

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH JO ALLEN BRADHAM

CONDUCTED BY DEDE YOW AND THOMAS A. SCOTT

EDITED BY JOSHUA AARON DIX

INDEXED BY THOMAS A. SCOTT

for the

KSU ORAL HISTORY SERIES, NO. 15

THURSDAY, 10 JUNE 2004

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Thursday, 10 June 2004  
Location: CIE/CETL House at Kennesaw State University

TS: Jo Allen, what I'd like to do is just begin talking a little bit about your background: where you were born, when you were born, and things of that sort.

JAB: That's an easy place to start. I was born in Columbia, South Carolina, in 1937. I stayed in Columbia until I finished my undergraduate work at the University of South Carolina, where I majored in English and took a minor in French. I was fortunate in winning a Woodrow Wilson fellowship at Vanderbilt; I went to Vanderbilt, took the master's the next year. Then, I was offered what I thought was to be a perfectly wonderful job as Director of Programming with a radio station. I was told that this was a job that would include performance—and that appealed to me because of my interest and background in drama—and writing. Writing appealed to me because to live is to write. By midway in the summer, I knew that that job was much less than the original description and much less than what I wanted. I was able to take a teaching job at the newly opened University of South Carolina Center in Lancaster, South Carolina. At the end of that year in Lancaster, I went back to Vanderbilt and completed a Ph.D. in 1964 with a specialty in eighteenth century studies.

TS: I noticed that you also had a master's from Emory later on, too.

JAB: Yes. This is the ongoing thirst to go to school! [laughter] I was teaching at Agnes Scott, and one of the first things that I learned was that the colleges and the universities in the greater Atlanta area had a very nice cooperative arrangement: anyone who was a full-time faculty member at any one of the institutions could take one course a quarter free at any other institution. Well, there was the Emory Library School, and while I had never had any interest in being a librarian, I had always been fascinated with libraries. To be with the books is to be happy. I thought, "Here is my chance; all I have to do is drive from Agnes Scott to Emory, and that's certainly a very short trip, read some books, takes some tests, write some papers, all of which are easy for me, and I can take a degree in librarianship." I took that degree and my plan—greedy creature that I was—I would continue to take advantage of this one-course a term free. This time, I was going to do something that for me was more daring; I was going to Georgia State to take an MBA. But they changed the rules, and this wonderful, advantageous program that allowed a faculty member to take a course at another institution was cancelled. I have always wondered if perhaps the program was cancelled because I was over-reaching, double dipping, taking too many degrees, or being overly

eager to gain degrees. So I never took the MBA, in which I had no particular interest anyway.

TS: I was going to ask . . .

DY: That's—you were going to ask that too, weren't you Tom? Yes, an MBA; what drove you to that?

JAB: I think it was one of those things—it was there, like the mountain.

TS: Well, see, you may have gone out and made a million dollars, and we would have never had you at Kennesaw.

DY: I'm thinking about fortuitous terms here, and surely . . .

JAB: Well, I could have given you a million dollars, and you could have established a center of some sort.

TS: That sounds good too. Maybe you better go back, and work on that master's.

DY: The important thing is that you were diverted to teaching.

JAB: Well . . .

DY: From your radio station.

JAB: That's right, that's right.

TS: Where was the radio station?

JAB: The radio station was in Columbia, an educational radio station.

TS: So you grew up in Columbia, and Columbia is of course, the capital of South Carolina. What did your parents do?

JAB: My father was with McKesson-Robins, and my mother worked for the state.

TS: What is McKesson-Robins?

JAB: At the moment it's the company that seems to be in a great deal of financial trouble. But back when I knew about it, it was a large pharmaceutical company.

TS: Oh, I see. Did your father have a degree in that area?

JAB: No.

TS: So was he like a manager or salesman?

JAB: Salesman.

TS: And what agency did your mother work for?

JAB: Vital Statistics.

TS: Was she doing clerical work or administrative?

JAB: Clerical work.

TS: Did you go to public schools?

JAB: I went to public schools, and I feel I am very lucky in my high school; I can look back on my high school experience as an almost ideal experience in academic strength, in challenge and companionship of my colleagues, in the kinds of teachers I had, and in the opportunities I was offered. I know it's fashionable now for kids to hate high school, but I loved high school.

TS: Were you eccentric back then or did you have lots of people with similar interests?

JAB: Yes, I was moderately eccentric. But when I was in high school, it was still possible and legal to have very narrow tracks of students so everyone who was smarter, and possessed a little something extra, could be in the same class. Not only the same homeroom, but we would go around together all day and have accelerated sections of English and accelerated sections of history. I understand they can't do that now because it's not democratic, and it makes other people feel bad. And looking back on the experience I know that the homeroom I was in misbehaved terribly because we were snobbish, and we ran the institution. I think all of us in that homeroom profited from it a great deal. One of the history professors at the university, where he was also a dean, had sent his children to Columbia High and knew it well. I've heard him say on several occasions that someone should have done a thorough study of the Class of '55 from many different angles because it was a different class.

DY: Were you a thespian? Were you in the thespians in high school?

JAB: The high school did not have a drama club, but Columbia had a very fine children's theater program. The woman who directed it was excellent in teaching speech, directing plays, building teamwork, and inspiring us to perform well. She taught me about theater and about the power of language . . .

DY: Oh, how wonderful, Jo Allen!

JAB: It has been lasting.

TS: Do you remember what her name was?

JAB: Oh, of course. Her name was Mary Lou Kramer.

TS: Was she a native of South Carolina?

JAB: I think she was a native of Georgia, and I know her undergraduate degree was from the old women's college.

TS: Milledgeville?

JAB: Yes. [Georgia College & State University, formerly Georgia State College for Women.]

TS: You didn't have to go far to get to the University of South Carolina then. What was it like back in the '50's? Did they have a good English department?

JAB: Yes, they had a good English department. I remember with particular fondness Dr. Carol Carlisle, with whom I am still in touch. She taught me the first semester I was there, and just last year I went to Columbia for a party celebrating her sixtieth anniversary. We've arched over the years.

DY: Was it—your first class—was it a writing class or a literature class?

JAB: It was an introduction to literature course. The way the program was set up then, there was English 11 and English 12, and if you scored sufficiently high on a placement test, you could go directly into English 12. I went into English 12 and had the good fortune to have Carol Carlisle. I hasten to add she was one of the two women I had in my entire college career.

DY: Goodness. You mean through graduate school also?

JAB: Yes. I had two women, undergraduate and graduate combined, both of them on the undergraduate level, Carol and then a professor of sociology.

