

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH PATRICK L. TAYLOR

CONDUCTED BY STEPHEN WATSON

EDITED BY STEPHEN WATSON AND THOMAS A. SCOTT

for the

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KSU Oral History Series, No. 108
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Interview with Patrick L. Taylor
Conducted by Stephen Watson
Edited by Stephen Watson and Thomas A. Scott
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Location: Telephone interview from Sturgis Library, Room 233

SW: Dr. Patrick Taylor at one point in his career was the first chair of the Visual Arts department here at Kennesaw. Dr. Taylor, it's great to talk to you; how are you doing today?

PT: Very good.

SW: Great. Let's just begin at the beginning. Tell me where you were born and where you grew up?

PT: I was born in Valdosta, Georgia in 1948.

SW: Did you grow up in Valdosta?

PT: Yes, I did.

SW: What was your childhood like there in Valdosta?

PT: My parents were middle class; my father was a highway engineer. It was a very basic childhood. Valdosta is a big sports community in football, and I had a legacy of older brothers who had been football stars. For some strange reason, I didn't excel in football, but gravitated toward the visual arts, which was a real challenge in Valdosta at the time.

SW: Was your family supportive of that or did you get any sort of push back going in that direction?

PT: My family was very supportive, my father especially, but back in the 1950s and 1960s there wasn't much of a mechanism of community support for someone who is interested in the arts.

SW: Did you have any mentors during your childhood outside of your family?

PT: I had one high school teacher who was very supportive of my interests and nurtured me along, and then several other teachers outside of art were very supportive. Then I wound up going to Valdosta State University for my undergraduate degree in art.

SW: That would have been in the late 1960s?

PT: Yes, it was.

SW: At Valdosta State was there any kind of art community there?

PT: Oh, yes. That's where I was really able to get a lot of training and experience.

SW: How would you describe that community at that time, the arts community at Valdosta State?

PT: It was a small art program, but a lot of dedicated teachers. It was during the 1960s, so it was a time of change and growth. The art program there actually was in the main building, and it was relatively small. Then by the beginning of my senior year they had moved into a new fine arts facility, and they were really moving up in the world of art actually for teaching.

SW: Valdosta State at this time, were there kinds of things going on there, or at least on the scale that it could happen in Valdosta in terms of students protesting the Vietnam War—the cultural revolutionary stuff that was going on—was that happening at Valdosta as well?

PT: Yes and no. There was a lot of discussion, a lot of change, but out and out protests were not really there.

SW: What made you decide to go to Valdosta?

PT: Actually, I think it was just kind of a default decision. It was a four-year college, and actually my neighborhood was right next to the college. The head of the art department reached out and tried to encourage me to go there, and that's what I did.

SW: You moved from Valdosta; you got your master's and Ph.D. both from UGA in the late 1970s. I was wondering if you could talk about that transition from Valdosta to UGA at Athens?

PT: That was very interesting. There was an art teacher there, Aileen Dodd, whose father [Lamar Dodd] had been head of the art department at the University of Georgia. She was an influence when I worked with her. Unfortunately, my vision was that I was going to go up to New York and be a great artist or I was going to go to a graduate program and was making plans in that direction. Then I received a low draft number my senior year, and I was diverted into the army for a couple of years.

SW: A low draft number was a virtual guarantee that you would get drafted, correct?

PT: Absolutely. When they had that draft number in December, and it popped up, and mine was 111, I knew that I would be drafted. In fact, I guess, in April of my senior year, I was sent to have a physical. Then when I graduated the next week, I was being reclassified, so by August I was in the army.

SW: What year was that?

PT: In 1970.

SW: When you say you were reclassified, you were reclassified from what to what?

PT: As long as you were in good standing with the school, you had a student default permit, but if you'd completed school or dropped out of school, then you were reclassified as to being 1A or being available for military service provided if you passed the physical. I basically spent two years in the army, went overseas to Thailand, and then I was released after service very quickly and came back.

SW: You had no plans or designs of staying in the army past your two year, whatever you want to call that, obligation?

PT: Oh, yes, absolutely not.

SW: Do you remember where your basic training was?

PT: It was Ft. Jackson, South Carolina.

SW: I guess that must have been pretty trying, basic training for you?

PT: It was a very unique experience, yes, growing up in south Georgia, being put into an army that had a lot of diverse people. During that time, it was an eye opener for me, it sure was. From there, I was in the Signal Corps, and they sent me up to Ft. Monmouth, New Jersey. What had happened to me—I extended my obligation—enlisted—because an army recruiter said, “I can get you out of the infantry or any kind of combat situation in Vietnam. You can enjoy the Signal Corps. You’re a smart guy, and you scored high on the test.” So when I got to Ft. Monmouth in New Jersey, they announced that everybody that goes through this training will be sent to Vietnam. So I said, “Well, that’s just the way it goes.” What happened was, by that time they were cutting back in Vietnam, but they sent just four of us to Vietnam, and the rest of us went to Thailand as a kind of support troop.

SW: After 1970 you would have been talking about the program of Vietnamization of the War, I guess, would have been the term for it.

PT: Actually, by 1970, there were a lot of things going on. One was that I have the Vietnam Service Medal—not the Campaign Medal—but my Signal group in Thailand—we were putting in Signal sites on the Cambodian, Laotian, and Chinese border and supporting the Air Force with the bombing, with the communications and all of that kind of stuff. The army at the time—people don't realize in this country—they were thinking that the whole Vietnam War was going to spread into Thailand. In fact, they had already had some confrontation from rebels, and the United States Army was really thinking, we will be getting ready to start fighting in Thailand too. We were setting up communication sites and everything. We were also helping put Signal sites in places like Cambodia and Laos, which no one else officially knew about.

SW: How long were you in Thailand?

PT: I was there for a year.

SW: One year. How would you describe your daily life while you were there?

PT: I lived in Bangkok in a hotel, and I was the artist for the colonel in the headquarters company, so I had a very good life.

SW: Interesting.

PT: We had a coup in Bangkok when the Thai forces tried to take over the government, and that got to be a little bit tense for a few days, but other than that it was very pleasurable.

SW: Sure. While you were over there were you able to take part in any sort of art scene going on in Bangkok at the time?

PT: Not really. Because I had studied ceramics, I was really fascinated with the art there and the museums and the antique shops and stuff like that, and that was there, but we really lived a pretty isolated life. The Thai people didn't really associate with the American soldiers.

SW: I guess you get out of there in 1972?

PT: I got out early because they were cutting back in Southeast Asia. I'd gotten married right before I left for the army. So all of a sudden in February of 1972, I was just dumped back into the civilian life. My wife at the time was teaching in Valdosta. She had gotten a job there, so I went back to Valdosta and landed a job teaching high school art for four years.

SW: Was this at one of the local schools?

PT: Yes, the local high school. I always think that I got the job—the superintendent liked my wife and what she was doing. Then when he realized I was a GI getting out of the army—he had been a B-17 pilot and understood what it was to make the transition—and he just gave me a job actually teaching art, and that was my way into it.

SW: You were there for four years you said?

PT: Right. One thing I did when I was getting out of the army—in Southeast Asia they were just sending us home as fast as they could because they were pulling out of Vietnam. They told us we could leave and finish the rest of our obligation in the army reserve or National Guard. They said, “What day do you want to leave?” I said, “February 20.” The reason I did that, I calculated and that would be eighteen months and one day, and if you get that you get full GI Bill educational benefits. So I waited and went off of active duty. So when I came back to Valdosta, I realized I had four years of educational benefits that I could use at any given time.

SW: After your four years of teaching at the high school, is this when you decided to go back for your master's?

