sea. So you use your summer vacation getting to them, if you're going to do any research at all.

KF: Exactly, so even though you don't need a laboratory, you need the funds to get you to the country, and then sometimes you need special permission to get into specific archives. You have stumbling blocks, walls that are put up in front of you that prevent you from doing the kind of scholarship that the southern historian can do. Oftentimes, I think of, maybe as the extreme example, somebody who's a musician. Their piano or their keyboard or their instrument is all they need to engage, and maybe that's not entirely true, but part of their scholarship is composing. Maybe I don't know enough about scholarship in other areas, but I do know the sciences require a lot of money and space. Oftentimes, it's very difficult to do.

TS: So if you're going to do serious, basic research, if you're going to require that, the institution that requires that also needs to provide the resources to make it possible.

KF: Yes. I guess one of the saddest things—if you want to call it sad—that I personally see happening at Kennesaw is that it seems like—and I may be wrong—we're getting away from the fact that we were always such a wonderful teaching institution. Not that we aren't any more, but it just seems that it doesn't, I mean, if you talk to people they'll say, "Oh yes, teaching is number one; it's top." But then you superimpose the scholarship or the service or both on top of that, what you do is you take away from the time that the person had spent in making their teaching so spectacular. Because now, there is the commitment to scholarship. Well, when are you going to do the scholarship, if you still have the same teaching load, and you don't have the release time or whatever to do the other expectations? That's probably the saddest thing to me. I guess, I wouldn't

have any objection to knowing that Kennesaw wanted scholarship, but how are you going to do that scholarship unless something else gives. You've got to have some kind of release time from teaching or you have to have the funding or you have to have start up funds or something that's going to allow a new faculty member, not somebody as old as I am, but a new faculty member to do those kinds of things. So Kennesaw, I think, needs to rethink exactly what they want. To go in the scholarship direction, then they're going to need a lot of money to do that; they really are.

TS: Have you been using an increasing number of part-time faculties in biology?

KF: Increasing over what we did before. We pretty much were a department that did not have many part-timers, and so, even if we increase by one or two, you know, what's your baseline, we don't have as many part-timers as some of the other departments, and we do have more than we had in the past. We still have, I would say, probably 80 to 90 percent of our faculty full-time. We don't use as many part-timers as other departments, so it's kind of hard to answer that question because yes, we do use more part-timers than we did before, but in the past we used very few part-time individuals.

TS: Right. It's not a problem compared to English...

KF: Or math.

TS: Or history where they're teaching pretty close to half of the survey classes.

KF: And that presents a problem in itself because if you're asking your full-time tenure track faculty to teach the Science 1101, 1102, that would be like the equivalent of teaching the intro history courses to the masses and the English 1101 and 1102. We're using our full-time faculty to do that, which takes them away from upper-level courses that they can teach or courses for majors. But I think we're getting a little bit better at being able to hire full-time temporary or part-time temporary faculty to teach those courses. [That will] release the other faculty to do some scholarship and teach some upper-level courses. But it just seems like it's pulling teeth because it's just a struggle to be able to do that.

TS: And when I get release time, what that really means is they hire a part-time person to teach the general education classes so I don't have to teach them, which is fine with me, but not necessarily good for the students.

KF: But the teaching loads, and again I'm looking at it from the perspective of someone who was promoted and tenured on the basis of the old standards. There were things that I did in the service area that sort of overlapped with scholarship, and those were certainly sufficient. But heck, I can't remember what year I became a full professor, and it was way before this scholarship business came about. Being under the old model, I can't even begin to imagine how it would be for a new faculty member coming in who is being told that they have to do scholarship, but we don't have a lot of lab space. You have to do a scholarship,

