

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH JOAN E. LEICHTER DOMINICK

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## DEDICATION

***For my family, friends, colleagues, and students for generously experiencing learning with me.***

***Thanks for helping me share my academic mission to “Honor, Understand, and Connect Learning from Self to Global Society for a Just, Equitable & Peaceful World”***

Thanks to my family, Meaghan E. Dominick, Doris A. Leichter, Joseph T. Leichter, Judy Berk, Joseph G. Leichter, Jeanne Houston, Milton J. Leichter, Anna Leichter, Elizabeth Walters, Joan Connolly, Walter Connolly, Patricia Connolly Sito, Tom Sito, Walter Houston, Tom Walters, Elizabeth Walters, Eileen Walters, Patricia Carroll, Robert E. Leichter, Jeanne Benestante and Carol McNiff. To all my family members who bravely paved the way so that I could be free to pursue learning.

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Kennesaw State University Oral History Project  
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Interview with Joan E. Leichter Dominick  
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TS: Joan, if we could just start with a little bit about your background. Tell us when you were born, where you were born, where you grew up, and a few things like that.

JD: I was born August 21, 1951, in Brooklyn, New York, and I grew up in Brooklyn and Queens; let's see what else.

TS: I would have never guessed it from your accent when you said, "I was born," and all of a sudden it sounded like Barbara Streisand.

JD: Well, we were both from Brooklyn, New York. I grew up in post World War II time period; my father was a World War II veteran from the Navy and my mother became a housewife after marriage and giving birth to me. I basically grew up in Brooklyn and Queens, New York. My father was a New York City police detective and my mother was a Girl Scout Co-Leader and hospital volunteer. I have one younger brother named Joseph. Education was always in the forefront of my family, from a long history of wanting to go back to school and wanting to go to higher Ed. I really feel like that's where it came. I have plenty to talk about with that, but I won't go past the question.

TS: This is really something that we've been finding from these interviews. I think a large part of the faculty we've interviewed are first generation college, maybe. First generation to graduate from college. So I think you're probably very typical of what we're seeing on the faculty in that regard.

JD: I won't do too much of an aside, but I will say, just even getting ready, I got excited about this interview because I took seven of my relatives to Ireland this summer, and my family heritage, I mean, we can even go before birth, is Irish and German decent and of my Irish relatives from the 1860's, they were teachers who had to stop teaching and had to come to the States and immigrate here. So in digging the history and going to the places this summer, I really feel a lineage connected to teaching and education, and I feel grateful that I was able to be of one of the generation that my relatives would struggle to come here to the United States. Most of my relatives in Ireland are in the area of Adult Education, interestingly enough, I hold my doctoral degree is in Adult Education. Dedication to education does run in my family!

TS: So you may have had some college graduates in the past?

JD: Yes, yes. Well, either college graduates, certainly teachers, particularly in Ireland. My great-great-grandfather was a teacher in Ireland. Philip Scully.

TS: What brought him to America?

JD: Basically politics and also famine, so they came here and had to start all over again, all the generations, and so it took awhile.

TS: Did they come in the nineteenth century?

JD: Some of them came about 1880's, and some came after that during the famine period, and some came at the turn of the century. But all my great-grandparents were from either another country—except my one great grandfather was from America, but he was originally from Germany and actually France. That was my great grandfather, Benjamin Leichter, he as a leather importer. My paternal great-grandmother, Mary Morahan, came from Kilmovee, Ireland and supported education. From my maternal great grandfather side, my Donohue relatives are traced to County Cork, Ireland. My maternal great grandmother Catherine side are Riordans, we think from County Cork. His father was the head of the volunteer fire department in New York City. To this day we have many police and firefighters in my family. My maternal great grandfather George Walters, was born on a Cherokee Reservation in Oklahoma and was in the Army for his profession. He is buried in Arlington Cemetery. He died as a result of mustard gas poisoning from World War One. He also fought in the Spanish American War. I am so very proud of my wonderful diverse family heritage!

TS: So you went to the public schools?

JD: No, I did not. I went to Catholic school for twelve years in New York; I went to St. Nicholas of Tolentine Elementary School.

TS: St. Nicholas of who?

JD: Of Tolentine. I went to elementary school and had a really great experience. I had really supportive, wonderful nuns and what we would call lay people who are teachers who always pushed education and learning and the power of learning.

TS: This sort of parallels my wife's history. She went to Catholic schools, St. Pius in Atlanta.

JD: Tell her to come on in, we can trade stories.

TS: She has some.

JD: I bet she does.

TS: But one of our purposes, too, is to talk about mentors that we've had along the way, and so it does sound like you're getting into that.