PT: Yes, it was. I had gotten to a point where I was sort of restless. I didn't want to stay in Valdosta for the rest of my life. I went up and took some summer school courses at the University of Georgia in the art department, and I really realized I could actually make more money by being a graduate assistant and going on the GI Bill than teaching. So I left teaching and went back and started on my master's. Once I got my master's degree and really liked it and worked well with everyone, I just continued on with my doctorate.

SW: When you were beginning your studies, you were already teaching in Valdosta. Was art education your main focus by this time?

PT: Yes, it was. I had become interested in that because that was what I was doing. At the same time, even when I was in Valdosta, I had a pottery studio and making art and things like that too. I was very much involved in that.

SW: When you moved to Athens to go to UGA, did you find that Athens was a more conducive, nurturing environment for an artist?

PT: Absolutely. You know Athens and the art program—it was one of the major art programs and one of the largest in the United States in universities. Lamar Dodd built an empire there. My conduit was his daughter had taught at Valdosta State, so I had an entrée into that whole system. It was a very powerful program at the time that I was there.

SW: If we could back up a little bit and let me just ask, what kind of artist would you describe yourself as?

PT: Well, it's interesting. I studied painting and ceramics at my undergraduate level. When I went to graduate school, my purpose was art education. I did painting and studied with some very good painters, including Elaine De Kooning, who was a visiting painter from New York who was the big rage in painting at that time. I've just done a lot of different types of things over my career.

SW: I noticed, you were going to UGA in the late 1970s. This would have been around the time of the music scene really taking off there with R.E.M. and the B-52s. Were you rubbing shoulders with them at all? Were you close to that scene at all?

PT: Not a lot, but I was very much aware of it. One of the main people in R.E.M. was Jim Herbert, who was the painting teacher in the art department. He knew Michael Stipe, and they all had been to his house and everything. I was never really in that type climate.

SW: So, I guess, you were on the periphery then of all that at the time.

PT: That type of creative energy was everywhere, and the whole program rooted that type of experimentation and energy and so forth. I really liked Athens. I had the GI Bill benefits; I had four years there that allowed me to do a lot of intense study.

SW: I noticed on your resume too while you were there this listing as the elementary art specialist for the Clarke County Schools. I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about that.

PT: While I was there, my first wife and I had divorced. I met my current wife—she was a graduate student in the art program too.

SW: What is your current wife's name?

PT: Sally. We were married, and I was running out of the GI Bill, and I was trying to do my dissertation. I had already moved through the master's and was working on the doctorate, and I wanted to stay in Athens. I did not want to get a university job and just leave because I had seen a lot of my friends do that, the dissertation ABD [all but dissertation]. A lot of them would never get finished, and I was determined to get that dissertation done while I was there because I had access to the library and resources and professors and so forth. What I did, I finished up all my coursework, continued to work on the dissertation, and I would teach elementary school at the same time. Actually, looking back on that, that was really important. I also taught a Saturday program with Frank Wachowiak who is a very well known teacher of children. All of his experiences really prepared me.

I remember one of my major professors told me, when I said I'm going to have to go back to teaching elementary school, "That will be one of the best things you've ever done." Looking back on that, it was because that gave me six years of public school teaching experience, the high school and the elementary level, so I don't regret that. It was a very important part of my development as a professional.

SW: What sort of students were you teaching?

PT: All the students I taught in the high school in Valdosta or in the elementary school, they were in public school. A lot of them were middle class, and a lot of them were at an economic disadvantage, mixed races and so forth, so it was just typical public school students.

SW: Any sort of antagonistic attitude toward the arts in dealing with those students or their parents even?

PT: Unfortunately, visual arts—we've always been on the fringe of the curriculum in the public schools. But as an art specialist, it was really hard work—especially, I would have to go in and teach 150 kids a day. It was real work. Looking back on it though, one of the most interesting things, I think, is a pattern I've had over the years of program building. I think, going back to my undergraduate days seeing what happened at Valdosta State, how the program expanded—more faculty and then a building. That was a model that interested me. Then when I taught high school, we had a real dynamic high school teacher that I taught with, Jerry Pilcher at Valdosta. He had built a really good high school art program with a lot of resources and everything, and I taught there, and that was a model for me. Then when I went to Georgia, I saw how a dynamic art program works. That was a real influence on me too. That brings me to Kennesaw. I think I've had several opportunities to see how programs in art can build and grow before I arrived at Kennesaw.

SW: So you come to Kennesaw straight from UGA. Had you completed your dissertation when you got to Kennesaw?

PT: It is very interesting. That summer, we'd had our first child. I had been at Georgia for six years, and I decided it is time to finish this dissertation and go out and find another job. I had been very successful teaching in the elementary school. I taught at Fowler Drive Elementary, and the principal wanted me to stay there and teach, but I thought I needed to leave Athens. I went to a national conference and interviewed with different colleges and universities and also applied and interviewed at Kennesaw. So I was in the job hunt—that would have been in the summer of 1982. I finished my doctorate then, and I remember going over to Kennesaw and interviewing with [Dean of the College] Gene Huck and [Chair of the Humanities Division] John Greider and all the people at Kennesaw. What was interesting is they sent me back a letter saying that they were going to offer me a position, but if I had the doctorate it would be \$21,000 a year and

without it, it would be \$19,000. My wife saw it and said, "You've got to get this doctorate."

SW: You were pretty much on your way to getting it, but I guess that was just a little extra motivation for you then?

PT: I just had to finish my dissertation. I remember my major professor—the tradition is, oh, we'll just stop working and go tour Europe and look at art in Europe and all this stuff. In May he said, "I'm going to Europe. I'll be back the end of June." So he comes strolling in, and I've got all my research and stuff in this room, and I'm sitting there writing. He says, "What are you doing?" I said, "I'm finishing my doctoral dissertation. I need to get this committee together because I'm going to be ready to defend it in August." He said, "You're joking." I said, "No, I've been here six years; this chapter is done."

SW: What was your dissertation on?

PT: It was on the formative influences of twenty-four renowned American artists—on their childhood development and especially their high school and secondary experiences. It was very interesting. It's like an oral history in that I interviewed all of these artists like you, the same kind of tape recording that you're doing now.

SW: Can you give me a few names of some people that you talked to?

PT: Duane Hanson, all the big artists of the time, Kenneth Noland. I'd do a lot of research on how to get access to them, and then I'd just call them up and tell them what I was doing and asked them if they would do an interview. I was particularly interested in whether art teaching experiences they had had as a young person, what kind of influence that had on their development as a professional artist. The first person I called was Duane Hanson who was at the time a really well known New York sculptor. He was real nice and agreed to do the interview. So when I called up all these other people they would say, "Well, who have you talked to?" I'd say, "Duane Hanson." They'd say, "Okay, I'll talk to you." Very similar stuff that you're doing now where I would have to do the interview. Then I had somebody transcribe them. Then I had to analyze the data and so forth.

SW: What sort of findings did you come up with?

PT: It was interesting. I was having the proposition that there would have been so many wonderful art teachers that would have contributed to the development of these professional artists and their success. There were some that recalled that their art teacher was a great influence, but what was very interesting to me was that teachers that were not in the arts could also have an influence on these artists. Music teachers, chemistry teachers, but I think the core bunch had encounters

with committed, energetic teachers that did shape and influence their development.

SW: Since what you were doing was art education, it's got to be encouraging then to know that you can still have some impact.