TS: Right. Well, I can believe that; it was that way when I was attending the University of Tennessee. There weren't any women on the faculty in the history department at that time, although there had been in the past. I guess the only women that taught me were in what we called general education courses now. By the time you got to the upper level classes, there weren't. That's just the way it was back in the '50's. So I was surprised when you gave a woman's name to begin with.

JAB: I like to cite her first, partly because she is a woman, partly because I'm still in touch with her, partly because she taught the first English course I had on that campus. I had her later for a Shakespeare course, but I remember her particularly as a kind of launcher for me. But I had several other very fine professors there in the English department and in the French department. I had a splendid professor for the year-long world history course, a man named Bradley D. Barger.

DY: Can you name some of your teachers or professors whom you would consider your mentors?

JAB: Easily. I want to start with a French professor. This was Eugene Murphy. He taught with a great nervous excitement, and I don't want to think of him as a mentor in promulgating nervousness. I do like to think that I have consciously and frequently successfully carried on the remarkable excitement that he brought to every class. He could talk about irregular verbs and make those verbs sound as if they were the most fascinating creatures to come to earth. He'd start a tale, start explaining something, and then frequently he would stop and say, "Do you know this? Have I told you this?" And if we shook our heads, no, then he would say, "Well, I like to check. I don't want to bore you. The worst offense is to bore a class!" I think that's just wonderful. And it is. That's right, the worst offense is to bore a class. One day, he was playing with the desk drawer and talking about some French novelist with such excitement, with such fervor, that he slammed the desk drawer on his little finger and broke it! It made one of those moments that hold the class between gasping and laughing, but it's a good story about excitement. So I would put him in the column for a mentor for trying to inspire through exciting.

DY: His own passion for his subject.

JAB: His own passions. I would cite J. Edwin Whitesell in the English department as a mentor, on the need and the value of always being demanding: That the hard way is better than the easy way, and the professor who challenges is of far greater value than the one who does not.

DY: Could you talk a little bit more about what you mean by "demanding," in terms of workload and in terms of intellectual acuity?

JAB: All of those, all of the above. Demanding in the amount of reading he expected; demanding in the variety of reading; demanding in the level of writing he expected on papers and tests; demanding in terms of intellectual grasp. We were supposed to reach, grab and gain, not just sit through X number of hours.

- DY: So accountability is in there too. Students were intellectually accountable for what had been taught.
- JAB: Yes. I took three or four courses with Whitesell, one in Romanticism, which was a very large class. Romanticism must have been a requirement for some subcategory within the major.
- DY: Was it English Romanticism? British?
- JAB: British. The usual. But then the next year, I took a course from him in early English drama, the old *Gammer Gurton's Needle* sort of thing, and there were five or six of us in there. I remember that as a particularly happy class because I had a special interest in the material. I had such respect for Dr. Whitesell.
- TS: Yes, like a graduate class almost. Well, it sounds like you had a great time at the University of South Carolina with some very good teachers. You had mentioned Carol Carlisle earlier on; let's talk about her as a mentor. Did you consider her a mentor?
- JAB: I considered her a mentor from the first because I knew when I was in high school that I wanted to go into college teaching.
- TS: In high school, you knew that?
- JAB: Yes. I can digress and talk about that in a moment.
- TS: I didn't even know what colleges did when I was in high school, let alone that I would want to teach in one.
- JAB: I realized at the university that there weren't many women doing it, and it wasn't going to be easy for a woman to do it. So Carol Carlisle, who was demanding in class and interesting as a person, provided an immediate model.
- TS: Did she take a special interest in female students who wanted to pursue an academic career, do you think?
- JAB: I don't know. I think she took a special interest in me for two reasons: one, very early in the freshman year, the university assigned all freshmen to advisors, but their advisors were not in the department in which we were likely to major. I was given an advisor in some department--I don't remember what it was--and I said, "I know I want to go to graduate school, and I want you to tell me what languages to take." He said, "Well, do you know the subject in which you would like to go to graduate school?" And I told him, "Yes." And so he said, "Well, why don't you talk to someone in the department?" So I approached her—probably trembling—and said, "I have an advisor over in such-and-such department, but he tells me I should talk with you. I know I want to go to graduate school. I know I

want to take a Ph.D. in English. I'm now in third-year French. What other language should I take?" She said, "You need to take German." Well, I started the summer after my freshman year with German and had the German and French throughout. I hated every minute of the German, but Carol Carlisle did me a great favor by telling me when I was seventeen that I needed to learn German. It saved me a great deal of time and effort later on. So after that she noticed me, and I did notice that she looked a little surprised when I hit her with this question of graduate school in what was probably October of my freshman year. The other reason she knew me and helped me was that I had been active in the children's theater in Columbia. I had done all of the wicked stepmothers, all of the witches, all of the character parts. I was never allowed to play the princess because I was taller than all the boys. This is the story of my life! But Carol Carlisle had taken her two young children to all of the plays at the children's theater, and she had seen me do the witches, the stepmothers, and the other funny folks.

DY: So she knew you were a talented actor also.

JAB: Well, she knew I could manage language, I think. In class, when we would read sections from plays, she would always ask me to read a good part.

TS: Why German? She didn't mention French?

JAB: I had the French.

TS: You already had the French.

JAB: She knew that I had French.

TS: Because of all the scholarship in Germany? So it's still important that German be the language?

JAB: Oh yes. And when I arrived at Vanderbilt, I was particularly grateful to Carol Carlisle because Vanderbilt required French and German and would not accept any other languages.

TS: And you had a fellowship to Vanderbilt right out of Columbia.

JAB: I had the Woodrow Wilson.

TS: And so did that last all the way through your Ph.D. program?

JAB: No, at the time, the Woodrow Wilson fellowship was just for one year for the master's program. When I went back to Vanderbilt, I had a teaching fellowship.

DY: So you were teaching what we call general education courses today, more introductory courses.



JAB: The way the course worked then, in the first semester was critical analysis of short stories. The second semester was poetry and drama.

DY: I know which one you wanted to teach.

JAB: That's right!

DY: Although as a fiction writer now, I'm sure you loved dealing with short fiction.

JAB: Oh, I loved the whole thing. I was a total believer. When I describe myself in humorous terms, I always say I'm a word junkie.

TS: Well, you got through with remarkable speed. Just five years out of the University of South Carolina, you had your doctorate and a little work experience along the way as well.

JAB: I did.

TS: You got through fast. That's great. We talked about professors at University of South Carolina. What about at Vanderbilt? Any mentors there?

JAB: I would cite two, both in the English department: one, John Aden, whose specialty was eighteenth century. He directed both my master's thesis and the doctoral dissertation.

DY: Oh so you did both in that area.

JAB: He was known as a particularly meticulous and demanding professor. Many people were afraid of him, but he and I got along beautifully from the start. I really stumbled into specializing in the eighteenth century, and it was his power in the first course I took with him that led me into the eighteenth century. As an undergraduate I disliked it.

