

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH JOSEPH D. FRAZIER

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for the

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KSU Oral History Series, No. 99
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Thursday, 2 April 2009
Location: Alumni House, Kennesaw State University

TS: J.D., why don't we just start by asking you a little bit about your background and where you grew up and a little bit about your parents and where you moved around to and so on.

JD: Okay. Well, I was born in '59 in Roanoke, Virginia. I lived there just a few months, so I don't remember that. My father was a forester by profession; he went to NC State [North Carolina State University], and Ft. Belvoir Engineering School for a while and embarked on his career with the forest service and took us over the next few years to Marion, Virginia—first Roanoke, Virginia—then Marion, Virginia; Natural Bridge, Kentucky; Williamsburg, Kentucky; Manchester, Kentucky; Hot Springs, Arkansas; then Cleveland, Tennessee. And those were in various, different forest districts. One was originally the Cumberland National Forest which is where Dr. Betty [L.] Siegel is from, and my father grew up across the state line within horseback distance from where Dr. Betty is from.

TS: He was on the West Virginia side?

JD: He was on the Virginia side, extreme southwest Virginia, Wise County, the small town of Norton. My great-great grandfather founded the Harlan Coal and Land Company.

DY: Isn't that in a movie?

JD: Harlan County is in a lot of movies and country songs.

DY: That's exactly right. Moonshine, isn't it?

JD: Oh, yes.

TS: There were a lot of labor strikes in Harlan County too. My brother taught one year in Evarts, Kentucky. So I got up there awhile—this was in the mid-60s, I guess.

JD: I can still smell the coke ovens from the coal-fired coke ovens.

TS: What was your grandfather's name?

JD: Interestingly enough, Napoleon Bonaparte Dotson, which is what my middle initial "D" stands for.

TS: And then your father was named Thomas?

JD: Thomas Robert Frazier.

TS: You spent a childhood running around in the woods and getting interested in nature and all that?

JD: I did, I really did. My dad was very much a worshipper of nature and a protector of nature and very much subscribed to the notion that we are the caretakers of this green earth that we have inherited and need to manage well for our children and our children's children. Ironically, when my father grew older, not old but older, as the forest service changed dramatically, he engineered an early out so he could retire three years early. This was just before I was injured in 1984 in a work-related accident; I fell from a ladder seventeen feet and crushed my spinal cord at the cervical 4-5 level. That's why I'm in a wheelchair now with paralysis from the shoulders down. Dad had engineered his early out three years early which occurred in late 1983 and I was injured in 1984 after he had gotten his real estate broker's license which he decided to do in the last few years in preparation for retirement because he dealt with land. He was the founding district ranger of the Red Bird Purchase Unit in Peabody, Kentucky, which is not far from Big Creek, Kentucky, which you hear about in all the country songs or read about in books. This is where currently mountaintop removal is going on to get the remaining coal. And they thought strip mining was bad. Everything really came full circle after we moved a lot of different places. The last place we lived before moving to Marietta in '78, the last place we lived was Cleveland, Tennessee, where I went to high school. We moved here, I went to technical school at Chattahoochee Tech and went to work for, at the time, Southern Bell.

TS: Straight after you graduated from high school you moved down here?

JD: Yes, within a few months after graduation.

TS: You graduated in '78?

JD: Actually '77, and we moved here in February of '78.

TS: So you went to, actually it wasn't even called Chattahoochee Tech at that time, was it? It was called Cobb Marietta Vo-tech school?

JD: Marietta Cobb Area Vo-tech school.

TS: What did you study there?

JD: Commercial and residential wiring. I got an on the job training task with Southern Bell at the North Druid Southern Bell Executive Park Learning Center, which is still there, and I became the chief electrician for the entire building complex. I worked there for almost two years and was on my way home, as I typically was five days a week, and stopped to change a flat tire for a lady in her Jaguar on Northside Drive—well, actually it was on

Peachtree Dunwoody right by Northside Hospital--and gave her very clear instructions that there was really no flat place to jack the car up or a place to take the car because she had a flat tire, no flat place close by, so I explained to her that I needed to have her put the foot on the brake while I jacked the back of the car up and I would stay clear, but if she were to slip and let her foot off the brake it would damage her car and did she want to take that risk or have it towed? She decided to trust me and I told her I could get the car jacked up and get the tire off and the other one back on in about three and a half minutes. She said, "Let's do it." She gave me her card and a \$20 tip and told me to give her a call if I ever needed a job after I explained to her what I was doing in the engineering department. So I went to work for her at the Lane Company.

TS: What's her name?

JD: The lady's name was Cheryl Hudson. She worked for George Lane and George Lane owned the Lane Company, which was one of many companies under the corporate umbrella of Johnstown American Companies. They were property managers, apartments and condominium developers and managers, and I went to work for them managing a 200-unit apartment complex from the maintenance side. Then they started developing condominiums by building them and then farming out the management of the homeowner's association to Lane Company and they offered me the position to head up the homeowner's association's management piece for the contracts for the grounds, pools, any subcontracting for capital improvements, managing the contracts and inspecting properties before we signed the contracts, inspecting the work by subcontractors after we signed the contracts to get the management of the properties. That's how I was injured was inspecting the condominium property on Powers Ferry Road in a little complex called Powers Ferry North just south of Powers Ferry Elementary School. There were no cell phones and texting back then and there was nobody home at this small complex, they were all young, urban professionals and my foreman was with me and we were putting some tools away, getting ready to wrap it up for the Friday afternoon after doing some inspection of some roof work that a contractor had done for us.

I volunteered to climb the ladder the last time and he was putting tools away in my truck about thirty feet away and he said he heard the ladder rattle and he turned around and saw me fall and couldn't get to me quick enough to break my fall. If he could have it might have made a difference but I don't really remember anything; they say I didn't lose consciousness but he knocked on a few doors real quick and had to make the difficult but necessary decision to leave me to go make a phone call to 911. He drove to the intersection off of Delk and Powers Ferry to the little "stop-n-rob" we call it around here, and called 911 and they brought in the metro ambulance van and stabilized me and immediately called for a helicopter and flew me to Kennestone, Windy Hill, took me out to do an x-ray and said you need a trauma center. They put me back in the helicopter and flew me to Kennestone on Canton Highway, Church Street, the one that still exists under that name and I spent about ten days there on a ventilator in ICU. Dr. Schlachter did my surgery on a Saturday morning after I was injured on a Friday afternoon and promptly went on vacation so I never met him. I've tried to get in touch with him in anticipation of

my graduation from Kennesaw State because I wanted to tell him, I had tried to reach him before and couldn't get him and I really wanted to get him and just let him know the difference he made by doing the surgery he did and keeping me alive and healthy while I was in ICU. I understand he's still around; I just never have been able to find him.