PT: Let me skip forward to Kennesaw. When I came to Kennesaw, one of the first things I had to do was to write an art major. I had never gone through that whole process of going through committees and so forth, but I'll never forget, I had been working on this with the faculty in the art program, and we were getting ready to go to one of the big final committees. A group of the faculty who were on the committee came to me—I think it was on a Friday—and they were looking at my proposal and said, "This is unacceptable; you can't do this; you have to do that." Then they said, "If you can't have this revised and to us by Monday morning, we can't hear this and approve this program." I sat back and took a deep breath, and I said, "I've heard that before when I was doing my doctoral dissertation." What these guys don't realize is I'm going to go home over the weekend and do all of their revisions. So we will make that committee review on Tuesday. My connection is that my graduate studies, especially the research and dissertation, actually served me well when I got to Kennesaw.

SW: When you got here what was the art department like?

PT: It's interesting. Kennesaw—when I arrived, I was really shocked because it was such a small campus. They had just built the Sturgis Library. They had just built the Humanities building. But a lot of the buildings that they had had [been here] since the beginning of the college—just those little, small, yellow-brick, box buildings were there. When I first arrived, I said, "Wow, this is a four year college that looks more like a community college," which it had been. I was shocked from that standpoint. But one thing, though—the Humanities building had about four nice art studios. One of the reasons they had that, I believe, is that—I wasn't the first art teacher. Tom [M. Thomson] Salter had been the first art teacher from, I think, the beginning of Kennesaw Junior College. He had been an art teacher from the Atlanta public schools. I think he had even been the Coordinator of Art for the Atlanta Public Schools. He had come to the University of Georgia in the same kind of model that I had, and he started the art classes and the art program at Kennesaw Junior College when it first started. Then Barbara Swindell and Olleen Williams and some other people had come and taught. Tom had been real instrumental in getting space in this new Humanities building that was built. The ground floor—we had those studios down there, and I think that was very important.

SW: I just took a class where we dealt with KSU history in the spring, and I'm trying to remember, is the Humanities building Willingham Hall today?

PT: [That was the old Humanities Building. The new Humanities Building is] where the English department is housed.

SW: Okay, the much bigger building then. So you guys, you say you had four studios. Which floor did you say of that building were you in?

PT: Ground floor. I think now they have writing labs and everything here. They've added on to that building. It was not anything the size of what it is the last time I saw it. It had been built in [1981], so it was a very new building, one of the newer buildings on campus. Can I just go on and tell you other things that I noticed? I think when I arrived in 1982, Betty Siegel [1981] and Ed Rugg [1982] had just arrived too, and the college had just been converted from two-year to four-year [first upper level classes offered in 1978] and we were in a real transition period. I remember interviewing there, and the focus was, "It's time to create a four-year art major." They had already done that in music, and music was up and running as a four-year program. There was a real push at that time to get as many four-year degree programs in place and operating as possible because they were really trying to shake off that image of just being a two-year institution. We were in transition. I think there were still some two-year associate degrees in place, and when I was hired to come in and teach there, one of the charges that I was given was to see if I could move the art program into a four-year major.

SW: Okay. You mentioned the—I don't know, confrontation might be too strong of a word—but the meeting that you told about the revisions that you need to make. Were you able to go back and make those revisions?

PT: I was. And I'll tell you my mistake. In going back to Tom Salter, I can't say enough about Tom. He had a lot of courses and things already in place since he had been teaching. Also, Tom had a beachhead for the visual art thing. Tom really believed that everybody that was educated in the liberal arts needed to have an appreciation of the visual arts. He was really good at teaching all the students on the campus Introduction to Art. Some of the basic foundation courses and people really responded to that, so there was a beachhead there of art already there and a lot of courses were already on the books and in the catalogs. It was just a matter of adding some courses and then pulling it together into a BA degree of art. My mistake, when I first got there, was I wasn't in tune with the concept of Kennesaw College at the time, which was that we are in a liberal arts tradition. We were an excellent two-year school, and now we're moving into an excellent four-year liberal arts type of program. The emphasis was that you would have a major, but then you would also study other areas in the form of a minor and electives and so forth. Well, I came over there from a big program where everybody just takes as many art classes as you possibly can. So I didn't follow that minor upper level elective model and so forth. I didn't pay a lot of attention to the Core curriculum, which was very important. When I started proposing all these programs, they didn't quite fit the model that all the other majors were following. So the people from the curriculum committee had to come and tell me

I had to adjust my curriculum and be in sync with all the other liberal arts programs.

SW: So incorporating these upper level classes—what would be upper level electives?

PT: Let me just explain how it worked. You had your Core curriculum, your two-year courses, like your basic English, your history, your biology, and so forth. Then within that you could have, I think, four courses in your major area. Then after that you would have a forty-hour major—this was on the quarter system—followed by a twenty-hour minor, which was supposed to be outside of your major area. Then you would have another twenty hours of upper division electives. It was a real liberal arts degree program that most of the majors were following at that time. I just had to go back in that initial effort to get a four-year art program. I had to go back and just plug all of our courses into that model. Actually, looking back on it, what I thought we should have, or what I was trying to build, was what we called a Bachelor of Fine Arts [where] everything is concentrated in art. Looking back on it, we really would not have been prepared to deliver that kind of program with a limited number of faculty—we didn't have enough space and resources. So going back to that BA degree in Art—in the first years of the program, it served us well.

SW: Do you remember what year that was?

PT: I came in 1982. Tom and Barbara Swindell and myself—we started sitting down working on the major around '83. Roberta Griffin, who became the gallery director and was really a big force in the art program, came in about that same time [1983]. We all sat down and started working on the program around '83. I had a connection, and Tom had a connection, and I'll just tell you this story. When I was at Valdosta State, there was a vice president there named [W.] Ray Cleere, and Ray Cleere had been good friends with Tom Salter in the Atlanta City School System. He knew me and my first wife at Valdosta State. Well, by the time I got to Kennesaw, and Tom was at Kennesaw, Ray Cleere was the academic vice chancellor for the Board of Regents. He reviewed all the programs that were put before the Board of Regents. When we sent the art major down there in 1984, he was there and was very receptive to our program and proposal. It doesn't hurt to have friends in higher places.

SW: It's not what you know; it's who you know, sometimes.

PT: Yes. He didn't really do us a lot of favors, but he was open to it, accepted it, and helped us get it through the Board of Regents.

SW: Was that just one attempt and you guys got it?

PT: We got it on one attempt. It was implemented—the first major started in 1985. We were not a department. We only had four faculty by that time, and we were

not a department. We had been placed in another department called the Department of Liberal Studies. Here we are trying to make new programs and so forth. When Ed Rugg and Betty Siegel got to the campus, a lot of the government structure and the structure of the school and everything was more like a two-year junior college model. We had divisions—for example, the division of Humanities and the division of Social Sciences. Rugg and Siegel decided that we've got to change this. This is not the structure that will grow the college. So, right when we were doing all of this, they also had a major reorganization where they created a school of Arts and Behavioral Sciences.

With that, you had the [chairman] of the Social Sciences (which was George [H.] Beggs) and John [C.] Greider, who was the head of Humanities. There was this kind of tug of war, who would become the dean of the new School of Arts and Behavioral Sciences, the School of Business and the School of Science that they had and so forth. So there was a lot of administrative realignment during that time. We were getting the art major on board, and they were creating new departments. A group of us, like Foreign Language, Philosophy, [and] Art—they didn't know where to put us because we didn't have enough faculty to really form a department. You had to have at least five. So they just created this department called the Department of Liberal Studies and put us all together. David [M.] Jones was the department chair. Some of us had majors. The art [faculty] just implemented this major. So that was a kind of catchall department.

SW: A kind of hodge podge, I guess.

