

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH KIMBERLY S. LOOMIS

CONDUCTED, EDITED, AND INDEXED BY THOMAS A. SCOTT

for the

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KSU Oral History Series No. 105
Interview with Kimberly S. Loomis
Conducted, edited, and indexed by Thomas A. Scott
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TS: Today I'm interviewing Kim Loomis, who is the 2011 recipient of the KSU Distinguished Teaching Award. Kim, it looks like all your degrees came from Tennessee. Can I deduce from that that maybe you grew up in Tennessee or can you say anything about your background a little bit?

KL: My family calls me a Snortherner. I was actually born in the suburbs of Chicago. I'm a late baby; my parents were older; my dad retired from the First National Bank of Chicago when I was twelve years old. Apparently, my parents thought that what you do when you retire is you move south, so we moved to Tennessee. You can imagine for a child who had just gotten done with sixth grade headed to seventh grade—that was quite a culture shock. I moved to just outside of Knoxville, and I had a hard time that first year. I talked funny. You know, the schools were very different.

TS: Different in what ways?

KL: I think the support. I was in a junior high school in sixth grade, and when we went to PE, we had uneven parallel bars and vaulting blocks and gymnastics equipment, and so we did gymnastics for PE. When I went to East Tennessee, it was basketball, and we made do with what we had. Another example was I was in band in Illinois, and when we moved to Tennessee, they had a marching band in the junior high, which was really interesting because I was just concert band. But I had to buy my own instrument in Tennessee. I was a drummer.

TS: They had them for you up there?

KL: Yes. In the concert band all the drums were already there, but in a marching band, if I wanted to march, I had to buy my own drum.

TS: Because football is bigger in Tennessee?

KL: I guess so, and I'm not going to complain about that a bit. I'm a big Tennessee football fan. So that first year was tough.

TS: What suburb was it in Chicago?

KL: Northern suburbs. I grew up in Wood Dale. My sister is still there. I was a late baby; there is seventeen years between my sister and me; and there's just the two of us.

TS: Well, we've got kind of a parallel career. I was born in Oak Park.

KL: There you go. And you're a Tennessee grad as well.

TS: We moved back down to Tennessee when I was one year old. We were originally in West Tennessee, but then my father got a job with TVA, so we moved to Knoxville, and so I grew up in Knoxville. You said near Knoxville; how close to Knoxville were you?

KL: We were just outside Maryville. When my parents figured we would retire down south, for some reason they decided it would be Asheville, North Carolina. One summer . . .

TS: But they got on the other side of the mountains.

KL: They sure did. They didn't like Asheville, and on the way back home they drove through Maryville, and they said, "This is beautiful." We got back to Chicago, and the following weekend, Mom and Dad got on a plane, went to Maryville, bought a house, and moved.

TS: Well, in late October I'm going to a reunion of our old track and cross country teams at the University of Tennessee. The SEC championship is on a golf course that the University of Tennessee uses between Maryville and Townsend, and so I'm going to be up in your old stomping grounds in late October—and mine too, at least in Knoxville.

KL: We lived just outside Maryville for two years and then moved up near Crossville, and that's actually where I went to high school was in Crossville, and to me that's home.

TS: Okay, up in the mountains. My brother went to Tennessee Tech for a while before he transferred to Tennessee.

KL: Right. And most of the folks that I went to high school with went to Tech but for some reason . . .

TS: Right, Crossville was what a half hour away.

KL: Yes, and just beautiful, but I decided I wanted to go somewhere farther away, which was unusual because I loved the gang of kids I hung around. We loved high school, but I went to East Tennessee State, and that was to get closer into the mountains. I wanted to be as close to North Carolina as I could get. My mom had taken me one summer, and we spent a month on a college campus, Lees-McCray College in Banner Elk. She was an administrative assistant for a correspondence school that awarded Ed.D.s, so you can imagine, now that I'm

grown up, and I look back on that, I think, what was that? She went up for one summer and typed dissertations and took me up there with her, and I just fell in love with that area. The mountains are just beautiful, and so going to East Tennessee State was the closest I could get and still stay in state to pay in-state tuition, so that's how I ended up there. I loved it there, loved Johnson City.

TS: How did you decide upon science education or did you to begin with that? Where along the way did you make that decision?

KL: As I said, I was in band, and that was always very important to me. When I got into high school, band was really, really a driving force. We were band nerds, and as a group we made good grades. We were good kids, so when it came time to graduate, everybody pretty much figured I would major in music. I could remember talking to my mom about what was the next step, and she, all my life, kept saying, "You should be a teacher." And I kept saying, "No, I don't want to teach; I don't like little kids; I don't want to teach." So I'm getting ready to graduate, and I said, I don't want to major in music because I'm not good enough to be a professional musician, so the only other thing that I knew that I could do with a degree in music was teach, and I did not want to do that.

TS: You didn't want to teach music or didn't want to teach anything?

KL: Didn't want to teach anything. Didn't want to teach music. So I went up to ETSU to meet with an advisor before the beginning of the freshman year, and before they assigned me to an advisor, they said, "Well, what other classes did you like in high school?" I said, "I really liked biology." I really did. They said, "Okay, we'll send you over to life sciences." Okay. So I met with the advisor, and he said, "What do you want to do when you get done?" This is exactly what I said: "Oh, I guess I want to work in a lab, wear a lab coat, and help people." I mean, how brilliant is that? He said, "Okay, how about microbiology as a major." I said okay. I guess I was open to suggestions. I loved it. I absolutely loved microbiology, and this guy that was my advisor ended up being a very influential man, Lee Pike. I took several classes with him; he pointed me in the direction of graduate school; so when I finished with a degree in microbiology, I started right up the following fall at the University of Tennessee working on a doctorate in microbiology, focusing in molecular genetics. I did that for a year, and while I was working, you know it's a lot of time in a lab. I was working in a research lab and just loved it. I also had a teaching assistantship, and I really loved teaching the general microbiology labs to nursing majors, pre-med, pre-vet.

TS: So you taught the labs?

KL: I taught the labs and loved that, but didn't like being in the lab. It was just isolated and especially in a microbiology lab where everything has to be kept sterile.

TS: Just looking into a microscope all the time?

KL: Yes, and a lot of time spent growing up cultures. I loved the science, but I liked talking about it, I liked helping others understand. So I was talking to a friend on the phone—she was an elementary school teacher—and she said, “I hear you say you like teaching.” I said, “Yes.” She said, “Why don’t you go across the street to the College of Ed and see what you’d have to do to be certified to teach high school?” I did, and he said, “Here’s what you have to do to be certified to teach high school science, and for twelve more credit hours we’ll get you a master’s degree in Science Ed.” So that’s what I did. As I was finishing up that degree, Cobb County Schools came to the University of Tennessee campus recruiting. There was a big teacher shortage then. This was in ’87.

TS: It was ’87 that you got your master’s.

KL: In ’87, yes. I interviewed just to practice interviewing, and I chose to interview with Cobb County Schools because my roommate at the time had an aunt and uncle that taught in Cobb County, you know, just that kind of random thing. I really liked the guy that I interviewed with, and he invited me to Cobb County for a formal interview, and I went. They offered me the job at North Cobb. At the time, the principal at North Cobb was from Sparta, Tennessee, which is just up the road from Crossville. Their colors were orange and white. I thought, you know, meant to be. I took the job at North Cobb High School teaching biology and physical science, and that was it.

TS: How long did you teach at North Cobb High School?

KL: Two years, I stayed there for two years and made the decision to go back to Tennessee, so I could keep going to school. I got a position teaching physical science with Oak Ridge City Schools, which is an interesting place to teach science being the home of the National Labs. I had a lot of students whose parents had Ph.D.’s in gaseous diffusion, so that was pretty challenging. It was fun.

TS: I used to think of Oak Ridge High School as being the elite high school because they were getting all that federal money.

KL: It was a good place to teach. Those are well supported schools. Like I said, teachers really want more parental involvement, and when you have a lot of parental involvement, now you’ve got kids to manage and parents as well, but I’d rather have a lot of parental involvement in the classroom.

TS: And very smart parents it seems.

KL: Very smart, oh, my gosh, yes.

TS: So you were teaching there in the day time and going to school at night?

KL: No, mostly going to school in the summer. I found the environment to be—I was at Robertsville Junior High, and it was so different from North Cobb.

TS: Robertsville Junior High?

KL: Robertsville Junior High School. At North Cobb I was one of fourteen brand new teachers that year. The first year that I was there seven of us were science teachers, and the department chair, [R. Wesley] Wes McCoy, you might know Wes; he's a good friend of Pic's.

TS: Yes, I've met him. Was Pic [Michael P. (Pic) Petelle] there at the time?

KL: Pic was brand new. It was his first year too.

