

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH J. B. TATE

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Interview with J.B. Tate
Conducted by Kristin Dalton and Brenda Eubanks
Edited by Kristin Dalton
Indexed by Thomas A. Scott
Tuesday, 19 April 2011
Location: The Tate Residence, Cartersville, Georgia

BE: It is April 19, 2011 and we are interviewing with Mr. Tate. Will you state your full name for the interview?

JT: I just use my initials J.B. Tate.

BE: All right.

JT: That's what everybody calls me.

BE: Mr. Tate we are going to begin by talking a little bit about your childhood. Where you grew up and what your childhood was like.

JT: I was born and raised in Oklahoma in a little town of about 2,000 people. People familiar with Oklahoma if you say you're from Osage county they always know exactly where it is. The county is bigger than the state of Rhode Island, but there are no large cities in the county—just a lot of little towns like I'm from, neat place. Everybody in my graduating class except for about four or five, we left. There was nothing to do unless your daddy had an oil well or a ranch. Nearly all my classmates ended up in Colorado or California. I ended up in Georgia. Somebody said, "Why?" I said, "Bad judgment." I was being facetious. I love Georgia, and Georgia's been good to me and hopefully I've been good to it. That's kind of it in a nut shell. I went through the public schools and I went to Oklahoma State University for a couple of years and I was confronted with a math course so I transferred all the way across the state of Oklahoma to get away from that math course. I went to Northeastern State University. That's near the Arkansas state line, and that's where I got my bachelors' degree. Then I went into the army for a short stint; this was during the draft. From there I went to [George] Peabody [College] in Nashville, Tennessee, and right across the street was Vanderbilt. So we could take class at Vanderbilt or they could take education classes with us. Vanderbilt ultimately acquired [George] Peabody [College]. Somehow I get all of the alumni things from Vanderbilt and I didn't even go there, except to take a class or two.

When I graduated with a master's degree now, some recruiters from DeKalb County, Georgia, were recruiting for some high school teachers. And I was getting real guilty at this point still being on my mother's, who was a widow—my

father died when I was four on—I had been on her payroll for about five years now, and she was very close with money. I always thought she was tight until she died, and then I found out she didn't have any. She worked at the Post Office as a postal clerk, and she always made it real clear to me when I was in the army in California or Nashville or wherever I was, you never call unless there is death in the family or something. Don't pick up that telephone, because it cost money. Back then a stamp was 3 cents. So I got this job at DeKalb County while I was still in Nashville. I knew she was going to be thrilled that I was off the payroll. I was a graduate student and I didn't even know how to make a long distance phone call. I had never made one. Back then you had operators, so I dialed my mother's phone number in Oklahoma and I told the operator that it was a collect call. My mother was predictable, so I knew she would be home. So I heard my mother's voice say, "Yes?" And the operator said, "This is a collect call from J.B. Tate; will you accept the charges?" There was a long silence and it went on and on, and I thought, "Hell she is not going to accept the call." She finally said, "Yes," and I said, "I know you're going to be thrilled. I've got a job." She said, "Oh, really?" I piqued her interest. She asked, "Where?" I said, "Georgia." She said, "Son, Georgia's the most backwards state in America." I said, "No, it's not; Mississippi is." We got in this long distance argument about who was the most backward in education. My mother only went through the sixth grade, but she read all the time. She was a very astute well read woman. So she knew her history, current events back then. But any how that's how I ended up down here.

BE: What year did you move to Georgia?

JT: 1960.

BE: How long did you stay with DeKalb County?

JT: I only stayed there one year because I was single, and I was going to be a gypsy school teacher. I was going to stay in Georgia, and I had a professor who inspired me about the Civil War. Well in Oklahoma, there's not many battles to go to. So I was going to look under rocks here for a year and go to battlefields and then move onto another place and look under rocks. Well, her name was Nan. She changed all of that. So here I am 51 years later; the gypsy school teacher didn't last but one year.

BE: What did you do after you left?

JT: When I left DeKalb County, my wife at that time—she is deceased now—she worked on the north side of DeKalb County at Cross Keys High School. I was down at Southwest DeKalb; I knew nothing about DeKalb County when I came here except they were the highest paying school system at that time in the whole south, except for Miami, Florida. Dade County Florida was a few hundred dollars higher. My salary that first year with a master's degree was \$4,000. That's not a week or a month; that was a year, before taxes. I thought it was a lot of money.

