

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH S. FREDERICK ROACH, JR.

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Interview # 1: Friday, 17 September 2004

TS: Fred, let's begin, if you don't mind, by saying a word or two about when you were born, where you were born, and where you grew up.

FR: Well, I was born on May 3, 1939, in Morningside, in Atlanta. I grew up in Atlanta and went to Morningside Grammar School and to Grady High School, and that was the Jewish section of Atlanta at that point in time. We had a very unique experience in the sense that we had a large Jewish population for the southeast; it was about 37 to 43 percent, as I remember. Everybody got along, and there was never any tension whatsoever, and many of the Jewish people in our class married Jewish people from other areas of the country and other schools, and said that was not the case where they grew up. It was a great experience and a great group of people, and quite frankly, I'm still quite close to many of the people that I played football with and that I went to high school with, and, by definition, many people in the Jewish community.

TS: Great. I interviewed [James Davis (Spec)] Landrum some time back; he was a coach there at one time, at Grady High School

FR: He was almost my high school coach. He left and Erk Russell came, and I knew who Spec was, so that's the reason. I don't know if you'll remember at the annual retirement breakfast this year; that's the reason I was the one that pulled the chain in the last analysis that got Spec hired here.

TS: Really?

FR: Yes, because they were hiring a director of Alumni Affairs, but we had a new president coming in and my feeling about it was that a new president might want an athletic program, but we would have to do it on a shoestring financially. I knew that Spec, having worked for Bobby Dodd over at Georgia Tech and Wally Butts up at the University of Georgia, could step over there real easy. And Alumni Affairs at that time wasn't much of a thing, and it wasn't going to be much of a thing. And of course, that's exactly what they did with Spec when Dr. Siegel came in as President. Cullene Morgan [Harper] could not make a decision on Spec, and a younger fellow from over at Oglethorpe I think it was, or maybe it was down at Georgia Military Academy. Cullene always had a hard time making

decisions, but this one was really hard for her. She asked me one day over at the administration building, pulled me over in the corner and said, “Fred, I just can’t decide.” I said, “Cullene there’s no decision to make. Spec Landrum’s the only choice.” And like I say, I had been hearing Spec’s name all my life as a kid coming up, and I never heard a young person that really didn’t like Spec. I think he probably did do what I had envisioned in the back of my mind; he gave us the contacts to establish a good, tight athletic program that we wouldn’t get embarrassed by as far as rules, regulations in the Southern Association and that type thing. Plus, he had a lot of good contacts, just in general, because he had worked with Coach Dodd all those years.

TS: I was thinking in terms of, Spec went to UGA to be the freshman football coach and Erk Russell went from I guess Grady High School, straight to the University of Georgia as well, so Grady must have had a mighty good reputation at that time.

FR: No, Erk went to Auburn. That’s where he came from.

TS: Oh he did?

FR: Yes, he went to Auburn first, and then he went to Vanderbilt, and he says that everybody that coaches ought to coach one year at a school like Vanderbilt, which is of course, an awfully fine academic institution. But then he went to Georgia with Vince Dooley. That’s the way he got on with Dooley at Georgia because both of them had played ball at Auburn under Shug Jordan and what—Erk was an end and I think he was a couple of years older than Dooley who was a quarterback. I think Bill Dooley—there was a fellow named Bill Dooley; it may have been Dooley’s older brother that was an end that played with Erk.

TS: Is that right? What position did you play?

FR: Well, Erk played the old Notre Dame box when we were in high school. We played the single wing of all things. Probably, the last school in the state of Georgia. But I played fullback on offense and linebacker on a 6-2-2-1 defense, and that’s when men were fullbacks and linebackers, and women were majorettes and cheerleaders, and it wasn’t a perfect world, but it was certainly a simpler world than it eventually became.

TS: Okay. [chuckle] Well, you graduated from Grady High School and went I guess straight to Georgia State, which was a relatively small college at that time, wasn’t it?

FR: No, I went to University of Tennessee.

TS: Oh, that’s right. I forgot about that.

FR: A neighbor across the street had taken me up to Tennessee to, because we played the single wing in high school and of course, Tennessee had the same offense.

TS: Were you thinking about playing football at Tennessee?

FR: Well, at first. I got hurt, and I had to quit playing in high school, but in the ninth grade they took me up to see George Cafego up there, and I still remember meeting Coach Cafego. I was very impressed by him.

TS: I remember him.

FR: He was the kicking specialist and of course, stayed around for years and years and years. I spent my first two years up there. I came down with mononucleosis or glandular fever, and it was one of 10 or 15 percent of the cases that at that point in time couldn't be diagnosed with the tests they had which was an old hetrofill test, so I had to come home and spend six months. I started back to school at Georgia State to get my feet under me. I about died with it. Ten percent of the people that had it at that time died. Georgia State was so good at that point in time that I just decided to stay there and finish up because they didn't have but six people in a class, and I studied under people from Hopkins and Princeton and Duke and what-have-you, and I just liked it, and I thought it was a better education than I'd get at Tennessee.

TS: So you really, you weren't at Tennessee real long then?

FR: I had about my first two years there.

TS: Two years? Oh, you had two years? But you didn't play football, or did you play football?

FR: No, I didn't play football. I was broken up by then. I had a vertebra problem in my lower back where it was disjointed and by tenth grade in high school they said I wasn't going to ever do that kind of stuff any more. And, of course, back then, they didn't know much about those kind of things.

TS: Right. Okay. So you got a degree in history from Georgia State. What made you decide to go into history?

FR: My high school history teacher—we didn't have middle schools then—my high school history teacher, who, by the way is still alive; he had a horrible stroke about seven or eight years ago, and he won't let me go by to see him. But his name was Grady Randolph, and he taught at old Boys High, and then at Grady, and then he pioneered educational television for the Atlanta public school system. Something happened; I think he was ABD at the University of Chicago; he was a Fulbright Scholar, and he never got his degree. Mr. Randolph, really, from my point of view, he was really not as much an historian as he was a classicist, but he really knew Western Classics. The result was that you either loved him or hated him, and he had an acerbic sense of humor. I'll tell you where he was from: he was from Possum Trot, Alabama and I'll tell you where Possum Trot, Alabama is because I know you're interested. You know how you spell Birmingham?

TS: Well . . .

FR: You know the “i” in Birmingham? You know, the dot over the “i” in Birmingham? Well, Possum Trot is under the dot, over the “i” in Birmingham and right across the creek from Egg Heaven, and when it rains you can’t get from Possum Trot to Egg Heaven because the creek overflows.

TS: Okay.

FR: And Mr. Randolph lived out on Collier Road by Piedmont Hospital; his wife was a lawyer for the Federal Reserve downtown, and he had a room over his garage out there that he would have students to every once in awhile, and he had a sign over it: “Chateau de la Possum Trot.” But he was an incredibly bright man. I was much more of an athlete than I was a scholar in high school. I caught fire about the tenth grade, and it was due to him and an English teacher I had. But by the time I got out of high school, I had read Machiavelli’s *The Prince*, and I had read the complete *Paradise Lost* by John Milton, not just the first two books. I had read Plato’s *Republic* and Aristotle’s *Ethics*, which I never really did understand at that point in my life, but I read it anyway. But where I was that was the type of thing, and he just inundated you with that type of classical thought, and I still maintain that not only academically, but as far as my personal life that having that background, and that rational thought saved me a lot of times. It’s given me the correct answer in a lot of situations because it just becomes intuitive after it gets so ingrained, thinking that way. For the culture that we live in, I think it works. But anyway, he set me afire, and then I had Byron King who was an English teacher, and he set me afire on Shakespeare and *Macbeth*. Between the two of them they—and Grady High School was the oldest high school in Atlanta; it was a liberal arts side of Boys High and Tech High. In 1947, they built eleven other high schools, and the old teachers in the Atlanta system that wanted to stay at Grady were allowed to do so. The others went to the other eleven high schools. So people like Mr. Randolph and Mr. King and those people that were really the old pro, dedicated teachers stayed at Grady.

TS: So you got the best.

FR: We really did. We got the best of the best, and that section of town was unique in that we had, as I mentioned 37 to 43 percent Jewish population; we had a population from Piedmont up to Georgia Baptist Hospital which was very poor white; we had firm middle class—it was borderline upper class white in Morningside and Ansley Park; and then when they came in and put in Sherwood Forest over there behind White Colleges, that was upper middle class, nouveau riche. So we had a little bit of everything, so it was a very unique experience growing up in the South to have people from all economic classes together. Also to have an ethnic/religious minority of that sort, because, I think, in very few places in the South would you have found that situation. The number of professional people that came out of my class was just incredible. As a matter of fact, two years behind me was Stuart Eizenstat who was of course, President Carter’s

- Domestic Political Advisor, and then under President Clinton he carried the portfolio of Ambassador, and also was the one that determined where the Germans put the Jewish money in the Swiss bank accounts and got a lot of it back. And he wound up as number two at Treasury, and I think if Gore had been elected in 2000 that Stuart would have become number one at Treasury, and the man at Treasury would have gone ahead up to Fed. That kind of thing. But there were quite a few people like that.
- TS: I don't guess anybody even hinted at integration while you were going through. You must have graduated in '57 or '58.
- FR: Yes, I graduated in '57 and yes, that wasn't even talked about, and I can remember, like I say, I hurt my back and I became an eighth grade/ninth grade assistant student coach with a guy that got paid to do it, and I loved it, just loved it. That's when I decided very quickly and started out wanting to be a high school football coach and teach history. Harry, the guy I coached with, was from South Georgia, and when they started talking about integrating Grady, he shared with me—and I'm sure it was true—that the old Boys High and Tech High people were saying that they'd blow it up before they'd integrate it. But a lot of that talk was cheap back in those days. And of course, Atlanta integrated without any difficulty at all, although Mr. Woodruff did a lot of planning and Mayor Allen did a lot of planning behind the scenes.
- TS: Right. So you graduate in '62 from Georgia State, and then make a big decision to go up to Yankee land to Villanova. How did that come about?
- FR: Well, Mel Ecke was my major professor at Georgia State; he was a Princeton type. He wrote the history of the Atlanta school system, and Mel wanted me to go to Princeton, and Mel just didn't realize that I wasn't that good. I realized it, but Mel didn't. At Georgia State, at that point in time, there were very few of us going to graduate school but he did. He told me to try what you call a shotgun technique, and that was to pick about four schools in each part of the country: a large state university, a smaller state university, a large private university and a smaller private university and apply to them. In those days in most places it didn't cost you anything to apply to go to graduate school. He said, basically, you've got a better chance that way because people in other parts of the country should want to give people from the South, which is a very definite region of the country, fellowships to make their graduate student valued more or obeyed. Now, they may not like you, but at the same time you'll be different.
- TS: Right. So they can claim diversity that way.
- FR: That's right. That was before the color thing was just becoming important, and quite frankly, I find out years later that I got the assistantship at Villanova because they were hoping I was black because I was from the South.
- TS: How many black students did they think Georgia State had at that time?

FR: Well, they would have had no concept on that being on the main line out in Philadelphia, you see, and I had no concept of what I was doing going to a Roman Catholic University. And then when I went from Villanova to Oklahoma at Oklahoma they assumed I was a Roman Catholic and once again, assumed that I might well have been black because the lady that I rented my house from the first year, my apartment, she was in Oklahoma City, and she called the head of the department, John Ezell, who is a southerner from Alabama, and she wanted to know, because I was renting her place, wanted to know if I was black or white. He said, "Let me look at his picture on his vita." And he said, "I can't tell."

TS: [laughter] Was he pulling her leg?

FR: Well, he claimed that that was true. He used to rag me about that but I did get, I wish I could say that I got a letter from the real estate man; she got concerned enough that she had the real estate man write me.

TS: She wasn't going to rent it to you, if you weren't white.

FR: That's right. She had the real estate man ask me, he said, "She wants to know whether you're a white man or not." I told her I was, there were two or three grammatical mistakes in this two paragraph letter, but he said, "I told her I was sure you were white because you "writ" like a white man." [laughter] I wish I had saved that one, I really do.

TS: That would have been worth saving.

FR: But that's, as I've told you many times . . .

TS: You "writ" real pretty.

FR: Yes, I "writ" real pretty. I like to make a story better, but that was absolutely true, and I lost that letter somewhere over the years.

TS: Okay, so you went to Villanova; you survived there, got a master's degree.

FR: And it was a great experience. I loosened up at the master's degree level at Villanova where a lot of people did that when they went off down to graduate school. Now, I worked very hard; the program at Villanova in the graduate classes was completely separate from the undergraduate classes, and they were almost all research oriented. So this was great because later, when I went to University of Oklahoma, that being a state school, undergraduate and graduate classes were mixed together except for the graduate seminars. And at Oklahoma, the courses, rather than being research except for the seminars, which were few and far between, they tended to be reading courses and content courses, so I felt like I got the extreme of both sides of exposure in the profession.

TS: Did Villanova have a Ph.D. program?

FR: No. They just had an M.A. Villanova was not like it is today. It's in the Boston College class today, and they're trying, and I think probably do compete on the level; they've finally gotten the money to compete on an Ivy League school level, or at least they think they can. But it's a lot different from—when I went there Villanova was a nice little Catholic school with 10,000 students—only males except for the nursing students—and all the freshman wore blue blazers and straw hats and white pants, and they came to the football games and walked in together. That kind of thing. And it was just a perfect place. I loved it. I didn't go up there with a chip on my shoulder so everybody accepted me. The dean was from South Carolina, Al Buford. He hadn't had anybody to talk to from the South in a long time, so he'd call up the history department once a week just to have a chance to talk to me. I could always tell when it was he after the first couple of calls because, for the first year, anybody that sounded like that did not have an accent to me; I knew they were from the South. Everybody else sounded like they had an accent!

TS: Yes, right. How big was Georgia State at that time?

FR: Oh, Georgia State, we didn't have, Georgia State had, it was Georgia State College of Business Administration. Noah Langdale and the people down there had split it off in a coup in the middle of the night from the University of Georgia. It was the Atlanta Division of the University of Georgia, and, all of a sudden, it was independent the next morning. Dr. Langdale, of course, was the president and Tom, I think we had, when I was there in '60-'62 I think we had 3,000 students, of which, about half were in day school, and half were in night school.

TS: Really small.

FR: Really small and, like I said, the classes, I didn't have five or six people to a class. Once, again that was a motivating factor for me to stay there. The other thing that I liked about it in contrast to the University of Tennessee was that at Georgia State most of the people there were working part-time to help subsidize their education. Their parents weren't wealthy enough to pay for them to go to school, and so they were much more highly motivated, whereas at the University of Tennessee, like any state school, we had a lot of rich kids or kids from middle class families, I guess like myself, and their parents paid for everything, and a lot of them weren't worth shooting as far as being motivated and interested in what they were doing.