TS: He came in with you?

KL: Yes, as did Mike [Michael J.] Dias, who is an associate professor of Secondary Science Ed here at KSU.

TS: But he was there?

KL: He was a first year teacher in '87, and so was Tom [Thomas J.] Brown who was over in Early Childhood Education as a science educator until last year, and he's the science curriculum head of Cobb County Schools now. But all of us were first year teachers together and here's Wes McCoy . . .

TS: Pretty good group.

KL: Oh yes. I tell you what, it was mostly because Wes was so great. He was such a good department chair, and when I think about if I have to go back and say who taught me how to teach science, it was Wes McCoy. Just an amazing guy. That was such a wonderful, open atmosphere.

TS: What do you think you learned from Wes McCoy?

KL: Wes taught us how to teach by letting us teach. He would give us some guidance, and we'd come to him and say, "I'm going to do this; I'm going to do that." He'd say, "You go right ahead and tell me how it goes." Learning by experience and of course, that's the most powerful way to learn. He was always there to back us up; he always got us involved in things. I can remember tag team teaching with him, I'd be teaching, and all of a sudden here's Wes at my door. "What are you doing?" "Photosynthesis." "Okay, tag." I'd go to his room, and he'd go to mine. It was just a real tight bunch of teachers and very supportive and cooperative and collaborative, and I've left that situation to go to Oak Ridge, and that school was

more the teachers were isolated and maybe a little competitive and very much less collaborative. Teachers went in their rooms and closed their doors and taught and didn't talk to each other about teaching and didn't talk to each other about the students. I didn't realize that that was so valuable until I didn't have it.

TS: It's lucky that started your career.

KL: Yes, because you always hear about first-year teachers just trying to survive. My first year of teaching was fabulous, just fabulous, and I think Tom Brown and Mike Dias and Pic would tell you the same thing. I was still going to school in the summer, and I got offered a graduate assistantship to come back to school full time to start working on the doctorate, and I took it. I went back to school full time to finish the doctorate, and I think that was a great idea. I was able to get involved with a lot of things.

TS: It didn't take you too long to get through the doctorate.

KL: It didn't. When I quit work and decided to go back full time, my mom and dad paid my rent, and I didn't like for them to have to do that. So right when I started full time, I started working on that dissertation with the goal of getting done as fast as I could. Looking back, I wish I had taken another year because what a great atmosphere, what a great environment, being a full-time doctoral student and just being into your stuff and working with the major professors and the other graduate students! I tried to finish quickly. My mom, when I [told her] I don't know whether to continue going to school part time or just quit and work on this doctorate—I was really struggling with that decision—and she said, "Your father and I aren't getting any younger." I said, "I'm going back to school. I want to do this, and I want to get it done."

TS: You've mentioned your mother several times; maybe we ought to put her name in the transcription.

KL: Marilyn Loomis.

TS: It sounds like she gave you some good advice.

KL: She did. It was funny because she said all of my life, "You need to be a teacher; you need to be a teacher." And she has never said, "I told you so." Even when I finally listened to her and discovered, yes, this is what I want to do. Just the other day, after the awards ceremony, I went over to see her. She's in assisted living, as I mentioned, and I went over to see her. I had the plaque, and I wasn't sure if her Alzheimer's was going to let her really understand what I was telling her. So I handed her the plaque, and she read it, and it took her a minute, but she looked at me and just spread out her arms and said, "I couldn't be more proud of you than I am right now." She was right with me; she totally understood.

- TS: That's great. Well, you're mighty young, and I was thinking of the time frame on this. If it had been twenty years earlier, you'd think, if they say go into education, they're thinking that's the only thing for a woman to do with an education, but certainly by the 1980s, she probably wasn't thinking that way, so maybe she saw that you really ought to be a teacher.
- KL: Maybe so. She and my dad were both surprised when I called them and said that I was going to leave the microbiology program because they knew how much I loved that, but this was definitely the right move.
- TS: You didn't think that you might actually like to teach not science education but science on the college level?
- KL: My original plan was to get the doctorate in microbiology and then teach microbiology, biochemistry and molecular genetics at the college level, but all I knew when I changed my major, I just really was not enjoying the time spent in the lab, and I really was enjoying the teaching, and this just seemed like the right move.
- TS: So college level is not a career move if all you want to do is teach.
- KL: Right. And I was real fortunate because right after I got my doctorate in Science Ed, my first position was at Catawba College in Salisbury, North Carolina, a small private institution.
- TS: I noticed there was a three year gap between when you got the degree and when you got here to Kennesaw, so it's Catawba for three years?
- KL: Catawba for three years, and I did get to teach physical science and earth science at Catawba. Physical science was a course that was for teachers, and the earth science was a course for anybody. The students could fulfill their science requirement with that, so I did get to teach science to college kids. I haven't done that in a long time, and I miss that. That's still on my list of things to get back to. I'd like to teach the integrated science courses here or something. In talking to the folks over in the College of Science and Math, I think that opportunity is there for me when I get ready to do it, if I can ever find time to do that.
- TS: Right, persuading people in the Bagwell College to let you have that time off to teach it.
- KL: To let you go, that's true.
- TS: Maybe you could do it in the summer time in the future.
- KL: I was actually thinking about it this summer or maybe in a year or so I'll flip flop things around a little bit.

TS: I've always admired people like Pic Petelle. I think his doctorate is in straight science, but he's wanted to teach on the high school level all these years.

KL: Yes, it's in environmental science. What a resource for the kids that he teaches.

TS: He's done a lot of good community work as well.

KL: He sure has.

TS: Okay, so you go through the program. Were there any mentors at Tennessee that stand out?

KL: Yes. Of course, my major professor, E. Dale Doak. He always said the E stands for Elizabeth, but he never told anybody what the E stood for.

TS: He said the E stands for Elizabeth?

KL: Yes, that's the kind of guy he is. But E. Dale Doak. My first day as a full-time doctorate student at Tennessee, the woman who was going to be my major professor left, and that was great. She went to be the director of the Semester at Sea program, which is awesome.

TS: But not good for you.

KL: Yes. The graduate assistantship I had was working in the curriculum lab, and the director of the curriculum lab was Dr. Doak, and his emphasis was instructional technology. I had an interest in technology. I was always pretty good with it. So I talked to him, and he said, "I will be your major professor, and we can merge the science education and instructional technology, and that can be one of your cognate areas. Good to go." So that's what I did. I worked with Dr. Doak and taught some Intro to Technology courses for him. Of course, this was when those courses were with Apple 2GS's that you had to boot up with a five and a quarter inch disk, and that makes it sound like it was back when the earth was cooling, but it really wasn't that long ago.

TS: You got your degree, even though it's only nineteen years ago, before the Internet really had come in.

KL: It's true. As a matter of fact, I graduated, I got my doctorate, I went up to North Carolina at Catawba, and that summer after my first year of teaching at Catawba I went back to UT to learn about this thing called the Internet. Yes, it was just right on the cusp, so I had to go back and brush up a little bit.

- TS: I guess the Internet really started with scientists in England and Switzerland and places like that. I guess maybe science was ahead of other areas in seeing the usefulness of the Internet.
- KL: Something that I try to help my students understand is that the science drives the technology, and the technology aids the science to drive the technology.
- TS: What were you all doing with technology in the Intro to Technology course back then?
- KL: Back then it was, “Don’t be afraid to turn the computer on. You can’t hit one button and make everything disappear. It’s going to be okay.” It was mostly in helping teachers use technology to teach. We concentrated on, how can you use a word processing program or a spreadsheet for some productivity tasks that you have, keeping a roll, data base, grade book, creating your own grade book out of a spreadsheet. There was also an application called HyperCard, which was very basic, like the founding level of Power Point.
- TS: I was going to ask if there was anything equivalent to Power Point.
- KL: It was very labor intensive, but it was there. It used the analogy of a stack of index cards. You built cards instead of slides, and so we did that. Dr. Doak was fortunate to have some pretty big and powerful computers for his graduate students to work on and develop these programs. We’d take them into schools, and students would use them. We presented at conferences in how to use technology to teach effectively. So when I came to KSU that was one thing that they were interested in was that I had the science education background, but also the instructional technology background. So I did teach some instructional technology courses here as well.
- TS: Maybe that would segue into how did you get to Kennesaw?
- KL: Actually, that’s technology related. The Internet came out, and Bitnet was around at that time when I was at Catawba. The only computers that were connected to the Internet on campus were those at the library, of course, and it was not graphic interface. So I’d walk over to the library. I went over for some kind of orientation, and the librarian was new, a friend of mine. She said, “Oh, they’ve got these things; they’re called list serves. You find something that you’re interested in, and you join this list serve, and every day you get a big, long post of everybody that’s posted something, and you can reply to the list. It’s like a discussion group.” I said, “That’s great.” I’m a huge dog lover. It’s another thing my mom instilled in me. So I got on a dog fancier’s discussion list called Canine-L. This was 1992, ’93, and I got on this list. A bunch of people with dogs, everybody from people like me who have mutts to the woman who had the best in show at Westminster that year, there were about 500 people on the list. No, what did we used to say? There are 50 people on the list and 500 dogs.