Then after one year at Southwest DeKalb, Nan and I were going to get married. It was a great commute back then. There were no expressways, just two lane roads. A person told me there was an opening in Fulton County, and that seems like it was even more distance, but it wasn't. It was in Alpharetta. Alpharetta is where big bucks lots of money is today. Well it was a dog pasture back then. You wouldn't believe how backward Alpharetta was. One of my students when I started, my second year, he said, "Mr. Tate, Alpharetta is not the end of the world, but you can see it from here." So altogether I put seven years in public schools on the high school level.

I always taught juniors and seniors which was nice. I really enjoyed it. Anything I know about teaching, I didn't get at Kennesaw. I got there, because they let you experiment. You could do whatever you wanted to do as long as you didn't have a discipline problem and bother the principal. That gave me a lot of latitude to see what would work and didn't work and what not. Then the first year Kennesaw opened, they got in touch with me, and I interviewed with them. Well, the problem was that it was the best class I had ever taught before or since was that high school class. I had them for two years, first as juniors and then they took me again as seniors for either American History or government. And they were good. So I turned down the position at Kennesaw. They were paying me to have fun over there. The next year it was a crop failure. It's like somebody tilted the campus and all of the dregs came into my class room. It was a very long year. So Kennesaw interviewed me again. I was saying, "Take me." Then the President at that time, Dr. [Horace W.] Sturgis said, "You do know that there will not be a third interview?" And I said, "No problem." So that's how I ended up here. I nearly shot myself in the foot after that first interview by not accepting it. So I wasn't there at the creation. Student asked me one time, "Professor Tate, were you here at the creation." I said, "No, I came in with the second load of bricks."

BE: What was that interview process like?

JT: Oh well interesting, the person who interviewed me was, they didn't have deans like they do now. It was the chairman of the [Social Sciences division], [George H.] Beggs. I was thirty minutes late for the interview, not smart, right?

BE: No.

JT: I was living in Alpharetta, so you just had these county roads coming over and again there were no expressways. Everything was two lanes, so you had to know the county roads to get over here. So I got over to within five miles of the college and I couldn't find it. I stopped and asked a service station or a garage or something, "Where is Kennesaw Junior College?" They replied, "Oh, we have heard of it, but we don't know." So I'm wandering over in north Cobb County and like I said I allowed plenty of time to get over there. I got within five miles of the college I must have spent an hour. So I told Dr. Beggs, I said, "I am so sorry."

He laughed, and he said, “Don’t worry about it; nobody can find us out here.” It was a college in the pine thicket back in those days.

BE: What did the campus look like? Was it still covered in trees? How many buildings?

JT: Well, yes. They had as I recall, you have to keep in mind were playing mind games of a fading memory here forty years or so ago. We had 150 acres, and I thought that’s like a plantation; you don’t need that much land. Well guess what, they used that up in the last fifteen years, and they paid next to nothing for it. Probably four or five hundred dollars an acre, which was the going price at the time.¹ I was trying to think what is still there, actually quite a bit of it is. All those building—you know you can look at a building and tell whether its two years old or forty years old. All those buildings that are only two stories and that yellow brick—the real tip-off is when you walk into any of those classrooms, you know, the light switch is always real up high. And the reason for that was the architect designed grammar schools. You don’t want the kids flipping the light switches. Yes, I think all of the original buildings; I don’t think any of them have been torn down.

KD: I don’t believe so.

JT: I can’t think of one.

BE: I think there were [eight] original building.

JT: Something like that, yes. You had the Humanities building. And then the history, psychology, political science, and philosophy we were all lumped in together. That’s the building that fronts the parking lot, and then the Humanities building right behind it. Where the police station is, that was the [Administration]. I guess where Dr. Siegel’s office. The center of the campus was the quadrangle, where the flag pole is. All the buildings were around it, so that was the nucleus of what it is today. I think we had about 1200 students; that was the second year.

BE: You mentioned before the interview that Cartersville was suppose to house the college before Cobb County got it. Can you explain a little bit about that?