TS: Yes, I see what you mean.

FR: So I liked the environment at Georgia State very much.

TS: I was surprised that Villanova was as big as you say it was at that time, 10,000.

FR: Yes, that is—the first building was put up in 1837, I think and it's on a main run in Philadelphia, and that is the international headquarters of the Augustinian

Order of the Roman Catholic Church. I did not know until I got on campus that Martin Luther was an Augustinian.

TS: I guess he was.

FR: It was the kind of thing, when I walked on campus, the only white, Protestant, Anglo-Saxon out of 10,000 Roman Catholics, Villanova kind of tilted over on its axis a little bit and never corrected. The first night, I walked into the gym to register I had not introduced myself to anybody there. Of course, being a southerner I had on a light blue Palm Beach suit, white buck shoes, yellow knit tie and a white shirt. I had my best; I wore it to register. I walked in, and they were just registering graduate students, so there weren't many people in the gym there on the mainline. I walked in, and from halfway across the room the head of the department, Henry Roffeneau, who studied under Alan Nevins at Columbia, Roffeneau, when I walked in the gym said, "My God, you must be Mr. Roach from Georgia. I haven't seen a pair of shoes like that since the end of World War II."

TS: [laughter]

FR: He was a character. He was an alcoholic, died in the middle of a sentence in a lecture years later in a classroom. But he was a terribly colorful lecturer. But those were great years. I enjoyed those.

TS: What did you do your master's thesis on?

FR: The *London Times* and John Chandler Bancroft Davis, the *London Times* and the American Civil War, which I eventually published that in the *Atlanta Historical Bulletin*, and Grace Sherry was the editor, and she became infatuated with both me, and that article, and so she got Franklin Garrett to publish it. Basically, though we did stuff on Atlanta history. Every once in awhile, they'd do something on the Civil War, and I still think that that was a very good piece of revisionist work. John Chandler Bancroft Davis was the *London Times'* special correspondent to the American Civil War before William Howard Russell, the first real war correspondent in western history came in '63, and nobody knew about Davis. Davis also becomes important later in that he prosecutes the Alabama claims in 1870-'71 against the British. But nobody knew about this period because when I was looking in the *Times* I almost missed it. Microfilm had just come in then, and I'd go down to the University of Pennsylvania, and walk over and use their microfilm room, which was very small. It had the *London Times* and it's indexed by pools. I had chosen the topic around the *Times*, and their current policy on the Civil War. I was down there for about six weeks, and I knew something was wrong, and I just couldn't figure out what. Of course, I had looked under United States, Civil War, Abraham Lincoln, editorials, whatever, and then I finally ran across it one day and that is that, just like in England, the trunk of a car is called the boot; in England an editorial in a newspaper is called a leading article. I had a colleague that I taught with for years and year and years

that did his Ph.D. dissertation on English history during the Civil War, and he never knew that he never found the editorials because when I talked to him years after he'd finished it, it just slipped out that he had no concept of the editorials being leading articles and at that point in time he was a dear person that I loved very much, and I just wasn't going to say a word about it.

TS: Okay, so you got through at Villanova and went straight to the University of Oklahoma?

FR: Straight to the University of Oklahoma, where I had an assistantship there and John Ezell who was a Schlesinger, Sr., student at Harvard and was also a classmate of his with John Hope Franklin, so I was lucky to meet a lot of people along the way.

TS: Ezell and Franklin were classmates.

FR: That's right. A year or two ahead of me was a young man named—African-American man from Philadelphia, Mississippi—by the name of Jimmy L. Franklin who now holds the Frank Owsley chair up at Vanderbilt University. Of course, Ezell introduced the two Franklins, and then he also introduced the other graduate students in the group and I was very lucky to meet a number of people that way because Ezell probably, I guess wrote either the first or second textbook in the history of the New South. That was his main contribution academically. And he was considered a leading southern historian for a long time. He had a great personality. He was a dean; well, he was chair when I went to Oklahoma, and then he became dean, and he had me grade my contemporaries' graduate papers out of the backside of his office after I had taken the course. And, of course, that could have destroyed me among my colleagues had they known I was doing that but he would give me a clear outline. He and I got along—both of us were southerners and realistically, you know, southerners can communicate in ways that other people can't simply because it comes from a very definite culture and he and I always got along very well. He's just a wonderful personality. My wife loved him, and I thought he hung the moon.

TS: Okay. So you went through at Oklahoma, and let's see, you'd been there four years I guess when you hit the job market.

FR: No, I'd probably been there longer than that. Let's see, I went there for—yes, that's about right because I went there in '64, and I came here in '68 ABD, so that's exactly correct. My major professor out there was Gilbert C. Fite who was very well known at that point in time. He was actually a western agriculture historian and was nationally known. I decided that the best deal I had was to write under him and that was . . .

TS: And later on he got to Georgia with Richard Russell.

FR: That's right. He became chair of Georgia when they were in a crisis, but when he came in as chair; he also was brought in as research professor to write the official

biography of Senator Richard B. Russell. So Fite and I stayed together closely over the years, simply because both of us were in the state of Georgia. I would have lost contact with him otherwise, which was a tremendous advantage for me, and I still call him up about once a year in January or February after the holidays. I spent my last time with him out in Los Angeles at the OAH about three years ago. We had about two good days together, and I knew that that would be the last time. His mind is still fine. He's getting arthritic, but my gracious, he's in his early nineties now.

TS: My goodness. Is he still living in Athens?

FR: Oh no, he moved to Beautiful View, Arkansas. Bella Vista, Arkansas. His wife's brothers and sisters moved into a retirement settlement, and so he and Mrs. Fite moved there to join them.

TS: Well, you got interested in Will Rogers when you were working with Fite.

FR: Yes, we had a graduate seminar, and he had a list of topics, and one of them was Will Rogers and the Depression if there's enough information. And so I spent, I guess we got out of the seminar about 3:00 or 3:30 in the afternoon, so I spent all afternoon and all night in the library because I knew that was a juicy topic. I didn't know anything about Will Rogers and Western History, but I determined that there was enough to do it, and Fite drove an old Model-A Ford that he still has; it's worth a fortune now, mint condition. He drove it to work every day when he was at Oklahoma. It was the perfect thing for a western agricultural historian—unpretentious, man of the earth type thing. He used to get in his office at 6:45 or 7:00 a.m. every morning; he was a workaholic. At 7:00 a.m. I was sitting on the floor outside his door.

TS: My goodness, that doesn't sound like your schedule.

FR: The next morning and I got the topic Will Rogers, and then a classmate of mine, Henry Kirk, showed up at 8:15 and wanted Will Rogers and Fite told him, "Well, Fred had that one." And So Henry Kirk got "Race Relations in Kansas City," and I definitely felt I had the more interesting of the two topics. And I did ride the topic of Will Rogers almost for an entire career because it was such a popular one; there were problems with it because the family wanted to control everything that was written about him, and they had control over the papers. For decades, it's been a well-known fact that the Will Rogers memorial and the topic of Will Rogers is not really fertile ground, simply because of the attitude that the family and the memorial people have taken which is very unfortunate. But I got what I needed out of it.

TS: Well in '68 you came to Kennesaw. Did you send out job ads all over the country or did you want to come back to Atlanta? Is that how you got here?

FR: Yes, I had a job—the legislature was meeting late in Oklahoma, and I think I would have had a job; I think they called it Central State University in Edmond,

- Oklahoma right outside of Oklahoma City. I taught there part-time my last year I was at OU, and I felt like I just couldn't count on that position being there in late July when the legislature finally got around to doing something. But it was a very nice school.
- TS: Which would have put you at a four-year school.
- FR: Four-year school with graduate programs. Much bigger school than I went to.
- TS: Didn't Jere Roberson go out there from Kennesaw?
- FR: Yes, I got Jere the job out there.
- TS: He was I guess our only one with a doctorate at the time in our history department.
- FR: That's right and I picked up the telephone, and I got him that job.
- TS: Really?
- FR: Yes, sure did. He got in some difficulty here and he went out there.
- TS: We should say that the difficulty was with his teaching ability. It wasn't anything else that I know of.
- FR: No. He was an immature person, let's just put it that way, as far as I understood it. But I literally got him that job. I think I called a fellow named Dick Peters out there who was chair and who was an OU guy and put them together and that was it. Jerry wanted to go, and they wanted him because he was a very articulate, bright guy, young man.
- TS: But at any rate, I interfered with your story of why you came to Kennesaw.
- FR: I had a job offer in Massachusetts at a technical university up there. A friend of mine from Villanova was teaching up there, and I had a job offer from them, and I had a job offer here from Kennesaw. And a job offer at Kennesaw was \$600 more than the job offer in New England, and \$600 was a lot of money in those days. My first job here was \$9,300. That was a lot of money. That was top dollar for an ABD at that point in time.
- TS: Not to mention what living expenses would have been in Massachusetts.
- FR: Well, that's what made the decision for me. Well, there were several things but certainly partially financially, that is, I felt that, having lived up in the northeast that I really could never afford to own a middle class home being a university professor, a college professor in the northeast. I really couldn't. I'd be at best in an apartment the rest of my life. I knew I could live a lot better than that in the South. The real key thing was that my parents were both orphans, and for all

intents and purposes, and they were getting older, and I felt like that me being an only child, and all things being equal that I had an obligation when it presented itself to come back to Atlanta and be in the area and be able to help them as they grew older. Indeed, I was able to help my mother with my dad through, goodness gracious, thirteen years of health problems. I've been able to help my mother through health problems and into assisted living and finally a nursing home and that kind of thing. I never felt that that was a choice that was a burden that limited me in any way; that was a choice, well, as far as I was concerned there was no choice to it. Those two orphans gave me a wonderful home, and there was just no doubt about that that that's what I was going to do.

TS: And you didn't have any brothers or sisters, did you?

FR: No brothers or sisters. Only child.

TS: Two orphaned parents and you were the only child. I bet you were spoiled rotten.

FR: No, my parents were older when they had me, I think they were thirty-five or thirty-six and I grew up in a society that at that point in time in Atlanta was probably upper-middle class and very structured in the sense of both religion and very structured from the point of view from being militaristic in nature in the sense that authority was to be recognized. And then in playing high school football under Erk Russell simply put an exclamation point behind that that authority was to be recognized!

TS: Yes. Now, do I remember that your father worked for Coca-Cola?

FR: He worked for A&P food stores.

TS: A&P, okay.

FR: He was supervisor for A&P food stores, and by the time it was over with he had oh, seventeen or eighteen supermarkets under him. He was very good with people, very good with people. He was known as the old pro when the new unit heads came in after a certain point in time, they didn't bother him; they just let him do his thing.

TS: I remember meeting him once before he had health problems, I think.

FR: He was a quiet, easy-going person, and when he made a point, he didn't have to jump up and down to make it; he just said it and everybody knew who he was, and that's the way it was going to be. But he provided a very good father figure for me. I've always said that what sense of character I got I got from my father and what sense of morality I got I got from my mother. That's not to mean that my mother didn't have any character and my dad didn't have any morals. [chuckle] That's the way I always say it. But he was very good with dealing with people because he dealt with people fairly. And basically his philosophy of managing people was that as long as you do a good job for me, and you don't do

something that places me in a position where if I'm going to support you I have to put myself at risk, I'll support you right down the line. But if you do something you really shouldn't have done, something illegal that puts me in a position where I have to put my own job at risk, that's where the line ends. And I thought that one was an awful fair way to deal with people. And he was very open with people. I can remember one Christmas, a young manager ordered, he thought he was ordering thirteen Christmas trees for a little grocery store, and he ordered thirteen gross. Daddy spent the next two weeks putting those trees in the trunk and back seat of his car and running them around to the bigger stores and spreading them out so the manager didn't get in trouble.

TS: Wow.

FR: So he was that kind of person.

TS: Right. You said earlier that you were ABD when you came here, but as I recall you actually went back your first quarter to take your prelims.

FR: That's right. I had, well, that's partially right. I took my—you know, these things are structured differently in every department, and what we call our general examinations out there, which we correctly call prelims was that, the way it happened in the history department at Oklahoma at that point in time, you did not take those until you finished all your course work and until you had passed both foreign languages. I had five fields, two US history, one modern Latin America, one modern Europe, and one foreign policy, which was the outside field in political science. I had an eight-hour written examination every other day for ten days in each one of those fields. Then, the committee read my examinations over a six-week period of time, and then I went back and took a two-hour oral examination before the committee, based on the weaknesses in the written exam. Then, when you passed that, which I did fortunately—two-thirds of the people that I was in school with failed, and that was a percentage at Oklahoma at that point in time. I hear no one, I don't hear younger people talking about that kind of thing, so they're evidently weeding people out a lot earlier, which we knew they should have done. You sure shouldn't let somebody go through all that, and then cut them out.

TS: Sure.

FR: But it was common.

TS: You've got a big commitment after you've put in several years then.

FR: That's right. Basically, after you failed one time, you had one other shot, and quite frankly most of the people made it on the second time around, but I certainly—and that surprised me, but I certainly didn't want to go in there . . .

TS: Didn't want to get to that point.

FR: The second time.

TS: So what you were going back for when you were here was the oral exam.

FR: That is correct. I took the written before I came here, and then, I went back about six weeks after I had taken the written and took the oral. The last sixteen questions at that point in time—of course, there was nothing known as African-American history per se, just a little bit about slavery and that was it—well, my major professor at the end, starting with the presidential election of 1892 and going up until about 1952 asked me in every presidential election how African-Americans had voted and why. That was one of those things where you had to say, “Well, I don’t know, but in this one, I can guess, and this one I really don’t know.” So I basically had to say “I don’t know” about ten times in a row, and then it was over with, but that was part of the humiliation process. I went out and stood in the hall for about ten minutes on the fourth floor of the library. Then my major professor came out and told me that I had passed and shook my hand. Then I was free to go ahead and write my dissertation. At Oklahoma then, the general exams were the stopping place. The dissertation was not considered a stopping place. In that department at that university at that point in time, if you did an honest, conscientious job, they would not stop you.

TS: They were going to get you through.

FR: They were going to get you through. And as you know, that was not the case at a lot of schools. Those things varied from school to school, from time to time.

TS: It wasn’t the case at Tennessee.

FR: In the English department, they took their preliminary exams one year into their coursework for the Ph.D., whereas we didn’t take ours until all of the courses—I spent a year studying for my preliminary exams.