Anyway, it was a really, really good list. We learned a lot from each other. I noticed one woman who was posting had a Kennesaw e-mail address, and so I e-mailed her privately, and I said, "Hey do you still live in Kennesaw? I used to teach at North Cobb." She said, "Oh, I'm at Kennesaw State." So we started talking and finally she said, "What do you do?" I said, "I'm a science educator." She said, "We're looking for a science educator. Are you interested?" I had been at Catawba for three years, and I was interested. I wanted to go to a bigger school and a bigger city. I felt like Catawba was....

TS: Middle of nowhere.

KL: Yes, it was wonderful, but not for someone who's 31 years old.

TS: Which town is Catawba in?

KL: Salisbury.

TS: I taught one year at Western Piedmont Community College in Morganton before I came here. That would have been '67-'68.

KL: It's beautiful up there. Again, I was looking up in that area to get up into the mountains. Of course, Catawba wasn't really in the mountains, but it was North Carolina. It was a nice town, but I felt like there wasn't a lot of growing room for me there. She said, "Are you interested?" I said, "As a matter of fact I am." She said, "Well, I'll send you the information." Turns out she was on the search committee.

TS: Who is this?

KL: Linda Webb.

TS: Linda Webb? Oh, so she's a dog fancier too.

KL: She had at the time two beautiful Shepherd dogs, Hoffen and Krieger. I submitted my materials, and right after I submitted my application materials, Bill [William D.] Impey passed away.

TS: Oh yes, I knew Bill Impey.

KL: I never had the chance to meet him.

TS: He was Social Science Education.

KL: That brought everything to a screeching halt, and I said, "Well, I'll wait."

TS: When I got my Distinguished Teaching Award, he just out of the blue wrote a letter on my behalf. I did a lot of things with him, but we weren't that close, and I certainly didn't ask him to write a letter or even thought about him writing one, but he wrote a really nice letter.

KL: It was very clear that everybody just loved him because they were just devastated. Linda said, "We have to stop the search." So that's okay. That was in the spring, and by the end of the summer, Linda contacted me. She said, "We'd like to invite you on campus." I thought real hard about this. I thought, "Okay, I'm being invited on campus. Linda Webb is on the search committee. She's going to pick me up at the hotel that first night for dinner, and I'm going to put dog treats in my pocket." Sure enough, she picked me up, and instead of going right to dinner, we went to her house so I could meet her dogs. I pulled out the dog treats, and she said, "Oh, this is very wise." So I would say the Internet and my love of dogs got me this job. She was my link, and that Canine-L list, I am still friends with people from that list. Of course, now it's moved to Face Book, but that was so long ago.

TS: That had to be one of the first lists ever.

KL: It was.

TS: Linda wasn't the department chair at this time I guess.

KL: No, that was Bob [Robert L.] Driscoll.

TS: He was the department chair? Okay, he's beyond being dean.

KL: Right, he had stepped down from dean. Deborah [S.] Wallace was the dean, and Bob was just wonderful.

TS: There was another dean between Bob and Deborah.

KL: Right, and I missed out on that too.

TS: You were lucky to miss out on that. That was when the School of Education failed to win NCATE reaccreditation for a probationary year.

KL: Right. That was another thing. I was being brought in as a result, to try to help out with the NCATE review. Of course, the next one was great.

TS: So Bob had retired from administration and was brought back in I guess as department chair. Okay, he was your department chair when you started. What was the name of the department?

KL: It was Secondary and Middle Grades Ed. I think there were five of us.

TS: Pretty much the same as it is today. Except there were only five of you.

KL: That first semester here I taught a day class every day except Friday. I had a night class every night, but Friday. I had two student teachers that I was driving out to see, and I was on dozens of committees. It was a small department.

TS: Sounds familiar! Who were the five?

KL: There was Bob, me, Pam [Pamela B.] Cole . . .

TS: Pam was here then?

KL: Yes. Ann [D.] Smith, Randy [F.] Elmore and Marj [Marjorie] Economopoulos. Within a few years we added [M.] Leigh Funk as an instructional technologist and Binyao Zheng, who is still here. Leigh and Binyao came after I did. Pam Cole and I came the same year. But that was us, and I don't think I'm missing anybody.

TS: What department was Linda in?

KL: When I got here she was the director of the Office of Field Experiences. She belonged to Secondary and Middle Grades, I think. That may or may not be true because eventually she went to Ed Leadership. I think after she left the Office of Field Experiences she went up to Ed Leadership.

TS: It's a small department, but some very good folks.

KL: Yes. We think so. Of course now we must be up around twenty.

TS: I guess so. You applied for the job, they postponed the search, but then toward the end of the summer they call you. You must have signed a contract at Catawba by that point.

KL: No, it was just before. Catawba was very small. We had a Department of Education, and there were five of us there and my department chair. She was another great mentor. She will tell you that she raised me up right.

TS: Who was that?

KL: Shirley Haworth. Years ago I saw her at a conference, and Marj Economopoulos was my chair at that time. She looked at Marj and she says, "I raised this one up right." Marj said, "You sure did!" But Shirley was kind enough—she knew that to advance my career, I needed to go to a bigger place, and I sat down with her and I said, "Now we're at the end of the summer, and I'm sitting here asking you if I should do this." She said, "You go ahead." So very kind.

TS: Well, we were bigger than Catawba at that time.

KL: Yes, Catawba had a thousand students at the time.

TS: What were we at that time?

KL: About 12,500.

TS: This is '95, and so you all hadn't moved into Kennesaw Hall yet at that time.

KL: Right, we were still over here.

TS: Where was "over here"?

KL: It's Willingham now.

TS: So you all were still in there. That's right. I remember that the dean's suite was right in the middle of the second floor.

KL: Right. We were small, but we were happy. Of course, they built that new building, and we went over there with our hard hats on to pick out our offices. That was just exciting, and now we're getting ready to have an addition built, and we need it.

TS: It sounds big; how many million dollars?

KL: Something like \$18 million and 82,900 square feet. Big!

TS: Is that going to be connected to Kennesaw Hall?

KL: Yes, it will just build on out toward the parking deck.

TS: That's right. I was in Wes Wicker's office on the fifth floor, and he said his view was going to be blocked by the new building.

KL: Right. They're planning for three floors and then building a fourth floor that will be empty, but we'll raise money to finish it out. Right now, if they put us in three floors we're going to fill it up. I'm on that building committee, and that's a fun job.

TS: So you're in one of the original buildings with Willingham Hall and move out to the suburbs, I guess, at Kennesaw Hall, and now to a new addition.

KL: Yes, it's amazing. When I think this is the start of my seventeenth year....

- TS: That makes you an old timer.
- KL: It does, and I don't know how that happened. When I came, I knew that was the right move, and I knew I was coming to a good place, but I didn't really think I'd stay here forever.
- TS: Why don't you say something about what campus culture was like in 1995 when you got here?
- KL: Well, it was really different. Even just walking today, the students are here and all the Greek organizations are here.
- TS: Even though we don't have classes until tomorrow the students are here.
- KL: They're moving in. The residence halls are opening up, and the Greek organizations are out on the [Campus] Green. There's music, and they've got food and people standing there, and that wasn't here before. So the culture and the climate of the campus is really changing, and I enjoy it.
- TS: You enjoy the change?
- KL: Yes. It's nice to see students here all the time. It's nice to see them playing Frisbee out on the green. I enjoy that atmosphere. Kennesaw is moving that way and doing it well, I think. Way back when, as far as talking about campus culture, how that's changed, but looking at the composition of my classes, Teacher Education has always had a larger share of nontraditional students. Teaching is something people come back to, a second career, especially for women. I suppose somewhat like me, they reject, "Oh, careers for women, you can be a secretary you can be a nurse, you can be a teacher; I'm not going to do that. Teachers don't make any money, so I'm going to go into accounting or [something that pays well.]" So they're accountants for a little while, and then they get older, and they think, "You know what? I've always wanted to teach." So they come back to teaching. My Teacher Ed classes in general tend to have a larger proportion of nontraditional students, but just in the past year I'd say I've seen younger and younger students in my classes. The good thing about that—that means that when students are coming out of high school and coming to college, they're going with this call to teach. I do think people are called to teach. I think you have to be, otherwise, why would you do it?
- TS: Even though you resisted the call for a while.
- KL: Right. So I'm seeing younger students in my classes. They challenge me more because with nontraditional students as a teacher educator I'm able to draw on their life experience. They have a lot of life experience working with their kids, with other kids, with other human beings that a nineteen year old doesn't have. So it's more challenging for me to help this nineteen-year-old even though the