JT: Yes, the Chancellor back then—this was early 1960s, probably ’63 or ’64 when all this was just on the drawing board. No land had been purchased. The Chancellor of the University system had taught here in Bartow County. The Chancellor is always a powerful figure in this state. Let me a little aside here. Just in terms of my career I have always been very lucky. It’s called demographics, the study of population and shifts and that sort of thing. I use to tell my students in class, well if you live long enough. They always thought that to be a historical

¹ The purchase price was \$100,000 for 152 acres, or about \$658 per acre.

figure you have to kill the president or be president or something. I said, “No, no, no.” I said, “If you live long enough you become a historical figure yourself because you will have seen things that nobody will ever see again.” But anyway back to this Chancellor. What had happened, not just here but all across America, was that during the hippie [era] in the late 60s early 70s there was a point there I think around 1969 when half the population of America was under 25 years of age. That’s never happened before or since. That’s why you had all that crazy making with kids; every other person was a kid.

But that benefited me because I was born in 1937, the Great Depression, when people didn’t want to make babies because they cost money. I had an older brother, but I was unexpected. Mother told me—she had a weird sense of humor, which is probably where I get mine—she said that she wore a black arm band for a year after I was born. “Oh, no, he’s still here,” you know—like I said, kind of a gallows type humor. Anyway, that benefited me, being born when I was, because when I graduated from college, it’s the only decade in American history that the population actually contracted was the 1930s. So when I graduated from college, all these people who later caused all the mischief, the hippies, yuppies, they had just started grammar, middle school, or high school. Now they needed teachers to teach them. So, bingo, that helped. Then they started building these junior colleges a few years after I started teaching. So now they needed teachers for that. So once again, you know Winston Churchill once said, “If you want to live a long life, choose your parents wisely,” and I chose wisely. Back in ’37, it was a good year for my career. And, by the way, when they hired me, I didn’t have a Ph.D. So the deal was either I get a Ph.D. or get the equivalent of two more master’s degrees. So I had three kids holding on my legs, saying, “Feed me, Daddy.” And back then you didn’t have scholarships. It was pretty much out of pocket, and I never could figure out how to take a couple years off and get a Ph.D. So I went to summer school over to Athens and got the equivalent of two more master’s degrees, and when I retired in 1993.... [brief interruption]

BE: All right we were talking about how it was a good thing that you were born in the time period. And then we started with the Cartersville idea that the school was suppose to be up here.

JT: Yes, let’s jump back to Cartersville for a moment. I wasn’t here, but what the people in my age bracket and a little older have told me was that it was a done deal for it to come to Cartersville. And some of the local people got into some in-fighting as to who was going to make money off the land and this that and the other. So the end result was that the Board of Regents lost patience with Cartersville, and that’s how it ended up in Cobb County.

BE: So just a little squabbling and....

JT: Greed.

BE: Greed?

JT: Yes, call it what it was.

KD: So how was the decision made to pick Kennesaw instead, do you know?

JT: Yes, a junior college was going to be built somewhere up here in northwest Georgia. Cartersville was in the catcher's seat. Dalton said, "If they can't get their act together, we want it," and Cobb County said, "We want it too." And Cobb County got their act together. See, the way that worked back then was that if you were going to have a junior college then the county and maybe the city too would have to buy the land, 150 acres, and then build the buildings. Then once the buildings were built, they would turn it over to the state. Then the state would own it after that. I think I'm accurate on that. That's the best that I can remember it.

BE: Do you know how they funded that process?

JT: Probably with bonds, that's my best guess anyways. Particularly back in those days, money was hard to come by, particularly individuals as well as local governments. But the one way to raise money is something borrowed through a New York bonding company. And then you build the buildings and like a house payment over 30 years or so you pay it back, year by year with interest.

BE: Okay, going back to early Kennesaw. What did you teach, or what was your main path there.

JT: Well being a junior college, all we taught was freshman, sophomore Core courses, you know. No upper level courses. And Dr. Beggs made it real clear to me. He said, "We expect you to teach everything we offer." World history, well back then they called it Western Civ. Forget the rest of the black and yellow people; we just focus on white folks, you know. So I taught all of it at one time or another. American history I was always comfortable with. Got into European world history; that was a little shaky ground there; it wasn't my training. So when I went to Athens in to school in the summer that's usually what I was taking was European courses to give me a little credibility in the classroom.

BE: Do you remember what some of those early faculty relationships were like? You mentioned [when you visited the] class some of the crazier situations with the hippies. Can you speak a little bit about all of that?

JT: Oh, yes, as I recall we had about forty faculty members. You probably have about that many people in the history department today. That was the whole school; I think that included the president, academic dean, department heads, and everybody else. Again, that was the first year I showed up. Then again we only had like 1200 or 1400 students in that time frame. So we were a close knit bunch.