DY: But surely you've always had your satirical bent, your wit, and you just simply found a home, found the roots of it.

JAB: Yes, my natural satiric spirit, yes.

TS: What was your master's thesis?

JAB: Are you ready to be bored?

TS: Oh yes.

JAB: “The Use of the Spence Anecdotes by Warburton and Ruffhead.” Aren’t you glad you asked!

TS: I didn’t understand a word you said. [laughter]

JAB: At the time, I was very much interested in biography as an art form, and, needless to say, that has stayed with me. I said something to Professor Aden about doing the paper for the course on biography, and he very sensibly and immediately explained that that was much, much too big a subject. I needed to narrow it down, and then he said, “Have you ever heard of the Spence anecdotes?” I said, “No.” He said, “Well, read a little bit about the Spence anecdotes, and if you’re interested in that you could probably get a very good thesis out of it.” So I read a little bit about the Spence anecdotes, discovered that there was a talented, unassuming minister named Joseph Spence, who was in the Alexander Pope circle. Spence seemed to have no personality of his own, no ambition of his own, he was a *tabula rasa* of human beings. He loved to follow Pope around and gather information about him. Spence is to Pope as Boswell is to Johnson, except Spence and Boswell have nothing in common, psychologically or emotionally.

TS: Now, would Boswell’s book on Johnson be out by this time?

JAB: Oh no. Boswell’s *Life of Johnson* doesn’t come out until the very end of the century.

TS: Okay, so they’re doing the same thing, but in separate spheres, and not aware of each other.

JAB: Oh no, they couldn’t be aware of each other. Boswell was still in Scotland, if in fact he had even been born, when Spence was gathering his anecdotes. I mentioned Boswell only because the Boswell-Johnson relationship is well known; the Spence-Pope relationship is known only to specialists. But it helps people who don’t know Spence to think, oh yes, he’s like Boswell, in that he affixed himself to a great man, collected a great many notes and intended to write a biography. Whereas Boswell is always amorous and egomaniacal—always larger than life—Spence is self-effacing to a fault. He may be the original invisible man, which may be a very good quality for biographers to have.

DY: Especially one of Alexander Pope.

JAB: That’s right. Spence did not write his biography, he just collected the anecdotes. Two early biographers, [William] Warburton and [Owen] Ruffhead, had access to some of Spence’s notes, and my thesis was to try to determine how they used them, how many of the anecdotes each of those men might have had.

TS: Did you find that they used quite a few?

JAB: Yes, and with significant dishonesty.

TS: Sounds like a great master's thesis.

JAB: Yes. Well, at the time I was fascinated by it. I have forgotten the details now because you don't exactly use Spence every day.

DY: Well, we want to be sure to get to the conference, a fabulous conference that you did, the biography conference that you did here at Kennesaw, but I suppose we're moving chronologically so . . .

TS: Well, yes, let's keep that in mind, definitely. We want to definitely talk about that because you brought some great people to campus.

DY: Yes, you did.

TS: Including historians. Zell Miller, a historian among other things.

DY: But first talk about your dissertation.

JAB: Then when I moved on to the dissertation, I worked with what I now know is an essentially impossible topic, but at the time I thought it simply a challenging topic. I was interested in the decorum of style in English formal verse satire. Now that's splitting hairs because you get into satire; it divides into its subcategories. You get into formal verse satire, which is essentially Alexander Pope. Then, I was trying to establish that there were certain principles within formal verse satire that determined the correctness and the success of the genre.

TS: The title of your dissertation was "English Lucilian Satire: The Augustan Decorum." Did you prove that there were certain principles?

JAB: I don't think so. I got the degree, but I don't think I proved it. If I had to write a long paper on that subject now, I think I would say, "This cannot be established." But doing the thesis gave me a very keen sense of subtleties of style and what to look for in determining style.

DY: Your dissertation director and your master's thesis director were the same.

JAB: John Aden.

DY: John Aden. But you said that there were two.

JAB: The other man at Vanderbilt who had a great deal of influence on me was Cyrus Hoy, who was a specialist in Renaissance drama. Cyrus Hoy's hallmarks were his flare, his style, his classroom exuberance, and his ability to present the routine in a way that it seemed thoroughly exhilarating.

TS: What about Aden? You talked about him being demanding; were there other attributes that you found that might have influenced your teaching career later on in the way that either he conducted his class or was helpful to students?

JAB: This may be embarrassing to talk about; he was unbelievably sarcastic in class, and I'm afraid I've continued that, even sometimes when I don't mean to do it. He was exacting in scholarship and obsessed with secondary sources. So he made me very mindful of the need to know everything that had been said about everything, and the need to have exactly the right bibliographic information in the right form. It was "do right or die" with John Aden.

TS: So a stickler for details.

JAB: Yes, very much so.

TS: It sounds like you went toward English literature, but I'm just wondering if the old agrarian school still had any influence at Vanderbilt by the time you go there?

JAB: That was the lingering shadow of greatness, but I would not say there was any direct influence.

DY: Well, this is around the time—maybe even just a little bit before—when American literature was considered worthy of study in the academy too. You're right about that that . . .

TS: That Americans had not written anything worth reading?

DY: Or perhaps were pursuing . . .

JAB: Close study.

DY: Close study, yes.

TS: I was just wondering, as you were talking about the canon; the canon had not expanded at all in that era.

JAB: No it had not, and I'm sorry that I came along when I did, in terms of the canon. In graduate school, when I was working in the eighteenth century, the person I was most interested in was Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. Had I been encouraged to do something with Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, I would have been in the forefront of the soon-to-be explosion of feminist studies.

- TS: Absolutely.
- JAB: But the conventional wisdom was, don't write about a woman, you will never be taken seriously.
- DY: As a result of this cognizance or awareness—and I think that most of us women, if we went to a southern institution, and an institution as grounded in tradition as Vanderbilt, saw this—even I saw it too. Do you think that experience influenced your own teaching, and your own mentoring of students?
- JAB: Yes.
- DY: How did it?
- JAB: Yes, I think it has, in that I have always kept a sharp eye out for promising young women. I tried to do whatever I could to encourage them. Now, I did not intend initially to take the Ph.D. at Vanderbilt. My plan was to go there for just one year, and then go somewhere else for the Ph.D., but I knew when I was finishing my undergraduate days that I was female. I was coming out of a state institution, and that I was coming out of a southern institution. I knew that my chances for going to say, Wisconsin or Columbia, schools that I was very much interested in, at that point, were limited. But I could go to Vanderbilt, take a master's, and then be well positioned to go to another school. But I liked Vanderbilt so much, I liked John Aden so much that I went back.
- TS: Once you got through Vanderbilt, did you have a job lined up at Agnes Scott at that time? How did you get to Agnes Scott?
- JAB: Well, I wrote several institutions. Initially, I was not particularly interested in teaching at a women's college, but I wrote several institutions in the Atlanta area and Agnes Scott was the one that responded. I wanted the South, I wanted a liberal arts college and I wanted a large city. Agnes Scott responded, and I knew what a fine reputation Agnes Scott had. But my preferences and Agnes Scott's reputation convinced me I should go there.
- TS: Right. Did they bring you in to teach eighteenth-century literature?
- JAB: They did. My predecessor in eighteenth-century studies there was Ellen Douglas Leyburn, a formidable scholar. She had died two or three years before I applied, so the school was looking for someone, preferably a woman, to teach eighteenth century.
- TS: So you were lucky that they had a gap of a couple of years before they filled that position.