PT: It was, and it worked okay. But the school reorganization at that time was really critical. So I have to give credit to Betty Siegel and Ed Rugg. I've talked with Ed before, and he said that, "I had the same kind of shock as you did when I got to Kennesaw—how small it was," but he saw a lot of potential. Siegel and Rugg—they had to move forward and say, "Okay, we can't go on the way we've been going on. We've got to have a new administrative structure and academic structure and so forth." When I was there, I went through a whole series of those kinds of things.

SW: It sounds like right as you got here, you hit the ground running in being a part of all this.

PT: Yes, and I will tell you one other thing. I'm not trying to be negative, but I think in history you ought to know the whole dynamic of what was going on. There was some competitiveness back during that time with programs. I was part of being competitive too. One of the things that I encountered when we were trying to get the art major through was some of my colleagues in other departments would say, "There's no need to have an art major. You will not have anyone majoring in it except for just a few people. It'll be a drain on the resources. We should not approve an art major, but go to something to where the vocational possibilities are greater, and there will be more people there." They even looked

at music and said, "Look, music only has a handful of people. That's the way the art department will be too." I had done some research and studies and little surveys among the students, and stepped forward and said, "Oh, no, in my proposal we will have, by the end of the year, twenty-five to thirty majors. Then by so many years, we'll have this and by three years we'll have seventy majors." We implemented the art program, and immediately we surpassed those projections to where we had about thirty people that were majoring in art just from the get-go. Then we started growing very fast after that.

SW: Why do you think that was?

PT: There was a need there. There was an enthusiasm among the faculty of Tom and Barbara and Roberta and myself. It was a high energy kind and an excitement. That was a part of that. We also started doing things like having concentrations within our liberal arts degree. One of them was graphic design, and we quickly had to hire a graphic design teacher. We had very little resources. Like everybody else at Kennesaw, I think that's the thing. In the history of Kennesaw, during the 1980s and the 1990s, for the people who were working there, the [teaching] loads, the pressures, the numbers that you were dealing with, and the limited resources—it was just constantly excruciating that you never had enough faculty. You had too many people in classes usually. You never had enough resources, but the pressure was to keep growing and expanding because you can't just stand still.

SW: Right. When you described the campus and the faculty and administration when you got here, what were the students like when you got here?

PT: That's very interesting, and for me that was the real adjustment. Betty Siegel used to always emphasize the nontraditional students, the fact that we had a lot of students that were not just out of high school and just coming to Kennesaw for their first undergraduate experience. We had a lot of transfer students. We had a whole number of adult, older students, who had attempted to go to college or university and had not completed or had dropped out, who were working and coming back. It was a very diverse group. Then we had some senior students who had finished a career. I remember a whole number from IBM and places like that who had finished their career in business. They needed to retire or semi-retire, and they wanted to do what they wanted to do. They would be coming back to get an art degree. So it was a very mixed bag.

The other thing that was really amazing to me when I came to Kennesaw was how our schedule was set up that in the morning from eight o'clock until twelve o'clock we would have classes just jam packed. Then, in the afternoon, there would be nobody there. Then at five o'clock, you'd see the parking lot fill up for the evening sessions. Some of us would wind up teaching at eight o'clock in the morning, and then we'd come back and teach at night too because we just didn't have enough faculty to cover everything. What we were doing in the art

department was being done across the whole campus. People were really going that extra mile, I think, to cover all the bases of teaching and service to the students and so forth.

Another thing that I saw occur at Kennesaw—and you didn't realize what was happening until it became a fact a lot of times—and it was this: Ed Rugg and Betty Siegel could bring us in as faculty, and we'd be talking about space and parking and offering courses, and it was pointed out with those things, we've got to start using the afternoon periods. You cannot think that you can just teach in the morning and in the evening and forget about that block of time. The buildings are not being utilized. The faculty could be teaching this. I know that we started, in the scheduling of classes and everything, shifting things around to where the students gradually gravitated toward taking classes in the morning, the afternoon, and in the evening, so eventually that became a fully occupied facility.

SW: How do you facilitate something like that?

PT: Well, I'll tell you how they did that. Department chairs and the people in charge of the schedule—the deans got the orders from Ed Rugg to start, saying, "You've got to start offering classes throughout the day. Some of the classes that are maybe critical that students need, start scheduling them after lunch. But we've got to get people in the mindset that they can take classes around the clock." It's just a gradual transition. Then with more and more students arriving on the campus and the demand—people got to a point where they would say, "I'll just take the class when I can get the class." So it just evolved.

SW: I guess out of necessity for the students then. If that's the only time this class I need is offered, then I guess I have to rearrange my schedule kind of thing.

PT: Right, and it got to the point where because we were just scheduling in the morning and then the afternoon, we couldn't schedule all the classes that the people needed just on those periods. So it just passed the college through. We had to do that to accommodate the demand. One other thing I was going to tell you about—the art major—some people didn't think that we needed it, that it would be a drain on resources. The other thing is that after we really got off to a good success with numbers of students, we hired a graphic design person, which was critical.

SW: Do you remember that person's name?

PT: You know, this is amazing, I think the first person that we hired was Beverly [K.] Ayres [1988]. What happened was, I was very restless with what we were doing. I didn't think that the Liberal Studies department model was serving us well. I came very close in 1984 to leaving Kennesaw and going to another school, and even had an offer. George Beggs called me up and did a little counter offer and said, "You can be the coordinator of the art program." So, I said, "Okay, I'll

stay.” So I was the art coordinator, but I always felt like we needed a department chair and a department to be an advocate for the visual arts and so forth.

So in 1985, or maybe '86, I said, “Dr. Beggs we have five faculty. That qualifies us for a department, and we need to form the Department of Visual Arts.” Dr. Beggs, said, “Oh, wait a minute, money’s tight. I wouldn’t have any money in the budget to even get a departmental secretary which you’d have to have.” I told him, “You go ahead and do that, form this department. I’ve got a new McIntosh computer that’s just wonderful, and I’ll be the secretary. I’ll just handle all my secretarial and administrative work in the department if you’ll just go ahead and make us a department.” So he said, “Okay, I’ll do that.”

That was at the same time—and this is hard for you young folks to understand—but we didn’t have computers back in the early 1980s. I’m trying to remember. I guess it was around 1983 that we first started getting these very basic, crude word processor computers. Not that you were using a Window system. It was a DOS system. You’d have to do all of these prompts to boot it up, and then you could do basic word processing. Before then we had secretaries with typewriters. So at that time we had all the computers and in graphic design we were willing to use the McIntosh computer, and I started using it, and I felt like I could do all the administrative work for the department on the McIntosh computer, which I did. For about a year there I did secretarial work and did all the reports and everything, and we had a department formed which is really critical.

Then the following years, I guess around 1988—because we had formed the department in 1987—we implemented the art major in '85, and so in '88, I think—Dr. Beggs said, “Okay, I’ve got money to let you have a secretary, but I don’t have an office. I just don’t have any space.” I said, “Okay, the secretary can just share an office with me.” We had fairly large offices in the art department, so the first secretary, who was Caroline Gibbs, for the first couple of years she just had a little desk in my office, and that’s the way we conducted business. Then as we grew in faculty, we had to start dividing up offices any way we could to accommodate new faculty members.

SW: It sounds like your transition was fairly easy going into the chair of the visual department there because you were the coordinator of what was the precursor to that department. I mean, I’m not saying it was an easy transition if you were having to do your own secretarial work.

PT: I think you have a good point. I remember when they were forming the department. Ed Rugg and Dr. Beggs called the art faculty in, and they sat down and talked about their support of me becoming the art department chair. So that’s the way that came about.