By the time I left down there, I had no idea who was in the math department or the biology department unless they had been there for a long time. In other words we got Balkanized by whatever division you were in. And we don't know those other people much; that was 1993. In 1967 it was a whole different ballgame. So yes we were a tight knit bunch in those early years. Kennesaw didn't grow dramatically for a few years.

BE: How long did it remain that small, with just about forty faculty members?

JT: Well let's see, we went from 1200 up to 2000, and that took a few years. I wouldn't make a claim as to what year, but, boy, when we got 2000 students [2031 in Fall Quarter, 1973] we thought we had hit the big time. Twenty-two hundred [2241 in Fall Quarter, 1974], we were saying that's the University of Southern California, not us.

KD: What were the students like back then?

JT: Well, let me try to get a blue light special here, two for one. When I was hired and was interviewed, Dr. Beggs in particular made it real clear. He said, "We expect to have high standards in every classroom," and he said, "Don't worry about the body count." I mean student mortality rates, you know. Where that was coming from was over in DeKalb County they built a junior college three or four years before Kennesaw opened its doors. And that college became kind of a joke in the metro area, just like the thirteenth year of high school with loosey goosey standards. So Dr. Sturgis and everyone on board with that one, they said they wanted Kennesaw to be known for a good rigorous undergraduate education. So the emphasis—a lot of universities stress research, and they let teaching assistants do all the work in the trenches. That was never an issue for most of the time I was there. What Kennesaw wanted to be known as was a good teaching school, and research was secondary.

What were the students like? All of this kind of changed seemed like overnight, but I know it didn't. First couple of year I was at Kennesaw they were pretty much like the students I had taught at Milton High School in Alpharetta. Most of them came from blue collar families; their mothers and fathers had never gone to college. They were first generation college students, and it would never have entered their mind to protest anything. If they got a bad grade, well, tough beans. All of that began to change; it got swept up in that whole national movement. And there is something kind of interesting there; this is no longer as true as it was back then. It may not be true at all now. Say thirty years ago, anything that happened in this country that was innovative or new or society was taking a culturally different turn—it either started on the West coast or the East coast and then it would work its way into the center of the country. So if you studied that era of the hippies, yippee, and the counter culture, it started on the West Coast with the free speech movement at Berkeley [University of California], then it ricocheted to the East coast.

A place like Georgia is very conservative historically, traditionally. So it was almost over in California before it even got here. I got a scholarship one summer to Harvard, at the Harvard Business School. I never will forget this. I was sitting in class there taking notes, scribbling notes and listening to this professor. I was sitting there and the door was open, the classroom to the hallway. And I saw all these people walk by, and they were wearing sandals, had long hair and beads. I thought it was a theatrical group, I saw my first hippies. By the way I didn't see them down here until two years later.

BE: You mentioned in class about the troubles with the Psychology department. I wonder if we could get you to speak a little bit about that.

JT: Well let me preface that by saying that when I left Kennesaw, like some today, they had a great reputation, a lot of good people in the Psych department. It hasn't always been that way. When I first went there, let me get this straight here. They hired a psychologist. It was the second year at Kennesaw; the state actually had a little money back then. So if you wanted to travel to a convention they just filled out the paper work and bye bye and take off. So he talked them into going to the Bahamas to a hypnotist conference. So he goes down to this conference at the taxpayer's expense, and he comes back, and he was a kind of arrogant sort of guy. Well he was convinced that he was quite capable now of being a hypnotist. So he told his class, a Psychology class that he was going to put the whole class under. And if they didn't cooperate, he would lower their grade.

One of the students in the class, I think it was a female, she was well connected in Cobb County, her parents were politically. She went home and told Daddy. So Daddy was on the phone with Dr. Sturgis, and Dr. Sturgis was on the phone with Dr. Beggs, and as I recall [the psychology instructor] had a night class—back then it was either 6 or 8 o'clock. [Beggs] met him at the door of the class and told him to go to his office and clean it out. WOO. And they did it all wrong, and the academic dean knew that they had done it wrong. They didn't go through the process you are supposed to go through. So he could have caused a lot of damage there. But I knew him. He was always broke. He even worked for me. That shows you how broke he really was. So the dean knew that I knew him, and he said, "Do you think he is going to cause any problems?" I said, "Just pay him. There is only two months left in the school year, so pay him, and he will disappear"—which he did.