JAB: Yes, I was lucky.

TS: And you stayed at Agnes Scott for seventeen years?

JAB: I think it's thirteen.

TS: Thirteen. So you went there in '64?

JAB: No, I went there in '67.

DY: What happened with your research interests there? At what point did you feel free to be able to pursue what you wanted to pursue without the constraints of the political awareness of what one can write a dissertation on or should ask to write a dissertation on? That is, without the gender block, is what I'm saying. Have you worked on women writers?

JAB: Yes, as soon as I had completed the degree, and didn't have to answer to anyone I felt free. But the time also coincided with the beginnings of serious interest in women's studies.

DY: Recovering texts?

TS: It goes back as far as the sixties, mid-to-late sixties?

JAB: That's when the stirrings start.

TS: I was trying to think if in history it was that early, and I guess it was, but I don't think they were really taken very seriously back then. You know, women that were writing about women's history.

DY: You don't have any premiere southern women historians in the seventies, for example, do you? Or in the sixties?

TS: Well, in the seventies, it's becoming more common. But in the sixties, I'm sure they were there and trying to get tenure and promotion in some institutions.

DY: And published, probably.

TS: And published, yes, and getting anybody to take it seriously. Nothing that I was terribly aware of, but I know that, I guess that's right, that it would have been in the sixties, so I guess history and literature were about on the same time scale.

JAB: I think literature was probably a little bit ahead of history, simply because there had always been so many women English teachers.

DY: I was going to say, yes, the teacher, that's right. Is this a good point to talk about your interest in biography and what you did with that interest? It seems to have gone way back. I didn't realize that it went so far back.

TS: Sure.

DY: Leading up to this wonderful conference you did, Jo Allen.

JAB: I have always been interested in biography, and working with the Spence papers underscored that interest; taking courses in Boswell and Johnson, and then later teaching courses in Boswell and Johnson underscored that interest; writing some articles on Boswell's art in the *Life of Johnson* certainly underscored the interest. Then, when I came to Kennesaw the dates were right because it was the anniversary or we were coming close to the anniversary of Boswell's *Life of Johnson*. I was coming into a new institution; I knew that I needed to have an idea right away that would be academically sound, but would also be different from what this institution usually did.

DY: Remind me of the year you came; I was on the search committee that hired you.

JAB: Yes, I know, I remember calling you with all kinds of questions.

DY: They were very good ones too!

JAB: '86. I remember you proofread the two or three pages that I had planned to submit to [English department chair] Bob [Robert W.] Hill as my initial proposal for BioFest. You had come to my house . . .

DY: Yes, I do remember that.

JAB: I was fixing a luncheon, and I said, "Would you proofread this to make sure I haven't typed "of" when I mean "or." So you were in the first of BioFest, too.

DY: Well, that's good to remember. I'm honored.

TS: I'm messed up on my mathematics here. You went to Agnes Scott in '67, [and] you came to Kennesaw in '86? That's nineteen years, if I can add.

JAB: You've got some missing years, but I'll talk about these years, and then I'll talk about the other years.

TS: Or maybe you don't want to talk about it.

JAB: No, I'll be happy to talk about them.

TS: Because I thought you went straight from Agnes Scott to Kennesaw.

JAB: Oh no, no.

DY: You were dealing with another branch of your career.

JAB: I surely did. At Agnes Scott, the woman who was director of admissions asked me to help her revise some document that the admissions office was using in recruiting. Well, I did it over for her; she liked it a great deal.

DY: Laura Steele?

JAB: No, she was the registrar. This was Ann Rivers—I can't think of her last name now but Ann Rivers . . . Payne.

TS: Not the novelist?

JAB: No, no, no! [chuckle] I think it was Payne, I think it's Ann Rivers Payne. I can check that easily; I just don't know off the top of my head. I became the voice of the admissions office, writing all of their material. When it was time for Agnes Scott to prepare a new viewbook, which would be sent to prospective students, the admissions office asked me if I would write the copy for it. I did, and in writing the copy, I worked with a company that was then simply a printing company that was going to take the pictures, do the layout and design, do all the artwork and print the material. This company then started using those viewbooks as a selling tool. The company would go to different campuses all over the South, use this material as an example of what it could do. Well, any number of schools said, "We like this; this is impressive; this is a fine document. We would like one that sounds just like it." Well, there was only one way to have one that sounded just like it, so I started working during spring break and over the summer with this printing company, which wanted to expand into a college recruiting company. I would go to different schools, spend a couple of days, interview people, and write the promotional material. I'd write the viewbooks, I'd write brochures to parents and other kinds of promotional items. Finally there was so much demand for this company, and for me, that I had to choose between staying at Agnes Scott and working as a marketing, public relations person for higher education full-time. There it was: there was that opportunity to make a living by my pen.

DY: What's the connective tissue here between the role of the academic, the professor, the teacher, the researcher/scholar, and then one who writes for a far more general audience?

JAB: In both cases, I was working for the advancement of higher education. I think I was poised between the two worlds. Had I been, by nature, more scholarly, I couldn't have done the marketing writing. Had I been more marketing oriented, I couldn't have done the academic writing. But I think I was on a kind of fulcrum between these two edges of writing in and for the academy.



DY: And what fiction writers often say is that they have to put the academic writing over here and get it out of the way, before they can write; so, in a way you were following that path that was going to lead you to your fiction writing.

JAB: Yes. I see it as a path. But while I was doing this marketing, public relations writing for colleges and universities, I became the voice of roughly a hundred schools all over the South. I did a great deal of traveling—I'd stay in a place a couple of days—size the institution up quickly, write the material, go back several weeks later, and make a presentation.

DY: How do you see yourself, or see yourself as teaching, because you've always been the consummate teacher. I know you love the classroom, but I also know that you work very well with students one-on-one. But this is a different venue. Did you see it as that, did you acknowledge it as that, and how did that satisfy your need, your desire, and your passion for teaching to be doing this kind of work?