JD: I certainly am, and I can transition into mentors. I can start immediately with my family for mentoring. My parents and my grandparents all really pushed education. Education will set you free; please stay in school. My immediate grandparents all had to work and were not able to finish high school. My parents finished high school, and then I was always, not just pushed, but it would open a door; it will set you free; it's your ticket; it's power; it's wonderful opportunity. So those are my immediate mentors. And what's really remarkable is after I was in college, when I was a senior in college, my father was a First-Year Student/Freshman at the same school, and he decided to come back to college since I was in college as well. My mother got into the college that I went to in Queens, but became ill and could not attend. We all became the Queens College family, but I was the first of my generation to graduate but my family is remarkable. I did have significant teachers that definitely helped me, and one was in my junior year, I mean I have others prior to that; I don't know how far back we want to go.

TS: Well, the ones that are really important to you.

JD: The pivotal where I feel a life-changing event happened for me was my high school teacher at St. Helena's High School, Sister Patrica Marie. When I was a junior, she was my Latin teacher as well as my English teacher, and she was one of the most fascinating teachers with Latin, so I enjoyed that thoroughly with her. But when I took the English class, she came in one day and she said, "I'm going to introduce a subject to you that I think you should study and this is communication." She started this whole talk about the importance of it and just of public speaking. I remember it's not that we weren't learning about communication throughout our entire time, but it was our first time I was introduced to the discipline of communication. It was very striking, and I was sixteen, and I remember that. In fact, a textbook I wrote with my colleagues, I dedicated to her as well for introducing me to the love of my first discipline that I studied. And then in college, I had interesting experiences and interesting teachers. It was Forbes Hill who changed my life and Dr. Forbes Hill eventually became my director of my master's thesis.

When I was a junior, I transferred to Queens College—I was at Hunter previously. He was my advisor the open advisement day, and I was an English major, but I still loved communication and took classes. This was still sort of new-age for me, and I got stuck with English after leaving another major. But anyway, he did some advising, and he said, "I have a class that I'd love you to take, and it's on Aristotle, and this would be a great class." I think he was looking for people to take his class! But I was like, hey, he's the most welcoming person.

Well, he was one of the best teachers I have ever had. He changed my life; I changed my major; I ended up specializing in rhetorical theory; I had the best teachers humanly possible at Queens, and it just was a remarkable experience. I stayed for my master's there, as well, because my teachers wouldn't hear of me not staying, and they promoted me to teaching. I'm not bragging; I mean, they gave me so much self-confidence that I was always what I would call a "B" student, you know; I got "A's" but . . .

TS: In high school?

JD: Yes, but I was always working or something, something else going on. I enjoyed school, but never really felt like I was special, if that's of any description. It was the nun that made me feel special and Forbes Hill that made me feel special, and then along after Forbes came Bob Cathcart. Dr. Cathcart was the one that—he was also in communication—liked my rhetorical analysis, entered my paper on John F. Kennedy into a contest when I was a senior. I won for the school; I was flown out to California to present and compete, and I came in as a runner up. But it changed my feeling about my own capability to learn. It was the most remarkable thing. They went out of their way to mentor me. It was more than advising; I mean, they went out of their way to mentor me. Those two remarkable men have really . . . I've stayed in touch with them over the years.

TS: Cathcart?

JD: He's one of our leading rhetorical theorists and Forbes Hill. And also while I was there, another man who changed my life is a world renowned, fabulous teacher, and when I was a young graduate student I didn't realize his fame; I didn't realize anything, but I studied with Dr. Chaim Perleman who changed my life. He wrote *The New Rhetoric*. He was a Belgian attorney and philosopher, and he was brought over as a special exchange. He taught with us, and he taught me the Socratic method of thinking and was remarkable. I was in awe of him; it was this transformational learning experience for me.

TS: How big a department was that?

JD: It was big. We had a very big department; it was called the Communication Arts and Sciences. We were a very traditional, old school. It's a modern discipline but with ancient roots, back to Greek as the classic Western and so in it was housed rhetorical theorists, media specialists, audiology, theater.

TS: What did you say before theater?

JD: Audiology. Like the audiology people were in there. Because that was the original look in 1950, when communication became an academic department. They sort of broke away from English when working class students came back to college, and so they became their own group and started this speech

communication association. Our department was configured like that, and most departments don't look like that today. But mentoring, that was life changing.

TS: Well, late '60s, early '70s, you weren't occupying the president's office back then or anything were you?

JD: I marched in a very big protest for Kent State, when Kent State occurred; they closed down every university, and I did march that day for Kent State, and was against the War. We marched from Hunter College, in NYC, right down Fifth Ave. I mean, young men I knew were being killed, and it was a terrible time period, I think, to be a young person and to go to school. People cannot describe it, unless you've lived through it, for lots of different levels: the War, gender, race issues, it was just a remarkably sad time. It wasn't an upbeat, oh, I'm in college and I'll sit on the lawn kind of thing.

TS: The people who had the luxury of getting kicked out of school were a class above.

JD: A whole different one. I had to work for a living; I had to work to go to school; I lived at home for most of school. In college, I took a full load, and I worked two jobs always. I had a white-collar job during the day as a publisher, and at night, I sold hot dogs and beer at Shea Stadium. I was in the union. I did that for two and a half years, and that taught me how to be a chair of a department. I worked at Shea Stadium, Madison Square Garden, I worked for Harry M. Stevens Food Service. I tell you, they didn't let the young girls walk through the stands then. We had to be behind. It was a union policy. We had to stand behind the stands. They wouldn't let the young girls out.