So, then, let me get my sequence right here. The next person they hired was an attractive young woman; I cannot think of her name off the top of my head. Her office was right across [from me] in the two-story old [Social Science] building that fronts the parking lot. Her office was right next, across from mine. Her classroom was right there between us. I noticed that in the first week of the new quarter that these students would be in there about 10-15 minutes and they would all walk out. That's okay the first day you know, here is the syllabus and

something on America, about 20 minutes, bye bye. Well, back then we had about five hours credit. Well, you went to class Monday through Friday five hours. They didn't have all these exotic schedules like today. But anyhow, day after day 10 or 15 minutes they leave. One of her students had been one of mine, so I pulled him aside, and I said, "What's going on in there? Y'all are in there 10 or 15 minutes and you're gone." She said, "[The instructor] can only talk for 5 or 10 minutes, and then she starts hyperventilating and has to let us go." So that was the second.

So now the administration says we have been burned with these psychologists, so he wanted a fool proof deal. And this is the best one of all. They hired this guy; I mean he was credentialed out the kazoo. Like the University of Edinburgh and big universities—English universities and what not. He had a degree in theology. Oh, a man of the cloth, we're safe. He took over [the previous psychologist's] office, so he was like my office mate 15 feet away in a cubicle. So I introduced myself. I said, "Nice to meet you, Professor," and he said, "Just call me [by my first name]." So what the administration didn't know, now this is also at the height of the crazy making, nationally and on our campus. We had our share of eccentric peculiar people. Back then you had an underground hippie newspaper, and actually it was a pretty good paper called the *Great Speckled Bird*. There was an add in the *Speckled Bird*, If you ever get busted by the pigs, that's what they called police back then, If you ever get busted by the pigs call [the psychology instructor] with his phone number. That's our psychology man. I nearly fell over when I saw that one, knowing how conservative the administration was.

I was teaching a night course one night, and this was back when law and order, well the national crime wave, this was when Nixon was running for President. So American people got real fed up, tired, and sick of crime. So it was real easy for Congress to pass a ton of money to upgrade police departments. Like in Marietta, if you were on the Marietta police department you could go to Kennesaw for free. This federal money would pay your tuition, books, and I think it gave you some spending money to go with it. Better than the Hope scholarship. Well these cops figured out real quick—cops are like teachers—we all have to moonlight sometime in our career. Rather than directing traffic into a liquor store in your uniform after duty, why not go to Kennesaw and get the same amount of money and free education.

So they created this department of Criminal Justice at Kennesaw. The problem was that we didn't have anybody qualified to teach criminal justice programs. But they needed somebody to meet and greet these police officers and welcome them, to sign up for history classes, and then they would send somebody from Georgia State [University] to teach the criminal justice course. In other words that took the same courses everybody else did except for criminal justice. So Dr. Beggs said, "J.B., I think you are the ideal person to work with these police." He said, "You've got a knack for working with the common man." I said, "Sure I would be glad to."

You know these big burly policemen with their guns strapped, they wore their guns to class. When they got to Kennesaw they were terrified out of their minds because this was an alien experience to them, higher education. So I was their security blanket. So I had a class of about 35 students; 25 of them were policemen. They were hanging on to me like a security blanket. So this was a night class. So I got these cops in there, all of them packing heat as you would say. [The psychology instructor] is upstairs, and he's got a Psychology class. Well, I don't know how it is anymore, but back in those days the night students were usually 25 or older. The day kids were 18 or 19 or so forth. His class was disproportional with young women whose kids were now in school and they could go to school. They didn't get a chance right out of high school. So he invites some of his parishioners from 14th Street. Fourteenth Street was an epicenter of the hippie world back then.

So all these guys came rolling up on motorcycles, and they had turbans, naked from the belt up except for little halter tops, with big earrings. So they are upstairs. I didn't see them come in. I heard all those motorcycles, but I had already started my class. He gives them a break at the same time I give my policemen a break, and they converged out there on the hall. Oh... That was the longest 10 minutes of my life. They were cussing each other, and you can imagine the epithets going back and forth. The policemen didn't really like the idea of being called pig and particularly when you add a few more adjectives to go with it. So I finally got my policemen back in the classroom, and they are hot. They are hot; you know somebody could have gotten killed out there real easy. It took me 20 or 30 minutes to get them settled down enough that we could get the class going again. Well needless to say his days are numbered. That's the Psychology department in the first few years here. It was interesting. They really did, they got some really good people after that. All the time that was I was there after that they had a good reputation. Students got a good deal after that.