JAB: No, I'm afraid I did not see my marketing and public relations days as teaching, unless we emphasize that I was providing information to students who had to make decisions. I saw this career experience as a chance to live by my pen, which is something I had always wanted to do—as a chance to be very versatile. I prepared the materials for so many different kinds of institutions: from academically sound schools to real Bible-thumping, fundamentalist places to military schools. And I liked the variety. I liked the challenge; I liked the creation of a voice that was right for each of these places.

TS: What was the name of the company?

JAB: The company no longer exists. It was called College Concepts. I had my stint with College Concepts for about two years, and then the company closed. I worked as a freelance writer doing the same kind of work, largely with not-for-profit institutions until I could get another full-time job, which was in technical writing. I did technical writing for a couple of years, not enjoying it very much. It was in response to Kennesaw's ad for someone who had hands-on experience as a technical writer as well as a Ph.D. that brought me here.

TS: I had written down that you came in '86. But if anybody had asked me, I would say you came long before '86.

JAB: No, I came in '86.

TS: And one of the questions I was going to ask you is why you came to KSU but I guess you told us.

JAB: Well, I wanted to get back into teaching. The ad that the college ran and my experience notched exactly. It was one of those perfect-fit things.

TS: What was your first impression of Kennesaw when you came here? For your job interview?

JAB: That the entrances to the building were not well marked. [chuckle] I stood in the parking lot and debated for some time which door I should go in.

TS: Into the Humanities building?

JAB: Into the Humanities building.

TS: Well, I agree.

JAB: Dede had told me she would meet me at the front entrance, but I didn't know which entrance was the front entrance. I finally went in the door that turned out to be the front entrance, and there was a directory with her name on it. I went to her office.

DY: Oh dear, I'm sorry I wasn't outside waiting for you.

JAB: I was early because I had no idea how long it would take me to get out here and how long it would take me to find the building. I did not know this campus.

DY: At that time, you thought maybe that you could just be headed right into Chattanooga, didn't you?

JAB: Yes! [laughter]

DY: Given that you were coming from . . .

JAB: I was coming from Decatur.

DY: Decatur.

JAB: And Town Center Mall was under construction.

TS: Yes, that's right. Town Center opened in '86.

JAB: After my interview I didn't want to get back on the highway right away because after an interview, I'm always keyed up. I thought, I don't need to be on 75 late in the afternoon. So I drove around the emerging mall.

TS: Did you get interviewed by everybody including the president back then or . . . by '86, were they all involved in job hiring?

JAB: No, I was not interviewed by the president; I was interviewed by a vice president, who, just a couple of days before, maybe even two days before, had been given his walking papers.

TS: But you did get interviewed by George [H.] Beggs?

JAB: Yes.

DY: Of course, Bob Hill was chair then.

TS: Was Bob Hill chair in '86?

DY: Bob had just come as chair; he was very new.

JAB: Yes, I was his first hire. He had come the year before, and I was his first hire. He and I had some mutual friends, so we immediately had plenty to talk about.

DY: I guess George Beggs was the dean, so that would have been next.

JAB: Yes, George Beggs, and I hit it off well from the beginning.

TS: He went to Emory.

JAB: Yes.

TS: Down in that Decatur area, at any rate, for his undergraduate degree.

JAB: I remember I had lunch with you [Dede Yow] and Don [Donald J.] Fay.

DY: Where did we eat? On the campus?

JAB: We went to the Kennesaw House in Marietta by the tracks, which was still a restaurant. I very much appreciated your picking it out, and I think you said something about, "We thought this is the kind of place you'd like." It was the kind of place I liked.

TS: There were several different restaurants in the Kennesaw House at different times.

JAB: I'm very much interested in old buildings, historic preservation, and architectural adaptation. These folks at Kennesaw did not know that I had that particular interest, but I was impressed that they took me to exactly the right kind of building to feed my interest. Very perceptive.

TS: Showed you downtown Marietta.

JAB: Yes.

TS: So what courses were you brought in to teach at Kennesaw?

JAB: I was brought in to teach the first courses in technical writing and to do the courses that everyone did, the first year courses, the basic courses.

DY: Composition and world literature.

JAB: Composition and world literature.

DY: Western world literature.

JAB: I realized there was not an eighteenth-century person here, and there had not been for some time. I asked Bob about doing the eighteenth-century work, and I think it was the following summer that I had the first eighteenth-century course here. I had the good fortune to teach Shakespeare a couple of times and to develop a new course in biography. Then, way led on to way until I had taught practically everything.

TS: That's right. Kennesaw and Agnes Scott are quite different institutions. I guess, in that one's private and the other's public, and one's a women's college, and one is not; could you talk a little bit about the differences and maybe the similarities in the two? Could you use the same teaching techniques? Did the same teaching techniques work as well here with larger classes, for instance, than what you had at Agnes Scott?

JAB: I remember, I suppose my second year here, Betty Siegel asked me to compare teaching at Kennesaw with teaching at Agnes Scott. We were in a public place, and there was an audience of some size. She was certainly putting me on the spot, and I said, "One thing I like about Kennesaw is that it has no past and all future. Agnes Scott has a very rich past." I said that to her because of the awkwardness of the situation, and, I suppose, because it was what I knew she expected to hear; there is a great deal of truth in that past / future juxtaposition. When I was teaching at Agnes Scott, I was always very much aware that I was expected to do things the way they had always been done. Now, I don't mean that in a negative way because the teaching there had always been high quality. I was expected to do it in the same high quality that had always been demonstrated. I was also supposed to do it with the same methods that had always been demonstrated, and, at the same times the very courses had been taught. Ellen Douglas Leyburn wanted to teach eighteenth century at 8:30 in the morning; I had

to teach it at 8:30 in the morning. When I tried to change it, when I was so bold as to make the suggestion that we shift the hours of courses around, I was looked upon as if this were a dangerous, dangerous suggestion. So we kept the eighteenth-century course at 8:30 in the morning.

DY: That may be why I never took it, Jo Allen. [laughter]

JAB: Could be! Well, other people didn't want to change their courses, so this course could not be changed. All right, I came to Kennesaw, and I realized that there was no past here.

TS: Were you at Agnes Scott when she was teaching there? [This a question to DY.]

DY: Yes, I was. And she did a directed study for a very good friend of mine. You did a directed study on Clarence Darrow..

JAB: No.

DY: No?

JAB: I've never done a directed study on Clarence Darrow.

DY: Well, I don't know what—oh, her name was Darryl Long, I'm sorry.

JAB: Now, I remember Darryl Long.

DY: Yes. What was her paper? Do you remember? She adored you.

JAB: I remember her very, very happily, but I don't remember what her paper was.