- but we can't provide you with the equipment; you have to get a grant to do that. Well, you have to have time to write the grant in order to get the money to...but then granting agencies want you to have some track record in doing research. It's a vicious cycle with the folks in science. I feel bad for how they're struggling to be able to adjust to that change.
- TS: Are they doing more scholarship in science now on our campus than they used to?
- KF: Oh yes, definitely.
- TS: But feeling . . .
- KF: Feeling strapped. They're teaching a full load and doing the scholarship and doing the work with the students; student interaction with directed studies, research work that they do with students, so I don't know how they do it but they manage to do it.
- TS: Did I hear you say that they have downplayed community service in the sciences?
- KF: Well, that's just a personal opinion. Maybe it's not so much in the sciences, but I remember that while serving on department committees and on the college committee, it just didn't seem acceptable if somebody put down that they worked with the Boy Scouts; that was just sort of like, "Oh, why are they putting that in there? We're not going to consider that as important as being the chair of the academic standing committee." You're looking for chairmanships, and you're looking for active participation in campus-wide or university-wide committees. It just didn't seem that that was looked at—and not just in the sciences, but I've served on university promotion and tenure committees, and it just didn't seem that that was . . .
- TS: Yes, I think I know what you're saying now.
- KF: It was there, and sometimes it was just looked at as, "Well, look at this person's service." And you see some things out in the community, and it just didn't seem to hold the same weight as service on the campus. Service became more of a "What did you do on campus?" And not just, "How many committees did you serve on, but how many did you chair?" It became real important that you had to be an active participant, and you had to be a chair of a committee or you had to be a co-chair or something like that. It was more of a ranking of the service, I guess. Looking at some things that were done out in the community, that to me would have been just as important, knowing that your faculty is out there, high profile out in the community.
- TS: I agree absolutely. I think in our department, the emphasis has been on professional service, and that would leave out Boy Scouts for us too, although it could include other kinds of service. Like when I'm involved with Cobb Landmarks and Historical Society, that's community service, but it's also an extension of the professional service.

- KF: It's professional, right, and I think that's probably how it was being looked at. Is your service out in the community an extension of your professional abilities? And another thing that has changed over the years is that in the late '70s or early '80s, it was very much frowned upon if a faculty member did consulting work out in the community. If you went out and became a private consultant in your own professional area. That was not looked at as very favorable, and then somehow, somehow the switch was flipped, and then it became important. I did some professional consulting from about '82 to '92. I was doing this over and above my KSU commitments. I used that in an annual review as support for my work outside my professional area, and that suddenly was okay. But in the very beginning that was [frowned upon].
- TS: I think the attitude was that it was taking away from teaching. You were off campus—and also from service on campus.
- KF: So that atmosphere changed for the good. You've got to temper what you're doing on campus with what you're doing outside and not let it take away from your professional activities on campus. But, by the same token, I think it's good to have people from this institution out there in the community and high profile, like you working with Cobb County doing things where they can say, "Oh, well, we have this person, an experienced individual who also is a professor at Kennesaw."
- TS: Right. But I think what you're saying is very interesting and very much on target that the people in the community have all kinds of stereotypes of what faculty members are like, and if we're not out actually meeting real people in the community and dispelling some of those stereotypes . . .
- KF: There are things that I do out in the community that I'm not going to stop and give other than my name. And then they find out by either asking where I work and what I do for a living, and it becomes almost as if, "Oh, and you're doing this?" And they're surprised that somebody from a university or college is doing something out in the community. Well, why not?
- TS: Well, you mentioned before we got started that you've been involved with hospice. Would you talk a little bit about that? How you got involved. You could make a case that that related to your interest in genetics, I guess, can't you?
- KF: Yes, I guess in some respects. I got interested first in volunteering at Kennestone Hospital. You know, I met my husband [Robert W. Eisenhardt, Director, Auxiliary Enterprises] here, and we were married back in 1982. He passed away in 1993 of cancer, so I became interested in [hospice]. He had had hospice for two days before he died, and I learned a little bit about what they did. I talked to a friend of mine who is a former employee of Kennesaw, Diane Rogers, you might remember her. She was a volunteer at Kennestone Hospital. She volunteered for four hours a week, and she got me interested in the program there. I said, "Well, let me kind of wait and see." So after maybe a little bit, I went over

and went through their volunteer course. I started volunteering in the oncology unit, getting to know people. What was kind of interesting about that was it was my way of trying to do something for other people who I knew had gone through a family member having cancer. I don't think I would have been as inclined to do it, if I didn't feel that I had some kind of empathy for what they were going through. Oddly enough, I had met not only people that were members of the same church that I went to—because somebody was going through this trauma—but I actually had a student or two that unfortunately had gone through that same experience. One student in particular who passed away, I got to know her and her family, and I don't think I would have had that opportunity had I not done that. But while I was volunteering at the hospital, I got interested in hospice. Every time I [would] try to sign up for their volunteer program, it was held at night, and I was teaching at night. Then it was held during the day, and I was teaching during the day. I finally got around to finishing the program with them. After awhile, I found it just got to be a little bit much doing the volunteer work for hospice and doing the volunteer work for the hospital, and keeping the full-time job at Kennesaw. So I quit the volunteer responsibilities I had at the hospital and then just continued with hospice. But the people that you meet, the patients, the fellow volunteers, the other individuals, there's a certain amount of medical interest that I have. But then I also became interested in end-of-life experiences for people, and as a biologist I suddenly realized that we spend so much of our time talking about birth and life. We never focus on the other end of that spectrum. So from a biological standpoint, I became interested to the point that I actually took a Chautauqua course in the biology of cancer and developed a course on campus. I've been teaching a course on the biology of cancer for the last couple of years and try to bring the biological/academic in with the personal, and have had really good response to that course. It all kind of ties in again with biology interests and community interests and a variety of things that just merged together at some point.