TS: Well, I did too, at least a year because I was teaching full time here by the time I did that. I took a leave of absence in ’70-’71 to finish the coursework and I think it was ’73 before I actually took the prelims.

FR: I was thinking, I was in Atlanta, yes, I was finishing up my coursework as I was studying for—and my coursework had gotten lighter, but I was also teaching at Edmond, and so I was studying for a year, and my feeling about it was I was kind of hostile about it really because I felt like that after all that coursework, the coursework should reflect your examinations at the end of the program. As far as I was concerned, the coursework only reflected about 25 percent.

TS: That was my experience.

FR: Of what you were expected to know. What coursework then—and my courses after I started teaching were better than the ones I had because I had to do all the bibliography on my own, I had to do all the interpretation, for all intents and

purposes, on my own, and I had to do all the historiography on my own. And once again, I just felt like that was somewhat unreasonable. That's why I took a year off to do all that stuff because you had to find out where a lot of that was. Nobody even told you where it was.

TS: No, no. Just a few would. It was almost like they had the keys to all this knowledge, and they weren't going to share it. I think there was a big difference between private universities and public universities, maybe in that private universities were oftentimes very selective, but once you got in, you pretty well knew you were going to get through. Whereas the public universities were less selective in the front end, but very selective, probably much tougher standards at the back end.

FR: I would certainly agree with you generally speaking. As time went on, I became convinced that after I had a little while here that private university graduates were brighter and more creative on average than public school graduates with Ph.D.'s. Private school graduates were up on contemporary interpretation like you couldn't believe. My feeling was that the public school graduates had a much more massive control of all the information in the disciplines as opposed to the private. They weren't as creative; they weren't as bright, but they just had massive control of factual data and all kinds of information, plus they had a reasonable knowledge of current interpretation, but they also knew the other interpretation going all the way back, so they were able to put the current interpretation in perspective. So my feeling was I encouraged people here. Basically, George Beggs who was our dean for a long time, I encouraged him to hire—every time he hired a private school graduate, I encouraged him the next time to hire a public school graduate to keep that balance in the department. I felt that way that our students would get the best of both possible worlds.

TS: We had some good people who came out of private institutions, but many of them were disasters too, I think, when they got here. I know when I'm on search committees I think I'm biased in favor of public universities because I feel like they can relate better to students in public universities.

FR: Yes, you've got that, but at this point in time I know that we've got some young people that I've gotten to know here in the last two or three years that have come on that have been a big plus for me right at the end. I like them, I have a lot of respect for them, and a number are from private—some are from public universities—private universities and man, they're really committed to teaching the kind of kids we have. Now, whether it's part of that institutional ripple environment they come out of or whether it was made clear in the interview process what their task was going to be, and they're very pragmatic about it I don't know. But I've been impressed by their commitment to that kind of thing. But it is an adjustment for some, there's no doubt about it.

TS: Yes. You took four years doing your dissertation roughly; you were teaching full-time by that point. Of course, that's the same story with me, it took me four years, and I was teaching full-time.

FR: Full-time and every summer.

TS: Yes.

FR: I think I was the only person at that point in time that finished a dissertation that never took any time off to do it.

TS: You taught full-time in the summer?

FR: Yes. As a matter of fact, I've taught full-time in the summer every one of the thirty-six years I've been here, and that was a little bit of money that let you hopefully be able to maybe take a one week trip sometime during the summertime. I mean, money was not flush.

TS: No, it wasn't. Okay, so you got through, and by that time you were also getting involved in administration, weren't you, by the time you finished in '72?

FR: Well, that's kind of hard. Of course, George Beggs was the division chair on the junior college structure, which, of course, is equivalent to a dean on a four-year college structure. He had a number of disciplines underneath him which would have been equal to a dean in humanities and social sciences and . . .

TS: Right, which is what he became.

FR: That's right. And gradually—it didn't happen quickly—but I think after about gosh, Tom, this is hard, I think it took four or five or six years before things got big enough, and I think he needed some help he felt so basically he gave me an extra course in the summertime in exchange for me doing teaching schedules. He gave me the parameters of what he wanted.

TS: You're saying they didn't pay you, and they didn't give you a release time.

FR: That's right.

TS: You just got to teach one extra course and make the money for that course in the summer.

FR: That's right.

TS: Wow.

FR: That was it. And that was a big thing because, as you'll remember, history was lucky to get one course in the summertime, whereas English got two every summer because they kept those classes so small. So getting that second course

- was really a leg up financially for me, and I was young and energetic and that kind of thing. But that's the way it worked then. I wound up doing schedules, and I wound up—I certified everybody to graduate for about the first seven or eight years, until the registrar's office took it over. I ordered the books. Like I say, I just got one extra course in summer school.
- TS: Lest somebody wonders a hundred years from now, we operated on nine-month contracts, and then had a separate contract for the summer, and so whatever we taught in the summer was extra pay.
- FR: That's right. I think at that point in time we got one-tenth base pay for every course we taught. I really did that for three, four, five years, and finally, I was designated as assistant division head, but still, I think, at the end, I think I was finally given a one-course release, and got the second course in summer school. And then of course, I became the first head of the department, and I've always said that—of course, Dr. Beggs was a very professional person and had very tight professional standards—but basically, I had about an eight year interview before I became department head, and I think that's probably the longest, most grueling any human being every experienced.
- TS: I believe that was '83 that we went to the department system, as opposed to the division and suddenly started having department chairs?
- FR: That's about right. And the first year, Dr. Siegel did it in the middle of the year. We started doing it in the middle of the year.
- TS: So everybody was internal at that time, weren't they?
- FR: That's right, that's right.
- TS: All the department chairs were people already on the faculty.
- FR: And basically, the people that had evolved as assistant division chairs just like I had, or a lot of them anyway, because each—we weren't as big then so every discipline didn't have a department head. Only the largest disciplines did. I was department head in actuality for about a year and a half, technically, for only a year, but like I say, it started about six months before it became official. I think I continued being department head, and I think I got the extra session in the summer, and that was it. No release time, no secretary, and responsible for everything, and I continued to function, quite frankly, as assistant dean or assistant division head because Dr. Beggs felt so comfortable with me. We kind of knew each other's ways by that point in time, and that was a very natural thing. That first year burned me out because I felt that I should set an example, so I had a class at 8:00 in the morning, and one from 8:20 to 10:30 at night, and was teaching three five-hour courses, and I was still involved in professional organization activity heavily. I was still involved in publishing pretty regularly. After a year, my stomach said, "You've either got to quit it or do something." So I had never wanted to be an administrator per se. To me, when I came through

being a department head that was a reward for teaching and scholarship that gave you a little time off where you could do some more research and writing, and it gave you a secretary that could type your manuscripts and let you set an example for leadership of the department in that area. And by the time I got into it, it had become a full-blown thing in and of itself, full time. I really had no desire for it. I have never had any desire to control other human beings. One of the most disturbing parts of when I was appointed chair was that for me, people who had been colleagues and friends all of a sudden—not all but some—started boot-licking, and that kind of thing, and it was obvious that they were fearful of me. And that was not the way I worked with people, for fear. I had never done that, I never intended to do it, and I've never done it. Being Irish, I'm perfectly capable of losing my temper, but I have no desire for that kind of thing. So that was the best decision I ever made, and if my stomach hadn't kicked up, I'd probably still be over there grinding away.

TS: Well, nowadays, where they only teach one class every, one or two at most a year it might have fit better with your attempt to do some scholarship, and still be chair.

FR: Maybe, except that there are so many other things that every office down to the chair is basically, I think at this point in time just an extension of the president's office, and they'll find something for you to do.

TS: I agree. It's a sacrifice of everything except service.

FR: Yes. And, like I say, at the point of retirement, as I look back on my career, I really feel very positive about what I've done with my life. I've been very fortunate, and I think I would not feel that way at all if I had been in administration because I always felt that when you went into administration, you gave up what there was of value in the job, which is the classroom and working with students. I think you and I both feel that way.

TS: Absolutely. Well, we're not going to be able to get all the way through today, but we have about fourteen or fifteen minutes left before you have to go. I wanted to at least get into one type of service that was still important to the development of the college, and that was the presidential search committee that you chaired when Betty Siegel came in. How did that come about? Vernon Crawford picked you to chair the committee after Dr. Sturgis retired, and how did that come about? Vernon Crawford was the chancellor at that time.

FR: Well, I'll tell you. That's right, Vernon Crawford was the chancellor and that was really . . .

TS: Did you know him?

FR: I got to know him during the presidential search.

TS: But you didn't know him before?

- FR: No, no. Did not know him before at all, and that was one of the most, that was work. All the pain and torment of chairing that committee, which a lot of people said, “Oh, you’ll love being up there in front doing that.” I didn’t love that; that was a torturous process. But Vernon Crawford was one of the finest men I ever met; I didn’t know him that well, but I really treasured the relationship I had with him.
- TS: Did someone recommend you to chair that?
- FR: I think the way it happened was this; it was somewhat bizarre. I’m guessing here, Tom, because I was never told, but it just makes sense. Number one, I was told just here recently, and that was not the case—number one, I think we have to understand that at that point in time, search committees had a very substantial role in the process of choosing presidents, in the sense that the search committees on campuses narrowed the list to three, and then sent them down to the Board of Regents, the Chancellor, and normally they were taken from those three. That’s not the case today. The search committees filter down to the top twenty or something like that, and it’s not even closed off at that, so you don’t have near the impact.
- TS: Correct.
- FR: When Dr. Sturgis announced his retirement, Dr. Crawford, the Chancellor, it was announced that he was coming out to the campus for two days, as I remember it, over in the conference room next to the president’s old office. He was going to set, I believe it was fifteen or twenty minutes, aside for two days for all the people on campus that wanted to give him input as Chancellor concerning what they thought the new president should be like, and who they thought should be on the committee and et cetera, et cetera. Well, I really wasn’t interested in those kinds of things, and I just assumed one of the administrators—
- TS: It certainly would be nowadays.
- FR: —was going to chair the committee. And evidently the decision had been made; it had to be a full-time faculty member. Now, I assume the Chancellor made that decision, and that was the kind of decision that he would make. Anyway, the bottom line was [that] I was the last person to see him: the last fifteen minutes on the second day. I barely got in to see him, and of course when I went in to see him, I told him I wanted a person that was committed to the academic side of the house. I thought that’s where we made our reputation, and that’s where we should stay, and I recommended George Beggs, my boss—your boss.
- TS: He would have been a perfect one to do it.
- FR: Yes, he would have been a perfect one to do it; he would have been very good at it and that kind of thing. Over the years, Dr. Sturgis and I have gotten to know one another. When Cullene Harper over in continuing education and public relations had her child, I went over there and sat in her office—they had a

personnel problem over there, and I worked closely with the president for about three months. While I was over there, he and I went to a meeting in Chicago, and Dr. Beggs told me that he'd never leave the campus. But what was happening was he had a sister that was dying just north of Chicago, so to my horror he had only gotten one room for the two of us, and I remember the first night, it was a regional meeting of the American Association of Colleges and Universities.

TS: Dr. Sturgis believed in saving money.

FR: Yes. The first night in the room he asked me, he said, "Fred, what kind of personnel changes do you think we could make at Kennesaw to improve things on campus? Nothing's ever perfect." And I thought to myself for a minute and then I said, "No, no, no..." Like there were three or four changes that came to my mind immediately, and when Dr. Siegel came all of those changes were made, okay? But I had just . . .

TS: But you didn't want to make the recommendation.

FR: No, no, no, because I did not think Dr. Sturgis would carry then out number one, and I felt like it would be a good way to commit suicide, number two. I wouldn't have even thought about it, had he not asked me, but I didn't want to go there. That scared me half to death right there. But anyway, he got comfortable with me because he knew I believe in academic standards, and I think he picked up that I was a straight arrow person, and that's what he was. So I am convinced—he and Vernon Crawford had been friends over at Georgia Tech when Dr. Sturgis was assistant registrar over there. I was never told directly, but when I got the letter in my office from Dr. Crawford for me to head the committee—I don't get surprised by many things but boy, that one floored me, and I just kind of dazed and walked out in the hall. Dr. Beggs walked by, and I just was kind of in a daze and showed it to him, and he just looked at me and said, "Take it and run with it." But that was a real shock because I think at that point in time, if you thought about it, that would have been a surprise to every faculty member on campus that a full-time faculty member would have had the job of chairing the committee. Now, of course, people don't realize that people who chair committees don't have nearly as much influence as a lot of other people think they do. But I am convinced personally that Dr. Sturgis told Dr. Crawford that I was the one that he wanted to chair that committee because I'm convinced that he had seen enough of me where he felt like that I was firmly rooted in sound academic standards. You can say anything else you want about Dr. Sturgis, but he did support that on this campus. He never flinched on that one. I think that was the key right there. It was a tremendous experience. I decided early on—well, first of all, the campus was in such, it was such a time here when was it, where in 1980 . . .

TS: 1980 is when he retired. I guess the last day of 1980 is when he left campus.

FR: Okay, so it was . . .

TS: It must have been right at the beginning of fall semester.

FR: Right. And we had nine months to do the job. The Chancellor came out very quickly. And we took all nine months; boy, we barely got it done. As I approached it, I decided personally, I just figured that, okay, this was mine and the only way you can—I had never solved that type of leadership position, but if you're going to be responsible for something, you may as well exercise leadership; that way you can live with mistakes. So I decided that I wanted two things—well really three things: number one, I did not want, top priority was not to bring the new president in under a cloud of a lawsuit which sounds ridiculous, but of course at Atlanta Vocational Technical School two or three years later that guy lived under a haze, he was in a lawsuit for two years when he came in. So I didn't want a lawsuit, number one; obviously I wanted to get the best person we could get, number two, that was understood. And number three, I was determined that it was going to be an open and honest process. I just didn't know any other way.

TS: Did you get any legal advice along the way?

FR: The Chancellor had a legal beagle down there who was Henry Neal, and as a matter of fact, at one point in time, we had a crisis in the committee over a legal question, and it didn't seem logically like there was any way out, so that was the only time that I had to call the Chancellor in that whole nine months. I had to call him, and I said, "This looks like a sticky wicket legal to me." Once again, I tried to cross every "t" and dot every "i" because that was—and of course there were a lot of lawsuits coming in, or there were a lot of lawsuits coming, and that kind of thing at that point in time, and I just did not want it. So he said, "Well, let me talk to my legal beagle," who was Henry Neal at that point in time. He got back with me in forty-five minutes, and I had my answer, and it was an easy answer, but I wasn't the lawyer, I didn't know. So we were very careful, number one. So number one, I approached it with those three priorities in mind. Number two, the campus was in such a—the campus had been ruled in a very authoritarian, paternalistic fashion. There were some of us, like you and I that worked under George Beggs that as we saw other approaches used we were quite happy with that because we felt the man was fair, and you didn't have any surprises coming from him. But there were other people that didn't feel that comfortable with it at all, and we had the women's rights movements getting going here; we had a committee of about twenty-six people, I think.