DY: Yes, we did, we were there.

JAB: We overlapped.

TS: But you didn't take any of her courses?

DY: No, I did not. I was a history major.

TS: Oh, that's right. Before you saw the light.

DY: I'm not sure whether that's it or not. [chuckle]

JAB: But when I came to Kennesaw, I immediately realized that there was no past, but given demographics, given some of the enthusiasm that I saw in a great many fronts, I realized this place had a future. I am by nature someone who likes to make things; I like to make things out of words or out of wood or out of food or

- out of paper. I like to make things. I thought this would be a good place because this is a school in which there is plenty of room to build, plenty of room to make things. I made it my business to find openings and avenues in which I could build.
- DY: Did you find support for that along the way? I mean, your colleagues and administratively, the programs that you were interested in building?
- JAB: I was delighted with the support. The school found the money for BioFest. I was able to get the grant from the Georgia Humanities Council; the College Foundation under the leadership of Norman McCrummen got behind BioFest.
- DY: I think for the record, and for what we're doing for this history, it would be good if you talked in more detail about BioFest. I think it's one of the most successful conferences or events that we've had at this institution.
- JAB: In the course of the year, we brought in six major speakers who had published important books and biographies. Carol Bleser was in this group.
- TS: Yes, I forgot that that was part of BioFest. A historian.
- DY: Because it was a year-long celebration, it was not just one event and one evening.
- JAB: Justin Kaplan was here, biographer of Mark Twain; Irma [S.] Lustig, who is one of the editors of the *Boswell Papers*, was here. A list of distinguished people.
- DY: Arnold Rampersand, biographer of Langston Hughes.
- JAB: Yes, Arnold Rampersand was here. We had one person a month or every six weeks for the year. In addition to these major speakers, we had regular informal coffee discussions with local biographers, including Zell Miller.
- DY: Do you remember some of the other locals?
- JAB: I'm trying to think; help me with the name of the biographer for Carson McCullers?
- DY: Virginia Spencer Carr.
- JAB: Yes, Virginia Spencer Carr was in this series.
- DY: And they were well attended, and there was a lot of intellectual energy in those gatherings.
- TS: We ought to think about doing that again.

DY: Yes.

TS: It's been a long time now. Probably half our faculty doesn't even remember BioFest because they weren't here then—two-thirds of our faculty.

DY: That event was one of the most interdisciplinary events we have had.

JAB: Constance Reid was one of the major speakers, and she is a biographer of mathematicians. When we think of biography, we generally think of literature, history, and politics. But a biography of mathematicians is unusual. It was the folks in the math department who put me on to her; I had never heard of Constance Reid.

DY: That's exactly right. A very good way to cross disciplines is biography.

JAB: Now it would work probably better than it did then because there are so many biographies of business leaders. It should be an invitation to the Coles College of Business too. There was a third level—we had the distinguished visitors, the local biographers, and then there were regular meetings in the basement of the library [Bentley Rare Book Gallery] in which faculty members talked about favorite people. I talked about Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. Dr. [David N.] Bennett in Nursing talked about Florence Nightingale. Fred Roach talked about...

TS: Will Rogers.

DY: I came to that. I came to yours.

JAB: George Beggs talked about Thomas Jefferson. So this was easy, informal; it wasn't demanding. It wasn't scholarly, but it showed people interested in people in the good way and people talking about people.

DY: From what I've heard from students and colleagues about your teaching, Jo Allen, and observing your teaching too, that's exactly what you do. You get that intellectual energy going, and you draw people out. The wonderful thing about that was putting the people together.

TS: This would be a good project for our Center for Regional History and Culture.

DY: It sure would be.

JAB: It would be. You may hire me as a consultant.

TS: Absolutely. We'll put you into the grant.

DY: That's a great idea.

TS: Yes. Make you work hard.

JAB: I'm used to working hard; I like to work hard.

TS: Well, you did the BioFest; what other kinds of things can you think of about those early years that you got excited about at Kennesaw?

DY: Or even later years...

TS: You retired two years ago?

JAB: Yes. 2002. I was very much excited about the opportunity to teach creative writing in the master's program. Once I started teaching creative writing, I realized that that's what I should have been teaching all along. While I liked to teach literature, and I think I'm good at teaching literature, I think I have a real gift for teaching creative writing. I think I can conceive very quickly what are the needs of the student. I can bring the person along to help him or her write.

DY: That is a gift.

JAB: I have a particular exhilaration in teaching creative writing. That is what I miss most about not being here. If I could have taught only the creative writing, I never would have retired.

DY: I know you taught fiction writing and playwriting; did you not?

JAB: I did. Then on occasion, when there was no one else to do it, I taught the creative non-fiction.

DY: Right. Of those genres, do you have a preference?

JAB: I like doing both fiction and playwriting. It would be hard to choose between the two. Fiction is much easier to teach than playwriting. I enjoy them equally.

TS: Now, what year was it that your novel *Some Personal Papers* came out?

JAB: The first edition came out at the very end of '94.

TS: How long did it take to write it?

JAB: A lifetime.

TS: Yes. [chuckle]



JAB: In calendar days, it was about ten years since I had the first idea [to the time] the book was in my hands.

TS: So the whole time you were at Kennesaw, you were at least working, thinking toward that book.

JAB: Oh yes.

TS: When you came to Kennesaw back in '86, we all had heavy teaching loads; how did you find time to do scholarly pursuits?

JAB: The way anyone finds time: make time. What's the cliché? What you have to do, you do.

DY: What you want to do. Because it's not as though you were merely teaching or only teaching classes. I mean, that is enough in and of itself. But you were always involved in something like BioFest or something to do with the arts. I don't know when you first started acting with the drama department here . . .

JAB: Curt Daw's production of *Tartuffe*, and that was still in the Music building.

DY: Okay. So you were doing that also.

JAB: That would be easy to date.

TS: Pre-theater, Stillwell —what do we call it?

JAB: The Wilson Building.

TS: Pre-Wilson building, pre-Stillwell Theater, pre-theater or drama department.

JAB: Oh yes, well before that. But I was happy to have a chance to be in *Tartuffe* because the crazy old lady part is the kind of part I prefer to do. The crazy old lady part really is beyond the range of students. And so that, too, was a happy meeting. And many times, as I'm sure you know, Dede, I have gone over to Kurt's Elizabethan acting styles class, and he has rented a costume for me, the Queen Elizabeth costume. I have played Queen Elizabeth to his class.

TS: I bet you'd be a good Queen Elizabeth.

JAB: I'm a very good Queen Elizabeth, and I'm a fun Queen Elizabeth. But he would tell the class that they had to come to court and hail to the queen. There I was, and usually it turned out to be a difficult day for them because they were really frightened. Finally, it was a rewarding day.