I went to Shepherd Center which at the time was called Shepherd Spinal Center and at the time they had one patient floor in the basement and then the first floor which was administration and rec. therapy and things like that and the second floor was the only patient floor. The third floor was under renovation being finished out for the first time and in the last two weeks that I was there they moved all the patients from the second floor to the newly finished out third floor and gutted the second floor and redid it. The rest is history with regard to the multi-million dollar expansions they've done and I spend a lot of time down there now. Everybody from occupational and physical therapists to folks in administration; you know, Scott Sikes who works at Shepherd is a good friend of Dr. [Wesley K.] Wicker's here in the Foundation.

DY: I didn't know Dr. Wicker was on the Foundation.

TS: Our Foundation [Executive Director of the KSU Foundation].

DY: I know, I know. That's interesting.

TS: Is Dr. Wicker associated with Shepherd?

JD: No. He is a friend and peer and colleague of Scott Sikes at Shepherd who is the VP of Development for Shepherd and he and Dr. Wicker go way back. So we cross-pollinate a lot when it comes to alumni and spinal cord injuries and brain injuries and things like that. Actually the company that my father started, after retiring in '83 and my injury in '84, he did some real estate work and was looking for housing for me, accessible housing and started a private homecare provider service in 1988 and said, "You do what you've got to do, J.D., I'm going to start a company and make life easier for folks like you so they don't have to go through what you went through." One of these days, he said, "If I do a good job . . ." —he said if he did a good job and the company did what he wanted it to and I decided that I wanted to be a client, then we'd work that out. So two years later I became a client of Para/Quad Services, Inc. It was incorporated in 1988 and I lived—he did that because when I was, in anticipation of discharge from Shepherd we had been looking, I say "we," my father had been looking for accessible housing, apartments, whatever and could not find any accessible housing. I ended up living in a motel for eleven months, the Holiday Inn at Powers Ferry Landing at 285. We eventually found a Post complex that was being constructed and dad got with them and said, "Can you put the brakes on for a few minutes and let's see if we can move some doors before you put them up?" They said, "Sure." When they poured the slab and put in the sidewalks they didn't put the fence up for the deck or the patio, they just left it open and poured a sidewalk to it and I lived there for three years. In the meantime I was learning computers for the first time. I would hand pieces of paper at arms' length to my secretary and say, "Would you please type this for me?" I didn't know anything about computers at the

time. I was twenty-four when I was injured and prior to that I didn't know anything about computers and I was able to. .

TS: Nobody did back then.

DY: I was going to say, they were just taking off.

JD: There were a few PC's in corporate offices and that was about it. I partnered with Texas Instruments and they gave me, after my worker's compensation insurance company purchased a computer from Texas Instruments, Texas Instruments donated a software package called AutoCAD, which in the industry is very well known. CAD stands for Computer Aided Design and in different fields it can be called different things but that was the original meaning I believe. They donated it to me because I kept asking, "Can I design a house on this computer, is there some way to draft or draw?" They said, "Yes there is in fact. There's this software package called AutoCAD." And I said, "Will it work with this computer?" To my knowledge, I had the first retail computer ever put on the market that was operated by speech. It was manufactured by Texas Instruments and it was totally impractical but everybody has to take a first step and I was able to get that first computer. I designed a floor plan with a few elevations on my computer and built a house and that's where I still am, in a modest, little 1,800 square foot house. I decided, before I got into the house actually, I decided I wanted to, I knew I needed to go to college, I just needed a safe environment in which to study and live, meaning my house in particular, so I applied to Georgia State University and they said, "You've been out of high school long enough that you need to take some remedial courses," so I took reading, writing and arithmetic and did a little less than half of my core work down at Georgia State and took a class at Kennesaw because the university at the time was getting a lot of press for the quality of education it was providing and the friendly, accommodating nature that it was known for in addition to being analytically rigorous, academically rigorous. I took a class as a transient student is what it was called at the time and I immediately transferred after taking that class.

DY: That's good to hear.

TS: This was '91, I believe.

JD: Yes, it sure was.

DY: What was the class you took as a transient?

JD: You know, I can't remember what that first class was.

DY: That's all right. You've had many, many since then, understandably.

JD: Oh yes. I know that the ones that just about killed me, well, I decided to take a split summer semester four week course and I took DNA, the biology class; I don't know what possessed me. But I just remember the friendly, but again, rigorous nature of the

complex as it related to the staff and the professors, the faculty. They genuinely cared about the legitimate success of the students.

TS: So you found this somewhat different from Georgia State?

JD: I did. I found it different in the sense that although I'd had very good professors, it was just, everybody was hurried at Georgia State; everybody was in a rush.

DY: Well, they're downtown.

JD: They were. They did a great job, I very, very much enjoyed my time there; in fact I went back, I was accepted to law school after graduating from here and went back to Georgia State for a couple of trials at, no pun intended, at first semester law school. I had checked with my physician, Dr. Donald Leslie at Shepherd Center and said, "You know, Dr. Leslie, if I'm going to do this law school thing, my homework shows and my age, I need to get it over with, I need to go full time or not." I tried it but my body just wouldn't take it. The time it takes to get up and go to bed for a quadriplegic and the time it takes to study and access all the materials and process the data and write papers, which I did myself, I was stubbornly independent and wanted to type all my work myself with a mouth stick, my body just wouldn't take it. I withdrew and rearranged my schedule and re-entered the next semester and my blood pressure and sweating would start too and my blood pressure would go up. There's this autonomic dysreflexia that happens to people with spinal cord injuries that their body, when it perceives any kind of stimulus, whether it's dangerous or not, results many times in a dangerous response to that stimulus which is called "dysreflexia" and it's hyper-reflexia, all of the reflexes that are normally; if someone were to pass a kidney stone or something like that they might start sweating and their blood pressure might go up a little bit. Well, if I sit on a wrinkle or something that might be just mildly annoying to the average person makes my blood pressure go up and makes me sweat and I can be inordinately uncomfortable on a number of levels. But so I tried it again and couldn't quite do it and that's when I'd been watching the Master's of Science and Conflict Management program starting to emerge from the Board of Regents process for getting approval as a degree program here and immediately applied for that and got accepted into the first cohort.

DY: Oh, you were the first cohort?

JD: Yes.

TS: Was Helen Ridley running it at that time?

JD: Oh yes! Dr. Ridley—I had heard the legends of Dr. Ridley before I took the class with her as an undergraduate here and I sought her out because of her reputation.

DY: Yes, she was great.

JD: I watched many people either cry on the way out of her office or break down in tears afterwards and that was a good thing, actually because if you couldn't take it, if you couldn't take what Dr. Ridley had to offer, you didn't need to go to law school, you just didn't need to.

DY: Or try to be a mediator.

JD: No. Phenomenal, phenomenal professor and great sense of humor but she expected nothing less than one hundred percent.

DY: Did you have her for any political science courses?