TS: Have you written any papers or done any presentations on biology of cancer?

KF: No, other than the course, no, I haven't. I would like very much to get involved in pediatric hospice. I would like very much to see WellStar Hospice get more involved with that. It's not as pervasive in the hospice community as, obviously, taking care of adults, but I think that there may be a need for that, too.

TS: About how much time a week does it take to work with hospice?

KF: It depends on what you do. Usually, if we're actively working with a patient, we visit them once a week, and we can spend anywhere from two to four hours with a patient. Usually, we only get one patient at a time, sometimes multiple ones if they're in a nursing home. I've spent some time on different committees. Since I've been involved with some hospice committees, that takes a little bit more time. But mainly working with patients about four hours a week.

- TS: What other kinds of service have you engaged in other than the five million committees that we all do?
- KF: I actually coordinated a bone-marrow drive on campus many years ago, where we got people to donate—right now you just give a blood sample and get registered with the national bone marrow donor program. I coordinated a drive on campus for that. What else did I do, other than the volunteer work? Nothing comes to mind right now.
- TS: I wanted to ask you about the biology advisory board; you're chairing it now, I gather.
- KF: I turned it over to someone else. Since I've retired, I turned over most of my responsibilities to somebody else.
- TS: How long have you been retired now?
- KF: I retired in May of 2003, and then I was rehired on a one-year, part-time contract. That just terminated on June 30 of this year. I did teach a course in that year's time. When I came back on campus, the greeting I got from my fellow colleagues was, "What are you doing here? I thought you were retired."
- TS: Doesn't sound much like retirement.
- KF: No, it doesn't sound much like retirement, but I did retire from my full-time position last year, and this past year I've been working half time. I've been trying to turn over those kinds of responsibilities. The biology advisory board has not been as active in the last couple of years, as it was initially. I think we made good use of the board, and we still have those individuals that we can make contact with. But part of what we were using them for was to give us feedback on the kinds of skills that they would like to see our students have as graduates, that they would hire. What were the most important skills that they wanted in a scientist that they would hire and what kind of influence could they have on the curriculum that would be important. So that was sort of the initial impact of that committee. They did help us out greatly. They emphasized that they wanted graduates to be able to speak well. They wanted them to write well, even though you might say, "But they're scientists!" Communication skills were important; organizational and writing skills were tops, and then of course they needed to know their science. Our curriculum was pretty strong, so they didn't make a lot of recommendations on courses to be added. They certainly did emphasize those things. So we haven't had any meetings of the biology advisory board in a couple of years.
- TS: So these community people would be like people from Kennestone Hospital or businesses?
- KF: Correct. From businesses in the area. We had people from the CDC [Centers for Disease Control]; we tried to make a list of those individuals that would be most

likely to hire our students. Anheuser-Busch has a microbiology division up in Cartersville. They were on our advisory board, so anybody and everybody that we could find—environmental groups that would hire our students. We would look to those companies that would be most likely to hire our students.

TS: Earlier on—you know we've been talking about intellectual climate—and you mentioned Ben Golden as a mentor; would you say a little bit about what you learned from Ben and who else might have been mentors? You mentioned Betty Jo Hicks, of course; but others that you would look to as mentors?