SW: I guess just moving forward after the department of Visual Arts is created, how fast is the department growing, and how fast are you getting students in?

PT: It was growing at an unbelievable rate. I will just tell you, I was always hustling and fighting for faculty positions and resources and space. We were growing so much that we were able to start moving up onto the second floor, and we created a graphic design studio. Well, actually, let me backtrack. There was a language lab in a little classroom on the ground floor, and our first graphic design studio—they moved the language lab out. There was a lot of tension there, and we took over that, and we made it into a graphic design studio. Then from there we moved up and got a studio upstairs and just kept creeping slowly upstairs to the art history room, graphic design, and really there was a tension and pressure between the art department and the English department [that] was also growing. Everybody was growing, so this was always a difficult problem, but we were growing so fast that our space needs were just overwhelming.

At the same time, we had a real good, active student group and a great exhibition program that Roberta Griffin had developed. So we were really doing a lot of high profile things. We created and revised a student organization, Visions: The Student Art Guild. Our majors for some reason were very enthusiastic. They would attend meetings, and we would do activities. We would take trips up to north Georgia every year for a weekend of painting and sketching, and we'd take twenty students or thirty students. Then Roberta started developing museum trips. We would get about thirty or forty students and put them on a plane out at Hartsfield Airport. They'd take \$200.00, and they'd fly up to New York City. We'd take them to all the museums. We'd get to stay at a hotel, and then we'd get back on the plane and fly back on Sunday night. We had a lot of energetic type things going on.

We were growing, and I know in the 1990s, I felt, as a department chair, that we had to have a new building or had to have more space. I even got to a point where I thought we could rent space off campus. That was my idea because at the time there were a lot of warehouse type industrial spaces that had come up around campus. There had been some economic setbacks where there were some spaces available, and I went around looking for those. I'll never forget; I found a space that I thought would just be fantastic. Ed Rugg had encouraged me to do that. I went in and told Roger Hopkins, who was Vice President of Business [and Finance] at the time, that we had this space and how much it would cost and we needed it. He listened, and he said, "I'll get back with you." When I came back with the deal that we were going to get to move our studio there into this off campus space, he said, "We're not supporting you doing that, but we are moving Continuing Education." So they moved Continuing Education off campus. I always felt like I'd been hoodwinked. I did all the work on finding the space and even negotiated with the realtor that owned it and everything, but it turned out to be a great space for the Continuing Education people.

SW: Would that have been the Outlet Mall on Busbee Drive?

PT: No, it's not. It was another space which is just above that [about a mile east, off Chastain Road]. That occurred later. Really, Ed Rugg and the president knew that because the Regents were not funding Kennesaw for buildings and support fast enough that they were going to have to start looking for that type of alternative space, and it served the university well.

SW: Right. So when you got that rejection, what did you do? Was it back to the drawing board for you then?

PT: It was back to the drawing board. This was in the early 1990s. I was just really despondent because we were growing. We had like 300 art majors. I'll be quite frank. There was some tension there too. I was always competing with the music people that had much lower numbers, but they had a lot of resources. They eventually got the building across from the Humanities where they have the theater now.

SW: Right, the Joe Mack Wilson building?

PT: That's it. And the circular little gallery, we used to have. They still have that gallery, I guess, in the library on the ground floor. That had been built during the time that they were constructing the Sturgis Library. Again, Tom Salter, who was the first art teacher, had really lobbied with the president at the time, [Horace W.] Sturgis, to have a nice gallery space on campus. That's how that came about. He was instrumental in getting them to designate that as a gallery space. Then when Joe Mack Wilson was built, Roberta Griffin was really putting on some very innovative, cutting edge exhibits that had not been shown, not even at the High Museum. She was really doing a great job. Even then we were tight on space. Especially, we had this idea of having a senior exhibit as kind of the capstone experience. We were getting so many graduates by that time, it was hard to schedule them in the gallery with our regular exhibition schedule.

I remember Betty Siegel called me over to the new Joe Mack Wilson building, and they had this circular front room with a circular half glass. She looked at me and said, "Do you think this could become a little gallery?" I said, "Absolutely, yes we can. We can solve the problem." She said, "But you don't have any walls to show things." I said, "We can make portable walls." Roberta chimed in and said, "Absolutely, we can make portable walls, and this will be a great space." So that's how we got that second gallery.

Really, that was the pressure that we were having because of the number of students that we were graduating, and that was a critical thing with the majors that had been developed. The Regents wanted to see us graduating students. One of the things that Kennesaw had as a problem back in the 1980s and 1990s, a lot of people would start a program, and then they'd drop out. It would take them forever to complete the program, and the heat was on from the Board of Regents to get people through your program. So we really emphasized supporting the

students and getting them graduated in a reasonable length of time in completing the program. We were beginning to have twenty or thirty graduates every year, which was pretty strong.

SW: Definitely. I think even today that might be considered pretty strong.

PT: Yes. Then I don't know if you know, but the interesting thing, like when I got my graphic design person, we were always struggling to keep up with the computer technology [and] with the space. It was just, those years at Kennesaw, with all the energy and excitement and the change, it was tempered with the idea that the Regents were not putting a lot of resources into the school at that time, especially when it came to building new buildings and so forth. But I'll never forget, our graphic design program—we just had drafting tables and just a couple of computers and that was it. I remember recruiting faculty trying to get somebody to teach graphic design. We would do these national searches and entertain these people and say, "Look what we have." People would reject us and say, "No I don't want to come here," because we just didn't have any resources. We thought we were going to have a great program, [and] they would go off to a more established program.

But out of that program—I don't know if you know who [Andres] "Andy" Azula is. If you have ever seen the UPS whiteboard on commercials, he does with the magic marker the little drawings—very popular. He was one of our first graphic design majors [graduated from Kennesaw State College in 1990], and now he's a major ad executive, nationally known, and has that account. That would be an interesting thing to follow up on, how he came from Kennesaw. He went on to be very successful. I always look back on that and say, "A lot of times you think you have to have the greatest equipment and facilities, but a lot of times it's the energy and the people that help shape somebody's development and direction." We've had a whole group of students who were like that, though, that were very enthusiastic and very creative. They interacted very well with our faculty. I think that the faculty—what we couldn't give them in a lot of fancy equipment and facilities, we spent a lot of time nurturing and mentoring the students and ended up with something that Betty Siegel and the administration and everybody really emphasized—you know, spend time with those students.

SW: In the early 1990s—actually this is kind of a funny story when our first interview session was cancelled because you had to be working as a magistrate in the North Carolina court, I had not yet at that point read the Carol [D.] Edwards interview that's here at the archives. So because our interview got pushed back that first time, I was able to go and read her oral history, and she speaks very glowingly of you and even refers to you as a mentor. She came in 1991. I was wondering if you have any thoughts on Carol Edwards.

PT: Yes, I do. I will tell you one of the things that happened during that time. I've been talking about physical facilities and everything. We were also bringing in

faculty, so if you remember me talking about we had four or five people, Tom and Barbara Swindell and Roberta and myself, and when we first started this art major we were running around teaching everything we could possibly do, trying to teach art history, trying to do this and that. As we matured as a department, we all realized that to expand the program and go toward a bachelor of fine arts degree and so forth, we had to bring in people with expertise and let them run certain parts. I recruited Carol to come. She was finishing her degree from Florida State—Ph.D.—and I saw her as taking the art education area, which was a very strong part of the program, and developing it. I depended on people like Carol. I didn't want to have to sit there and say, "Now, what do we do next, what do we do next?" Let her take that program and develop it. That's exactly what she did.