TS: I knew it was a big one, I didn't realize it was that big.

FR: Yes, I think it was about twenty-six people. That's just a guess on my part, but I think that's about right. We had a number of women and some very outspoken women, and the bottom line was that I realized pretty early on that, well, I realized before the committee ever met that there was a lot of discontent on campus. A lot of discontent on campus.

- TS: For a variety of reasons.
- FR: For a variety of reasons. Women's rights was one; authoritarian administration as perceived was another, et cetera, et cetera. So what I did was, and it was the smartest thing I did, I think. Before the committee ever met, I went and talked to every individual on that committee in their office, at their convenience for somewhere between thirty and forty-five minutes and just simply asked them what their concerns were, et cetera, et cetera, and what they were interested in, how they wanted it to be run and et cetera, et cetera. And the Chancellor had told me, he said, "The committee sets up your own rules, and all you've got to do is follow them." And that was one of the smartest things I did because that let off a lot of steam. I pretty much became convinced at that point in time, as I looked at the personalities; I knew that there was probably going to be a woman on the short list that went downtown. That was simply the attitude, not only among the women who were not all firebrands—some of them were very quiet, but very determined that it was time to do something about this—but also among some of the other more liberal males on the committee. So I came to realize pretty quickly that there was going to be a woman on the short list, and there were going to be a lot of women on the longer list before it was over with.
- TS: This is at a time when there aren't any women in any of the—I guess we had some women who were department chairs at that time maybe, but certainly not deans, and we didn't have vice-presidents back then.
- FR: That's right. No, we would—and of course there had never been a woman president in the history of the university system of Georgia. I'm not so sure that there had been a woman president—we never looked this up—in a state system in the southeast, except for women's colleges. I don't know, has anybody ever looked that up, but I could see how that could have been the case.
- TS: We're going to have to wind it up for you to get to your doctor's appointment.
- FR: There was one other thing that was in the back of my mind, and that was that—I can't think what it was now, but it was fundamental as the plan evolved—well, it's right on the tip of my tongue. This is it, this is important. If I remember correctly, no faculty member had ever participated in hiring another faculty member on this campus up until that point in time. It had all been done *ex cathedra* by the division heads or deans, and so this was a completely new thing. I was so lucky to have Bill Thompson. They put him as second in command to make sure I didn't mess it up. He was a retired army type, he loved to fill out forms; he was so organized it wasn't even funny.
- TS: He taught accounting.
- FR: He taught accounting. And the law was emerging at that point in time concerning what could be done and how it had to be done concerning searches, and once

again, none of us had ever had any experience at it. And Bill Thompson got in and did his homework.

TS: I guess by that time, we had cut off business to where he was the division chair maybe for the business administration?

FR: He was the dean in business at that time.

TS: Or what would be dean. Division chair at the time.

FR: Yes, he was that, and I think they put him there to make sure that I didn't mess up. Bottom line was basically I didn't care about the forms and all that other stuff, but I didn't know anything about it. I let him take the lead for the first six months I guess; I just laid back in the shadows, and did my job, but he was the one that was, because he was the one that knew this stuff. And then after we got everything set up structurally, my feeling about it was as things finally emerged. He was the genius when it came to figuring out what the law demanded and designing these forms and all this stuff. But I, in the last analysis was the one that had the ability to deal with the group dynamics in the committee and keep the committee moving in one direction. What I wanted to do was of course bring somebody in with a unified committee so that when the president came in, they didn't have a split faculty to deal with. That was also another concern that was on my mind. I laid back in the tall grass for about six months, and when it got down to crunch time, I asserted myself, and I think I was very wise to do so because I think if I had tried to assert myself in a position of leadership for the whole nine month period of time that it would have worn out. Laying back in the tall grass and then coming out when I felt that the skills that I had would work best, and I think that when we made the decision we peaked just right; we had a unified committed behind it. We had a unified faculty behind it and everybody was happy with me. And that was not my concern that everybody be happy with me but at the same time . . .

TS: It's nice when it happens though.

FR: But at the same time to have a positive result you needed that to a certain extent. And what the bottom line was, everybody knew it had been an honest process. That was the one message that came out.

TS: Well, I think we can probably go at least this long on a second occasion, and we'll just schedule another interview later on. Thank you very much.

Interview # 2: Friday, 1 October 2004

TS: Fred, last time, a couple of weeks ago, we were talking about the presidential search which you chaired, and I think about the last thing that we covered was Bill Thompson's role in the early days, in the search, and the fact that faculty had never been involved in searches for any faculty members, let alone a president.

- FR: That's right. That's the way I remember it.
- TS: Well, I think you're right. I can't remember us being much involved in anything before that time.
- FR: Right. And like I said, Bill Thompson was amazing. His life was geared around making out questionnaires, and that to me was the most boring thing in the world, and he was really the one that looked up and checked us out on the legalities and how interviewing had to be done because there were a lot of legal restrictions that were emerging at that point in time that you could really get yourself in trouble on if you didn't have all the "t's" crossed and all the "i's" dotted. That was his kind of thing. Plus, he had been, in essence, a dean, so he had been involved in interviewing, so he had probably been exposed to that information either in a system-wide continuing education program up at the University of Georgia or some other way. But I certainly had no knowledge of it so it was very fortunate that he was here. We even got to the point that we had to have a student, or we had to have somebody from the committee with each candidate as they went before each group that they talked to, so that if anybody in the group asked a legally inappropriate question, the representative of the committee could simply jump up and say, "I'm sorry, that's not an appropriate question, and we'll have to move on to another one." And people were just not aware at that point in time that's when it was just surfacing. You couldn't ask anybody if they were married or if they had children or anything that just might slip up in casual conversation. You just couldn't ask them anything about their personal life at all. That was a completely new world. So it was easy to make mistakes.
- TS: Right. And of course, we didn't have an attorney on campus at that time; I think you mentioned Henry Neal the other day.
- FR: Right. That's the only legal support we had for that.
- TS: From the Chancellor's office.
- FR: From the Chancellor's office. I only had to call down there one time. I think I mentioned that. I called and talked to the Chancellor, and he got with Colonel Neal and gave me an answer in about two hours. I think we do need, if I may, there are two things that I need to mention about the search committee. Number one, and you may or may not use this, but I think it needs to be mentioned; we had an internal candidate for the office of the president.
- TS: Right. Two of them, didn't you?
- FR: Well, yes, but one that was really somewhat of a sticky wicket for me, and that was Gene Huck who was the academic vice president at that point in time.
- TS: Right. And acting president.

FR: And acting president, that's right. I think I mentioned before that the committee was composed, I think I said twenty-six people last time, that may have been a little bit high, but it was nineteen or twenty-one.

TS: Can you say something about who the people were on the committee? I know you had Wyman Pilcher from the community.

FR: Wyman Pilcher was from the community and—this is going back a long way now—and Ed Mulkey was from the community.

TS: And also an alumnus.

FR: And also an alumnus from the early years. Terri Thomas represented the staff, and June Rowland Krise represented the students.

TS: She would have been an alumnus by that time.

FR: Yes. Bill Thompson, Herb Davis . . .

TS: So two administrators.

FR: Bob Driscoll . . .

TS: Three administrators. Cary Turner was on the committee.

FR: Cary Turner was on it; Inez Morgan was on it as I remember; boy, I tell you it kind of flows into nothingness after a certain point in time; it's been so many years. Well, I'll tell you who else was on it: Mildred Landrum was on it; that's about all that come to mind.

TS: Well, let's see what this—Cary Turner was from the English department, Mildred Landrum was business communication—she taught business communication; I don't know what department she would have been in—so you've got the College of Business—School of Business back then—represented, School of Arts, Humanities and Social Science I think we were called maybe. No, we weren't called anything at that time, we were still in divisions.

FR: Social Science.

TS: And she would have been Humanities, Cary Turner. Actually Mildred was probably still in Social Science. Or no . . .

FR: She was in Business by then.

TS: We had a separate Business, okay.

FR: That's right.

TS: So that, and of course, you would have represented Social Science.

FR: That's right. And Herb Davis was Natural Science.

TS: And Driscoll was Education.

FR: Driscoll was Education.

TS: Anybody from Nursing?

FR: I don't remember.

TS: They would have been part of Science.

FR: That's right. They would have been part of Science. And those are pretty much the only people that I remember.

TS: Were there any students per se; any current students at that time?

FR: I can't imagine there not being, but I can't remember. June Krise they may have gotten her as an alumni and a student both.

TS: She was a student at the time of the four-year movement, which would have been four or five years earlier.

FR: As a matter of fact, I didn't even remember she was on the committee until she told me she was the other day.

TS: So at any rate, we've got probably more faculty representation than we've ever had on anything before.

FR: Yes, but still you're sitting there, and it was a bizarre make-up because you had three top administrators . . .

TS: Were you officially assistant division chair at that time?

FR: I don't think so, Tom. I don't think so.

TS: So this was all, I mean it wouldn't happen today, where a full-time teaching faculty member would have chaired a presidential search committee.

FR: Evidently, they had decided that a full-time faculty member for whatever reason, needed to chair. I just picked that up from Roger Hopkins indirectly about four weeks ago, as a matter of fact. You had a bizarre split because you had the three administrators who could have been expected to have supported the academic VP hub, and then you had people that were really, like Inez Morgan who had a quiet disposition, but at the same time very much a feminist type of person in her own right, and Cary Turner who was overtly and verbally and very clearly a feminist type and Mildred Landrum. So as I said last time it was clear to me from the very beginning that, all things being equal, that there was going to be a woman on the list of ten that we sent down to the Board of Regents. Now, let's get back to Gene

Huck who was academic vice president, the major internal candidate. There was such a feminist sentiment on the committee, and there was also such a suspicion of both the administration here because the school was run conservatively from an administrative point of view at that point in time, as evidenced by the fact that the faculty had never been involved in a search for other faculty members. And the system was considered to be very conservative at that point in time. I think it was clear, well, it was clear to the committee, the feeling on the committee, it was clear that the feeling on the committee was that if Gene Huck was—what we were supposed to do was to narrow it down to a short list of ten or thereabouts, and then interview those people, and then we would send three members down to the Board of Regents, or three candidates down to the Board of Regents, and if the board found somebody that was appropriate out of those three, then they would make the choice down there. So, in other words, we weren't simply a filtering process; we narrowed that list quite a bit and had a great deal of voice in saying who the board sought.

TS: So your first cut is to ten, and then you cut to three to submit to the Board.

FR: Yes, we brought ten to campus here.

TS: Yes, I remember there was a lot that we brought on.

FR: Yes, we were allowed to bring ten to campus, and we did, and then out of that ten we sent three names down to the Board and—but before I forget Dean Huck's thing, Vice President Huck did not . . .

TS: Actually, he would have been dean at that time but acting president.

FR: Acting president, right. He did not make the ten cut; in other words, he was not invited to campus for an interview, and the reason for that was that there was such suspicion on the committee among enough people on the committee relative to how conservative and manipulative the campus was run from a lot of people's point of view, as well as the system. Their fear was that if acting president Huck was invited for an interview that then it would manipulated downtown for him to be sent downtown for an interview, and he would be made the next president. In other words, the committee would have in essence lost its say and its influence in the matter, and there were enough people on the committee that did not want him to be the next president.

TS: Did the opposition come from the teaching faculty or from a cross section?

FR: I think it was most active among the teaching faculty, and I think the reason was that any good president has to be good at making their academic dean or academic vice presidents do a lot of things that are unpopular, so as to keep the president above the fray, as it were. I think that, quite frankly, Dr. Sturgis had been very good at that. I thought that Gene Huck was a very fine man, and I thought he was a very good candidate, and I thought he would have made a very good president, and quite frankly I'm sure that I voted for him to be on the list of ten, personally

- because I thought that much of him. I thought he was very capable. Like I say, it was the atmosphere on campus and pretty much in the system in general at that point in time, but especially on this campus at that point in time and especially with the mix of personalities on that committee.
- TS: So he's kind of the Vice President Cheney on national politics.
- FR: That's exactly it.
- TS: The bad guy of the administration.
- FR: That's right. And I think President Sturgis was very good about making him carry out the policies that weren't popular that were either decided on this campus or that came down from the system level, and then had to be passed on down.
- TS: Right. Well, I can remember how unpopular he was with the faculty back then, and it's so mind-boggling now after he went back to the faculty and became so popular among his colleagues.
- FR: Yes. And like I say, anybody that really knew him, he was a very bright, urbane, kind, civilized man. But what was not to like? It was just one of those things where I think he got manipulated into that position; I really do. He always felt, I went over and when it was decided—like I say, he was not put on the list to bring to campus because there was a strong feeling among a number of members of the committee that if he were invited for an interview that it would be manipulated that he would be the new president. That type of feeling, considering the way the campus was run at that point in time, and considering the way the system was run at that point in time, it was really not irrational by any stretch of the imagination. Many things like that that are a lot worse had happened. So it was the type of thing that here I had always taken the position that, and it's the kind of thing that I could vote for him, but as chair of the committee all I could do was vote and say my piece as a member of the committee. But I didn't have any special prerogative as chair of the committee because the Chancellor had charged us to make our own rules. With my complete support, we set up a very democratic and open process, and it's the old story that, to a certain extent, the higher you get as far as structural authority, the less authority you do have in some situations. You can't exert what perhaps is potentially there.
- TS: Did you all cast secret ballots or open ballots?
- FR: Yes, we did. Once again because of the atmosphere on campus everything was done with secret ballots. As a matter of fact, Terri Thomas was secretary of the committee, and she was the only African-American on the committee, I think. Pete Silver may have been on the committee; I don't remember. But I had her count the ballots and read off the ten that were going to be invited to campus.
- TS: Pete would have been here by then. He came in 1977.

FR: And Pete may have been there. But anyway, once the decision was made, we met, I think it was on Thursday afternoon, and after it was decided everybody realized that this was kind of a sticky wicket, and I think the feeling was that also that if they did not want Gene Huck to be president, if the majority of the committee didn't want it, number one, they didn't want him to be invited because they were afraid he would be manipulated in, in some way; and number two, they felt that if he was going to not be the choice, which there were a majority on the committee that had already decided that or I would say a majority, that it would just be a more humane thing to not even put him through the interview process and get his hopes up. The quicker and earlier the cord was cut, the better.

TS: So don't worry about a courtesy invitation to campus?