JD: Yes.

TS: What was it, constitutional law that you took?

JD: I'm not sure what the class was, frankly.

TS: Well, you got your bachelor's in '96 and that was in political science.

JD: Yes.

TS: And then the first cohort—I know you actually got your master's in 2001; was that like a sixteen month program? I think it's a sixteen month program.

JD: I think they call it sixteen or eighteen month accelerated executive degree program; I don't know what they call it now but yes.

TS: So you probably started it . . .

JD: In '99. I went from undergraduate to law. I learned a lot about what my tolerance level was from a disability standpoint from the law school experience and the accelerated master's program was rigorous but it was nothing compared to law school so I was, I enjoyed it a lot, it was very good and Ansley Barton . . .

DY: Yes, she's a good friend of mine.

JD: She was the original director of the Center for Conflict Management in the program, just a phenomenal lady, really phenomenal. In fact, I took some more training from her just a few months ago.

DY: Oh, is she out doing training?

JD: Yes. She still works, coordinates and works with Dr. Raines, Susan Raines who was in the conflict management program also.

DY: Right.

JD: They partner and do trainings from time to time.

DY: Ansley is a lawyer, as you know, so she's a lawyer!

JD: Oh yes. She was with the Georgia Office of Dispute Resolution and I believe was one of the folks responsible for getting that program implemented. She's remarkable. Kennesaw just has a really good record of attracting good people. It's kind of a shame that the market has turned the way it has and we're not able to continue to bring on as many of the best and brightest as we need to.

TS: Hopefully it'll be temporary.

JD: Yes, it will. All things are usually.

DY: That's right. Wheel of Fortune turns.

TS: Were you involved in any student activities as an undergraduate?

JD: Yes. I was Golden Key; much to my surprise I got an invitation to be considered for Phi Kappa Phi, so I was involved in that; I was involved with SABAC, Student Activity and Budget Advisory Committee and worked with Dr. Nancy King who I tell you, she and Dr. Betty are, in my book, neck and neck in terms of integrity and dedication to the students and the institution at Kennesaw State. Two phenomenal people.

TS: Could you maybe elaborate a little bit on the things that you were doing with Nancy King and with Betty Siegel?

JD: Yes. At the time, the Alumni Association was housed under the aegis of Dr. King. Now, I wasn't an alum at the time, I hadn't graduated yet, but I did—and at the time I didn't really realize that that experience with Dr. King would come back, would come to a fruition that I really wasn't aware was in the cards, and that's frequently the way life is. But we got to heavily looking at the budget and the way it affected the students and the way the students affected the budget, or certainly could have, and in fact, there are a couple of people on the alumni board now, three people in particular, who were, after I graduated—they're a good bit younger than I, they came along after me because I started college late in life, but they're young if they came along after me—who were heavily involved in student governance. John Fuchko, Nels Petersen, Justin Tomzak.

DY: John was a student of mine. He was very bright, very good.

JD: The current president of the alumni association, Yvonne Wichman, who is an adjunct professor of English, I believe, just incredible diversity on the board that we have now that Dr. King—I got to watch her many times; she sat back and I watched her very carefully as she watched how all the different players around the table were affected by

and could affect the process. She always went to bat for the students. She walked a fine line between stirring the pot or allowing the students to stir the pot and managing the pot if somebody stirred it. She was very much the diplomat. I have just the utmost regard for her professionalism, just unbelievable. Dr. Betty, I don't know if anybody is aware of this, but prior to my graduation I decided, rather than get gifts that I would have people donate all their money, whatever that meant. I got to talking and met Tom Hughes and Jack Gibson and I had asked Dr. Betty, "Who do I need to talk to?" I didn't know her very well. In fact, my first communication with Dr. Siegel was to send a letter to her complaining on the one hand about the registrar's office and complimenting her on everything else.

DY: Very diplomatic on your part.

JD: Well, it was honest and accurate. [I explained,] "I've got one complaint but at the end of the day the university is wonderful. I've just got a little problem that I don't think that you would like." We resolved that really quickly and that's when I began to do a little more research on Dr. Betty and found out where she was from and introduced her to my father and shortly thereafter, in preparation for graduation, I asked Dr. Siegel about getting any donations made and how we'd go about that. She introduced me to Tom Hughes and Jack Gibson, the late Jack Gibson.

TS: I was trying to remember just the other day, just exactly what years he was here. So, obviously you graduated in '91 so he was . . .

JD: No, I graduated in '96.

TS: I mean, '96, so he was still here in '96.

JD: He was. I don't remember the exact time frame but I believe he passed away within a year or two after I graduated. We set up a scholarship and the small but dedicated family that I have the privilege of being a part of donated, I think at the time, about \$11,000.00, which was pretty good for a small family.

DY: It really is.

JD: At the time, it was my understanding, that all the graduations occurred in the old gym and they would set up a stage and anyone with a disability who couldn't articulate the steps, you know, it was their privilege to have the president and the registrar step down and hand him a degree on the floor. I heard a long time ago a cliché that it takes more energy to take offense than it does to give it, and because I was injured at twenty-four and tend to focus on the positive, you know, I wasn't real concerned about that but my father was. He says, "You know . . ."

DY: Oh, he wanted you to go across that stage.

TS: I never did like that either.

JD: From my viewpoint, I guess if I had grown up with the kids that I was graduating with, because I was no longer a kid myself, I probably would have had more of an affinity for being shoulder to shoulder with my peers. That epitomizes the nature of the way the campus was at the time, very commuter, very non-traditional, a lot of people would show into the classes and get a great education, but not really identify with the campus itself. It was more of a relationship with the classroom and the professors as opposed to the university itself as an institution. My dad surprised me by getting with Dr. Siegel and arranging to have ramps put in, so we were able to traverse the stage with my peers. We have a picture of Dr. Siegel with her hand on mine and my dad standing behind me with my diploma in his hands. I believe I was the first person in a chair to traverse the stage and receive a diploma, so that was amazing. That along with the remarkable level of dedication that Dr. King always displayed, and still displays, even after the pseudo retirement, is just indicative of the way this university has always developed.

TS: I wanted to ask you, how wheelchair accessible was it when you came here?

JD: Very interesting. What was the gentleman's name who was in development at the time? You can probably help me.

TS: Before Jack Gibson?

JD: No. I believe it was after. Not Jim Fleming. He was here, there was a guy that was more, maybe it wasn't development, maybe he was just a campus financial person. He just left shortly after Dr. Papp came on board. [B. Earle Holley, Vice President for Business and Finance]. To my knowledge there were no automatic doors. If there were any automatic doors they were in places that didn't matter because the person in the wheelchair couldn't find them.

DY: You didn't notice them, right?