Roberta developed the gallery. Susan Bakewell [hired in 1990] came on and did the art history. Then [Daniel J.] "Andy" Spillane, [Jr.], was the graphic design teacher [hired in 1989], but he did not make tenure. He had some transition problems from going to the traditional graphic design to the more digital media. Then we got Jeanne Sperry [1996] and Carol [Edwards 1991], Carole Mauge-Lewis [1995], and then Ayokunle Odeleye [1989], who took over sculpture. All of these people—what they brought to the program was that they knew what to do in their areas and could go with it. But I also had, for the most part, a flexibility in knowing that we were in transition. They were very good at teaching outside their specialty areas too because even in the 1990s, the Regents [and] everybody was looking at the credit hours generated [and] number of students. By that time, sometimes, especially our studio courses would have low numbers. But we would balance that by having people teach things like a section of 100 in Art Appreciation or Art History.

So we were still asking the faculty to do a lot of different types of things, but at the same time we became very dependent on people that knew a certain field to help us develop those specialty areas. Carol was excellent at that. Also what Carol did was to develop the summer institute programs that tied art education into a broader framework with teachers in the region and the community. She did a lot of work in connecting our art education program to a broader network than art education. We had that North Georgia Teacher Institute that she implemented.

SW: Could you talk a little bit about that? The North Georgia Teacher Institute?

PT: Yes, it was sponsored—the Getty Trust for the Arts, which is a national organization, had a tremendous amount of money for teaching what they called discipline-based art education at the time. They were trying to get teachers into public schools to adapt this model of teaching art education in the schools. They had these satellite centers all over the United States. In the southeast it was the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga that was the big satellite center. Then from that they started these smaller programs during the summer. They wanted a program for the Atlanta area. Carol jumped in and started lobbying and saying, "We can do this; we have the expertise." When she was there, she developed this

summer institute where teachers from the Atlanta area or all over the southeast, actually, could come and spend two weeks at Kennesaw and get intense training in discipline-based art education. It was quite a model there when it was operating.

SW: Okay. Moving forward in the 1990s, I've come across in a couple of interviews about a controversy. I'm not sure how involved you would have been in this. I guess I'll just get your take on it, with *Share* magazine in 1994.

PT: I will tell you we had several controversies. I'll step ahead and say our department became to me almost a model of cultural diversity in the 1990s. Along with that came some problems toward the end of my tenure there. But the *Share* magazine: Mark Gordon was the editor. Barbara Swindell was the faculty advisor. *Share* magazine was a literary art magazine that had been around for years. Again, we had some very creative young people. I don't know why we had them, but we had some very innovative, creative, young people in our department: Andy Azula and Mark Gordon and Chip Gotts and some other people were a part of that. They took the *Share* magazine and started making it into more of an art magazine. It was very innovative. We were having some very innovative art exhibits at the time. I will go back. Roberta was always on the edge of tension with some of the more traditional folks in Cobb County in their view of the arts and what she thought was contemporary art and what we should have at the college. There were times when that became very uncomfortable, sometimes, to the administration. Then with the *Share* magazine, I'm trying to remember, it was a time when Robert Mapplethorpe was a very popular photographer. You remember the National Endowment for the Arts controversy.

SW: Right. That would have been 1989.

PT: Right, and Senator Jesse Helms [Republican, North Carolina] was saying that the NEA was funding these homo-erotic, gay, filthy artists, and the taxpayers were being ripped off. That played very well in Cobb County by the way. I'd been involved in the arts community in Cobb County with the Arts Council and so forth. Another flash flood that leads up to what I'm going to talk about with *Share* was that Marietta had Theatre in the Square. Michael Horne was a very creative director and founder and leader of Theatre in the Square. He happened to be gay. He had an edge, but he did great theater. He was getting, I think, about 10 percent of his operating budget from an arts grant from Cobb County. During the 1980s and 1990s there had been a lot of controversy in conservative Cobb County about should we fund arts, what kind of art, and so forth. But the Theatre in the Square was very popular. People would go downtown, have dinner, and go to this little small theater that had about 150 seats.

SW: It's still there, it's still operating.

PT: Well, they were really cutting edge back then. They did two plays, one was *Lips Together, Teeth Apart*, I believe, was the name of it. Some people didn't like that. Then the other one was *M. Butterfly*, which deals with homo-erotic themes and all this kind of stuff. They had a nude scene in it which was well done. I went to it. It just so happened that Gordon Wysong, one of the county commissioners, happened to go to the play. He came out and said that this was just an affront to the good people of Cobb County, that this is bad art, it's perverted. We should not be funding things that glorify the homosexual lifestyle.

SW: Did he stop the show to do this or what platform was he saying this on?

PT: At the [Cobb County Commission] meetings. See, the board was giving Theater in the Square, I think, \$10,000 a year as a small amount of their operating budget. He was just saying that we should stop funding the arts because all of these bad things that are being presented to our people and the children. Then, a whole group of conservatives got very irate and wanted to defund art. I remember I was a member of the Arts Council, and we had this big meeting in front of the board and a hearing. We had, if you will, the Bible thumpers who were saying this is against God's will, and we don't want to be paying for this nasty art. We art advocates would try to get up and speak for the arts and how it enhanced the community and so forth, but finally the Board voted to suspend funding of the arts and give the money toward video cameras for the police department. I heard Bill Byrne, the Commission [chairman], make that proposal. I thought that during the time when we had the hearings that the people that advocated for the arts had a chance of swinging one or two of the commissioners to support continued funding, but when he made that proposal, I said, "There is no way they will continue to fund the arts." Theatre in the Square lost their funding.

SW: So basically when he makes that proposal it becomes the arts versus the police.

PT: And you don't have a chance. And the other backdrop was Gordon Wysong was on CNN [and] national talk shows. It was just a big controversy. It was a time of real tension and strife. The university was there on the edge of that. Then some of our more creative art students who were now in control of *Share* magazine decided they were going to make their statement about all of this, about photographing and publishing some nice, Robert Mapplethorpe types of nude figures in [*Share*]. They wrote some articles that I think were misinterpreted. One was about someone who had been molested as a child. All of a sudden people were saying that *Share* magazine was publishing material that favored child molesters and homosexuals.

The next thing I knew was that the Student Government [Association] was having a hearing about whether *Share* magazine should be funded or not because it was a reflection of what had happened in the community. To be quite frank, the administration wanted me to put a lid on what the students were doing. I was unwilling to do that and tried to explain you can't censor the students or they will

have a more powerful reaction than they have had. I actually thought that what they were doing was pretty creative and innovative. They had taken a magazine, which had been on the sidelines, and nobody paid any attention to it. Now it was a front page newspaper [story]. Some of the conservative students at Kennesaw were standing up and hollering, “I don’t want my student activities money being paid for all this nasty stuff that’s going on in *Share*.” Then another group was saying, “No, we have to have artistic freedom.”

SW: Probably neither side had ever read *Share* magazine at that point.

PT: Absolutely. Once it got out that all of this stuff was in the magazine, you couldn’t find a copy on campus.

SW: Circulation went up after that I guess.

PT: Yes. The administration was very concerned that this was going to cast a bad light on the campus. Some of us were trying to say, “No, it’s more academic freedom and freedom of expression of the students. They’re in charge. They’re the editors. You can’t just tell them that they can’t publish this or they’ll have to have everything reviewed by the administration.” So it was a real controversy.

SW: Do you remember Betty Siegel’s reaction? Did you ever talk to her about it?