FR: That's right. And I think there was definitely some feeling in that area too, and I think that was, in the long run, I think that was a positive thing. After that vote was taken on that Thursday afternoon, I think we used to meet from something like 3:00 to 5:00 or 5:30. I went over—because we had faculty meetings on Monday, and we had a faculty meeting coming up that Monday, and at the faculty meetings I had usually about eight or nine minutes to report to the faculty as a whole, which met as whole, on the suggestion of the committee. I certainly did not want Gene Huck to find out in a public meeting that he would not be on the short list, so I announced to the committee that I would go ahead and go over and talk to him that Thursday afternoon as I remember it was, so that he would have the weekend to kind of adjust to the situation, which I felt was the only fair, and humane thing to do. Wyman Pilcher, bless his heart, he caught me as the meeting was breaking up and offered to go over to Dean Huck's office with me to inform him, and the bottom line was Wyman was afraid I was going to be fired if I had to be the one to deliver the message. Now, he didn't realize that things didn't work that way here at that point in time, but I thought it as a very kind gesture on his part. I went over and told the dean, and he took it well. After that was done, I spoke to him on two other occasions about it trying to soften the blow and one, I think I helped his feelings and the second time, what I said upset him, which was not my intention, and so we never spoke about it again. I'm sure that his family held some hostility toward me for several years after that, but I never—which was just human nature—but I never picked up any hostility on his part toward me, and I told President Siegel when she came to the campus, and it was either when she was interviewing or after she had interviewed, and she was on a visit here. I can remember catching her at the library door. It must have been during the interview process, and I said to her, I said, "I know you're probably picking up . . ."—because once again, Gene Huck was a friend of mine, I thought a lot of him, and I caught her at the door coming in the library and said, "I know you're probably picking up from various groups you talk to a certain amount of hostility toward Gene Huck. I think he is a very fine scholar and gentleman and administrator, but in the last analysis that obviously is going to be your decision to make if you should come as president." Then when the search was over, I wrote Chancellor Vernon Crawford and told him what a gentleman and a scholar I thought Gene Huck was and how he had handled a very, very, very difficult situation in an

incredibly positive way, and I had never sensed any hostility from him whatsoever, although I had been the bearer of bad tidings. I understand that when the Chancellor came out as the process started to interview faculty members about who should be on the committee and that sort of thing, that he had lunch with Dean Huck and told Dean Huck that it was very hard at that point in time in the system for an internal candidate to be appointed president and was, in essence, Dean Huck really sure he wanted to place himself in that position? It is my understanding that that conversation took place, so evidently, the process had started whereby these committees that had a good bit of influence on who became president. The bottom line was that it had started, and they were bringing people in from outside the system and not appointing from within. That was part of it that was a sticky wicket, and also when Gene Huck, who was just a wonderful guy as you know, when he went back to the history department, everybody welcomed him with open arms, and he told me—and of course, I was chair for those first two years after that—and he told me on more than one occasion that he really appreciated the way that he had been received within the department, and that he personally was convinced that I had gotten the department members together and banged some heads together and told them that he was to be considered as both a friend and a colleague because he said, “Normally, administrators, when they go back into the classroom are not met with kindness that I’ve been met with and the consideration and support.” And of course, I did not do that; it was just his personality.

TS: Well, I think so, and you know he was a great teacher and scholar, as you say, so he was a leader when he came back into the department, and I think people realize that. I think a lot of administrators, after they’ve been an administrator for a while, don’t really have a field anymore because they’ve just been doing service, and they let their scholarship go, but he really didn’t.

FR: No, he had been editor of the Southeastern Latin American Association *Journal* that they produced, so he stayed close to scholarship that way, and he just had a very fine mind and a very curious mind and was a good scholar. The other thing personnel-wise that I had to deal with was with Herb Davis who I felt an affinity for as an administrator because, although he was head of the Natural Science Division, he had come here from Emory, and he was newly divorced, so in the early days, for a year or two, he socialized with the faculty because that was the only social outlet he had, having just been divorced and moved to a new school. So you got to know him in a different way than you got to know other administrators. Of course, that time had passed many years by the time we got into the search committee, but Herb was very bright. He probably had as fine a mind as anybody that had ever worked on this campus. I don’t know whether a lot of people realized that or not, but he was very bright. He started out on the committee and he had pretty much within the first two months alienated a number of people on the committee who had come and spoken to me about his attitude: number one, toward me, they felt like it was condescending and domineering; and then toward the committee in general, number two. So I called and got an appointment with him and chatted with him, and I just told him what had

happened, that people had mentioned it to me; that I wasn't especially concerned, but that other people were concerned about it, and that he was alienating himself from too many members on the committee and I just said, "Herb, I need your help because you are an administrator, and you are respected, I need your help to have this committee function as effectively as it can function, and I can't afford to have somebody of your prestige alienated from the committee. It's going to create too much of a problem for the job we're trying to do, for the job that you want to do, and the job that I want to do." And of course, that was kind of a sticky wicket at that point in time. But I think that I pretty much stated it as I've just stated it now, and he was a stable enough personality so that he took it, his tone changed, and that problem was neutralized immediately.

TS: Good. Now, if I recall correctly candidates for the presidency, the list of candidates was confidential, until you all narrowed it down to ten, and then it became public, is that correct?

FR: That is correct. We published the list of the ten that I think—I'm sure knowing myself—that we had contacted that primary list, if you want to call it that and made arrangements for their visits to campus, and when the list was published, it was the names and the time of their visits so everybody had agreed. And there was only one what we would call a GIST phone today that had long-distance privileges on campus, and that was in President Sturgis's office, and so I had use of his office to make all of those telephone calls. All those telephone calls were made from his office.

TS: What did we do, go through the switchboard before that time if we wanted to make a long-distance call?

FR: I guess so.

TS: I can't recall.

FR: I guess so. And I'm not sure the faculty made long-distance calls because if you realize he used to always point out the first of each year that "we're providing the telephone for your office" because Georgia State professors at that time had to pay for their own telephones.

TS: Really?

FR: That was not an automatic thing in the system, so as far as he was concerned that was quite an act of largess on his part. During the process, I did have one problem, where the mail was coming in, when it came on campus, it was being opened before it got to me.

TS: Uh-oh. In the mailroom?

FR: Let's just say it was being opened before it got to me. And I realized that that was unsatisfactory, but it was a sticky wicket in handling it, and the way I handled it

- was that I told the person that was opening it, who was a staff person, that I wanted that stopped because for legal purposes I needed to date with my own stamp the date that I had received it and opened it and so the result was that that stopped.
- TS: Was this a secretary that was opening it?
- FR: Well, let's just say it was a staff person.
- TS: Okay.
- FR: Okay. Let's just leave it at that. Like I say, I had to deal with that and of course my concern was that information was going elsewhere from there as far as who was applying and all that kind of thing. And I'll tell you something, when you have a committee, nineteen or twenty-one people—I want to revise that number, I think it was that rather than twenty-six like I said last time—but it was still a large committee. And after we, when we developed our first filtered list, this was not the ten that would be invited to campus but when we . . .
- TS: How many were there to begin with? How many candidates?
- FR: Tom, I think we had over seventy-five. We had between seventy-five and a hundred. It was massive.
- TS: Did the guy in the mental institution in South Carolina apply that applied for all our jobs?
- FR: Yes, he did. And I had had him as a French teacher in undergraduate school. He applied, and there was another guy from California who was crazier than he was.
- TS: Okay. So there were a few that you could easily knock off the list.
- FR: That's right. And some, of course, even then just clearly didn't qualify based on the qualifications. But we had a large pool to deal with, and I think we originally set it up where we had a, let's say we originally boiled it down after we did some looking and everything else to a list of twenty. That was the first filter. And then from twenty, we went down to the ten that would be invited to the campus, and then you would go down to the three that we would recommend, and they would be taken to the Board to interview.
- TS: Right.
- FR: When that list of twenty—and we had a thing, and I meant it too, that everything in there needed to be confidential because there were internal candidates on campus and all kinds of legal factors involved and that anything that was said in that room had to be confidential. We made that list of twenty as I remember it, and I think that was the number, and I remember who was number one on that list, and we were already ranking people. And it was somebody from in the system,

but not on this campus, and they knew down at the Board of Regents at 8:20 the next morning who was number one on that list. It was incredible. And I know exactly how it got down there. In my mind, I know exactly how it got down there. That's when I decided right then and there that the only kind of committee that was confidential was a one-person committee, and maybe then, the one-person committee that person needed to have laryngitis. But that was literally what happened.

TS: So a leak from a person on the committee?

FR: On the committee. It wasn't a leak on campus, it was leaked right down to the Board. It was a person who later took their name off, and who progressed on up the ladder administratively at the institution where they worked.

TS: Oh, I see. A person who withdrew from the presidential search.

FR: That's correct. As a matter of fact, we had one crisis on the committee. The committee was very suspicious, and so I think the rules we established were—this is going back a long time—but I think we decided that all major decisions, certainly decisions concerning who the candidates were that would be brought to campus, et cetera, et cetera, all major decisions—personnel decisions, potential personnel decisions—would have to have a three-fourths majority vote. Well, having a three-fourths majority vote, that's pretty hard to do. And we only got in trouble on it one time, and that was when we had this original list of twenty, and then we narrowed it down to ten, and we started bringing people to campus, and then some of those people that we brought to campus, I'm trying to remember the sequence of events here, but some of the, after we narrowed it down to a list of ten some people bailed out when we notified them that they were going to be brought to campus. In other words, the process then was professionally that a lot of people didn't want their own schools knowing that they were applying for another job because that could have put their job in jeopardy where they were.

TS: So you are saying that if it had only two or three that you invited to campus they might have come, but in a group of ten they weren't going to take a chance?

FR: No, what I'm saying is I had to call each person, once we got down to that list of ten and say, "I'm notifying you that you are on this short list of ten to come to campus for an interview, and as part of that notification I want you to be aware that we feel free not only to contact the people that you have asked to write recommendations for you, but from this point on we feel free to contact anybody. And I felt like it was only professional courtesy because we felt like there were some people, unless they really felt they were going to get it, that wouldn't want to put their job in jeopardy. And as I remember it, we had a couple of people pull out at that point and as a matter of fact, number one on the list of twenty pulled out at that point I think. And then after we narrowed it down to ten and started bringing people to campus . . .

TS: When they pulled out, you put somebody in their place?

FR: Well, that's where the sticky wicket came. Some of the people we brought to campus pulled out after they came to campus. I can think of one; I'm not so sure there were others, but I can think of one. So the bottom line was we felt like we did not have, between the people that had pulled out when they had been notified that they were going to be on the short list, and then the people that came to campus, and then pulled out, we didn't have enough of a pool left, and we had started out with a pool of I think maybe fifteen. In other words, inviting ten to campus, and we had a pool of fifteen or maybe twenty, but with people pulling out, we didn't have enough of a pool. So we had to go back and increase the pool, and we had this rule that you had to have a three-fourths majority to make personnel decisions, and we couldn't get a three-fourths vote in the committee to open that pool up again because once again, there was such concern about the thing being manipulated. And I'm sure there were some people that didn't trust me although of course, I felt like because the way I'd run it that everybody felt it had been absolutely open and above board, but I'm sure that there were probably some people at different times who didn't trust me simply because they didn't trust the system. So that's the only time I had to call the Chancellor. Legally, we had set down the rules, and we followed them, and so he contacted Henry Neal, his legal advisor down at the Board and called back and said, "Well, all you've got to do is vote to change the rules in this situation and then . . ."

TS: A majority vote to change the rules.

FR: Well, he said you had to have, I guess it was a three-fourths vote to change the rules, but then in that three-fourths vote to change the rules that you could agree on a new list by two-thirds vote or something. We did it in some way that was logical and rational, and we got the committee to agree to it. I think that was probably what it was although we couldn't get the committee to vote three-fourths to do a new list, we did get the committee to vote by three-fourths to extend the list by two-thirds vote to increase the pool. I think that's what happened. But that was the most difficult time for me because I had been very cautious, and there seemed to be no way out. If we hadn't worked that solution out, there was no way out. Also, I think that at the end, I think I told you we took nine months, I think the AAUP [American Association of University Professors] chapter that we had on campus was getting very restive because things were proceeding from their point so slowly, and we were clearly nearly approaching the deadline, and we hadn't given them the list of ten people that were coming to campus. This would have been in the mid to late spring of that year. I had the feeling through the grapevine that there'd really been a very contentious meeting in the AAUP, and I had a feeling—and nobody told me directly, just one of those things—I had a sense that Toby Hopper that I had played a lot of tennis with and who had a lot of credibility with people at that point in time—that was before she had become an administrator and thus brought her loyalty into question—I had a feeling that Toby Hopper had stood up before the AAUP and said, "If Fred says it's honest and above board, it's honest and above board," and that that group had narrowly

- carried the day, and literally, in the next week, we had list of ten. But I think I had a feeling that it got pretty contentious.
- TS: I don't remember that at all. I remember making calls for AAUP to different campuses. I'm not saying it didn't happen; I just have absolutely no memory of that.
- FR: Sure. That was just, like I say, nobody told me that, I just had a sense of it, and sometimes, when you're in a position like that, you pick up false signals from people because, like I said, my concern was that I brought this person, whoever came in as president, that we got the best person, and we brought them into a unified campus, and I did not want a split on the committee, nor did I want a split on the faculty over the nature of the process. That's why my antenna was out about that. And I think we achieved both of those things. I think we brought the new president, Dr. Siegel into a unified campus that was behind her and felt very comfortable with the process we had used.
- TS: She was definitely the number one choice on campus.
- FR: I think that's true.
- TS: I know it was very interesting from my perspective. What I did was call AAUP presidents or if they didn't have an AAUP chapter, whatever the equivalent would be on all those different campuses, and it was very interesting to make those calls and get their reactions. I remember one guy who was a president, and the person that I talked to said, "Yes, I really hope that you will hire me on." [laughter]
- FR: That's interesting. [laughter]
- TS: So that's all I needed to know.
- FR: That's right. Those things can be played so many ways. I got in trouble at the end—not in trouble, but it was a sticky wicket—the board wanted to make the announcement of who it was going to be, and when we had finished the process, and the three people had been interviewed down at the board, then it was—but it took about a week or ten days for the board to make a decision. Well, the Chancellor called me and told me who the choice was going to be about three days before it was to be announced in the paper. Otis Brumby, who was the editor and owner of the *Marietta Daily Journal* . . .
- TS: Publisher and owner.
- FR: Publisher, owner, whatever, Otis was bending every—and I was the only one that knew on campus, you see—and Otis was bending, and I got call after call after call, and I just refused to tell anybody. So finally, I understand that after about two days before the announcement was made Mr. Brumby got his reporters down at the *Marietta Daily Journal* in a room and had a little bit of a revival meeting there with some pulpit pounding and told them that he didn't care how much

money they spent on long-distance telephone calls, he wanted them to call the campus of every person that had been brought in and to call every office on every campus until they found out who it was. Well, the next day, he published in the newspaper that it was Betty Siegel. I got a telephone call from Chancellor Crawford, and he was ready to ream me out—he was a wonderful man—but he was ready to ream me out for having let Otis Brumby know that. I told him, I said, “Chancellor Crawford, it did not come from me, and it did not come from this campus because as far as I know, I’m the only one that you told on this campus.” He said, “Well, that’s right.” I said, “It did not come from me.” So then the Chancellor started pounding the pulpit. He wanted to know who had leaked it, and it had been leaked by the public relations department up at Cullowhee, where Dr. Siegel had come from. Evidently, she had told somebody up there. That would be my bet.