- BE: Were there any more episodes in any of the other departments when conflicts between conservatives and liberals? At the time was that a heavy thing with the faculty?
- JT: Some of the faculty got into the epidemic of social change. It was very much like you know the red and blue states today. It was like red and blue faculty members. It was all civil.
- BE: Did you have any problems with students wanting to protest grades; you said they didn't at first but did that become a problem once that social change came in?
- JT: I never did have a problem personally; students didn't always like the grades they got. A student asked me one time, "Professor Tate how many students have you failed this last quarter?" I said, "As many as wanted to." But I would tell them the first day of class, you know I designed this course so anybody with a little bit

of effort can make a C. If you want to make better then put more effort in, but anybody can make a C. So as the quarter, then later the semester went on, and they got their grades back, then if they had a problem, that was the time to see me, not at the end. Basically, I knew that whatever they got I was fair with them. So I never had much of an ear for that my dog ate my homework stuff.

BE: You mentioned in class also about the streaking incident around the quadrangle. I was just curious if you could speak on that for a moment.

JT: When I was in college they had panty raids on college campuses. Of course you didn't have coed dorms and it was considered really brazen for a girl to throw a pair of panties out the window for the howling mob of boys down there, you know. But they didn't go into the dormitories or anything. That fad went to how many people could you get into a Volkswagen. Those little beetles, how many people could you cram in one. So the streakers were a thing of progression. Back in those days we didn't have classes from 12 o'clock to 1 o'clock because we were kind of a drive by college without dormitories or fraternities, sororities and all that sort of thing. So what you had was these student organizations that would meet from 12-1 to give them some idea that college was more than just going to a class and taking notes. Two things always happened between 12 and 1. My office looked out on the parking lot in front of the old history department there. So about 12:15 you see all of these trunks being opened up and students getting their dope out. And then where you have the Music building and then you have that much larger building there [Joe Mack Wilson Building]. Well all of that was just a hillside. So they all went up there, and you would look up there and there would be smoke coming through the pine trees. It's a wonder somebody didn't call the fire department there was so much of it. So that was our non-conforming students, and then, a quote from an older faculty member's point of view, the "good students" were off to some club.

So the word came one day, oh it circulated like a prairie fire, that there was going to be streakers at the quadrangle at noon during that free hour. People must have been twenty deep all the way around. I'm talking about people coming from Marietta to see the streaker! So I was standing out there by the old Social Science building, the breezeway was all the way around the quadrangle, and then there's the Humanities building. So I was standing there between the Social Science and Humanities building. We waited and waited and you know, where's the naked people? Everybody this is just a big fraud. Then around the old Student Center a big noise erupted over there, and suddenly two or three, maybe four or five these all looked like football players, you know jocks. They were all naked, and they ran out at the flag pole and danced around the flag pole and took off in the other direction. They had a car waiting for them. So people waited and waited and said, Well, I guess it's all over," and then suddenly noise went up again. It was a girl this time, and she had on a ski mask as the boys did. So she ran out to the flag pole, and you could hear around the quadrangle, "Oh, my God, it's Eleanor!" She was the only red head we had on campus; the ski mask didn't matter; we all knew

each other. Students knew the faculty, we knew them. Yes, she could have spared herself the ski mask. So then this must really be over now. So Eleanor, she went in and flashed Dr. Sturgis, a hyper conservative guy. I'm sure he hyperventilated. So we think it's all over, and I hear this noise off in the distance, and it's a small airplane coming right toward the quadrangle. They had taken the door off of the plane and they had this naked guy standing up there spread eagle holding on and the plane nearly hit the flag pole flying that low. We were ducking you know. Somebody called over to McCollum airport and told them what had happened; it turned out it was one of my students. The pilot was a little mousy guy. If you showed me a profile of a hundred people the one least likely that would be him number 100. He was like a kamikaze pilot.

BE: So Dr. Sturgis you mentioned several times is very conservative, do you remember that every being a problem with the faculty?