- classes that I teach I'm getting them as juniors and seniors. It's more challenging for me to help them understand how to manage a classroom full of adolescents.
- TS: Because they've never done it before.
- KL: No. And most nontraditional aged students have had contact with kids, and they've had experiences with being Sunday School teachers and so on.
- TS: They have their own.
- KL: Yes, their own kids or Scouting, a lot more interactions with human beings than these traditional aged students.
- TS: It sounds like you enjoy teaching the younger ones.
- KL: I enjoy both. Like I said, the younger ones are challenging to me. But great! That gives me something to do. The nontraditional aged students I enjoy because they do bring a different level of commitment and those life experiences. Those nontraditional students are in my class because they want to be there, and they are determined to do well. They are dedicated and committed. When I teach the sophomore level classes, sometimes those younger students are not quite there yet. They don't quite realize the work that you have to put into not only this class, but into the Teacher Education program to be successful.
- TS: I've had the same mix in Georgia history over the years because the vast majority of students are education majors.
- KL: Sure, right.
- TS: I know exactly what you're talking about. What all were you teaching? They brought you in to do Science Education, obviously, but what all were you teaching in 1995 when you got here?
- KL: I did the Middle Grades Science Methods courses, and Educational Psychology, Instructional Technology, and the Intro to Education course.
- TS: You had to do that too?
- KL: Yes.
- TS: So everybody did Intro to Education?
- KL: Yes. That's one thing that Bob Driscoll said that I really, really respected. He said, "Everybody should teach the Intro to Ed course. It shouldn't always be adjunct or part-time folks. We need to get our experienced educators teaching the Intro to Ed course." That course is the "so you think you want to be a teacher"

class. I love teaching that class. David [J.] Martin who is recently retired, and I wrote a textbook for the Intro to Education course, and it's the one that we use here at Kennesaw.

TS: The *Building Teachers*?

KL: Right. That course is very important to me. I think that's the class where you say, "So you think you want to be a teacher. If you don't, now is the time to make that decision because you don't want to go any further." The Teacher Education program is not one of those majors where you can get up to your senior year, first semester, and decide, oh, I don't want to do this and change your major. You have to start over in something. Sometimes, when you get out [in the schools] your second semester your junior year, first semester senior year, and then student teaching your second semester your senior year—that's when you really get out in the schools—then it's all on you; and we have some students that say, "You know what? I don't like this." We've put a lot of study into it so far.

TS: I've advised many of them over the years that switched from History Ed to straight History.

KL: Right. So that first course is very important, I think.

TS: You can head them off if they can tell at that point. I'm not sure how you can tell until you actually get into the classroom.

KL: That's why, I think, Kennesaw's Teacher Ed programs are so good because they concentrate on early field experiences—early and often. Get them out in the schools as much as possible.

TS: I've always thought that was a good thing about our program too. So you start doing that in '95 and maybe one last question about campus culture: You talked about being on five million committees. Was there any emphasis on scholarship—research and publications—when you got here?

KL: One reason I came to Kennesaw is because it was a teaching university with the emphasis on teaching. Of course, that's what's important to me. It should be. I mean, I'm a teacher educator. Of course, that emphasis has grown, and I mean grown in breadth. I don't want to say that emphasis increased, but I think our idea of scholarship at Kennesaw has broadened. I was fortunate enough years ago—I wish I could remember the exact year—to be involved in a learning community at Kennesaw on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning and trying to learn about scholarship of Teaching and Learning and what it is, how it is scholarship, how it can be valued on this campus. Those were the initial discussions that Dr. [Betty L.] Siegel emphasized that she supported. We ended up going with her, a small group of us, to Parker Palmer's home.

- TS: Oh, you were in that group?
- KL: Yes, and that was fabulous. Out of that group came the CETL Fellows program. One of the founding fellowships was the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, and I was fortunate enough to be that fellow. I feel that as a teacher educator our form of scholarship and research is valued and recognized now at Kennesaw. That's the growth because as we talk about research, well, teacher educators' research is the scholarship of teaching and learning. Of course, I feel good that that's valued and that's being acknowledged and validated. I do see more of an emphasis on scholarship. At our Bagwell College of Education retreat yesterday we were looking at our strategic plans, and we were also looking at who we aspire to be. We have institutions that we are like. We have colleges of education that we are like. There was a list of institutions that KSU aspires to be.
- TS: Is that the paper that Ed [Edwin A.] Rugg did?
- KL: I think so.
- TS: He's got a thing on peer and aspirational universities.
- KL: Exactly. Our dean [Arlinda Eaton] gave us that, and she said, "Let's look at this from a College of Education standpoint." Some of the peer characteristics and the characteristics that we aspire to—a lot of them are research focused, and we broke up into small groups and discussed it.
- TS: This was just yesterday?
- KL: Just yesterday. The College of Education still talks about teaching. Who do we want our graduates [to be]?
- TS: If the College of Education doesn't do it, who will?
- KL: Exactly. If we had come out of that saying, oh, we really need to do some research, I would have worried. We need to focus on teaching; that's who we are.
- TS: In your retreat yesterday, when you were talking about peer and aspirational institutions, which ones did you all look at or focus on yesterday?
- K: I'm trying to remember. I think the list that we got was made up of institutions that KSU aspires to be, and the dean asked us to think about colleges of education.
- TS: Within those universities?
- KL: Not necessarily within those universities. They were just giving those as examples.

- TS: Oh, so you all were brainstorming on who we were like or wanted to be?
- KL: Right, to help us to understand the concept of what do we mean when we're talking about peer institutions, what do we mean when we're talking about institutions that we aspire to be? Our College of Education, I think, is in a good position right now. We're the number one producer of teachers in the state of Georgia.
- TS: Yes, [President] Dan [Daniel S.] Papp said that in the opening of school. That's remarkable. We were two for awhile, and now we're number one.
- KL: What we were basically coming to yesterday in our discussions—we were saying we want to be the place where, if you want to be a teacher, we want to be your university of choice. "I want to be a teacher; then I want to get in Kennesaw."
- TS: The fact that we've got more of the younger students instead of nontraditional now—I think we've been saying that's an indication that we're a university of choice for people out of high school.
- KL: Right. That's right where we said....
- TS: That's what we want to be?
- KL: And then we said, okay, what are those characteristics then? Basically, what we landed on was we want to look at characteristics of colleges of education that have won awards for their programs. Why did they win those awards?
- TS: Makes sense.
- KL: We want to look at, why do people choose to come to Kennesaw to major in teacher education, and why do they choose to leave? Why do they choose not to come here?
- TS: Choose to leave short of a degree?
- KL: Right. Sometimes we're aware that the students will come here to start out and then transfer to UGA because UGA, Georgia State, they have capped enrollments, and they can't get in, so their choice is—sometimes though students will start out at UGA, and then they can't do their student teaching when they wanted to because it's a limited number, so they'll come to Kennesaw. We want them to come here first; we want to be their first choice. What is it about those institutions that make people choose to go there first, their programs, not necessarily the institution as a whole, but basically focusing on the colleges of education. I think we're well known; our graduates are well known. We've got the only nationally recognized middle school education program in the state.

- Information like that is what we should use to go out to help potential students choose us.
- TS: Nationally recognized middle school education program?
- KL: Only nationally recognized middle school education program in the state, and that's national recognition by the National Middle School Association.
- TS: That's what I was going to ask, recognized by whom?
- KL: Right, who cares?! National Middle School Association, that's our professional organization.
- TS: What do you have to do to get recognized by them?
- KL: Oh, my goodness! We submitted a big report, and the report contains performance evidence on how we meet the National Middle School Association's standards.
- TS: So you all are comparing colleges of education that won awards, but we've won awards too.
- KL: We have. We are recognized, that's true. That's one thing you have to sit back sometimes and say: Who do we aspire to be? But maybe step one of that is saying, we're pretty darn good right now. We're good, now where do we go?
- TS: I cut you off on what you had to do to win the award.
- KL: Oh, well, it's just any middle school program can submit this report. We call them SPA reports—SPA is Specialty Program Area—and there's a professional organization for every teacher education major, so there are the National Science Teachers Association, etc. The National Middle School Association has a set of standards, and you write a report that contains performance evidence from candidates that show that you meet these standards. That's what we submitted last year and came back nationally recognized with no comments, no concerns, no nothing. That's a step in our whole accreditation process.
- TS: What institutions were the models that you decided upon yesterday? UGA?
- KL: No. There were a couple that the dean mentioned that I can't recall. I think she said the College of Ed at UCLA. What we did mainly yesterday was identify some characteristics of [good schools]. What we said is we need more data, so we can identify why do students choose to come here, and how we can capitalize on those reasons. Why did they choose not to come here? How can we make those reasons better? Why do they choose to leave? One thing that we did say is that we want to be known for doing a good job with social justice education.