KF: Well, Betty Jo, of course, because she had been teaching here, and I got some practical things from her as to what the courses were. She would share her notes with me and say, "These are the topics we teach in this course; this is how we approach things, and this is the order." You know, just real simple things that you wouldn't think about. "Well, what do I tell them, and what kinds of things do you cover and not cover?" So she was very helpful in that as were a lot, well, anybody in the department. I could come to them at any time and ask questions. But what I got from Ben—we all like to call him Gentle Ben—was that passion for teaching, that love of being in the classroom, and the ability to share with me his particular approaches to things. I doubt, seriously, if I might even use more than one or two things. But even if he told me an approach, and I would either try it or think about it, at least it was something that maybe gave me an idea to do something else or do something a little different. He was a wonderful source of information as far as how he approached teaching, how he would view the subject, and how he would communicate the subject because he had the experience of the ten years of teaching. Even though we were both new on campus to the courses, et cetera, he had that teaching experience. I will tell you one story relative to Ben; he had been teaching the concept in biology of cell division: the process of mitosis, how cells divide. All of us memorize all of that, and all of us probably have rote memory of what the particular procedure is. He told me one day after maybe four or five years of teaching, he was there in the classroom, writing on the board, teaching mitosis for the eighty-fifth time. He's up there teaching it, and he says he remembers turning back to the blackboard, and all of a sudden in his mind he says to himself, "That's what that means!" Some aspect that he had never quite I guess maybe totally grasped or did not have that ability to get his whole heart around. In the process of teaching it, he understood it. So one of the things that I used to tell my students is that if you don't understand what I'm talking about, what I want you to do is explain it to somebody else. Go home to your husband or your wife or your kids, and see if you can explain to them in terms that you understand and they understand. If you can explain it to somebody else, hopefully, correctly, then... So that became a strong part of my teaching philosophy. I had to be able to explain it to somebody, and let that person in turn explain it to the next person. If they could repeat it and do that, then, I felt that that was a good way. But I remember him telling me that story, and [I] actually had that experience several times in my career, finally grasping something because I had explained it so many times that it was finally making sense to me. [laughter] I remember that in particular about him. But he

was very, very supportive and never hesitated to put up with all of my questions and comments and everything about, “What do I do now?”

TS: I sometimes think that when we go to graduation after graduation, and we never get out of here, that we’re condemned to stay until we get it right.

KF: Well, that’s kind of what it feels like sometimes, yes, definitely. [laughter]

TS: Gentle Ben, I guess for those that listen to this or read this transcript fifty years from now, must have been 6’5” or 6’6”.

KF: Been is about 6’5”.

TS: I guess at one time probably weighed 250 pounds.

KF: Very big man, but very gentle. Not brusque or anything. That’s the only way I can think of describing his personality is very gentle. He has four children and a lovely wife. The whole family kind of strikes you like that. Ben and I always used to march together in graduation. I always thought that was fun to march with somebody that was 6’5,” and I remember coming to his office one day many years ago. His son came to visit him—one of his sons. I remember coming in and Ben introducing me to his son, and all I remember is I was looking at this guy’s belt buckle. His son was 6’7” or 6’8” and would duck when he came into the doorways. [laughter] But yes, that’s a good description if people don’t know why he’s called Gentle Ben. But you’d probably think of somebody who’s diminutive or something. But no, that was his way. He’s the only person that I know that would be able to—and I’m very bad at this—know every name of every student in every class that I think he has ever taught. He’s excellent with names. Within the second day of class, he would know the person’s name, even if they sat in different places. He always knew a person; he knew them by name. I served on search committees with him. He would remember that he had read that back when a person was in high school, he got a C in some course. Boy, I’m glad that he wasn’t on the search committee for me. [laughter] He had this phenomenal memory of people, places, and things and would know about the person and most importantly, he would remember their name. I always admired that he had that ability to know who they are and remember them.

TS: Are you still involved with the Genetics Society of Georgia?

KF: I went to the meeting last year, and I don’t know if I’ll go next year or not; I’m not involved in the sense of being an officer or trustee any more. I served as president of the society for two different terms, and I’ve always been on the board of trustees. But slowly, again, closer to retirement, [I] backed off.

TS: Is this for academics, the Genetics Society?

KF: It is a professional organization for the State of Georgia and for surrounding states. It is an organization which fosters the study of genetics and provides a

platform for both faculty, as well as students, to present research work. We would have individuals come and present their particular research that they were doing. We became affiliated with the Georgia Academy of Science because, being a fairly small group of individuals, it became very difficult for—you know what travel money is like—a person to go the Georgia Academy of Science, go to Genetics Society, and try to go to some other national meeting. We became an affiliate of theirs, and we have our meeting with their meeting. In the last four or five years, we have been very, very strong and supportive of not using the Genetics Society as a platform for faculty as much—although we still do that—but we bring more and more students both at the undergraduate and graduate level and give them the opportunity to get some experience of what it's like to present research in front of peers. So we've been pretty successful with both students from Kennesaw as well as other institutions.

TS: On your website you've got a site for Cytogenetic Technology.

KF: Yes, that's the program that I put together back in 1985. One of the things I think schools are not good at is providing career opportunities. We have a tendency to provide all these courses and provide all this knowledge, get this person a degree, and then push them out the door. But I was finding students coming back saying, "You know, I never thought about this when I was doing all this course work, but when I graduated, then all of a sudden, I realized, oh, my God, I have to get a job!" So our program in cytogenetics provided an opportunity for students to be immediately employed after graduation. Our program was the first of its kind in the Southeast.