JT: Oh, yes, that was the only time in all the time that I was there that the faculty revolted, and it was nasty; it got ugly. It dealt with the, I guess the bylaws or the [Statutes] of the school. And according to the charter, the faculty was supposed to make any changes. Well, the administration recommended them, but the faculty had to agree upon it. It's all a little murky to me right now. What happened was Sturgis didn't consult the faculty about these changes that were made. The faculty, it was like knee deep in blood so to speak at the next faculty meeting. I worked up a petition denouncing what he had done. A high percentage of not only the faculty but the administrators signed it. You served at his pleasure, particularly administrators, and Dr. Sturgis called me into his office. What we were going to do was send it to the Board of Regents. He said, "I really don't want you to do that." I said, "Well, the faculty wants me to do it." I thought I had lost my job when I left there that day cause I didn't back down, we did whatever we were going to do with it. As years went by it was a real cool relationship he and I had. He was kind of one of those aloof type people anyway. But toward the end of my tenure and his, we found some common ground, some common interest there. Actually, he was the right man for the job for starting that school on the trajectory that I don't think it has really veered from of striving for academic excellence, particularly in the classroom.

BE: Was it a welcome change from Dr. Sturgis to Dr. Siegel?

JT: Yes, at the time because, as I understand this, and the older I get the more I understand it, you find a good horse, you ride it to death. So it's like Dr. Sturgis put the college on a good path. And he was some years older than me, and he was kind of stuck in that mindset of people of his age bracket, and the world was changing around him, you know. The students were changing, the college was changing. So Betty Siegel came, and he retired. She was like a breath of fresh air, and I'm a little reluctant because you know Dr. Sturgis is [dead] now. Let me put it this way, Betty Siegel was excellent in the community. People heard her speak; they said, "What a great speaker." Well she was an inspiring motivational

speaker. On the campus there was little different deal there. Her Achilles' heel was that she would get the members of the faculty all juiced up on one of her grand little visions. We would have committees established, and we would be working, and three months later you never heard of it again. Why were we putting all this energy and effort into something and there's no follow through. Well, that happened too many times, so a lot of the faculty members got disillusioned with her with that. But she had a lot of redeeming features that I want to emphasize. She worked well with students; she had a knack for making individual students feel important. That's a credit; Sturgis never had that flare or facility to do that. That was the only real complaint from the faculty members who got sucked into some of that vision stuff. We felt like we got burned a few times here.

BE: She had a flare for people and used to invite some of the faculty to her home?

JT: Yes, she was a lot more warm and fuzzy than Dr. Sturgis was, a bit of a social animal.

BE: Do you feel like Kennesaw has maintained the path of academic excellence until current times or do you feel like it has kind of dropped off with the new research tracks that people can take?

JT: I am really not in the loop on that anymore. What I do know is that as long as you have people like Tom Scott, you have got more of academic excellence than any where in the world. Well I don't know how many more Tom Scotts are down there, maybe a bunch or not so many any more. I don't know. I never hear anything bad about Kennesaw in terms of its academic program. Then again I'm not around enough people anymore to really know about that.

BE: Did you notice any changes in the students from the time you got there until 1993?

JT: Yes, like I said they were very traditional students when I first started. During the counter culture uproar I use to tell my students, I said, "You people aren't worth the powder it would take to shoot you." They couldn't care less about whether they made a C or an A. Not everybody, not everybody was into that movement. They were interesting. I remember a group of students came to me one time and said, "Professor Tate, we won't be in class next week." O really? They said, "Yeah, we are going to a big national anti-war march in Washington, and we are going out there to try to levitate the Pentagon." I thought, well I'm going to be watching that on the news, The Pentagon off the ground. Then some of the biology students would be out testing the Chattahoochee water, the river water, to see how bad corporations were polluting the water they were drinking. So they were interesting, but in terms of serious students, no.

One of the by products of that, the negative, you had an awful lot of these young people who were very idealistic and putting flowers in gun barrels saying "make

love not war” and all of that. They said we don’t want grades we want pass or fail, which means no standards when translated. Well unfortunately a lot of those people, not just at Kennesaw, but all across the country, got into that sort of thing, and then a lot of them got into education. When I first started teaching high school, particularly after I had two or three years experience, my students would go off to college saying that was boring we knew it all when we got there because I had the marks up real high. They didn’t know they couldn’t do something. If you said they had to do it, they did it. Then I saw that coming unraveled in the 70s.

Then the other thing is that when we go to a big recession, suddenly students got better. They couldn’t find a job. When everybody’s making money and the good times are rolling, down went the standards again. It’s kind of like that. I taught a couple years ago, and I was lecturing about the 60s, what we are discussing here and what they were all about it. I told them, back in that time period what kept students like you awake at night was out of 50 job offers, which one should you take? I said now you can send out 500 resumes and you may not even get one response. I said that was the difference between them. That’s one reason why the 60s were wide open; you didn’t have to be serious. There was always a good job waiting out there, and students knew that they could go out to Colorado and live in a commune for a year or two. You know, go out smoke dope and reach cosmic likeness, hugging pine trees, and when they got serious they could go plug back in then. It was an interesting thing to see.