TS: Yes, she had to tell them that she was changing schools.

FR: I guess. Anyway, that was a little bit tense when the Chancellor called and was more than a little bit irritated with me.

TS: That was smart on Brumby’s part to call all the campuses.

FR: Oh yes. And then we had one candidate who had friends in Marietta—close, lifelong friends—who had been invited on the short list, and he didn’t get it, and when it was published in the *Marietta Daily Journal*, he called me, and reamed me out up one side and down the other, and the language was not too pleasant, and I told him, “That did not come from me. I was instructed by the Chancellor’s office not to tell.” And his thing was that before the announcement was made people should have been contacted.

TS: They should have.

FR: But that was the Chancellor’s job, that wasn’t my job.

TS: Absolutely.

FR: Okay?

TS: Because you didn’t make the final choice.

FR: No. And I’m sure they probably intended to do that, but the *Marietta Daily Journal* jumped on it early.

TS: If they had three days, they should have gotten going.

FR: Yes. And so that’s what happened. So I got that call, and he was not happy at all. Of course, when the decision was made, and Dr. Siegel was the first woman president in the history of the University system of Georgia—and I’ve never known anybody to check it. I wouldn’t be surprised if she wasn’t the first woman

- president of a state institution in the southeast that wasn't considered a "woman's college" that had ever been appointed. So half the county wanted to deify me, and half the county wanted to lynch me. I told my wife, "Pack your bags; we're going to Florida for three days." [laughter] I figured that was the safest way to play that one. There were some interesting things about Dr. Siegel's interview per se that have a humorous side to them that might be worth talking about. Do you want to ask me anything . . . ?
- TS: Yes, I wanted to know both in the charge to the committee, and in terms of what you put in the job ad, by that time, affirmative action of course was a huge thing in higher education. How much emphasis was there on having a diverse pool of candidates?
- FR: Like I say, from the point of view of the attitude on campus and women members on the committee, it was clear there were going to be women candidates.
- TS: I don't remember any black candidates in the final ten, were there?
- FR: No, there were no black candidates in the final ten, but of course, at that point in time as I remember, and I don't even know if a black candidate applied, but you could not—the other side was that you could not ask.
- TS: Right. If they didn't apply you couldn't . . .
- FR: You could not ask, and if in some way you did not, there was not a picture in the view of the screen, you see what I mean?
- TS: Oh, I see what you're saying.
- FR: So as far as I know, I don't know whether there was a black person that applied or not. I think probably there were some African-Americans that applied, but only a token number. But I think there probably were a few that applied, but at this point in time, I couldn't swear to it, but I think I'm safe in saying that none of them made the short list of the twenty or the ten.
- TS: Well, anybody that high up in the world would be sophisticated enough to know that the population was 4 percent black in Cobb County at that time that chances were slim and none anyway.
- FR: Right. That would have been my sense about it that there may have been a handful of the seventy-five or eighty or whatever, but, if there were, certainly the African-Americans didn't make either one of the short lists.
- TS: Were there any other women other than Betty Siegel in the final ten?
- FR: No.
- TS: I couldn't remember any.

FR: Not that I remember.

TS: So she was the one woman in as a finalist.

FR: That's right.

TS: And I understand that she had applied several other places in the system, and had not been chosen before Kennesaw.

FR: I was not aware of that. I really was not aware of that. I wouldn't be surprised, but I really wasn't aware of that at that point in time.

TS: Okay.

FR: I can remember that when I, you know, you got people when you could get them on the telephone as far as arranging their visits, and she was one of the last that I was able to get hold of to arrange a visit. I can remember very clearly her asking where we were in the process as far as arranging visits.

TS: Yes. She's told that story before of getting her application in at the last minute.

FR: Well, I don't remember that about the application, but this was concerning the visit of the ten that were coming to campus.

TS: I see.

FR: These were the ten that were coming to campus, and I got her, and I think I had two slots left, and they were the last two, and she said, "Well, what dates do you have?" I said, "Well, we're getting pretty close. I've got things pretty well filled up and I've got these last two dates open." She says, "Well, tell you what, that next to last week is crowded. How about let's do it on the last week?" I said, "It's done." Later on, I found out that in the interviewing process that people that are interviewed—the first person that is interviewed and the last person that is interviewed are rated highest by committees on average, and that the people in between get lost. And indeed, the first person that we interviewed was rated very highly, and he pulled out of the process.

TS: Was that the person from East Tennessee State?

FR: That is correct.

TS: I remember that, that he just decided he didn't want to do it, I think?

FR: Yes. They'd been through a blood letting up there, and I think he just decided he didn't want to go through it again. And she was the last person. So that was interesting to me. And then on the second day we used to have them in about three o'clock to the search committee after they had been here a day and a half on campus and talked to everybody, and we had talked to them once or twice. That

last interview after the first candidate or two; we got very good very quick in a very fair and professional, but at the same time, upfront manner of stripping people and finding out what people were like; what they believed in, and what their temperaments were, and that kind of thing. When we came into that meeting with her, she took the initiative. In other words, she didn't let us do that with her. She took the initiative. She said, "Before we get started, let me tell you what's happened to me. As I went from group to group, I always had somebody from the committee with me, and you had rest stops figured into it, and so I begged off for a rest stop over in the student center. I did not go to the restroom; I went down to the bookstore, and there were two students in the bookstore, and so I went up to one of them and said, "Why did you choose to come to Kennesaw?" And they told me because they were a Business Administration major and that Kennesaw had the best Business Administration department in the state." Well, the assistant chair of the search committee was the Dean of the Business School. And then she went over and talked to the other student and said, "Why did you come to Kennesaw? What's your major?" And she said, "I'm a history major, and I came to Kennesaw because Kennesaw's got the best History Department in the system." Of course, I was the chair, and I was in the History Department.

TS: You're suggesting that this may not have been a true story?

FR: The truth of the matter is, I do not know until this day whether she ever went into that book store or not. I still do not know until this day. I remember because of information we had picked up in phone interviews that the one direct question I asked her was, I said, "Are you going to be a full-time president or are you going to be an absentee-landlord if you come?"

TS: That was a serious concern.

FR: Yes.

TS: Because of her track record.

FR: That's right.

TS: Traveling up to Washington or whatever and constantly being on the road at Western Carolina.

FR: Right. She feigned to not know what an absentee-landlord was. And she may not have known, coming from Kentucky, and coming from coal mining country, and mountain country, she may not have had any idea what an absentee landlord was, so I never got a direct question to my answer except that, "Oh, I'm going to be here." That kind of thing. But she never answered that part of it specifically. Of course, being a southern historian, that was a very normal way for me to phrase it. So she took the lead in the interview away from us on that last day, when we had gotten to the point of—and once again, I don't know whether that was her psychology background, where she knew to come first or last, and whether she knew enough about the interviewing process to know that committees on the last

days got to the point, the last interview where they could do that, and that the thing for her to do was take the initiative from the committee. I've never mentioned it to her, and I have no idea, but I will tell you this; there's no doubt in my mind that I had no idea that she would turn out nearly as effective a president as she turned out to be. I had no idea whatsoever that she would be as dynamic as she turned out to be. I just didn't, but I think that anybody that tells you in that kind of a process with a nine-month process and a committee of nineteen people that by the time you finish that they really know what that person's going to be. I think they tell you that; you better watch them because they'll lie about something else before long. I think really it's kind of like a marriage; when you get married, you figured out after about two years what you're married to, and I think hiring a Department Head or Dean or President from off-campus is the same thing. And I think that's why so many people go for, if you will, the local candidate, the person that's known rather than the person who is unknown.

TS: Because you know what you're getting. Absolutely. I wish I could remember who I talked to but it seems like it was Valdosta State or somewhere just a couple of years or a year maybe before Kennesaw, but this person told me that she was just full of educational jargon in her meeting with the committee and meeting with the faculty, and that he had taken her aside and said, you know, I guess afterwards she wanted to know why she wasn't a finalist or whatever, and they told her that was why. She was a quick learner.

FR: Well, and of course, we know now that she is very, in addition to being a quick learner; she is very astute with people. She just has a sixth sense as far as dealing well with people. And once again that's something that, in that short interview process you could tell. I'll share this with you. I talked to the president at Cullowhee. I assume it was the president, and—by the time anything was done with this Dr. Siegel is going to be retired and President Cullowhee's probably dead, and I think it's obvious that Dr. Siegel and I have had a close relationship over the years—but I remember that the president of Cullowhee told me— whoever it was I talked to, and I just can't imagine it being anybody but the president since she was the Dean of the School of Education—that she was going to be a president some day, and she'd be a good one, but that she just wasn't ready yet. The bottom line was that I wasn't the only one that underestimated her.

TS: Did he give any reason why he thought she wasn't ready?

FR: I can't remember any specific reason that he stated, but I do remember that he said that, and of course, she's such a dynamic personality that at that point in time a male president who was not nearly that dynamic a personality may have felt somewhat overshadowed by her, and could have had a negative attitude toward her, simply because she was such a different type of person, and probably got more press than he did.

TS: What did we ask for in the job ad?

FR: It was something like top-level administrative experience or what-have-you, and probably a track record in top-level administrative experience. But that would have been the type of thing, and at that point in time, we had not gotten to the point where we were really sophisticated. We didn't realize how many people, once again it was the first time we'd done that on this campus, so we didn't have any idea how many people were going to apply, so the processes we do now of defining the job, so that you can literally cut out as many people as you can except for those that really specifically fit what you're exactly looking for, that approach was in the future because we didn't have any experience to go on.

TS: Right. Okay.

FR: One final thing: The process in the end after they interviewed the three candidates that we sent down to the Board of Regents—I don't know as anybody knows this—I got a call from the Chancellor, and it was arranged that the Chancellor and somebody from the Board would come down and meet with the committee on campus and that I as the chair of the committee would make a presentation supposedly representing the views of the committee concerning the three candidates that had been interviewed downtown and their strengths and weaknesses and what the committee thought of them. So in other words, it was very thoughtful in the sense that after they look at them downtown, they still wanted to come back to the campus and get campus impressions, which that was something that most people wouldn't have considered the system doing at that level, and I think that was Chancellor Crawford, I think that was his touch to things.

TS: That's more democratic than it is now.

FR: Yes. And so they did, that and after I presented my summation of the positive and weak points of each candidate, and they asked me a few questions, then Chancellor Crawford asked the whole committee if anybody wanted to add anything or if you will, challenge anything I had said because once again, he was looking for the feedback from the committee, and he wasn't going to let the chair of the committee be in a position to manipulate it, so it's in essence, it was luck for me that I initially had no idea but running the process in an open and above board manner. In the last analysis, it couldn't have been done any other way, but that. Now, the deal was that after that was done, and he brought Jesse, the African-American member of the Board . . .

TS: Hill.

FR: Jessie Hill came with him, Mr. Hill came with him, and I don't think anybody else, but I remember that Chancellor Crawford and Mr. Hill were there, and after that was all done, then I adjourned the meeting, and everybody stood up, and the minute book was closed, and then everybody sat back down, and Chancellor Crawford said, "Now, who do you really want, and how do you really feel about these people?" And that never went on the record. I don't know if that was legal

at that point in time or not; it wouldn't be today. I don't think, but we're talking about an awful long time ago. But I think they had those laws back then, but they may have smiled the other way, and did that but that's certainly the way we did it here. As I presented the people, I think I presented them as honestly as I could and I presented, I think there were two lead candidates, and then there was a third; there was Dr. Siegel and . . .

TS: Let's see, is the president from up in Massachusetts?

FR: Yes, Frank Pelecki. Bob Driscoll was in graduate school with him. So the two leaders were Pelecki and Siegel and the way I presented it, which was the way I saw it, and basically I think everybody agreed with me, that Pelecki had much more the scholarly mind of the two and much more of the sophisticated mind of the two, but Dr. Siegel was by far much more the public figure and much more the people person of the two, and I felt like that was an honest presentation of them. I think that being a faculty member from my point of view, I think I was probably presenting them equally, where I imagine from the point of view of the Chancellor's office, I gave Dr. Siegel the tilt right there. But I can remember the comment was that, after she was appointed the comment was, "Well, if she got past Vernon Crawford she must be pretty good."

TS: Yes.

FR: Because he was thought a lot of. And then old Poncho Fisher over at Southern Tech, Robert Fisher, who was Social Science Division Chair over there, he was somewhere at a meeting, I heard this story somebody told me and people say, "Boy, Fred Roach has ended his career. He's messed Kennesaw up. He is just as stupid as he can be hiring the first woman in the system." And Poncho evidently told me, he said, "He is crazy like a fox. He's got the first woman president in the history of the system. She is going to get funded whatever she wants funded." He said, "That's the smartest move they could have made over there." And of course, once again, it was the Chancellor, and the Board that made the decision, and I obviously did not have any more of a role than quite frankly any other member of the committee realistically.

TS: Though I'm sure either one of them would have been a fine president, but I doubt we would have grown as fast as we have or gotten graduate programs as fast as we did without Betty Siegel coming.

FR: Well, Roger Hopkins, who was on the committee, sent me in the mail a newspaper item twenty years later and—now Pelecki said at the time and it's true, in Massachusetts the public school system at that point in time was step-children. Basically, your school system was your Roman Catholic school system, your private school system, and these public school systems were a political thing for people to play with. The editor of the newspaper up there had been after Pelecki for five years. He'd been calling for his resignation for five years, and he told us that when he came here. Twenty years later, Roger sent me an article and just put

his initials on the bottom. “Thought you’d like to see this. Roger”—and a student had sued Pelecki for making sexual—a male student had sued him for making sexual approaches to him in a bathroom on their campus.

TS: My goodness. Twenty years later.