Let's see if I can think of the other ones: innovative use of technology to teach, culturally relevant pedagogy. These are important topics in our time in society, and we want to be known for preparing teachers who are competent in those areas. This was the first conversation that we've had along these regards. Our dean is just really good at throwing things up and at shared governance and at throwing things out to all of us and saying what do you think? She breaks us into small groups, and we report out to each other, and she moves us along. It was one of those all day meetings that you come away from being really excited. You know, that's kind of unusual!

TS: Sounds a whole lot better than some of the meetings I've gone to! Could we go back to when you were first here, and you were talking about Betty Siegel. Did she create the learning community, and was the learning community all faculty that you're talking about?

KL: I believe it was. Gosh, that was so long ago.

TS: We use that term learning communities now as far as the first year experience.

KL: Right. Learning community is I think what we called it. I'm pretty sure that's what we called it.

TS: How did you get into it? Did you just go or did they ask you to go?

KL: Julia Matthews was in theater at the time. She and I were kind of the co-chairs of that community, and we organized discussions and meetings. We read articles. The faculty signed up for it, and the group read articles. We had wonderful discussions, and then Parker Palmer came on campus, and Dr. Siegel took a group of us from that.

TS: So this was one of those things they advertised to see who on the faculty wanted to be involved, and most people said, "We don't have time." But you decided you wanted to.

KL: Right. I don't remember how exactly Julia and I were chosen, except that being in the College of Education helped me out a bit. I'm trying to remember, too, that Julia and I went out to a conference in San Diego with Ed Rugg. A group of us went out, and that was a good amount of time and a good amount of support and investment by KSU in learning about scholarship of teaching and learning.

TS: So you got in on the ground floor.

KL: I really did; I was very fortunate.

TS: And this is where Ernest Boyer's study, *Scholarship Reconsidered*, comes in? Maybe, we started doing that a little earlier than that on this campus. I can't

- remember when that report came out, but it seems like it was early 1990s, if I'm not mistaken. I think it was very wise on your part to get involved in groups like this. You actually got to know the top administrators fairly well on campus.
- KL: Right. It was a very valuable experience and exciting. I don't know if I can say that I was wise to get involved in it, but I thought, wow, that sounds cool, and I'll go. I was just excited by it.
- TS: Well, yes, it really was, as I think back on it, an exciting time to be defining scholarship in a way that makes sense at most public four-year colleges in the country with heavy teaching loads and lots of frustrations from people that can't get grants and don't have time for them anyway and feel like they're losing touch with their fields, maybe. But it's because they're still thinking the way that they were taught in graduate school to think about scholarship and not more broadly, and so I think that was the whole idea behind all this.
- KL: That's right.
- TS: I guess, Ernest Boyer was the head of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Parker Palmer was here for one of our symposia. Would you say that your scholarship has been—well, I guess in Education, scholarship of teaching, as you were saying earlier, is what you all do anyway.
- KL: That's what we do.
- TS: What about CETL's role in all of this? Was CETL involved at this point?
- KL: Oh, very much so. When we came back from Madison [Wisconsin], after we spent three days with Parker Palmer in his home, we came back, and CETL and Bill Hill were just really, "Let's talk about these fellowships" and were very supportive.
- TS: That's when the fellowships actually started, after the trip to Madison?
- KL: That's when it started. CETL was just instrumental and continues to be in supporting excellence in teaching and learning and scholarship about teaching and learning, so, yes, very supportive.
- TS: Great. There are several different directions I want to go with the interview, but maybe right now, you're the recipient of the 2011 Distinguished Teaching Award, and you've also won a Foundation Prize a couple of years ago now, I guess, with David Martin for your textbook, wasn't it, *Building Teachers, A Constructivist's Approach to Introducing Education*.
- KL: Yes, it's a mouthful.

- TS: I really want to go both of these ways, teaching and scholarship, but why don't we start with the teaching? I know that nowadays the Distinguished Teaching Award focuses a lot more than it used to on the scholarship of teaching. Why don't you talk about what you did to win the award? You had to do a twenty-page portfolio to apply for the award. Maybe talk about what you said in there. Or, let me just ask you, why do you think you received the award this year, without being too modest?
- KL: Well, I hope, in writing that narrative, I was able to express what kind of a teacher I am, my philosophy of teaching and learning. In writing that narrative, in effect, I guess, I was trying to teach the reader about my teaching. That's difficult in that it's also how our textbook is written. It's all in a constructivist format. Basically, constructivist philosophy, constructivist belief, is that people come into any learning situation already having their own ideas about whatever it is you're going to teach them. If it's science or if it's about how you should teach or how people learn, we all have our own ideas about that.
- TS: Okay, so we're not starting with a blank slate.
- KL: It's not a blank slate.
- TS: Even though they may not know much and what they think they know may be wrong.
- KL: And it may be wrong. That's one thing that constructivist learning theory acknowledges—what you might know could be wrong, it's a misconception. But as your teacher, it's my job to access that misconception and help you change it. It's much more powerful if you construct your own knowledge, and it might be knowledge that replaces that misconception. It's much more meaningful, much more powerful, if you construct that knowledge than if I tell it to you. If I just tell it to you, if I think you have a blank slate and I'm going to tell you how things are, that's still my knowledge; it's not yours. Most students, most learners, myself included, are very good at memorizing the knowledge that somebody tells me, and I can give it right back to you on my test.
- TS: You get an A on the test.
- KL: Yes. I can do great. Especially in microbiology, that was a lot of memorizing. Latin names for bacteria, microbes and everything. No problem, I can do that.
- TS: And this becomes a problem when you get up and lecture in a history class and then test them on what you lectured about.
- KL: That's it. What I discovered too in looking back in my own academic career—when I finally got up into organic chemistry, it occurred to me that I couldn't memorize it. I needed to understand it, and that was a different way of thinking,

- but that is much more powerful. I can recall that. It's more meaningful, it's my knowledge, if I construct my own understanding. In a constructivist-oriented classroom, a teacher's going to walk in knowing, just say it's in my science methods class, all the students there sitting in that class have learned science before, so they already know something about teaching and learning science. What they know might not be best practices, but they certainly have some strong knowledge base based on their experiences, and that is the most powerful learning.
- TS: So a constructivist's theory is we all come in with our experiences and those experiences are going to shape the way I hear what you tell me.
- KL: Exactly.
- TS: In the end it's got to be mine if it's going to be meaningful.
- KL: Right. You're going to take what you already know, and you're going to put it together with the new experiences and the new information that I provide for you and construct into understanding.
- TS: So if you beat me over the head the first day and say forget everything you know and just learn what I tell you, it "ain't gonna" happen.
- KL: No. The other thing about that, when I listen to you say that, just learn what I tell you, who am I? I'm the teacher with a capital "T."
- TS: Well, you're the one getting paid for it, so you're supposed to know it.
- KL: The keeper of all knowledge. But it's still much more meaningful if you come to these conclusions by yourself, so my job as a teacher is to set up some kind of learning opportunity for you that allows you to experience this concept, this knowledge, this skill as hands-on as possible, minds on certainly, and then lead you to your own conclusions. Your conclusions might be different from mine, might be different from the guy sitting next to you, but they're yours, and as long as they work for you at that time, they're right.
- TS: If you approach it that way, the conclusions I reach are mine, but they're not what I started with, I have been changed.
- KL: Right. They may or may not be. There are several outcomes to constructivist learning.
- TS: Oh, they may not be?
- KL: What you already knew might be reinforced, what you thought you knew might be completely replaced, you might say oh wow, or you might carry both.

TS: But this is what parents have always said isn't it? I sent the kid off to college, and they came home ruined.

KL: Yes, that's true! When I teach about teaching, I teach in a constructivist way, so that my students can experience constructivist learning in hopes that that makes an impact on them, so that that's what they want to do. What they know about teaching science is that you sit in a lecture and you learn content information, and then you go into a lab, and you do some activity that is not related at all to what you did in lecture. It's supposed to be, but those connections aren't really drawn.

TS: Or at least they are not obvious to the student.

KL: Right. They are to the instructor, but in a constructivist-oriented science classroom, you do the lab first. You say, "Try this lab, do this, see what happens, and what did you notice?"

TS: I was looking on your website where you said many of your presentations and publications focus on inquiry teaching strategies.

KL: That's it. Inquiry teaching strategies are constructivist learning theory.