DY: Frightened in the sense that this was something new?

JAB: It was.

DY: For them.

JAB: But I played them a fierce Elizabeth. They could have thought I was the power of the moment.

DY: I'm sure . . .

TS: I wondered if you cut off any of their heads!

JAB: They thought so!

TS: I guess Queen Elizabeth could be sarcastic too.

JAB: Of course!

TS: After a lifetime of teaching, what would be your definition of what a master teacher is?

JAB: A master teacher would be an adroit combination of demanding discipline and exhilarating challenge. This combination should be delivered with the voice and the bearing of belief in both.

TS: Okay. Good definition. Did you find an intellectual climate at Kennesaw when you got here that maybe facilitated master teaching—that rewarded it, that encouraged it?

JAB: I don't know that I found that kind of intellectual climate, but I was so glad to be back on a university campus that I did not miss it right away. I was so determined to do well that I did not miss it.

TS: You received the Distinguished Teaching Award in maybe '91?

JAB: '92.

TS: And then you received another award didn't you, later on, from the Regents that was a teaching award?

JAB: Yes, in '97 the Regents Teaching Excellence Award.

TS: What would you say your strengths as a teacher were?

JAB: I think my strengths as a teacher might be the same strengths that a really good dog has.

TS: [chuckle]

JAB: And I'm a dog-lover. I'm not going to say that this is not a doggie story, but the analogy just strikes me; it's come to me on the spur of the moment. Like a really good dog, I can bark at people's heels and wake them up. Like a really good dog, I can usually head them off from going into ideas that are too dangerous, too deep or too confusing. Like a really good dog, I will stay with them until they get it. Now this is not true outside the class, but in class I know when to keep my nose on my paws. I know when to bark with exuberance and enthusiasm.

TS: Okay.

DY: Do you see teaching as—in the metaphors that you've been using—guiding, inspiring, that sort of thing along the way? And what you've mentioned about your mentors, what part of teaching is performance?

JAB: I think a great part of it is performance, and I know that's not a popular idea now. I know it's frowned upon.

DY: Well, if we define performance or look at performance as one comes to the stage, and one is quite well prepared to do, that's another thing, isn't it?

JAB: I very much believe that if I do not conduct myself in a classroom in a way that shows I believe in what I'm doing, and I'm enthusiastic about what I'm doing, then I cannot expect anyone else to be interested.

TS: Absolutely.

JAB: The word I'm tempted to use, although I want to put in all the disclaimers before I use it, and I'll swallow hard and apologize, the word is "witness." I think of a good teacher in a classroom on any level has to make a witness, to mix metaphors, to perform in witness to the material itself. I have to witness that this piece of literature is worth something. I have to witness that writing in a powerful way is worth something. So the witness to the material is also the witness to the craft, and there is a witness to the objective. I think the person in the classroom has to project that he or she fully believes in teaching the end of teaching, the value of teaching, the creativity of teaching. Now, I'm about as far from a religious fundamentalist as a person can be, but I do have to borrow the word, "witness."

DY: I like that immensely; I really do.

JAB: That's what I've always tried to do. I cannot say that it's always worked, but I've always tried.

DY: Because it's not enough just to know one subject well.

JAB: No.

TS: Well, I was thinking of the class that Dede and I teach; we very clearly did not reach every student in that classroom, but we did reach some very well I think.

JAB: You never reach all of them.

TS: And that seems to be what you're describing. You've tried to get people as excited as possible. But in the final analysis, you have high standards, and if they don't come up, well, that's their problem, ultimately. And your role, as I see you saying it, is to help those who really want to learn.

JAB: That's right.

TS: And not waste that much time on those that don't want to be there.

DY: Well, if we're going to continue to use religious metaphor [laughter] . . . it's intrigued me.

JAB: Dogs!

TS: Well, now, she did go to Agnes Scott to teach, you know, a Presbyterian school.

DY: No, let's just both jump right now. Now, I've forgotten what my other metaphor was going to be, my other word was going to be.

TS: I'm sorry.

DY: Witness and oh, surely, no, I was not going to go for salvation, but the idea . . .

TS: A calling?

DY: Yes, and the fact that it's not just the material, but what you're bearing witness to is the inspiration. The fact that you model that energy, passion, and in that sense, some students are inspired. But Lord knows, we can't breathe the breath of life into them if they're not willing . . .

TS: To use religious imagery.

DY: I told you; I was headed that way.

TS: [laughter]

DY: While you were at Kennesaw, do you feel like you were able to teach what you cared most about, in terms of the way the curriculum was constructed, your course assignments, et cetera?

JAB: Until the last couple of years, yes.

TS: Then what happened?

JAB: The newer version of the World Lit course became oppressive. I thought the composition courses became impossible.

TS: Because of content?

JAB: Content, orientation.

DY: Lack of clear guidelines; that too, I think.

JAB: In part, but that affected me less because I always did what I thought would work best anyway.

DY: Well, I did too, but it was a problem when others weren't doing what . . .

JAB: Yes, right.

DY: And you inherit students . . .

JAB: Clear guidelines for the department. Right. Had there not been the problems in the basic courses I would never have retired because I don't think I come across as a senile old lady who needs to be helped across the street.

TS: No, I don't think so.

JAB: I'm ready to go out and kick up trouble almost anywhere.

TS: Yes. So changes at Kennesaw were for the worse, as far as you're concerned in recent years, at least in the English department.

JAB: Well, in those two courses. I do not think that was true for any other course because—well it would be true for one other course. Those two basic courses were at one end of the spectrum, and those courses were a hard push and a hard pull. I found them, finally, a thoroughly defeating experience. At the other end, there were the graduate courses in creative writing, and I have never dealt with more interesting or talented, cooperative, good-spirited people than I did in those classes.

TS: Are you talking about the students?

JAB: The graduate students in there. They were, for the most part, a joy to know and a joy to work with.

TS: That's good to hear. What about the job description in terms of scholarship and service and so forth? Did that evolve in the sixteen years I guess you were at Kennesaw?

JAB: Yes, because when I came, there seemed to be very little expectation in terms of scholarship.

TS: And certainly that was, creative writing at least was something you were very much interested in.

JAB: Always, always.

TS: So as time went on, did you see the expectations increase in that area?

JAB: Yes. And I thoroughly approve of that increasing expectation. Kennesaw needed to become a real school.

TS: And you'd define a real school as one where the faculty role is more than the classroom?

JAB: That's right. The faculty role has to be classroom, scholarship, and the school. The faculty has to be other than provincial.

TS: Did you see your scholarship as something that enhanced your teaching?