JD: I was sent to this gentleman, and I was referred to him, and I said, "Is there any way we can find it in the budget to pick the most heavily traveled areas, start somewhere and put in some automatic doors?" The library was one of the best places because people are usually always carrying more; usually I was carrying something but even more there. "Not in the budget, can't do it." Now, the difference between me and some other activists with regard to disability is that because of my level of injury somebody has to be with me all the time, so somebody can open the door for me. But there are many people who don't have that luxury, even if they need it. They get dropped off at the campus, as close as possible to the class, although that may be whatever case happens to me, and I don't have a bit of problem asking somebody to do something to me. I've had perfect strangers get my wallet out and get a credit card out to pay for something at a store. I don't make a habit of that, but I don't mind doing it. I was very fortunate in that sense. Now, accessibility on a global level was very good; wheelchair accessibility was very good. I could get to most places. And I think that many times as a function of the age of the buildings, the reason they were built in the first place, like many old, old institutions,

may have classes and administration offices and things like that in what used to be houses, or historical type buildings that steps make them look more regal. You know, you build them up higher and you put steps in front of them. Kennesaw didn't seem to have that kind of institutional bias that was built into the buildings and the terrain, so I found the accessibility very good.

In terms of accessibility to the learning experience, which is very critical, because you can have an accessible infrastructure, and if the attitudes are not right, are not inclusive and collaborative, then it's a moot point. I've never had any professor look at me askance as to why I might think that I needed to go to college or whether or not I could perform. Never. I did have a professor at Georgia State, and it really didn't matter where, but I did have a professor at Georgia State look at me when I got my first notebook computer. He looked at me as if to say, and actually asked me when we were going to take a test, he said, "Do you keep notes and things on your computer?" I said, "Yes." He said, "You have access to those while you're taking an exam?" I said, "Well, now that you mention it, yes." I'd only taken a couple of exams on a notebook computer, I had just bought it. So I ceased to use that for exams. I would go find a stranger's or secretary's computer, make arrangements in advance to borrow a computer, a keyboard on a computer drive I'd never used before and had no access to any materials, so they were just a little curious as to whether or not I could access information I shouldn't while I was taking an exam. That was interesting.

DY: He had probably had experiences with students.

JD: Oh, yes. I thought to myself, if I cheat, there's going to be at least one other witness because I'm never by myself, but I understood where he was coming from. The professors were always willing to accommodate and Carol [J.] Pope [Assistant Director of Disabled Student Support Services], who is a saint, she, I was going to say, aggravated me. She didn't aggravate me. She pestered me to let her type the essay exams, and I would just dictate to her, and she would type the bulk of the exam, and I would just dictate. I was still carrying the vestige of the professor who thought that cheating might be a possibility, and I said, "I just don't want anybody questioning whether or not this was my work." We were on the quarter system when I was here, and the last couple of quarters, rather than rearrange essay exams and put them on separate days so I'd have time, I said, "Okay, I'll let you do it." So I did three essay exams back to back on one day, and it was easy compared to what I was doing. Instead of typing with a mouth stick one key at a time I just dictated to her, and when she got through dictating large volumes of text from me, we just laid the keyboard up across the armrests here, and I was able to scroll the text and tweak this and that and add little details that I might have missed, and I got finished in regular time. It was amazing. So Shepherd taught me to be independent, extremely independent, and that particular experience taught me to be less stubborn about what to be independent about, so I learned to dictate at the time. That was really interesting.

DY: Did you find that your essays flowed more smoothly since you were speaking them?

JD: You'd have to ask my professors about that; I try to get good grades and whether they flowed better I'm not sure.

DY: Well, you're very articulate, and so it probably was very much to your advantage to be able to do that.

JD: I think so.

TS: Well, there's no question you made good grades all the way through.

JD: I tried, I sure did.

TS: How much did you study a day?

JD: I would look up after studying after about an hour and a half to two hours and realize that I needed to take a break, and I'd learn to take a break. I'd study about forty-five to fifty minutes at a time and then take a break and then come back. I would usually study two to three hours a day and depending on the load I was taking, because I started out taking one class at a time. There weren't too many quadriplegics at my level of injury that I had access to. Believe me there were many people that came before me, many, many people, but I didn't have access to those folks. I didn't know who to ask how to do this and what it took to do it. So I started out one class at a time and I figured out how to study and do the research and type and read and rigged up a highlighter on a mouth stick so I could highlight. I probably spent more time in the books than I would have had I not had a disability, but I did learn to be more efficient through that process which was what was key because at the end of the day the education is the preparation for work. If you're not efficient, you're handicapping yourself, to use the term more appropriately in my opinion. I probably spent more than the average of two hours of study time during the one-hour class.

TS: You spent more than that?

JD: Yes. Sure I did.

DY: Sounds like you were completely immersed in what you were doing and that makes it a lot easier when you really, really enjoy a class.

JD: Well, I couldn't work out in the gym, which was what I was very fond of doing. I couldn't run. I had done a lot of running, which is one of the reasons I haven't been re-hospitalized in twenty-five years because I took care of myself before and as importantly I'm taking care of myself now with the capable hands of folks like Jasmin who love what they do and are very good at it. Again, I would be remiss not to reiterate that not in addition to the individuals that I mentioned that are the embodiment of what this university is about and was about at the time, there are many other folks who follow in that same category. I just wasn't exposed to all of them, and the ones that I was exposed to I couldn't name them all. After the ramps that Dr. Siegel saw fit to have done for the

graduation, the commencement, doors started opening literally after that. There was one maintenance guy, you know, I'm not sure I—I'm really good about asking most folks what their name is, even with servers when I go to a restaurant—what's your name? I never asked this guy what his name was, but he'd always grab the door for me. Although somebody was always with me he'd always grab the door for me. In fact, I saw him at a basketball game at KSU, a ladies basketball game just a few months ago—he's retired now, still hangs around a lot after retirement—but everybody from grounds and housekeeping and plant ops all the way up to the professors and the administration are wonderful.

TS: You got your master's degree in 2001 in Conflict Management, so were you thinking about using this career-wise when you got the degree or did you have other aspirations in line when you got your degree?

JD: My plans were to become a mediator and apply the dispute systems design components of the degree program, potentially in the worker's comp arena. Even though the worker's compensation board uses attorneys as mediators solely, I still could play. I felt a very useful role in a system like that, that caters to and is supposed to take care of people with injuries and get them back to work. I wanted to go back to work, and what better place to go back to work than the institution that is what they're there for. Unfortunately, in '97 and '98 my parents both started having significant health problems; my father had bypass surgery and at some point during or shortly afterwards had a mini stroke and we didn't know it. My mother started showing signs of dementia, and she ended up being diagnosed with Alzheimer's.

TS: We never got your mother's name.