TS: So this is where you do the lab first.

KL: Right. It's teaching upside down. In other words, in a history classroom, I can remember learning history by my teacher lecturing, and then she would show a video, and the video supports the lecture, and that's fine, but that's all hers. I loved her in high school, I loved Ms. Brown. She wrote an outline on the board. I memorized it. I watched the video. I gave it back to her on her test. I did great. I loved it. But it was all hers. I don't remember any of it because I gave it back to her on the test. But, if she would have shown the video first and said, "What did you see? What did you notice? How do you think people were feeling at that time?" I could pull out my ideas. Then, in her lecture, in that questioning, she can validate my ideas, so what I've done is I've just told her what I know, and she has reinforced that, and it's all mine.

It's easy in science. Science is probably the easiest discipline to teach with inquiry strategies, according to constructivist learning theory, in that instead of saying something like, "This is the lesson," I used to introduce inquiry teaching to my students. Instead of saying, "Look, air wants to move from areas of high pressure to areas of low pressure. Let me show you. Here's this concept. Believe me, it's the truth because I'm your teacher and I know. Now let me show you." Then you do this classic demonstration of getting an egg to be sucked into a bottle. I don't know if you're familiar with it. It's a hard-boiled egg and a wide-mouthed bottle. You light a piece of scrap paper on fire, put it in the bottle, put the egg on top of the bottle, the flame causes the air in the bottle to heat, and it

escapes through the mouth of the bottle, kind of pushing the egg out of the way. You have to hold the egg, so it won't fall off. Now you've got high air pressure on the outside of the bottle, and low air pressure on the inside of the bottle. The air wants inside the bottle. The egg's in the way, but it's a squishy egg, so the air just pushes the egg in the bottle.

TS: So now the egg ends up in the bottle.

KL: Yes. There's no such thing as sucking. There's no sucking by the bottle. The egg is pushed in. So in a traditional science class I would lecture about that, explain to you what you're going to see, and then prove it. It's all mine. You did no construction of knowledge there.

TS: But now you do the experiment first, and ask them why did it happen?

KL: What do you think happened? There's a lot of questioning. I say, "Watch the egg go in the bottle." They're like, "Ohh! What happened? You lit it, the fire went out, the egg got sucked in." "Really? Okay, tell me why the fire went out." "Well, it used up all the oxygen." "Okay, so what do you know? There's less oxygen in the bottle than outside, right? What do you know about equilibrium? Things want to be in equilibrium." And you just keep asking questions, and eventually students will say, "The egg was pushed in the bottle." "So what can you tell me about how air moves when there's a differential in pressure?" "Oh, air moves from areas of high pressure to areas of low pressure." There it is. That's it. And they did it.

TS: And they're not likely to forget it after that.

KL: No. And my students who want to be teachers all go home and do that for whoever's in their house. Let me teach you this!

TS: We do this in history too. I'm not sure that I've ever done it very well, but I think I spent the first twenty years of my career lecturing and having it committed to memory. Then, I scrapped all that, and the last twenty years I've done it with documents where they read the primary sources first. If they're not prepared for class, they're not going to get much out of it because we discuss the documents. Then, they can come to their own conclusion about why Georgia seceded from the Union because they read what the folks at the time argued about when they were debating the issue.

KL: That's beautiful. That's exactly what inquiry teaching is and constructivist learning. We build new knowledge.

TS: I did it without knowing, it I guess.

- KL: Yes. I think when people teach for awhile and really care about their teaching and the participation of their students and how much their students are involved, that's kind of a natural progression. Give your students credit for being higher order thinkers—you know, beings capable of higher order thinking, and let them use that. Of course, my students are going to be middle grade science teachers. They're teaching adolescents. I want them to be the best teachers they can be, so I need to be a model of that for them. I can't lecture to them about inquiry teaching strategies and constructivist learning. [If I did,] they should throw me out in the parking lot!
- TS: Somewhere along in my career I realized that I was trying to teach the way I wasn't taught.
- KL: Yes, and you know, that's a really well known adage that you tend to teach the way you were taught.
- TS; But I tried to do it the way I wasn't taught.
- KL: And that's harder, so good for you. When my students come into my classroom to learn how to teach science, that's what I'm up against sometimes. They learned science in a traditional way, and my job is to help them turn that upside down. The best way I can do that—I do an inquiry lesson on inquiry lessons, and at the end of the lesson they say, "Oh, wow, this is a really neat lesson." I say, "Guess what; this is an inquiry lesson."
- TS: Not that I didn't have some great role models that I learned from.
- KL: Oh sure. That's what I had to write about in my narrative. In our textbook it's called a constructivist approach. Most textbooks are linear, and constructivist teaching is full of open-ended questions that can go anywhere. So it's a challenge to write a narrative about my teaching and help the reader understand what it is that I do in my classroom. Then with a textbook, boy, is that incredibly challenging! But it worked on this textbook, and we're working on a second one. We're under contract to write a science methods textbook for middle and secondary. My scholarship is what I think it should be. It's writing about teaching. Like I said, if I was doing anything else, I think you should kick me to the curb! That's who I am.
- TS: Okay, so let me see if I can figure where I wanted to go with all of this. In your narrative you basically make the case that the constructivist method is what you apply in your classroom and what you try to get the [future] teachers to go out and do. I guess, too, there's scholarship of writing textbooks, but is there a scholarship of actually testing to see whether these methods work? Or have you done any of that kind of scholarship of teaching and learning to see whether what you're doing in the classroom is actually effective?

KL: Sure. Well, one of the things I'm interested in is in my classroom I can get students excited about inquiry teaching and learning, but when new teachers get out in the classroom, often those methods fall behind. What we know about constructivist learning is that, well, it's kind of difficult because the standardized tests that we use usually don't measure some of the outcomes of constructivist teaching and learning, but they're getting better. So in an inquiry learning classroom what you find is inquiry teaching and learning takes a longer time. Students explore big ideas and don't memorize as many facts and concepts, although they come. You might not see these results on a standardized test. Does that mean it's not the best way to teach? It might mean that those tests aren't necessarily the best measures.

It takes time for the tests to follow best practices. There are standardized tests now that actually do measure skills, not only facts. The national science education standards, the Georgia performance standards for science, any kind of science learning standards, emphasize the higher order thinking skills that go along with doing science, not just memorizing science. The constructivist teaching and learning, that's what's going to get us that practice using those skills.

TS: So you're more or less happy with Governor Nathan Deal's proposing now to get away from No Child Left Behind requirements.

KL: That's interesting.

TS: And at least expanding what you measure?

KL: Yes, science is a second indicator. Yes, as long as when they're measuring it, they measure the right things, and that's where we have to see. The effective outcomes of constructivist teaching are tremendous, but do we measure those? Certainly, I think we'll see some standardized tests that come around to measuring those high order thinking skills. Some of the assessments are really interesting. They're harder because, like I said, they're not just memorizing the parts of a flower, the equation for photosynthesis. They're more, what do you think, and why do you think that? You and I have been literally trained to know that there is a right answer. Nowadays in society, what's emphasized, the type of thinking and the collaboration that we need as a global society, there's not a right answer. There's being able to sit quietly and listen to several answers and collaborate and compromise, and there's some ambiguity there. Well, how do you test that?

It's interesting. What I'm interested in is that might be part of the reason that when new teachers go into the classroom, they're all gung-ho about constructivism and inquiry teaching and learning, but they resort back to traditional methods. I've been asking my students as they leave my classroom and go into student teaching and go into their first year of teaching, are you doing inquiry oriented activities? How often are you doing them? Why? Pretty much

it's the usual. Inquiry oriented activities are harder to manage in a science classroom because the kids are up, it's loud, it's not as structured, parents want to see homework and lecture, lab, test type of thing. It might be different, but constructivism isn't a new thing. It's been around. Dewey was a constructivist, so we know that it's effective. Taking it a step further, talking about making learning more meaningful and allowing students to take ownership, learning by experience and by participation, when I have done presentations with my students in the past few years, I focus on informal or non-formal science education centers, like museums.

TS: Good for you.

KL: I take my students to the aquarium, to the zoo. We go to Chattahoochee Nature Center, and so how do we use these effectively as science teachers? Turn your kids loose at the zoo, and they go on a scavenger hunt. Well, what do they come back with? Think at a higher level here. I took ten teachers to Yellowstone National Park in June with Charlie [Charles J.] Amlaner. These are teachers. Here again, let's put you right in the middle of it. Now what can you do with this in your classroom? Oh, these were area teachers. I had everything from fourth grade teachers to a teacher from Lassiter who does AP Environmental Science, so this broad [range, including] social studies, math, and science. The elementary teachers did language arts, but I don't think I had any upper level language arts teachers. So ten of them. We spent ten days out there and...fabulous. Not only was this just a great bunch of people, but putting them out in the middle of this park, we explored controversial issues where there's no right answer.