PT: Yes. She was just trying to keep the lid on things and not let things get out of hand. As an administrator, I can understand that. Ed Rugg wanted me to be more forthcoming and tell the students things. To be quite frank, Ed and I had some confrontations. We’d always had a good relationship, but I felt like I was really under pressure for the department chair to control the students. I felt like I couldn’t really control the students and shouldn’t be on an ethical and academic ground.

SW: It kind of sounds antithetical to being an artist in a way.

PT: You get my point. You’re expecting them to be creative and innovative. Then all of a sudden, you’re going to say, “Oh no, you can’t do this.” That just didn’t work. I knew from the nature of the students at that time that they could come back with more creative stuff than you could imagine if we tried to repress what they were doing. I’ll tell you another story. I don’t know if I want this to be published. Again, it’s just the nature of some of the art students at that time. I still have the t-shirt. Every year we had this big annual end of the year student art show. We had these students in graphic design who were really clever. They would come up with posters for it and t-shirts. One year, one of the students had gotten a picture that was just a great cartoon picture of Betty Siegel. It had a picture of her with her big glasses at the time. It was an Andy Warhol kind of cartoon where it was a series of Betty Siegels looking with her glasses. The last

one, she takes off her glasses. Then the stars in her eyes—she's smiling, and it says, "Come to the 19-such-and-such student art show; you'll love it."

I thought it was really great. Jim [James A.] Fleming was Betty's assistant at the time. The next thing I know he had me in her office, and he was saying this is an insult to the president of Kennesaw College. I said, "What are you talking about? Students love Betty Siegel. This is a tribute to her that they would put her on the poster like this." He said, "Oh, no, the University of Georgia president wouldn't be like that." I tried my best. I said, "No, no, Betty, look, they love you. You're an icon on this campus, and this is just wonderful." She kept saying, "Oh, I don't know." She looked at Jim, and Jim said, "That just has to be stopped. You cannot let these students publish this. We can't pay for this. It can't be paid for through student funds." I said, "Look, please do not make me tell those students we cannot use this as a poster, because if you do that, they're going to go underground, and they will do something that you'll regret."

SW: That you can't imagine.

PT: I did. I said, "Let them do this." They said, "No, Dr. Taylor, you go and you stop this as the department chair." I said, "Okay, I'll do that." I had come close with this *Share* thing about almost resigning and losing my position over that, but I said, "Okay, if that's what you want, I'll do that." So I went to the student organization and the students. I told them, "I'm sorry but the president thinks that this is not flattering to her and that you're insulting her. I've tried to explain it, but they will not fund this for the poster." They said, "Okay." I turned around, and the next thing I knew on the campus they were all wearing t-shirts with the same logo. This time when Betty Siegel's glasses were removed, there are no eyes at all. That kind of illustrates the dynamic that was between the establishment and the creativity that was going on at the time.

SW: Did you save one of those t-shirts or posters?

PT: I've got my t-shirt.

SW: You've got one of those?

PT: I do actually.

SW: I'm sure one day the archives here at Kennesaw State might like to see it.

PT: I'll take a photograph and send it to you.

SW: That would be great.

PT: The *Share* magazine—there's a real challenge at the time. It reflected, I think, what was happening in the community because Kennesaw had been a community-

born college. There was always that concern about it. I will tell you this too. Dean George Beggs became my mentor and really supportive of the art program, yet he was an old social scientist, very socially conservative. But I had a good relationship with him. The beauty of Dr. Beggs was that he would let you in private in his office. You could argue with him, tell him he was wrong, that we should do it this way or that way. He would listen, and he would argue back. He did have this [policy]. Once all the things had been said, and, as he called it, an administrative decision had been made, he expected the department head or whoever to support that whether you agreed with it or not.

I appreciate that now, but there were several times that Roberta—early on in her innovation in her exhibits, certain exhibitions would sometimes raise eyebrows. We worked with Dr. Beggs—if you will, got him on board in supporting the arts. I'll give you two examples of that: When we first started an art major, I looked at Roberta and said, “What is the one thing that we're not doing in the foundation courses that has to be done?” We all said this together. “We're not teaching nude figure drawing.”—which is a tradition, but it had never been done at Kennesaw. So I went to Dr. Beggs and Ed Rugg and said, “We need to develop a course where we'll have a live model and be teaching live drawing, figure drawing.” At first they said, “No, we can't do that. The community won't take it.” I kept saying, “But, academically, Dr. Beggs, if we're going to have a major, this is what we have to do. It is expected. It is the tradition. We must teach this.” He finally came around. He talked to Ed Rugg and said, “Okay, we're going to just ease into this. Y'all just start doing this, but be discreet. We're not going to tell anybody we're doing it. If we get any criticism, we'll say, ‘Well, we've been doing that, and it's no problem.’” I agreed to that, and I said, “Dr. Beggs, I understand.”

And he said, “By the way, as part of our agreement, don't go plaster as soon as you start doing this a bunch of nude figure drawings on the halls to display because that will call attention and get everybody fired up. So please don't do that. You can put up a few, but just don't plaster the walls.” I thought I had that communicated to everybody. During the course, about a month into it, I walked down here one Friday, and Dr. Beggs was having a committee from the Governor's office coming on tour. The whole hall was just plastered with nude figures. As a department chair, I stepped in and said, “You know, this could be a deal breaker”—because we were trying to move into the art major, and this was a phased in part of the thing—“We made a commitment to Dr. Beggs. The students and people have plastered these up, what am I going to do?” So I went and took them down. I went back to the class, and I told the students why I did it and what the circumstances were. They all told me I was the big censor and a bad guy, but Dr. Beggs never got put on the defensive. We went ahead and implemented that figure drawing program, and he supported us. There was never any problem.

We had several times where nudity became an issue. We had a Georgia artist in residence named John Quinn, who was a sculptor. He did beautiful figure

drawings, and this was even before we started the art major. He had his show in the main gallery, beautiful drawings. He was there, and they had scheduled to have the Atlanta Boys Choir or some group like that come in for a little reception during the time those pictures were up. Dr. Beggs again called me into the office and said, “I’m giving you an administrative directive to take those pictures down when we’re going to have this reception.” I said, “Dr. Beggs we cannot do that.” He said, “Why not?” I said, “It would be a violation of academic freedom. We have invited this artist in residence from the Georgia Council for the Arts to be on campus and to have a show. I know you’re worried that the ladies of First Baptist Church might get upset, but we’ve got a bigger academic community and bigger academic issues to deal with. I can’t take those down, and you don’t want me to because we’ll catch hell from all the groups in Atlanta who are doing something like this.” Dr. Beggs thought about it, and he said, “You know, you’re right. We’ll just move that reception to somewhere else.” He came around to where he became a very strong supporter for our shows and what we were doing. When people would complain that this wasn’t right or something, he would be right there saying this is artistic expression. I came to really respect him for that too.

SW: That’s great.

PT: That whole conservative art versus all these other things was a real point of contention for many years.

SW: I’m trying to think what else I’ve got here.

PT: Let me tell you one other thing. In the early 1990s, [when] we didn’t get to move our studios off campus to alleviate the space, the whole thing that was frustrating me was that President Siegel and certain people had always had this vision of having this big, major Fine Arts Center. The main thing would be the music—concert hall. They told us to just wait your turn. We’ll add on a gallery later on. A lot of the time and energy was pushed toward, if we could raise ten million dollars in private funding, we’re going to do this. I was always frustrated, saying, “Well, if you’re going to be doing that, I’ve got this booming art program. I’m dying for space.”