JD: Carolyn Parman Frazier. My biological mother is Virginia Dotson. She still lives in Virginia. That is a whole different story. Suffice to say that I was fortunate to have more than one mother and father, at least more than one mother. But as fate would have it, as much as my parents did for me, supported me as best they could which was wonderful, helped me to carry out the decisions I made and helped me make sound decisions, I ended up being their legal guardians, even after I was injured. My mother passed away prematurely. She would have probably survived a few more years, but she suffered some complications in addition the Alzheimer's that she passed away prematurely, and Dad we lost in February of 2008. I was going to apply the dispute systems design and be a mediator and about three months before I graduated, my father had a pretty nasty stroke. He was able to walk with a little bit of rehab. He was able to walk without falling or bumping into things, but I started splitting my time between classes and going into Dad's office, because he was fiercely independent, that's where I got it. He didn't need my help, not in the office, [but] he would bounce things off of me. So I went to the office to see what Dad needed me to do once he got out of rehab at Kennestone, and it became apparent that he needed me there on a regular basis. The nature of a stroke in this particular case was one that robs some independence, but robbed him of the ability to perceive and respond appropriately to his deficits. So on the one hand he would say, "I need your help," but, "What's the matter, you don't think I can't go this myself? Don't

get into my space.” So I just walked as fine a line as I could trying to be there for my dad and do everything that I’m sure was very difficult for him to do for me.

TS: So the roles had been reversed.

JD: They had been reversed. It was a labor of love that I overtook willingly; life is not fair, you do with it what you can and I do everything that I possibly could for my dad. If there was anything else that I could have done I didn’t get it, but I would have done anything for him. I ended up staying with him in the office for a few more months until I realized that my original plans to practice pretty much solely as a mediator or in a role as a conflict manager within a company of some sort or government entity were not going to come to fruition the way I’d planned, but at the end of the day it’s all conflict management, it really is, so I was okay with that.

TS: When did you start getting involved with the Alumni Association?

JD: A few weeks or months after graduation. I established a scholarship before I graduated, and when the checks started coming in, there was a gentleman named Phil Barco, who lives in town, you’ve heard of him, just a wonderful complement to Betty Siegel and to the familial nature of many of the various faculty cohorts around campus doing really fun stuff with alums and faculty and administration. I met Phil because his office and the Office of Alumni Affairs were in the same building on the back of the library with Jack Gibson and Tom Hughes.

TS: In the back of the library?

JD: What’s the name of that, by the . . .

TS: Oh, the Pilcher building.

JD: Right. In fact, there’s a photograph that y’all probably have in the archives of me signing the paperwork, with a pen in my mouth and Dad signing paperwork on the desk with my mom standing behind my dad and Tom Hughes standing next to her, signing the paperwork. In fact, I’ve got a copy of it. But Phil said, “Well, I was looking for people who demonstrate that they care about the university, and would you entertain a nomination to perhaps sit on the Board?” I said, “What’s involved?” He explained that we look out for the best interests of the alumni and the university as a whole, as the alumni relate to that, which should be just about every facet of the university in my opinion. I was nominated and elected to the Board and went up through the ranks as an at-large member and in various roles as secretary, treasurer, I’ve seen it all the way up through the bylaws changes.

TS: So this would be as early as 2001 or was it 2002?

JD: Actually it was more like the first graduation when I did this.

TS: Oh, back in '96.

JD: It was probably '97.

TS: '97, okay. Well, that makes sense.

DY: Well, because Phil has been gone, hasn't he?

JD: He's been gone since 2006, something like that.

TS: Something like that. I remember sitting in Jack Gibson's office over in the Pilcher building now that you mention it. Where was the Alumni? Were you on the second floor of Pilcher or was that the first floor?

JD: I believe that the only office that we had at the time was Phil Barco's office, and I'm not sure if it was on the first floor in the hallway with Jack and Tom, if in fact their offices were on the first floor.

TS: I can't remember any more.

JD: I think it was on the first floor.

TS: When did they renovate all that for the Foreign Languages department?

JD: I'm not sure. Then they did move the office temporarily.

TS: And then you had the KSU Police Department on part of the first floor.

JD: Shortly after that, within a few months, I believe they moved the office to one of the upper floors in the library, a very small office. You'd get off the elevator and walk by a lot of bookshelves to get to it. But then, I don't know if there were any interim moves before the new Student Center was finished and we were on the first floor downstairs across from some of the Carmichael rooms there. I'm not sure what's in there now but if you go from the old cafeteria area and you cross the threshold where the new building ends, you walk in and right as it opens up there was one little office on the left there. That was a nice office and a nice location, but it was not big enough. It had two rooms, and one of them was divided into two cubicles.

TS: Was it Myra Morgan? Myra was the secretary, wasn't she?

JD: Yes. And I tell you, without Myra and Phil, I mean they did everything.

TS: That was a nice space. Not compared to what you've got now, but it was nice, and I guess the Wellness Center was next to that.

JD: Yes, I believe you're right, I remember now.

DY: And all the student clubs up on the next floor, or offices for the student organizations.

JD: Yes. And then when the university had the opportunity to do something with the houses along Frey Lake here, that was a win-win.

TS: That would have been the same time as the residence halls started developing, so that would be 2002 roughly that the Foundation was buying all these houses to pacify the neighbors that weren't happy to have student housing across the street.

JD: Well, why in the world would you buy a house close to a university if you didn't think that was going to happen sooner or later?

TS: I suppose.

JD: And there's where, when you start talking about the university going from college to university and from smaller to larger, I believe the enrollment when I was here originally was somewhere around 10,000—9,000 to 10,000—

TS: That would be right.

DY: Of course, it's doubled now.

TS: Yes. I think 1990 is when we passed 10,000 for the first time so that would be right.

JD: To go from a commuter, extremely non-traditional commuter campus to campus housing and residents and that's where the MS in Conflict Management came in. "Change management," let me tell you. To take a small institution, both in size and attitude, dedicated nonetheless to quality education, but the ability for more folks rather than fewer to know each other and to care about each other, to a larger institution where that becomes more difficult and take the Alumni Association from the watchful and competent eye of Dr. King and move it under Development, which was traumatic for a lot of people. It was a natural move but it was traumatic.

TS: Well if fund raising is your purpose for being . . .