TS: I really just have one last major question, and I think it might be obvious from what you've said today already. You mentioned when you first came here that you didn't think you were going to stay very long, but you did so. What was it that kept you at Kennesaw State all these years?

KF: Oh there's no problem there; it was the people that I worked with, primarily: the people that I work with in the biology department. From the very first day until now, twenty-some-odd years later, they were the best group of people I could ever possibly think to work with. They were supportive; they were a lot of fun, and we worked well together. It was a pleasure to come to work every day. If I had to say one thing, it was the people that I worked with in the biology department. That's not to say that the other people in other departments, and the other friends I made were not instrumental as well, but the ones that you work with on a daily basis in your discipline. Back in the old days, when we used to sit in the student center, and be able to converse with historians, English folks, musicians, and all kinds of faculty and staff, we had that opportunity to share with them, I think that's probably one of the most important things. The climate—the people that I worked with in the department as well as the people that I knew in other departments. That was it.

TS: I used to see you running down Shiloh Road all the time which probably—

KF: Suicidal now to run down Shiloh Road. [laughter] I run down Hawkins Store now.

TS: I was wondering if you were still running.

KF: Yes, I am. As R.C. Paul, you know, Bob Paul in our department always says, “I run because I like to eat.” [laughter] The only way that I guess he can eat all the food that he likes to eat is if he exercises. That’s what I try to do; I run because I like to eat.

TS: I’ve often thought that being a runner was a prerequisite for having a job in our math and science departments.

KF: There you go; that’s right. Lots of runners there.

TS: A few of us in other departments too.

KF: Yes, I know. You guys, over on the other side of campus as we call it, you’ve got some runners over there too.

TS: Well, I really appreciate you taking time to talk to me.

KF: That’s quite all right. I appreciate your time too.

## INDEX

- Anheuser-Busch, 25
- Bostick, Ed, 10
- CDC (see Centers for Disease Control)  
Centers for Disease Control, 24  
Champaign-Urbana (see University of Illinois)  
Cytogenetic Technology, 27
- Daniel, William, 8  
Davis, Bowman, 10  
Davis, Herb, 10, 11, 13
- Eisenhardt, Robert W., 22
- Fleiszar, Kathleen Ann  
    Birth and childhood, 1, 5, 7  
    Grandmother, 1  
    Father, 1  
    Undergraduate studies, 1, 5, 6  
    Graduate studies, 1, 2, 9  
    Draw toward genetics, 2, 3, 8, 9  
    Ph.D., 2  
    Coming to Kennesaw, 3, 4  
    Mother, 4  
    Mentors, 5-8, 10, 25  
    Deciding against medical school, 6  
    Early teaching experience, 9-11  
    Teaching methods, 11, 12  
    Technology in the classroom, 12  
    Co-authorship of biology lab manual, 13  
    Distinguished Teaching Award, 13  
    Master teaching, 13, 14, 17  
    Availability to students, 14  
    On being a Northerner coming South, 15  
    On teaching evolution, 16, 17  
    On racism, 16  
    Husband (see Eisenhardt, Robert W.)  
    Hospice work, 22, 23  
    Biology of cancer work, 23  
    Bone marrow drive, 24  
    Retirement, 24  
    Cytogenetics program, 27

Reasons for staying at Kennesaw, 27  
On running, 27, 28

Genetics Society of Georgia, 26, 27  
Gentle Ben (see Golden, Ben)  
Georgia Academy of Science, 27  
Golden, Ben, 10, 25, 26

Hicks, Betty Jo, 10, 13, 25

Kennesaw State University  
Early years, 3, 9, 10, 11  
Building locations, 11  
Changes over the years, 13, 15, 18, 22, 27  
Student success and retention, 14, 15, 17, 18, 24  
Reputation, 15  
Intellectual climate, 18  
Focus on teaching, 18, 19  
Committee work, 18, 21, 24  
Community service, 18, 21, 22, 26  
Scholarship, 18-21  
Faculty release time, 19, 20  
Use of part-time faculty, 20  
Faculty as consultants, 22  
Interpersonal climate, 27

Kennestone Hospital, 22, 24  
KraftCo Corporation, 1, 2, 7

Lance, Mary, 10  
Loyola University, 1, 5, 6

Mother Roberta, 6

Paul, R.C., 28

Quentin, Mary, 6

Rhyne, Pam, 3, 10  
Rogers, Diane, 22  
Roper, Tom, 15

Steffensen, Dale M., 8

University of Illinois, 1, 3, 7, 8, 15

Vulcan Quarry, 4

Wallace, Betty Jo (see Hicks, Betty Jo)  
WellStar Hospice, 23