Ed Rugg knew what we were doing and our needs. We had a large number of students, and we had expanded in the Humanities building as far as we could go. I’ll never forget. This was around 1997. It was really kind of bleak—the idea of getting any funding for buildings at Kennesaw. It was just painfully slow to get the Regents to agree to build new buildings. It was just choking us. Most of the buildings that the university was trying to build were large—ten, fifteen million dollar buildings or twenty million dollar buildings like the School of Education that had needs and the Social Sciences Building that they have now. Ed Rugg called me up one Wednesday, I believe, and said, “Look, I’ve been looking at projections for the Board of Regents for next year for the budget. They’ve created a small building fund for buildings that are under five million dollars. I

don't think anybody knows about this too much. If you'll come over here to my office we'll start working on this for an art building."

I came over there, and he started showing me all the requirements on the proposals that would have to be made. Then it was Friday, and he said, "This has to be in by Monday or Tuesday. Are you willing to come in and work with me on the weekend?" I said, "Sure, I'll be here." So we spent all Saturday going over the report and writing. Then he said, "I've got to go out of town on Monday, but you keep working on this." I kept working on it, and finally he said, "I think it's ready to go." We sent it in to the Board of Regents. We had funded the building at \$4.7 million, outlined what we needed. Then, in the spring, the Regents looked at the priorities. Lo and behold, we got that building funded. That's the current building for the visual arts.

SW: Facing the Humanities building I guess it is.

PT: That's right. I think people were shocked that we got that funding because a lot of people had been in line for these bigger buildings. We just came in under the radar with this small building, only 30,000 [32,423] square feet, but given what we had it was like night and day. That's the way that building came about. It also served as a model for the music because they had not been able to raise private funding. I think a year later they went and got a music building. They convinced the Regents to delay the funding and let them go back and seek private matching funding, which they were able to do. That's how that concert hall and that music building came about.

SW: Bobbie Bailey?

PT: It started in the late 1990s with these little, small building projects that the Regents were funding. To Ed's credit, he was really tight and knew what was going on at the Board of Regents. As soon as it hit the wire that that was available, he was calling me up saying, "Let's get this thing written up and down there as soon as possible."

SW: What year was this that the arts got its building?

PT: In 1997 or '98. Then we went through a year in 1999 of trying to engineer and design that building down to everything we could get into it for \$4.7 million to keep it under budget. Then for me it was rather strange. I had been teaching for twenty-nine years plus, and I realized at 51 I could retire with thirty years' service from Kennesaw. The building to me was a very important part of the program that I had initiated. I had been a department chair for twelve years, which is a long, long time. I decided that it was time for me to leave. There were some faculty tensions that I'm sure people have talked to you about during that time to where I just knew that it was time for me to leave Kennesaw. Not that I wasn't happy. I just knew what I could do was pretty much done. It was time for

someone else to come in and go to the next level. We got the building designed. They figured it out, it came in under budget. I left that summer before they started construction.

SW: That was when you went to Piedmont College?

PT: That's right.

SW: Since you retired does that mean when you went to Piedmont were you not teaching full time up there?

PT: When you get thirty years in your retirement system, you can retire regardless of your age. Basically, I retired on 60 percent of my salary that I was earning. I just thought that it was a time for me to leave and do something else. Piedmont College is a private school, and I was able to go there and teach. I was a full professor and taught there for seven years and was department chair there before finally deciding that I needed to stop commuting a hundred miles every day, from Piedmont to Highlands, North Carolina.

SW: Oh, so you were already living in Highlands at that point.

PT: Yes, my wife and I decided to move to Highlands when we were leaving Kennesaw. Then I discovered that there was an opening at Piedmont, and I took that position. I really enjoyed teaching at Piedmont. The reason I enjoyed teaching at Piedmont, believe it or not, Ray Cleere who had been at the Board of Regents and then went on to become the chancellor at the university system in Mississippi, had just gone to Piedmont as the president of Piedmont College [1995-2011]. So it was an interesting time at Piedmont. They were growing, very similar to the way Kennesaw had been growing in the 1980s and 1990s. So I enjoyed going there. It really in a way reminded me of the way I started teaching at Kennesaw, being very close to the students.

SW: Demorest, is that near Cornelia?

PT: Yes, it is.

SW: Was the art department there fairly new or were you coming into an established art department?

PT: At the time, it was not an art department. It was a fine arts department. Shortly after I arrived there, they split the music and theater and art into separate departments. I was there and became the department chair for seven years.

SW: When you came, were you doing the kinds of things that you did when you came into Kennesaw? You mentioned that you were working with students like you were early on at Kennesaw. Were you also writing curriculum?

PT: Absolutely. We wrote a master's degree in art education, something that Carol [Edwards] had been wanting to do at Kennesaw. But the Board of Regents—the way you get programs approved is very slow. At Piedmont, it was very fast, so I did that. Also, there was a commitment to teaching. Since we only had three or four people in the department, we all had to teach a lot of different things. So it reminded me of some of the early stages of my experience at Kennesaw.

SW: Today you're fully retired from teaching?

PT: Just recently. When I left Piedmont, I came to Highlands. I was on the committee with our local art gallery called the Bascom Louise Gallery. They were having to move out of the library. They had a small gallery, and we were going to have to build a new building. It's a long story, but some people that really valued the arts who had resources and energy and means got involved and said, "Let's build a first rate, national facility here in Highlands." From around 2006 until just recently, I was chairing the committee for designing this new facility. We built a ten million dollar visual arts center here. It's astounding.

SW: Yes. And that's on the campus there?

PT: No, we don't have a campus. This is in Highlands. It's just an institution. We went and bought for a million dollars six acres of horse pasture. Then we've built this complex, which is an arts center that has museum capability and classes and teaching. I've been very involved in teaching ceramics. We have a pottery studio. I've been very involved in that. Just now I'm moving away from teaching, I was the potter in residence, and I'm moving away. I'm retiring to my own personal ceramics studio at my house.

SW: Are you enjoying that more, just being creative?

PT: I am. For all these years, I have focused on program development and student development and worked my creative process into that. Now, I'm willing to let some younger folks come in and do the teaching and build their careers. I'm happy to go and work and pursue my own creative endeavors.

SW: Are you liking the mountains better than the 'burbs?

PT: Oh, yes. It's not anything to take away from my wonderful experience of raising kids and everything in Cobb County and in Kennesaw. I've really cherished those times, but where I live now is just a little small town. I know everybody, and it's a very nice community. I will close. I will tell you a funny dream that I have about Kennesaw. I had it again today, and it just gets away with me every time I have it. I dream that I'm back at Kennesaw, and in this dream that I had last night Roberta Griffin was with me. We were trying to recruit a faculty member to come and teach in the art program. I was telling him, "Oh, Roberta's done this

and that, and let's go on a campus tour." So we started taking him around. What we wanted to do was to impress him with everything that was there. The dream is that I can't find my way around campus. I don't know what buildings are what any more. It gets really frustrating to me, and I say, "Well, how did that building pop up? How did this happen? What are these people?"

I think subconsciously—I went back to Kennesaw when they were dedicating the [Bailey] Performance Center. I pulled in, and there had been so much building and development and dormitories and roads, I got really confused on how to get to the building that I used to be able to just walk across the street to many times. I think to me, I have a picture of the way Kennesaw was. I tell people, I really served at three different institutions: a small liberal arts college when I first got there, a good four-year college moving on up in the middle, and then it became a major university. I was lucky enough to be in the transition of all of those institutions. But it's funny. I go there now, and I say, "Gosh, I cannot believe that this has been built or they've got that many students." It's just amazing.

SW: That's great. Dr. Taylor, I really appreciate you taking the time here. This has been a really valuable experience.

PT: Thank you.

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