JD: It is. Who you're going to spend the funds on and what you're going to spend the funds on, how you're going to ask for those funds and the competition that sets up between the association itself and the way it tries to represent and does represent all of the students, not just those from a particular college and the natural competition that occurs between the global alumni umbrella compared to those individuals who identified primarily with one particular college and naturally don't share as broad a view of what is pertinent input into alumni affairs when they're tied to a particular college or a particular dean or department. As we discussed with Dr. Raines on a couple of times at the Conflict Management program, she shares the opinion of what the umbrella Alumni Association espouses, and that is that the alumni here give back and that is both to the institution,

administration, faculty and to the students and start to make significant contributions across the different types of contributors, whether it's time and effort, tutoring, mentoring, internships. I'm reminded that when I was stepping into the president's role, because the president of the alumni association is not directly elected; originally you were elected into the officer position and then you'd make your way up, but once you get to first VP you roll into the presidency which has served its purpose well and I think the Board will continue to look at ways that there is a most efficient way to foster leadership and let folks in without stifling people's interests if it takes too long to get where you need to be. But, when I first started and was just about to step into the president's role, I sent an e-mail about getting together with the appropriate players with regard to freshmen bashes which is what they call it when all of the new admissions come in for the first time and wander around the campus. You can tell it's highly choreographed, but these kids look like deer in the headlights. They put all the various organizations out; they put their tables out; and I am sure that the Alumni Association did not get the exposure they had needed early on. We started attending those bashes even though they were brand new students and in fact because they were brand new students. I sent an e-mail that said, "We need to get with the right people and make sure we get a—I want a prominent position." We had an assistant director at the time, Rocky Barnes, who worked all over the campus and I think probably has a pretty good perspective of this history.

DY: And is not afraid to speak his mind.

JD: Rocky was highly interested in, I believe anyway, at least he said he was, highly interested in being considered for the director position once Mr. Barco moved to Florida. I encouraged him to apply. He wanted my opinion, and I think he also wanted my support, and I think I made it clear to him at the same time that I encouraged him to apply, I made it clear that the best candidate for where this university needed to go was going to get the job, whoever that happened to be. As Dr. Siegel was fond of quoting Wayne Gretzky: "What makes you such a good hockey player?" He says, "Well, I just skate to where the puck is going to be." And that's what this university has done more often than not is to skate to where the puck is going to be. It just so happens that this campus is geographically located right in the middle of the rink, and it's in a good place, it's in a real good place. Rocky and I started attending the freshmen bashes the first couple of semesters that I was president, and I got a response back when I was inquiring about how to best arrange ourselves with the rest of the tables and the right people so that we could really have access to these freshmen and is there a way that we can be fit in for sixty to ninety seconds at the different arenas with where these freshman were spoken to. We want them to hear the word alumni and see the word alumni on a regular basis. I got an e-mail back [about the placement of the Alumni Association display] that said, "These are freshmen, they're not alumni until they graduate!"

TS: E-mail back from whom?

JD: I'm not going to tell you, but I'm going to tell you that Dr. King was not happy.

DY: I bet she wasn't!

JD: There was the change management, that epitomizes the change management, that's where the road came in. I think that Dr. Siegel obviously knew and knows the value of alumni. Dr. Papp very willingly grabbed that torch and carries it high which is very much appreciated by my peers on the Board and the alumni that we serve; it's just remarkable.

DY: Where, J. D., do you—I've got a double-pronged question here, venue and voice. What did you find was the best venue and is the president the voice, the one that's going to get things out there that need to be out there and dealt with or developed?

JD: The president of the Alumni Association?

DY: Yes.

JD: Yes. I think that the president of the Alumni Association and the director, the employee, the director of the Alumni Association, are the two key people.

DY: Are the two key people.

JD: Yes. In concert with the president of the university. Absolutely. I think that the venue—well, let's stick with the voice for a second; I think that the president needs to be made available through the director and the president of the university in those arenas on campus like at the freshmen orientations all the way up to the speaking part that we now have on the dais, at the commencements, which we've never had before. It's a very mutually supporting relationship.

DY: And I think mutually beneficial.

JD: If it's not, something's not happening right. I think that there were some personalities, as there always are, that were issues way back and some of those personalities along with the change that came in with the new president, it just, from a purely bureaucratic standpoint, when some of those major changes take place, like a twenty-five year president retiring, that simply opens doors and cracks windows. It's nothing personal, but there are windows of opportunity that have to be seized.

DY: That's exactly right.

TS: And you had become president about the same time that Dan Papp became president here.

JD: Exactly the same time. I became president of the Alumni Association as he became president of the university, and it was shortly after I became president that the executive director [was hired]—which is retitled, it's the director, not the executive director any longer, in Alumni Affairs—because on the campus level it's just semantics but executive director title carries a definition similar to that of executive director of the Foundation, which is Dr. Wes Wicker, for example. Other executive directors are just on a different

level, and it's confusing to some people for the director of Alumni Affairs to be called an executive director, so they changed that, which was fine. So we got a new director. Actually, a substantial amount of my time and [that of] the limited staff and the board itself and the committees [was] spent during my presidency working with the Foundation and with Nancy King in the transition over to Foundation and finding a new director.

DY: Understandably.

JD: We did two searches, two separate searches.

DY: Who was director when you assumed the presidency and when Dan did too?

TS: Phil Barco was still present.

DY: Phil was still present. Okay, I thought we had an interim.

TS: And you're still under Student Success and Enrollment Services at that point.

JD: Yes. It was very much all happening right about that same time.

TS: And then Phil gets pushed out, or does he voluntarily retire?

JD: I believe Phil had some family obligations. I'm not sure, I believe it was one of the older members of his family in Florida that had some serious health problems, and Rocky Barnes was working as assistant director. While he was never named interim, he served that role, and in my opinion, call it what you want, he was de facto interim director. He really got out there and got in the students' faces and I think did a great job for the time he was able to spend here.

DY: He's very much an advocate for whomever he's advocating for.

JD: He sure is.

TS: Okay, so you start doing your searches then and the first search failed to find anybody or they turned down the job, or what happened?

JD: We didn't get the type of responses that we wanted and originally required a master's degree and so, you know, that didn't work very well. Why don't we open it up to just a bachelor's and see how that goes?

DY: You were looking externally also?

JD: Oh, absolutely.

DY: You wanted external?

- JD: Not necessarily. No.
- TS: I guess I'm kind of interested in who, not necessarily the names but the types of people that were on the search committee. How many of the people on the search committee were alumni for instance and how many were faculty, how many were administrators or community?
- JD: I'd have to go back and look at my notes and see how many times we met and with whom. There were HR; there were faculty—this is just bringing back so much history and I'm trying to remember some of the names. In addition to Dr. Wicker, Dr. King, myself, the president before me, Steve Prather, who was involved in the original search, I believe. I certainly was involved in the second one; I think I was involved in both actually. Jerome Ratchford was involved and in addition to Dr. Wicker, Karen [K.] Paonessa was involved. My perception then, and it remains the same now, is that Development truly wanted someone with whom they could work that would be collaborative and understand the culture of the campus, of the higher institution, higher learning institution. We ended up going through tons and tons of resumes. Anybody who's ever done a job search, you get garbage collectors all the way up to former heads of state applying. It's unbelievable the people that apply. But we gave everybody's application due diligence with the exception of those that just simply didn't meet the qualifications. Brought a lot of people in anecdotally to, without revealing the actual resumes, per se, just to see if there were certain aspects of particular people's resumes that would seemingly fit well and ended up landing back close to home with Lisa [A.] Duke, who was formerly with Dean [Timothy S.] Mescon as his director of development at the Coles College of Business, and who answered to Dr. Wicker anyway. All the Development officers walked that fine line between the dean and the active director of the Foundation and the director of Development. That was interesting. It was quite a clue, actually to get someone like Lisa, who had the knowledge and unfortunately someone who works—anyone who works at that level and in a particular college and then moves to a more university-wide position has to figure out how to change hats. That's not been an easy thing to do, but Lisa has really done well. She had to fight tooth and nail along with Dr. Wicker and Karen Paonessa, with the support of the president of the university, to get the program staffing levels that we needed. It was very difficult to populate an office with the right people when the culture—you know, on the one hand it was good in the sense that she was able to create her own culture, one that she felt, with the insight that she had, having worked, not just any institution but in this one, to be able to develop a culture, that's kind of a Catch 22. Everything was changing, everything was changing. Commuter campus to a resident campus; smaller to larger; new president of the Alumni Association, new president of the university, lots of changes that an outsider probably could have understood in theory but to not really know who the players were, could have been a benefit, but it also could have been a huge land mine, field mine.
- DY: A detriment. Right, because there was so much shuffling of administrative positions in the higher level too, or changing of titles and nuancing here and there.