FR: Fifteen to twenty.

TS: He survived his presidency anyway.

FR: Fifteen to twenty years later whatever, but it was a good time. Dr. Siegel had been here for quite awhile, but it was kind of Roger’s way of saying to me, I think if we ever had any question there’s no question now. And of course . . .

TS: No, there was no doubt that they made the right choice for that time and place.

FR: Oh, I’ve always felt that, as Conley Ingram used to say, Judge Ingram, I’ve heard him say that it was providential that Dr. Sturgis was made first president of this institution. And I think all of us that were here then realized that he was the type of person that was needed to establish relationships with the community here and get this community support and get us off the ground and provide a firm academic foundation that that was exactly what was needed. I think that when Dr. Siegel came, I think, that it was time to get away from an internal system administrator who stayed on campus and get somebody who would get down on the perimeter and raise money. As a matter of fact, one of the things I was looking for in my own mind, I felt like I had two or three objectives, and as far as my first personal view of the presidency, and I felt like we needed to have a personality that could get down and raise money in Atlanta, on the perimeter, and be a public figure. One of the basic weaknesses we had on campus was that we did not have enough national and international speakers and figures coming on campus for our students to have exposure to, and we needed to be doing a lot more for that. And of course, with growth and Dr. Siegel’s aggressive approach as far as public relations and very effective approach. A lot of that was taken care of.

TS: Yes.

FR: So I felt like we were very lucky in the sense that, both the first two presidents I think that we [had were] uniquely the type of people that this institution needed at that particular point in time to do the jobs that really needed to be done.

TS: There’s no doubt y’all did a good job.

FR: Well, it was not easy to be chair of a search committee in those days and keep your job. [laughter]

TS: After a short break, let me just ask you if you want to make any concluding remarks about the search process?

- FR: There's one other thing, and I think this indicates how sharp a departure that search committee was for this campus, as far as faculty making personnel decisions, in essence for the first time and being involved in them, and that was that when the Chancellor came out and spoke to the faculty and charged us he made it abundantly clear, crystal clear that number one, I worked only for him and that he was the only one I reported to; and number two, that the committee would establish its own rules of operation whatever it desired.
- TS: When he said that you reported only to him, what he's really—is he concerned about people on campus trying to control what you're doing, like administrators, or people in the community?
- FR: He never verbalized anything. All he did was make it clear that I reported directly to him, period. And of course, that was very unprecedented on this campus, and I imagine that you might never have thought about that, but that was the charge he gave to the committee. He may not have given it before the faculty; he may have given it to the committee when he met with us after we had been chosen. But it was clear, and it was made clear.
- TS: So this is something he told the committee?
- FR: Yes.
- TS: Not just you, but he told the committee.
- FR: Oh yes, everybody was aware of it. It was not just me. It was not just me it was a statement to the committee, and he may have even made the statement to the faculty, I just don't remember.
- TS: I don't remember.
- FR: But it was clear that I worked directly for him, and the committee would make its own procedural rules and stated it, in perhaps a much softer way than I stated it, but that was once again an incredible departure for this campus at this point in time. And once again, that's the last thing I'll say about the search committee, but I felt that that should be pointed out because I think it fits in with a lot of other things that we've talked about.
- TS: Well, maybe this would be a transition; you know, after doing such a great job on the search committee I would think you would have been sitting pretty, and if you had great aspirations of being a Dean or a President yourself at that point of moving up the ladder . . . so why don't I just ask you, did you—you'd already been an assistant division chair, so you're interested in administration, and you apparently liked being an administrator. Did you have aspirations of wanting to be a Department Chair and maybe going higher up the ladder?
- FR: No, I disagree with your assumptions. [laughter]

TS: Okay. That's great.

FR: I never had any desire to be anything but a Department Head. I never desired—and administrators, that was not the full-time, all-encompassing type thing that it's become in the last thirty years when I went through graduate school and when I started here. For example, the only reason I ever wanted to become a department head, when I went through graduate school, that was a reward for superior teaching and research and scholarship, and your job was to set an example for the department of leadership in those areas, and as a reward, you got a secretary who would be able to type your manuscripts for you. Now realize, this is the day before computers and all that. Who would be able to type your manuscripts for you and therefore allow you to even publish more? That was it. You made out a class schedule, ordered a few books, and that was it. And of course, by the time I became a Department Head, administration had become an all-encompassing thing, and in every institution in the system, department heads were simply extensions of the president's office and all the way down through the deans, the vice presidents, and everything else, and it was a twenty-four hour a day job.

TS: You know, I guess, if I remember correctly, George Beggs was teaching a couple of classes in those early years even while he was division head, wasn't he?

FR: Oh yes, he was, and he was an outstanding teacher.

TS: So he got a one-course release basically.

FR: I think so, and when I was department head, I had no release time; I had no secretary to set an example. I had a full teaching load of fifteen hours, and I had an eight o'clock class in the morning, and I had an 8:20 to 10:30 class at night because I wanted to set an example, and I was still publishing, and I was involved in professional organizational activities, and it took about two years to burn me out.

TS: I was going to say, what's the good of being department chair if you're teaching at eight in the morning and eight at night?

FR: But do you see how I felt like I needed to set that example? That I did not want to do anything that I didn't ask everybody else to do, that kind of thing. And I never had a desire to go beyond department head, and if I had known what department head was going to be like by the time I got there I wouldn't have had any desire to do that. So I never had any administrative ambitions whatsoever. My feeling about it was that the value as far as I was concerned, the value of being in higher education was being involved in scholarship and in teaching, and if you went into administration, you clearly went into administration simply for the money, and my feeling about it was that if you went into administration and education for the money you made a horrible mistake because you could make three times as much in the private sector for the same amount of responsibility in education.

- TS: Right. There wasn't that much money in it anyway, was there?
- FR: No. And as a matter of fact, I felt like that the Georgia system had, rather than rotating chairs and rotating deans and that kind of thing with permanent deans and permanent chairs, that that was the way—and since I'm retired now, I can say this—I don't think there's any doubt about it, that was the way that the legislature felt like they could control what was going on with the faculty on college campuses because they paid the administrators just enough more to get their standard of living hooked on it, and that they wouldn't want to give it up. Most administrators that I knew went into it because they had children, and they went in not because they had a desire to do it, and once again, they really couldn't have a desire to do it because the whole thing changed so much at that point in time. It became a completely different thing. But I had no desires in that. As a matter of fact, people used to say to me, "Boy, you really love being up there in front of the faculty heading that search committee, don't you?" And I said, "No, not really." [laughter] And I think I probably could have become a dean. I had no desires, and I never made a move. I was asked by Dr. Siegel when she first came here, or at least the topic was approached with me of heading what she called the View of the Future Committee.
- TS: Oh really? I didn't know that.
- FR: Helen Ridley wound up heading. After a nine-month presidential search committee, I was worn out, and I wanted no more part of that kind of stuff. I told her that I had no desire, but I think that heading the View of the Future Committee, and then some other things, I think I could have moved into a dean or equivalent slot had I wanted to, but I would have been absolutely miserable and was fortunately wise enough to know. So I never made any moves in that direction, and I think [I] endeared myself to some people as a result of that because I think they realized that I was in a position to do it.
- TS: Well, Betty Siegel did appoint the View of the Future Committee, and then it was '83 that we went to departments and schools at that time. If I remember correctly, all of the original department chairs were chosen internally because they didn't have the money to do a search or bring anybody in from the outside.
- FR: I think that's correct, yes.
- TS: Okay, so you became chair in '83, and then I guess from '83 to '85 . . .?
- FR: Tom, I think the truth of the matter is, if we officially went to chairs in '83 . . .
- TS: I think I'm right on that.
- FR: If we went to chairs in the fall of '83, I was chair from '83, fall '83 through '84. The reality of the situation was that by January of '83, although the designation had not been made, the chairs were carrying out the function of chairs. So that's why I said I was chair for two years, basically because you had the responsibility

you were doing the job; it's just that the title hadn't been approved downtown and done on campus yet.

TS: And then it just got to be too much health-wise and mentally-wise and so on?

FR: Well, like I say, I was teaching fifteen hours, had no secretary; I was involved in publications still. I was involved in professional organizations still, and my stomach just wouldn't take it. I had a spastic colon for years, and it just couldn't take it. The doctor told me I was going to have to make a decision somewhere, so I got out of administration because that was not what I was, had ever wanted to do really. Of course, Dr. Siegel, I've always said that Dr. Siegel moves very quickly; she's a very dynamic personality, and I live with a type-A personality that's got red hair, and the truth of the matter is I couldn't live with my wife [Carole], and work for Dr. Siegel at the same time and remain sane and healthy. That I had to give one of them up, and there's a lot more truth than fancy to that. Bottom line is I chose to stay with my wife! Now, there are a lot of people on this campus that didn't make that choice, as you well know, but that was the choice that I was faced with. I think I was lucky that I understood that. I can remember when I decided to give up administration. I walked in; it's when the first portfolios were coming in. Nobody knew how they were going to be done. It was a completely new step. There were no guidelines for anything, and I went in, and there was Linda Papageorge's portfolio on the corner of my desk. I took one look at it, walked out of the door and never went back, in essence. I told George Beggs, and I did have health problems that I needed to step down because of health problems, and he told me that he said, "Well, once you get out of administration, you're probably never going to get back in." I said, "I'm aware of that." He made me offer the job to Ann Pullen. I think he felt like if I offered the job to Ann Pullen that I wouldn't do it, that I couldn't do it.

TS: She was acting as assistant department chair?

FR: No. She was just a member of the department. There were no assistant department chairs.

TS: I remember her helping with scheduling or something like that.

FR: No. All she had was the newsletter for the GAH [Georgia Association of Historians]. She had no administrative job on campus. I was chair, and I asked her to go out and walk with me on campus, and I offered her the job. She accepted the next day—still shocked by what was happening. Once again, I had no idea how good a chair she would eventually turn out to be, just like I had no idea how effective Dr. Siegel would eventually turn out to be. I asked her to go out and walk with me on campus, and I offered her the job walking up on campus. I didn't want to do it in the office. I wanted it more informal. And she said, "Can I think about it for . . ." I about had to pick her up off the concrete because nobody had any concept that I had any health problems or anything else, and she asked if she could—so it was very shocking to her—and she asked if she could think it

over for twenty-four hours, and I said certainly, and the next day, she came in and said she would take it, and I went in and told Dr. Beggs. Of course, as I said before, he and I talked about it together, and it was obviously his decision to make; he was the one that made the decision, but we talked about it together, and then, he in essence not only asked me, but told me to make the offer to her. I think he felt like that would be very hard for me, and it wasn't nearly as hard as he thought it was going to be for me because he was an administrative type person, and I really wasn't. I don't think he really understood that at that point in time because he was so involved in what he was doing.

TS: Well, looking back on that period, it wasn't a long time, but you were the first Department Chair. What do you consider your greatest achievements as Department Chair? What are you proudest of?

FR: Well, I was really, I guess, functioning as a chair in the sense that I was assistant division chair, and so had access as we went into the four-year process, had access to Dr. Beggs, and he relied on me for things in history. I was on the four-year transition committee; I wrote the first working proposal for a four-year degree in liberal arts on that committee; and then when it came to offering the courses in history I was the one that decided. I think he just let me have carte blanche on that and accepted what I proposed, the courses that we would offer on the upper division level, and we were limited, and I took it from the point of view that we had to; there was going to be a problem of survival for the history major from the very beginning, and that therefore, we had to combine what I considered at that point in time a traditional four year history program with what would be considered the more modern and student attractive courses. So for example, we put in the New South, the Civil War, 1939 to the Present, but then we also had social and cultural history, and we had diplomatic history, which remain staples and those kinds of things. But I geared it toward the present and then . . .

TS: And then the World where there were things like Modern Middle East and Modern Asia, I guess.

FR: That's right. And we felt that in this area we put Renaissance and Reformation in because Gird wanted that, and my feeling was that with a religious orientation of the community that that would go big here; we put in Twentieth Century Europe to start with, that that would go here in that point in time. And so, my main concern was we wanted to offer a good program, and Dr. Beggs challenged me on the courses, and I said, "Well, the undergraduate history program is nothing but a shotgun type of effect anyway because it's not structured with fields and concentrations and that type of thing, like when you get to the master's degree and especially the Ph.D. Although he was an undergraduate history major, he didn't really believe that; he'd never heard that. So he went and asked Gene Huck who was the academic dean and historian, and Gene confirmed it. So Dr. Beggs came back, and he told me, he was always an honest and straightforward guy, he said, "I didn't think you were right, and I went and asked Dean Huck, and he said you were absolutely right about the undergraduate history degree." And from

- then on out, I pretty much had carte blanche as far as anything I told him about history; he accepted it as fact, and we went on. But I think setting up the program that way was important for its survival. I think setting up from the very beginning a good senior seminar course that at the time that I went through undergraduate school in the South was only offered on the master's degree level. And you only had elite schools that offered the research and methodology course on the undergraduate level.
- TS: Let's see, in the early days that would have been History 300 instead of, it wasn't Senior Seminar per se, but a lot of people waited until the end to take it.
- FR: That's correct. As a matter of fact, well, it was History 300 and Ann Pullen taught it the first time, and then I went in, and quite frankly took my notes from her because I didn't have time; I was doing so much else. Then I based it on what she had done, and for a long time we taught historiography as well as methodology and research in the same course. As time went on and the students just became less and less able to cope with the workload, we then split it out but my time was gone by then. But I think having that research course as well as the historiography on the undergraduate level that this was a way of increasing the academic credibility of the program as far as I was concerned. And I think for that time and place, it was because I don't think every college in Georgia that offered a four-year degree in history had a research component to the program at all.
- TS: We still get compliments from people who go on to graduate school who say that compared to other students that they're competing against that they're much better prepared in terms of research and writing.
- FR: Yes, and I think that's been the case from the very beginning. I think that was a big step. The second thing that I wanted to do was that once again because of what was perceived by the faculty as an authoritarian administrative structure in the system, as well as generally speaking on the campus. I did not want the department to be run that way. I realized that there are two ways for a manager and administrator to function: you can do it in an "I-thou" fashion or you can do it in a "we're all in this together fashion". One produced just as effective results as the other. The studies were there then; they're there now. The difference between the two is that in the "I-thou" structure, a lot of people wind up being miserable. Whereas, in the structure of "we're doing this thing together" and everybody knows that I'm in the last analysis responsible if I'm the chair, people are a lot happier. The results are the same; it's just what effect it has on the people in it. So I intentionally, and you may remember this, I intentionally got what we would call—there were very few of them at that point in time—but I got conference rooms or seminar rooms to hold the early department meetings in so that we weren't just in a classroom. It gave it a sense of professionalism, and I intentionally, I think, set a tone of everybody knew I was the chair, everybody knew what my prerogatives were, but I intentionally set a tone of getting input from everybody and finally to reach consensus decisions in almost as many