We talked about buffalo and the fact that the buffalo leave the park in the winter, and they carry disease out to the cattle, and the cattle ranchers are mad. Well, okay, move the buffalo back into the parks. But then the animal rights activists are mad. So we talked to ranchers. We went out to a couple of ranches. We talked to the Buffalo Field Campaign people who are the animal rights activists. We talked to the National Park Service. It's just fabulous. But that was constructivist learning because they listened. They're having to draw their own conclusions—the learning that they got from that. Like I said, we go to the aquarium. We go to the zoo. Then their assignment is, what are you going to do with this? How can you help students construct new understanding by using this experience? It's your job to provide the experience, not to tell them what things are, how things are. That's exciting. I've got the best job ever! I get to go do neat, fun things like that.

TS: Good. My next question was, you've been here seventeen years, what keeps you at Kennesaw?

KL: Well, when I first started teaching at North Cobb with Wes McCoy, and we'd come up with these ideas about how we wanted to teach things, and Wes never told us, "No, you can't do that,"—it's the same here. My experience has been if I

got interested in something, wanted to do something, wanted to try something new, my chairs, my administrators, have always been supportive. I think that has allowed me—I hope it's like that for other faculty members across the university. I think it's true in my department and my college; we're just so supported. You want to try it, give it a go and see what you can learn from it. Of course, that, in and of itself is very constructivist. What did you learn, what would you do differently next time?

My chair, Susan [L.] Stockdale—it's very important to her that we analyze our course evaluations—what went well, what didn't go well, what are you going to do next time, and then show what happened as a result—again, very constructivist, very scientific in nature. I've had the opportunity to do great things. I taught a graduate level class on science trends and issues where that's all we did was we went on field trips all summer long, a couple of summers ago. Then, how do you teach physics in the context of the environment? They did, and we presented together on that. When I do present—one of my interests is wolf education and using inquiry oriented strategies to help people learn about wolves because a lot of people have misconceptions.

TS: I saw something on your web page about wolf education.

KL: It's not teaching wolves, but it is teaching people about wolves! There are a lot of misconceptions about wolves, and one of the best ways to get at and to change misconceptions and even attitudes is through a constructivist oriented approach. When I go to conferences, I usually present on resources and strategies that science teachers can use to meet their standards in the context of wolves. They're very interdisciplinary. And national parks, I do that as well. Professionally, I travel up to northern Minnesota to the International Wolf Center and learn from them. Then I come back and present that information at the Georgia Science Teachers Association and at the National Science Teachers Association. I spent a whole summer up there in 2005 and worked on some educational materials for them at the Wolf Center. I've been going there since 1997, and I'm very honored and very proud to say that I have good friends there now that are human and wolf. I just got back from there a couple of weeks ago. Next summer I'll be going back up to be a wolf pup nanny team leader where I will help raise a couple of wolf pups with them. That's something that I love personally. I'm a big dog lover, as the Canine-L stuff shows. So I got interested in wolves that way.

TS: So dogs are domesticated wolves?

KL: Yes. To be able to push those two interests together, use inquiry teaching, constructivist teaching strategies to teach about wolves, helping teachers learn how they can use wolves as a context or the environment as a context to meet their science standards, that's just a big example of me being interested in something, and my administrator saying, "Go for it. Bring this into your

scholarship. Bring this into your classroom.” That’s what keeps me at Kennesaw.

TS: Do you think our culture has changed much in the seventeen years you’ve been here?

KL: That level of support....

TS: Has always been there?

KL: And collaboration, at least within my department.

TS: That’s been a constant?

KL: That’s been a constant. I’m someone who really values colleagues and working closely with them. Since it was the five of us up to the twenty of us now, I think that we’ve got a very strong department, and it shows in our programs. That’s real important to me. If that weren’t here....I think I was telling you when I was at Robertsville Junior High School, I did leave there to go back to school full time, and if that had a been a more collaborative environment, one that was like North Cobb, I wouldn’t have; I would have stayed. What held me back were my students. I didn’t want to leave them. I taught eighth grade, and they were leaving to go to high school, so I knew that they were leaving, and so I decided to go too.

TS: They don’t stay do they?

KL: They don’t stay, they move on.

TS: A couple of Bill Hill type questions for you. How would you define a master teacher?

KL: Wow. Immediately what comes to mind is some Bill Buskist stuff that I know. He’s a friend of Bill Hill. [William] Bill Buskist was at Auburn, I believe, but he did some research on effective teachers and interviewed people who were identified as master teachers—interviewed award winning teachers and interviewed students at the college level and asked them to list characteristics of effective teachers. The only characteristic that was consistent across those three populations was enthusiasm. There were others. I think it was the master teachers that gave the most extensive list, and it was content knowledge, organization, cares about students.

I’m going to get this all tangled up with my beliefs about what an effective teacher is. I guess a master teacher is a constantly effective teacher, how about that? To me, mastery implies some sort of longevity or consistency. An effective teacher—all kinds of research are out there, but I’m going to say step one in being

an effective teacher is a relationship with the students. That is something for me personally that I've been thinking about very deeply recently and learning about. To have a classroom environment conducive to learning, I think the first thing you have to have is a good relationship with your students. I think it involves a lot more than it used to or we're acknowledging that there are many facets to that relationship. A lot of that to me includes this culturally relevant pedagogy, acknowledging the unique perspectives that each learner brings to the classroom because if you're going to be a constructivist teacher you have to know where each of those students is coming from.

In my classroom at Kennesaw that's one thing, but in the public school classroom there are so many unique perspectives that need to be acknowledged. Like I said, I've been thinking a lot about this, and it mostly comes from writing the second edition of *Building Teachers* now. That first copyright was in 2007, and I know a lot more about culturally relevant pedagogy, multi-culturism, multi-cultural education paradigms, and I've been doing a lot of reading and researching with that. I'm going to say that in an effective teacher that is step one. You have to have this relationship with your students, and that has to be mutual respect. It has to be unconditional, positive regard for all of your students, especially when you're working with kids. I think an effective teacher has to see students as human beings and also has to be a human being as well, you know.

Like I said, I'm not the teacher with the capital "T"—the knower of all truths. I know what I know, and I'm going to help you construct your understanding of it now. Accessible. You see what I mean? And that's one thing I really enjoy about working with my students is just enjoying them as students, as learners, as people; that's the big kick. I think as a classroom teacher, if that doesn't do it for you, then you're not going to be in teaching long in the public schools.

TS: Since you've been here seventeen years and we have a lot of newer faculty, do they ever seek you out for your opinions or advice on teaching?

KL: Sure. As a matter of fact, just on my way over here one of our new faculty members said, "Can you stop by my office later? I want to talk to you about your classes?" I said, "Send me an e-mail; we'll set up something for tomorrow." Our science method course is taught in a block with several others, so there's a lot of collaboration. We try to model what a middle grade's team does, and we should. Here again, if we're going to teach people how to be middle school teachers, we need to model that for them, so there's a lot of collaboration, and we learn from each other. Pam Cole and I, like I said, we started out together, and Marj Economopoulos, you know, having the opportunity to work with other teachers, we learn from each other. That's happening again. Just yesterday I traded ideas with one of my colleagues about our methods classes.

TS: I know you teach about technology, but what about use of technology in your Intro to Education?

KL: That's another thing. I think it's important for us to model effective use of technology. I get my fur up when people start talking about using technology to teach just because the technology is out there. I don't think that just because every adolescent has an i-phone that you necessarily need to bring i-phones into the classroom. Not unless there's an educational purpose. I'm aware that teachers will sometimes record their lessons on a Podcast. If you can support it, if it's educationally effective, then fine, but let's not just do it to do it. I'm all for a critical review about what technology we bring into the classroom and how we use it. You can use technology as ineffectively as you can use a textbook. What's the right tool for the right time?

I use technology as a visual aide trying to appeal to different learning styles. My students are heading out into classrooms where they're going to be using smartboards, so I've got to use a smartboard. Anything that they're going to see in the classrooms, I try to use as well, so, hopefully, in an effective way, they can learn how to use it. But then also I always encourage them to have a back-up plan because you walk in and that Internet access is down. If that's all you had planned, you're eighth graders will figure out something else to do very quickly unless you've got a back-up plan. I think technology is incredibly important, but I don't like technology in isolation, technology for technology's sake. It's got to be a naturally fitting tool into your learning objectives. I can go back and forth with online classes. Research has shown that the relationship with the teachers is one of the most influential pieces on achievement, and I think it's harder to establish that relationship with your students over the computer.

TS: Have you actually taught online classes?

KL: No.

TS: You don't want to?