JD: And there's where your bureaucracies, even when the folks involved, the ones who are involved who are not your stereotypical bureaucrats, if they've got any sense, they kind of sit back and watch. That's where you don't get very much movement, and the alumni association needed to move quickly, smart and quick and sometimes those don't go hand in glove.

DY: Don't you think too, J. D., that when major change comes along like that, systemic change, people get very territorial and they're scrambling for territory.

JD: I believe they're territorial anyway.

DY: I think they are too!

JD: The territoriality takes on a few more aspects that it normally wouldn't have; it becomes much more behind the scenes instead of in-your-face, because those with power know what level of power to exercise, but once things start to change, they tend to go behind the scenes, and it becomes very detrimental to progress.

DY: Yes. Although it's a good time too for advocates to step in.

JD: It is, and that's where your agents for change come in. I said this and maybe we'll get into whether or not I'll talk too much about the personalities specifically, but in general I've said more than once, you can't fire me, I'm a volunteer, you can't cut my pay, I'm a volunteer. If my board wants to

DY: Oust you.

JD: Give me a vote of no confidence, go for it. I'm not a rogue, and Dr. Papp and I had a couple of conversations about what he wanted me to do or not do, while things were shaking out, while things were settling down, while things were cranking up, while trees were getting shaken. He said, "Just show some discretion." I said, "I will not overstep my bounds. I'll do what you need me to do, and I'll do what the alumni need. If I feel like there's some sort of discrepancy between what they need and what this institution is doing, I'll let you know what my viewpoint is." I saw some challenges with some expectations of me about supporting the status quo and based on the history and—I'm choosing my words carefully because this is not a reflection of any kind of negative personality issues with any particular person or the institution, if an institution can have a personality, which it can. It's just the nature of the bureaucracy and huge change and because I was in a unique position where my mortgage didn't depend on pay from Kennesaw State, I could do the right thing without any fear whatsoever. Now, the good news is my father taught me that you do the right thing anyway, even if it is a sacrifice so it's a win-win for me, and in my opinion, although I might not be the best at navigating the waterways of the higher institution like this one is, higher education, I certainly was in a position to do what I felt was the right thing to do with the board, for the board, for the director, and for President Papp and the alumni.

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DY: And I would imagine your conflict management study came in to help you?

JD: It did. I was able to allow some folks to be the agent for change if they needed to be, whether they knew it or not, and in my particular case, there were a few very specific things that were going on that cropped up where people were trying to fill that power vacuum, that void and I wasn't willing to allow that type of bureaucratic dysfunction to remain. If it did it was going to be the choice of the people who were in a position that they needed to know. I had one meeting here in this boardroom that should have taken about thirty minutes and ended up taking over two hours and it was so remarkably indicative of the artifacts that we deal with when significant change comes along and I had it transcribed—seventy pages for one meeting. It was specific to Alumni Affairs, otherwise, why would I have been involved? But it was very, very interesting.

DY: Was this, you kept this as part of the minutes of the meeting?

JD: No, I didn't.

DY: This was for your own . . .

JD: Yes. Now, what I did . . .

DY: Study.

JD: What I did promise the folks that were involved is I'd make a copy available at the Alumni House for review, but under no circumstances would it be published or made available for people to carry out. I just thought it would end. It really was a tempest in a teapot. But I felt it was very interesting, a very interesting case study of how individuals—agents for change—which typically in my opinion has a positive connotation, took on a very negative one in this case. Very interesting. A distraction, it really was. But that was part of the changed management.

DY: Well, and people have to get that sort of out there. It has to be open, out there, so you can go on.

JD: Yes. Transparent.

DY: Move along.

JD: I found it very interesting about the ethics in leadership things that certificate programs, things that are available now for folks who are in management, in business in particular, specifically in business, to have ethics in leadership. Why all the interest in ethics in leadership? Because there's a lack of it, that's why. You can disagree with my methods, but you cannot argue with my integrity.

TS: You were president of the Alumni Association from 2006 to 2008, and that's not a long time to reflect back on now, but what are you proudest of that the Alumni Association

achieved during your tenure? Or even going all the way back to the time you came on the board over a ten year period or so, of what are you proudest of the changes that have taken place?

JD: A specific instance that epitomizes the thing I'm most proud of is that we had more than one alumni board member, along with the incredibly competent alumni staff, in the courtyard, if that's what it's called, up at the campus housing, and we got our first student alum to sign up and make a direction. That was incredibly telling that we had the volunteer, the paid staff, in the student's faces saying we are here for you.

DY: What was the biggest change in terms of staff during your tenure?

JD: It actually started to occur as I was finishing my tenure as president and well into my term as immediate past president, which will end next June, I believe it is. Going from two staff members, Phil and Myra, and depending on handouts and afterthoughts on the budget, borrowing communication and other resources from other departments, other colleges and other universities and asking for gifts, basically—please help us, we need your help, can we have this, can we have this? Going from that to a director who had the autonomy and authority and the wisdom to select our own financial people, our own communications people, our own IT, with regard to our own online community which we now have, and operating as a partner with the other components of this university, whether it be academic or administrative in nature.

DY: And you all had a representative on the president's budget and planning committee, did you not? I thought I remembered meeting Lisa on that but I might be thinking of something else.

JD: That goes back to having the standing in this Kennesaw State University community here. Before, we were always an afterthought, and now we are actually involved. In fact, the president of the Alumni Association prior to me, Steve Prather who I mentioned earlier, was actually on the search committee for the president of the university. That was a biggie. And although in the past I know that Phil Barco was heavily involved and included in lots of things, I just don't think that he was given nor his position was given, the credibility that it deserved and needed. It was no reflection on him, none at all.