JAB: Oh yes. I don't think the two are separable. With almost every scholarly article that I've written, that article began with an idea that I'd worked through in class. I put great faith in people's eyes, so I'm always assessing a class by what the eyes are doing. If the eyes seem to have special curiosity about them or special glimmer about them, if the eyes seem to say, "That's odd and I like it," then I think, I probably should go on with this; I probably should see if this will develop into an article.

TS: Good. You didn't ever use technology in your classroom to speak of, did you?

JAB: I spoke badly of it on some occasions, and then I spoke well of it on other occasions. I used word processing, and I think it is a great benefit to writers; I'm not sure it is a great benefit to people in basic composition courses other than it makes for much cleaner papers and faster reading. But the spell check and the so-called grammar check are not helping us produce literate citizens. I think PowerPoint is absolutely worthless. PowerPoint is part of our intellectual collapse because we've gotten the impression that everything can be reduced to three nice points with dots in front of them.

DY: We are culture sound bytes.

TS: I have never found that I was organized enough to know what I was going to say before I got in there and somebody asked a question anyway.

JAB: Aren't you suspicious of a person who can "can" a lecture in PowerPoint rather than going in, and responding to what people are interested in?

DY: Yes, yes.

JAB: I am really suspicious of the person who can pre-package the whole thing. I don't think that's teaching.

TS: Okay.

JAB: What other strong opinions would you like? I realize I've gotten into this now!

TS: We're in favor of strong opinions.

DY: I was going to say you're preaching to the choir here, to continue our religious metaphor. What do you think are some of the changes for the good and for bad that you've seen in our profession of teaching? I think you've noticed . . .

TS: Not just at Kennesaw? Or are you speaking specifically of Kennesaw?

DY: Well, I would like to be not that far out of the . . . but yes, I think we can say . . .

JAB: I'm not saying this to blast Kennesaw, but for the profession as a whole, I think it is unfortunate that there is excessive emphasis on publication at the expense of concentration on students. If we could have more merely a both-and relationship, rather than an either-or, or rather than one being privileged, and the other just being expected.

DY: Did you buy into that Boyer model of the different kinds of scholarships?

JAB: I think that's awfully fuzzy. I'm not really clear on what the scholarship of learning is. I mean, do you go out, and write up what you did in class? Fifteen minutes of discussion will be sufficient and then . . . I'm not clear enough on Boyer. I frequently have the feeling that people just trot out the Boyer model as a space filler. "Boyer model" is like the word "okay". When you don't know what to say, you just make this sound.

TS: I think we talked once before, years ago, about whether there is a difference in applied research and real research, or whatever, applied research and basic research. Applied research is basic research, isn't it?

DY: We have had people in the upper administration who have said that creative writing, for example, is applied research because you use a pen and a pencil and a typewriter . . .

TS: Well, that's right. Is your novel applied research? I guess to some of our administrators it's been regarded as applied research.

JAB: I would not regard it as applied research.

DY: Well, you, and probably most of the free world, wouldn't.

TS: [laughter]

JAB: [laughter] I guess we're back to changes I saw at Kennesaw. There have been so many changes in the last two years, when I have been away, that anything that I say is significantly out of date now. I left as the dormitories were going up, as the apartments were going up. Since I left, this major extension on the Humanities building has occurred. The food service has changed, not as much as it needs to, but it has changed.

DY: Athletics?

JAB: Yes.

DY: Well, I guess we can only speak to what our own experience is. Do you think that the changes that have occurred in the last two years are characteristic of what the culture is, or the climate of this institution?

JAB: Well, see, that's the point on which I can't speak clearly because what I see is the growth on the outside, the physical plant, and the change in material things. But on the outside I can't see changes in academic fiber. I can't see changes in student attitude; I can't see if the problems of that world literature course have been solved.

TS: Have you not taught any courses since you retired?

JAB: No.

TS: Okay.

DY: I didn't do this very well—I was going back to when you came to Kennesaw. You saw this place with a future. You saw that it was possible to be able to create or make what you wanted to as a creative person. Did you find, at the end of this, speaking from two years outside, that the culture was one that you, as an academic, as a scholar, and as a teacher, benefited from? Or grew in?



JAB: Yes, I benefited from it. I grew in it, and through it, and with it. But only because the graduate program in creative writing came into being.

DY: Okay.

TS: Well, I guess this all is really asking in part, do we have a collegial atmosphere at Kennesaw that encourages faculty—kind of the way the BioFest did—to have intellectual discussions? Is there a true academy here of scholars that communicate with each other and sustain each other?

JAB: I did not see it.

TS: Okay.

JAB: And I would have liked to have seen it.

DY: What did you see then as the focus? What do you think the focus was then? Or perhaps, what the major foci were, if not the kind of collegiality and intellectual scholarly atmosphere that we would hope to find at a college or university?

JAB: When I was with groups of people both within the department and elsewhere on campus, what I most frequently heard was complaining.

DY: About?

JAB: About anything on campus. Administration, parking, students. If it was there it was to be complained about. I cannot recall more than one or two intellectual conversations—and intellectual is not quite the right word—one or two conversations of thoughtful substance in which I didn't want to get up and leave.

TS: One of the things I learned in graduate school is to stay away from people who are constantly complaining, or I'd never get through graduate school. That applies here as well. What are you doing for your last two years now? Are you writing anything?

JAB: I've written a great deal; I've been in a couple of plays. I've just gotten back from three weeks in Greece, making the trip that I've wanted to make since the ninth grade. In the ninth grade, when I read *The Odyssey* for the first time, I knew that someday I wanted to retrace the steps of Odysseus, and I have now done it.

TS: Very good.

DY: Where did you go?

JAB: I was there for three weeks. We had half of that time on land, half in the Ionian Sea stopping at Ithaca, of course, and adjacent places.

DY: It's beautiful, isn't it?

JAB: Yes, it is beautiful. I always thought I was very good on color, but I know so much more about color having been to Greece. Something else I'm doing that I'll mention because you asked about my taking that extra master's degree and the temporary interest in the MBA: I am taking computer courses at North Metro Tech. So that answers your technology question.

TS: Absolutely.

JAB: I'd like to become skilled at Web design. I have a good background in art. I know topography; I know design; I know color; I can certainly write copy, but I don't know which keys to click. I don't know how to put all these things together on the Web. So I have signed up for a certificate. Now, I don't know that I will finish the program; I just had to check some blank for my application. I do plan to take the courses in Web design that interest me.

TS: That's great. What are you writing about?

JAB: About two hours ago, I read a short story to the Kennesaw Mountain Writing Project. This story is part of what I now see as an emerging collection of short stories about dogs. Not in the Lassie sense, that the dog is the principal character. Each of the stories has a dog as a catalyst. The presence of the dog provides the essential context for the human action. The human action could not take place were it not for the dogs.

TS: Thank you.

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