KL: I don't know. I've got a really good friend who's an English professor here. Laura [R.] Davis teaches online courses, and her personality comes through, and she has a relationship with her students. Maybe I need to learn how to do that better. That's something that I need to explore.

TS: What I've heard is that it takes a lot more time to teach an online course.

KL: I've heard that as well! But here again, maybe the other reason that I'm really resistant to my teaching an online course is because I get so much out of that interaction with students, I'm not willing to give that up.

TS: I understand they have interaction with students because they're writing back and forth to each other all day long. That's why they're taking so much time. It's just that you don't see them while that's taking place.

KL: Just like the lesson that I was describing earlier with the egg in the bottle, that is just littered with open ended questions.

TS: Yes, and you can't do that online.

KL: My students and I explore questioning skills because that's a big part of teaching science, and I always draw the analogy that I have this softball, and I throw it to you. This is my question. You throw it back, and you can throw it soft, hard, too high, too low, and I've got to be able to catch it and throw it back to you. I don't know if I can do that online. That's a one on one type of thing, that social communication. I don't know. I'm not saying that it's good or bad. I'm saying that I don't get it yet. Maybe that's just something I need to learn more about. If it comes to learning more about things, then I'd rather go out to Yellowstone again. If I'm having to pick and choose what I'm learning more about then....

TS: Well, you're about mid-career at this point I guess. What do you see for your future at Kennesaw or in teaching in general?

KL: I think in teaching I look forward to growing more with our programs, and again not growing bigger. Certainly, that will happen. But I think growing richer in the areas that we mentioned earlier, focusing on social justice, focusing on urban education to serve this population that we have. Most students graduate and they're teachers in this area, so we meet the needs of this population. I look forward to learning more about culturally relevant pedagogy again, to throw that word out, because that's what I'm learning about now. I look forward to doing more things like the Yellowstone teacher project. I would like to take science teachers or interdisciplinary teams of teachers up to Minnesota in the middle of winter to do some dog sledding and have them integrate that experience into their science teaching, reinvigorating science teachers, getting them excited about science.

Also, one thing I forgot to mention before was that when these teachers go back into their classrooms, they're not just telling their students about science. They are scientists, and they show the students how they can be scientists. You don't have to be in a lab. I look forward to doing more things like that. As I mentioned, I have been just recently thinking about it would be fun to teach some actual science classes again. It's been awhile. I look forward to completing the second edition of our textbook and to starting our next methods textbook.

TS; Is that your scholarship agenda for the future?

KL: Yes. I think that first textbook Dave invited me to co-author with him was just a good experience. I enjoyed that, and we did it well. There is a need for a middle grades and secondary constructivist oriented science textbook out there, and I

want to meet that need. So that's what I look forward to doing. I just look out into the future, and it's just all busy! And that's fine!

TS: Well, I'm just about out of questions, I guess. Is there anything that we should have talked about that we haven't?

KL: Gosh, after filling up a whole tape I hope not! I've enjoyed it. I get excited when I talk about teaching. It's the hardest and the best thing I do.

TS: It comes through why you won the award, I think.

KL: Winning that award really meant a lot to me. That was very humbling, and I'm honored to be in your company and with the folks that have won it. I think it's really important that Kennesaw is acknowledging teaching and service and scholarship. I think that's neat.

TS: You get a heavy stipend to do more scholarship of teaching or whatever you want to do.

KL: Yes, I've done a lot of fantasy shopping in my head so far!

TS: So you haven't decided what you want to do yet?

KL: I think it's going to go mostly with technology. I bought an i-Mac when we got the contract to write the second book to go in my downstairs office, but I'm still working on a big Dell laptop, so I think I'm going to get a Mac book Air. I think I'll go over to Apple products again. I go back and forth and back and forth.

TS: I think you were saying off the tape that you were related to the Apple creator.

KL: Yes, Steve Wozniak. He's my first cousin.

TS: He ought to give you free Apple computers, shouldn't he?

KL: You would think! He actually did years and years ago give me an Apple 2GS when they first came out, and I think he helped me get a Mac laptop at cost once, but he's a busy guy. As I mentioned, I'm a late baby, so he's older than I am and lives out in California, but I remember visiting him as a kid. He was out there in his garage working on that computer, so it's kind of neat. He's a neat guy.

TS: Well, I appreciate very much your coming and talking to me today. Thank you very much for the interview.

KL: I appreciate your time and I really enjoyed getting to know how parallel our paths were. That's really neat.

INDEX

- Amlaner, Charles J., 28
Asheville, North Carolina, 2
- Boyer, Ernest L., *Scholarship Reconsidered*, 20-21
Brown, Mrs. (high school history teacher), 24
Brown, Thomas J., 5-6
Buffalo Field Campaign, 28
Buskist, William, 30
- Catawba College, Salisbury, North Carolina, 7-10, 12-13
Chattahoochee Nature Center, 28
Chicago, Illinois
 Chicago First National Bank, 1
 Wood Dale suburb, 1
Cole, Pamela B., 12, 31
Crossville, Tennessee, 2
- Davis, Laura R., 32
Dias, Michael J., 5-6
Doak, E. Dale, 8
Driscoll, Robert L., 11-12, 14
- East Tennessee State University, 2-3
Eaton, Arlinda, 17, 19-20
Economopoulos, Marjorie, 12, 31
Elmore, Randy F., 12
- Funk, M. Leigh, 12
- Georgia Science Teachers Association, 29
- Haworth, Shirley, 12
Hill, George W. (Bill) IV, 21, 30
- Impey, William D., 10-11
International Wolf Center, 29
- Johnson City, Tennessee, 3
- Kennesaw State University
 Bagwell College of Education
 NCATE review, 11
 Department of Secondary & Middle Grades Education, 11-13, 28-30

- Move to Kennesaw Hall, 13
- Teacher Ed programs, 14, 16
- 2011 Retreat, 17-20
- National recognition of middle school program, 19
- Willingham Hall, 13
- Kennesaw Hall, 13
- Changes in campus culture since 1995, 14, 30
- Nontraditional students, 14-15
- Focus on teaching, 16
- Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, 16, 20
- Center for Excellence in Teaching & Learning (CETL), 17, 21

Lees-McCray College, Banner Elk, North Carolina, 2

Loomis, Kimberly S.

- Background, 1
- Father, 1-2, 6-7
- Junior high school experience, 1
- Sister, 1
- Mother, 2-3, 6-7, 9
- High school experience, 2-3
- Undergraduate college experience, 2-3
- Decision to major in microbiology, 3
- First graduate school experience, 3
- Decision to switch to science education, 3-4
- Teaching at North Cobb High School, 4-6, 28
- Teaching at Robertsville Junior High School, 4-6, 30
- Doctoral program, 6-9
- Teaching at Catawba College, 7-10, 12-13
- Reasons for coming to Kennesaw, 9-11
- First semester at Kennesaw, 12
- Service on building committee for Kennesaw Hall addition, 13
- Teaching traditional and nontraditional students, 14-15
- Co-author of *Building Teachers* textbook, 16, 21, 31
- Involvement in developing KSU's broader definition of scholarship, 16-17, 20
- Service as CETL Fellow, 17
- Recipient of Foundation Prize and Distinguished Teaching Award, 21-22, 34
- Constructivist teaching philosophy, 22-27
- Work on new science methods textbook, 26
- Measuring effective outcomes of constructivist teaching, 27-28
- Presentations with students, 28
- Field trips with students, 28
- Trip to Yellowstone National Park, 28, 33
- Reasons for staying at KSU, 28-30
- Interest in wolves and wolf education, 29, 33
- Presentations on science teaching in context of wolves, 29
- Definition of master teacher, 30-31

Use of technology in classroom, 31-32
Desire to teach science classes again, 33
Scholarship agenda, 33
Loomis, Marilyn (mother), 2-3, 6-7, 9

Martin, David J., 16, 21, 33
Maryville, Tennessee, 2
Matthews, Julia, 20
McCoy, R. Wesley (Wes), 5, 28

National Middle School Association, 19
National Science Teachers Association, 29
North Cobb (Georgia) High School, 4, 28, 30

Palmer, Parker, 16, 20-21
Papp, Daniel S., 18
Petelle, Michael P. (Pic), 5-6, 8
Pike, Lee, 3

Robertsville Junior High School, Oak Ridge, Tennessee, 4-5, 30
Rugg, Edwin A., 17, 20

Siegel, Betty L., 16, 20
Smith, Ann D., 12
Stockdale, Susan L., 29

Tennessee Tech, 2

University of Tennessee, 3-4

Wallace, Deborah S., 11
Webb, Linda C., 10-12
Wozniak, Steve, 34

Yellowstone National Park, 28

Zheng, Binyao, 12

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