- instances as I could. I felt that was important because I think Ann Pullen followed that example after I stepped down to a certain extent. I think that was very important to the department. It made for a very good working environment for the people that were here at that point in time. But those were the two things I was after: the survival of the program, and therefore I felt that the specific courses offered were important, and then the department be run in a professional, cooperative manner rather than an “I-thou” kind of thing.
- TS: Well, I think our department has been pretty unique on campus in the sense that we’ve managed to get along with each other over the years and haven’t had the back-biting and the knock-down, drag-out fights that other departments seem to have.
- FR: Yes, and every once in awhile, I kind of halfway hope that I helped to set that tone early and having set the tone at the beginning made it easier to continue it.
- TS: Well, it had to be. And I think Ann Pullen continued, and I think Howard [Shealy] is too.
- FR: Yes.
- TS: Let’s talk a little bit about your scholarship. You wrote a good deal about Will Rogers. Do you want to say anything about that?
- FR: I have, as we have talked privately; I had in August 23, 1990. I had a spinal fusion in my neck and a hole drilled in my spine. Six weeks after the surgery, I went back to the doctor for my first check up, and he said, “Look at that hole. Isn’t that thing perfect?” And I just looked at him and said, “I could have gone my whole life and not known that you’d drilled a hole back there.” That ended my writing career and my research career, except it was very nice. I got to review a book for the *Journal of Southern History* that came out about four weeks after I retired, which was very nice. I got my last crack at it and got a chance to mention some old books like John Bach McMaster and others, as well as your new book to kind of show the “young Turks” that there was something before they came along. People that knew a little bit more than they did. But I did two things of significance in scholarship: with some articles that I published on Will Rogers in the *Chronicles of Oklahoma* and what was known as the *Proceedings of the Georgia Association of Historians* then . . .
- TS: You edited that for a while didn’t you?
- FR: I edited that; I was co-editor for five years. As a matter of fact, I got the funding for that from Gene Huck for the *Journal* when it began and Kennesaw funded it for five years, and that’s the way Ann Ellis became the editor since we funded it, I made the argument that we should have the editor.
- TS: Ann Ellis becomes Ann Pullen.

FR: Ann Ellis becomes Ann Pullen, and before that she had been the newsletter editor, and my feeling was she had done a good job on that, it was natural that she moved from newsletter editor to editor of the *Journal*. But with Rogers, my study of all things was kind of a psychohistory which was kind of still in a little bit at that point in time and certainly a different approach to Rogers. My dissertation was basically the only book that had ever been written that was really documented in a scholarly fashion about Rogers's whole life. I presented a psychological interpretation that unified his childhood and his relationship with his mother and father with his later philosophy. Peter Rollins out at Oklahoma State University who published a book called a *Bio Bibliography of Will Rogers* was kind enough to say that my dissertation and my articles were the only ones that had ever been done that had tried to present Rogers as a human being, rather than an icon and that therefore they set a new standard. There were problems with working with Will Rogers' Memorial because any time you get people who are related to a famous person, if you try and make them a human being, they think that you're criticizing, so that's the problem I ran into, but no scholars, no recognized scholars have been able to work well out at the Will Rogers' Memorial at Clairmore. They've held information from them, and they certainly held a lot of primary sources from me. But I looked at more than anybody else had ever looked at. Anyway, the second one, which you and I don't agree on, I—with Harold Davis—helped to present a second interpretation on Georgia and the American Revolution to a certain extent in an article I did on the *Georgia Gazette* and the Stamp Act. Harold's book came out about the same time, and he pretty much argued the same that I did that Georgia had been more in the rebel column than people had previously thought. So I helped to establish those two things. Neither one made me famous. As a matter of fact, you cannot find my publications under *Google* on the Internet to this day. I do have a book on *Will Rogers and Aviation*. His support of commercial aviation and military aviation which is—and it's got a summary of his life interpretively and an evaluation, and it's really a collection of articles that I published in different journals over the years, and it's been out there, but about the time that that was ready to go, I had a contract on it with a private publisher, and that's when the back surgery took place, and after that the new copyright law 73 started being imposed, and I didn't know what could be done legally and what couldn't be done legally. They were interpreting everything differently every day, so that was it. But that collection has still not come out. But those were the two things: the work on Will Rogers and then the *Georgia Gazette* and the Stamp Act, and I did an article on the *Georgia Gazette* and the Ratification of the Constitution in Georgia, or the newspaper pressing the ratification of the Constitution in Georgia. Then, I did an article for the *Atlanta Historical Review*, which was, then, the *Notes of the Atlanta Historical Society*. It was on the "London *Times* and the American Civil War," which was my master's thesis, and I thought that was very good because I uncovered some stuff that people never knew about before. So you know, I had about six or eight articles to my credit, a chapter in a book here, a number of book reviews that I used to review books for publishers to see if they would be

published, textbooks, that kind of thing. And all of that came to a stop in August of '90.

TS: Right. Let's talk a little bit about the intellectual climate on campus and how it's changed over time. How would you describe the intellectual climate say when you started at Kennesaw and what it's like today?

FR: I came to Kennesaw ABD—All But Dissertation—and at the University of Oklahoma, I studied under some very good people. It was a small department, but they were good people and nationally known, and I got some national exposure as far as people that I met through the professors that I studied under. So when I came here, I really was a professional, and I was very interested in publishing and doing research and giving papers at professional organizations. There weren't but a handful of people on campus doing that when I came here, very few. So I was out ahead of the pack as far as doing that kind of thing. Nobody was asking to go to meetings or present papers or anything else, so I guess my feeling was that in the early days I was probably more polished and mature as an academia than the average colleague on campus, regardless of discipline, okay, regardless of discipline. I think today the young people that they're bringing in—and you and I have talked about it many times as far as scholarship and publication, probably neither one of us could get a job here now.

TS: That's for sure!

FR: And basically everybody they're bringing in now has that fire in their belly like I had when I first came here. What had happened was that they, when the school was young, they had young administrators and first of all, in the first couple of years anyway, it was hard to get people out of graduate programs. The jobs on the college and university level. I came here in '68 and in '69 the job market sealed up; there were no jobs anywhere. But our administrators were inexperienced and this was all across campus; they were interviewing for jobs that weren't connected with their disciplines in most instances, and so they really didn't know how to recruit, and they certainly didn't have the contacts to recruit outside of public schools in the southeast. And so the bottom line was I think that, to start with, they hired a lot of very fine, former high school teachers that had master's degrees. People like Mary Swain and David Jones and those people.

TS: Or J.B. Tate, for that matter.

FR: J.B. Tate, for that matter, who was an outstanding teacher, outstanding teachers, but no concept of commitment to scholarship whatsoever, I think, for all intents and purposes. They had fine minds, but the writing and research was just not part of it. And I think that that weakness continued for quite awhile, simply because people were interviewing. The administrators that were hiring were interviewing out of their field; faculty members of the field were not part of the hiring and interview process. They had no contacts out of the southeast; it was just a weakness for us. So that let me hit the ground and establish myself as somebody

that halfway knew what they were doing, and after having done that for the first decade, I was able to ride that reputation for an awful long way after that, simply because I was one of the few in the area. As one person might state it—I was referring this to somebody the other day—I took a weak horse and ran it an awfully long way. [laughter]

TS: Do you think there's a moment in time when we changed or has this been a gradual evolutionary process toward more and more emphasis on scholarship?

FR: Yes, I see the overt emphasis on scholarship that is going to, as you have said before, and as Dr. Siegel has said before, during her term here and during the forty years that Kennesaw has been here, there have been three or four different Kennesaw's. As far as that's concerned, I pretty much see two. I think there's a clear line, and I knew from the very beginning that scholarship, publication, and professional organizational activity were going to be rewarded first with promotion, salary, and that sort of thing. I knew that from the get-go because I came out of a very fine graduate program that was oriented that way. I think probably let's say we're in the fortieth year, probably about ten years ago, so after thirty years, about the time that we probably started adding graduate programs the change occurred.

TS: That would be '85.

FR: Okay, so that would be twenty years ago.

TS: And '96 is when we got university status.

FR: Okay, I would put it in between those two. I would put it probably about 1990, [when] we started bringing in more and more people who were committed to publication and research and knew that that's where their future was going to be promotion-wise and salary-wise and knew that was eventually going to become the name of the game. I think that has changed things dramatically. I think it's changed things dramatically, in the sense that, number one, I think what you have going on in the classroom is more up-to-date and dynamic, and these people are really better teachers than most of us were in the early days because they're more up-to-date; they're more involved in scholarship.

TS: They're better teachers in that sense.

FR: That's right, in that sense. The other side is the negative point: I think they overtly see a sense of competition between themselves, which we never really saw during those first two or three decades, and therefore you don't have the camaraderie, and you have splits in departments that you didn't have before, and you have personality conflicts and one person criticizing another person. Whereas in the early days, everybody was very open-minded. If you were here and doing your job everybody accepted that you knew what you were doing, and there was no effort to criticize people, that kind of thing. And I think the result is we're

beginning to have that, I'd say, since about 1990, and it's really begun to accelerate the last six or seven years.

TS: So collegiality is going downhill.

FR: Oh, I don't think there's any doubt about it. In the last analysis of course, I guess my feeling and your feeling is that the people that will be hurt the most by that trend will be the students. They will come out with a more jaundiced attitude concerning relationships with other people and people that they will eventually work with and what the lifecycle is really like. Whereas, we were just very fortunate; it was almost a perfect environment during our first two and a half decades. Like I say, some of the new people, they're not very nice the way they do some of this stuff. And it is very unfortunate. I was fortunate that in graduate school, I always studied under gentlemen and scholars. There was a lot of this pettiness around, but I was fortunate enough to never run into it, and this is the first time that I have ever been around it, and I don't like it, and I specifically don't have a lot of respect for those that engage in it.

TS: So you see pettiness increasing on the campus.

FR: Yes.

TS: What about students? Have they changed over thirty-six years?

FR: Yes. Twice in my career I talked with Bowman Davis over in biology; he went through the same thing about the same time and other people on campus, about fifteen or twenty years out I was teaching what I covered in my survey courses in my early days. By the time I was here seventeen or eighteen years, I had cut the amount of information that I covered by about thirty-three percent, and in another decade, about twenty-five or twenty-eight years, I cut it by another third. So in other words, by the time I retired I was covering about a third of the factual and interpretive information in the survey course than when I began because the students I thought were so poorly prepared and so unmotivated.

TS: You wouldn't have thought that our students in those first junior college days would have been that good at a brand new school, and yet I remember how many books George Beggs required them to read; it must have been ten books . . .

FR: Ten books for political science 101. It was outrageous. That was outrageous for graduate school!

TS: And I remember years later, I guess maybe it was after he retired as dean and taught—I can't remember—maybe he was still dean, but he was teaching a class every now and then. I remember him coming to me once in amazement. The students were complaining about his assignments, which were about a third of what he used to assign.

FR: Yes, I think there are a lot of things involved. I think it's incredible materialism and wealth in American society; I think it's the letdown of family life, and I think the bottom line for us dealing with students is that students have basically lost a concept of sacrifice for attainment. And in losing a concept of sacrifice for attainment, when you put the bar there, they don't challenge. They don't try to reach the bar. They have no desire to do that, and quite frankly, it's a result—and this goes back to my old high school mentor who is something like ninety-five now and paralyzed from a stroke—and he still maintains that we learn our culture, society, and specifically our education program the day we offered the first degree in professional education. I think I would agree with him because everything teachers are taught in the public schools now, they're taught in the colleges. Everything is audio-visual aides, and the result is when they come here, they can't take lecture notes. They can't write; they can't think; they can't organize like the early students we had because everything's been done for them through audio-visual aides. They haven't been taught to do all those things. One of the good things in the early days, we had a combination of kids. Some of them worked, suburban almost nouveau riche and to some extent halfway sorry. But then we had rural kids, who were our farmers, who weren't as sophisticated as the kids from the subdivisions, but they had incredible work ethics, and so when you put those two things together, those two groups of people fed off each other. They created that very positive student body environment that you were talking about. Where did those folks come from? I think it came from positive mixing of those two groups. Plus, we had a very young group of faculty who communicated very well with them. I think we've obviously lost. As Atlanta's grown, we've lost that rural atmosphere with that work ethic that came out of it. We've gone much more into a suburbia, materialistic-type environment, and it's not nearly as oriented toward the work ethic.

TS: Let me just conclude by saying you stayed at Kennesaw thirty-six years, made your entire career here and then retired. What was it about Kennesaw that kept you here all these years?

FR: Well, first of all, I was the child of orphaned parents who married older. I came back here and stayed here because, all things being equal, I felt that I had an obligation to be close to them so that I could help them as they grew older. Indeed, I helped my mother with my dad for eleven years, and then I helped my mother as she became more and more feeble for a good seven or eight years. I fulfilled that desire. At the same time, when I came here and visited the campus for the first time, my first reaction was that, having been a native Atlantan, my first reaction was this school is just perfectly located. It's not going to stay a junior college forever; it's going to grow because the area is so dynamic. I proved to be right in that judgment, although it took a decade for it to come about. Another thing was that the type of students that I met here had been the type of students that I have found myself able to communicate with in a positive fashion, on average. I have been in isolated instances, around students, especially from nouveau riche, upper-middle class families, where I found it difficult to communicate with them because they came from a completely different work

ethic and materialistic background from myself. As a matter of fact, Gene Huck and I have talked about it a number of times. He had a very brief experience with that one time in his early mid career. And finally I stayed here because of course the school grew. Georgia has been good with salaries for this part of the country and for other parts of the country, and every time—I had two offers to leave here over the years, twice in the system in administrative positions at fifty percent increases in salary, and I didn't take them because I felt like my situation here was better than it would have been there. Once again, I was not driven by the administrative bug like a lot of people. Secondly, whenever I would go to conventions and people would periodically, in the earlier years, ask me if I was looking to move, anytime that I looked around and just listened, I came back convinced that the environment here and my situation here was better from an academic point of view, from the point of view even of academic freedom and collegiality and even [the] salary than it was anywhere else in the country that I could conceivably go. I just felt like this was the best place. Every time I ever heard or looked at any other place, it didn't even come close.

TS: Well, all right. Thank you very much. I appreciate it. I've learned a lot from doing this. I've known you for thirty-six years, and I still learned a lot from the interview.

FR: Well, I enjoyed it.

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