TS: Have you seen a significant growth in the amount of money that the alumni raise?

JD: Significant, considering where we came from, yes. But nothing compared to what it's going to be. We had absolutely no access to data and that has changed and it is changing dramatically.

TS: No access to data that you didn't know how much you were raising?

JD: Data both—yes, on two levels. One, how much are we raising and how; and how do we get to the data so we know who to contact without—you know, it's one thing for one particular department to step on toes within their own department about who they're

contacting or what they're contacting them about, but to step on other components of the university, other office and departments, you don't want to overwhelm these alumni with too much stuff.

DY: Exactly. You end up harassing them.

JD: And there is the positive part. Dr. Papp, Lisa Duke, me, members of the board, and various committees and other people on campus, I don't mean to say we're the only ones, not by any stretch, are very well aware of the necessity to manage data well. That requires a lot of quality communications and persistence, otherwise a bureaucracy just don't happen, it doesn't happen by itself. That's where I believe this board has come into itself, particularly with the perspective that the current president has as a faculty member. John, who's going to be president, he's president-elect, John Fuchko, works with the Board of Regents; he's an auditor.

DY: I didn't realize that.

JD: Nels Petersen who was with King & Spalding after going to Harvard Law, came back and went to work with King & Spalding and is now with the governor's office. We have Billy Hayes, who is the CEO of Cherokee Northside Hospital on the board; we have some other folks with Kennestone—Linda Caldwell who is a CPA who work with Kennestone WellStar; I don't want to leave anybody out. We can get the roster out and just look at the talent now on the board that represents the colleges, professions, the government that affects this university and vice versa, and it's just an incredible pool of talent.

TS: So the people that can really raise money, it sounds like, as well as say what they please to the president of the university.

JD: Yes, we were given the token five bucks or so from folks who had a membership; we've changed the nature of what membership really means. We call it active alum. You're an alum no matter what or when you graduate, but are you an active alum.

TS: An active alum is defined as giving?

JD: Just that, giving.

TS: Any amount?

JD: Now, there have been some developments and will continue to develop as necessary, different levels of giving and what that affords you in terms of recognition, and it's going to be giving because it's making a difference and not just because you give. It's going to make a difference, it's going to make a huge difference, it has to.

TS: Do you see the Alumni Association taking over the annual fund campaign for the whole campus?

JD: Yes, I sure do.

TS: Do you think we're close to being there?

JD: That remains to be seen. How that will actually pan out at the end of the day is going to depend a lot on how the current president wraps up her tenure and turns it over to the president elect, and I think that the ways to raise money, the avenues through which the money is raised. What it's called and how it's accomplished is all subject to change just like it was subject to change where the Alumni Association was housed in the first place. I believe that was before I was involved in the details early, early on in my board membership and prior to that when I was a student for that matter. It's my understanding, I don't have any firsthand knowledge of it, but it's my understanding that there was a tremendous amount of political issues that kept us where we were, which at the time was probably the best place. I can't think of any better place to be than under Dr. King at the time and for that length of period. That was the best person and the best place; it really worked well. And then times changed, they turned on a dime. I've never seen so many things come together at the same time. Never.

TS: I've asked a number of Foundation members, first of all, why there are not more alumni on the Foundation Board of Trustees, and second, whether they see the two merging together. They often said that our graduates are so young and they haven't really had a chance to get to senior stages in their careers where they can give a whole lot of money yet because we're such a young institution, but that they think it's going to happen someday. I was just wondering whether you all on the Alumni board have thought about that and discussed that and whether you have any feelings about whether eventually there should be a merger of the Alumni board and the Foundation board?

JD: That's an excellent set of questions. The first answer is that early on, Steve Prather as president extended an olive branch and a bridge, and my presidency was built on bridge building, and he started that by us having an ex officio membership on the Foundation. So the president is an ex officio member. With regard to the number of conversations and the types of planning that have gone into identifying alums who are the stage where they are maturing in their careers and can be in a position to give financially and otherwise, that goes back to the data. I think it was there, it is there, but when I was president, leading up to that time and during my presidency and even now, I guess I should say finally now, we've gotten to the point where the relationship with Lisa having worked for Wes for a number of years, and having worked on this campus specifically, and the IT department having gone through remarkable changes, the way data is handled, and in light of the way alumni data specifically, and student data, were mishandled across the nation but not at Kennesaw State fortunately, the ability of us to mind the data properly and access the alums that are of the age and stages in their careers where they can give back, I believe the way that you characterize the maturity of the alumni base and it's quite accurate, we've had a lot of conversations and will continue to have those conversations about the nature, the quality, the quantity of individuals who are alums who can be recruited for the Foundation. Frankly, I've said out loud more than once, that

the Alumni Association outgrew me, even. I was perfect for the Board when I came on it and I remained appropriate for a good while and I'm glad I got my graduate degree when I did and was able to use that in a substantial way, I hope, and a wholly beneficial way I hope, but this Alumni board and this university deserve the talent that it has now and is able to recruit, which will go towards maturing that relationship between the Foundation and the Alumni Association.

TS: I think I'm pretty much out of questions. Dede, did you have anything else that you wanted to ask?

DY: If you could narrow it to one thing, what would you like to see happen in the future with the Alumni Association? What sort of the shining star there for you? In your vision?

JD: That education, provided by this institution, is not just successful but significant to the society in which we live now and the society into which we will find ourselves growing over the next years and decades. I've seen the degree programs added that seemed to be indicative of what I'm talking about. The students that we have now and will attract and retain and graduate need to be representative of our society, not just the upper economic brackets. I think we really need to make sure that we're giving the opportunity for quality education to a cross section. Otherwise, we're going to end up skewed in our views.

DY: Beautifully said. Of course, I happen to agree totally. Yes.

TS: Do you think we have not done that in the past, to hit a cross section?

JD: I think that we have.

TS: So we need to keep doing that.

JD: We need to keep doing it. We are in the cradle of conservatism right here in Cobb County and as have we seen in this market society as of late, the pendulum is swinging. I think that that's a good thing, but we really have to be careful that the pendulum doesn't swing too far and become a wrecking ball. I think that in this conservative area that we're in at the same time that it is being criticized worldwide as the problem, I think it also holds the answer. The ability for us to change without bloodshed, I think, has to start in the way we raise our families, in the way we educate our children. This institution and others like it, although I don't think there are any others like it, as good as it, this institution along with the way we raise our kids as parents, this institution needs to be a fertile ground for ideas and an expression of them. I think that, again, the conservatism that is being blamed so much right now also holds the solution. Not as an ideology but the reflection of the fact that we're a republic where we can, again, make changes without bloodshed.

TS: I thoroughly enjoyed the interview today.

DY: I did too. Thank you so much.

JD: Same here.

TS: Thank you.

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