BE: Well is there anything that we have forgotten to ask you, or that you would like to add.

JT: Not really. Like I said, as long as I was there full time I was involved in a lot of things. When you leave—and I was there for several years every year part time—you still basically came into the parking lot and all the perks were gone. So belt out a lecture and you would go back out to the parking lot, so you don’t have a feel for a lot of things that you used to as a full-time person.

BE: A lot of students do that now, it’s parking lot, class, parking lot.

JT: Yes.

BE: Was that always the case?

JT: Yes, well I’m sure it has changed some with dormitories. Virtually all the time I was down there it was a park and shop college. Some things have changed that; collegiate sports will help change that; dormitories will help change that; but it’s still very difficult to have a sense of college community without a lot of the things that make it interesting to go to college.

BE: And Dr. Siegel really worked on building that community.

JT: Yes, I remember that. She was a good vision person, and a lot of her visions obviously came to pass down there. Part of that is just the demographics. You got a lot of young people, and everybody can't go off to Princeton or UGA, and here's a good school in your backyard to save some money and get a good education. The real trick was if you wanted a degree from UGA was to go to Kennesaw for three years, transfer your last year, and get a degree from [the University of] Georgia—if that sort of thing was important to you. But I had students who when we were still a junior college, they would leave Kennesaw and go down to Georgia State [University], and they would come back and say Kennesaw is so much more difficult than Georgia State. I had lots of students tell me that over the years.

BE: Because we have always set the bar very high?

JT: Yes, the English department was notorious. When you go through two years of Kennesaw and you took, I guess, two English courses. I've had students take the same course five times before they could finally pass it. You're talking about a body count; the English department churned out the bodies over there. Everybody has like their favorite quotes of the time period. Like the Vietnam War, I think it is Pogo [who] says, "We have met the enemy, and he is us" [Walt Kelly]. Well my favorite quote, we still had some wooden desks during the Vietnam War at Kennesaw. So I was giving a test, and I was kind of walking the aisles, keeping good people honest, you know. I look down and somebody had carved on this desk, well I'm not heavy into graffiti on public property but this one caught my attention. This is what it said, "Transferred to Saigon University." Saigon was the capital of South Vietnam, and this was during the Vietnam War. Well there's not a University of Saigon, but clever kid. In other words he was flunking out of Kennesaw, and he was going to be drafted. They were going to send his butt to the jungles. So he carves on the desk, "Transferred to Saigon University because of a god damned comma splice." In other words the English department nailed him. Is that good?

BE: That's good!!

JT: I guess we can stop there.

BE: All right, thank you so much, Mr. Tate

KD: Thank you.

JT: All right, I enjoyed y'all.

INDEX

- Alpharetta, Georgia, 3
- Beggs, George H., 3, 6-7, 9
- Cartersville, Georgia, 4-5
- Dade County, Florida, 2-3
- Dalton, Georgia, 6
- DeKalb College (Georgia Perimeter College), 7
- DeKalb County (Georgia) School System, 1-2
 - Cross Keys High School, 2
 - Southwest DeKalb High School, 2
- Georgia State University, 15
- Harvard Business School, 8
- Kennesaw State University
 - Remote location of junior college, 3
 - Appearance in 1967, 3-4
 - Site selection in Cobb rather than Cartersville, 4-6
 - Collegiality in junior college days, 6-7
 - High academic standards, 7, 10-12, 15
 - Students, 7, 11-14
 - Psychology program, problems in junior college era, 8-10
 - Criminal Justice program, 9-10
 - Streakers, 11-12
- Northeastern (Oklahoma) State University, 1
- Oklahoma State University, 1
- Peabody College, 1
- Scott, Thomas A., 13
- Siegel, Betty L., 12-15
- Sturgis, Horace W., 3, 7, 12-13
- Tate, J. B.
 - Childhood, 1, 5
 - Education, 1, 5-6, 8
 - Mother, 1-2, 5
 - Move to Georgia, 1-2
 - High school teaching, 2-3

Job interviews at KJC, 3-4
Courses taught, 6
Work with Criminal Justice students, 9-10
Grading system, 10-11
Involvement in faculty protest over Statutes, 12
Tate, Nan, 2-3

University of California, 7
University of Georgia, 5-6, 15

Vanderbilt University, 1