TS: Oh, you didn't get to see the game then.

JD: No, but they fed us early, and we'd watch everyone warm up, and we'd get to meet everyone, and we'd go on the back elevators, and you'd meet everyone. It was just a delightful job. I did that my junior and senior years of college. But I'm not doing the violins, poor me. I loved the idea of all this working and studying and trying to make a better life. And by better not just materialistically, but opportunity.

TS: Sounds to me that that was [a] perfect background to come to Kennesaw State, where most of our students work.

JD: It is. I think that's one of the reasons I came because what's interesting is I ended up waiting twelve years to get my doctorate. We'll talk about that a chapter later. I had gotten in, and, instead, I chose what I think a lot of my colleagues did: I got married. I got into a doctoral program at Indiana with a full fellowship, however, I got married at this point in my life. So he got tenured, and then after all that was through, I decided I really want my doctorate, and I was teaching as an

- instructor most of those years, but I did get my doctorate in 1990. I graduated at thirty-nine years of age in Adult Education with an emphasis in Communication.
- TS: I was noticing you got your master's in '75.
- JD: Right.
- TS: But you were in Athens all this time?
- JD: All that time, I was always working, and I worked at a radio station selling advertising—they hired me because of my background in communication—I wrote commercials and sold advertising. It was really a great fit; they took a chance on me, which was really great. I enjoyed it, but I always wanted to teach. This is where my other mentor comes in, my next adult mentorship. I really wanted the doctorate, but it was a different time period; it was the man's career was number one, the way I was raised and the way things were. I can't even explain it to my young students.
- TS: Well, I was going to ask you about this earlier, and maybe we can go back to it is whether you were directed in any particular direction because you were female as opposed to male.
- JD: “Don't get too much education.” I mean, that was a message that was either direct or subliminal. “Well, you've sort of gone far enough. Let's see, you've got the bachelor's degree, and you've got that master's degree. Now, what's this doctorate about? Hm. Now, wait.” Well wait a minute, women's careers were not taken that seriously. It just wasn't. You noticed the mentors; there's not one woman in my higher education experience I mentioned because there weren't many. There were one or two and they were in audiology or in theater or there were in some speech or hearing. They were in the traditional female [roles]—in education. I had some fabulous female teachers, but none became my mentor because I really don't know why, except that I didn't really meet that many at Hunter or at Queens.
- TS: Right. Well, I know in my own experience, other than general education courses, I didn't have any women who taught me in college. In fact, they were all white males. I mean, I didn't spend much time thinking about it at the time, but they were actually a very liberal group and very enlightened-- after the fashion of the 1960's and 1970's, they were very enlightened. Maybe we wouldn't think of them [as enlightened]; maybe we think of them as being very narrow because they all were white males at that time.
- JD: Except that they did mentor; they mentored me. But now, I'm thinking back to it, I did take a few education classes as an undergraduate. I would bump into women, and that was it. You did not see them in the more mainline majors.

TS: Right. And so you bought into these ideas yourself I guess.

JD: Yes. And it's not a bad thing, it's just the way the time is and my view on things is life moves on, and you have time to see things differently, and you either have a choice of making the change or living within how it was. So you can either live in the past with that past train, or you can do something transformational and take a chance and try that out. In the mid 1970's, I kept applying to UGA and everyone told me, "Oh, you're not going to get a job, you're an instructor." But one faculty member in the communication department just allowed me to have a chance, and it was Dr. Dale Leathers who has since passed away. But he was our national president for the National Communication Association. The name changed from Speech Comm. to NCA, and he always opened a door for me. There was just something about him. He gave me a chance, and so he let me come in and interview; there was no job, but he let me come in and interview in about 1976. I waited a year and someone walked out on them before school started, and I was supposed to get a temp job, and they left me in there for seven years. I had taught for a year as a TA in Queens and loved it. I did it seven years straight, and that's when I got the bug. But even in those days when you worked as a temp instructor, you couldn't take your doctorate at UGA; they wouldn't allow you. It was either or. See, times are so different; it was so much more restrictive. Today people can work here and get a doctorate at night. Those things didn't exist in the '70s, nor were they encouraged. In fact, it was like, "You want to be a doctoral student? Then quit this job."

But my problem was, there was no doctoral program in communication, and the adult program really wasn't developed at that point; there were no doctoral programs at UGA that I could fit into. I even tried to go to law school, I applied and got rejected in 1980, so I was like, "Oh no!" But I really didn't want to be a lawyer. But one of my professors, Forbes Hill, had talked me into applying. He goes, "How come you don't want to become a lawyer? If you didn't get your job, try law school because you know so much about argumentation and reasoning." But so, it worked out the way it should have because—I will do a transition—so Dale Leathers I'm forever indebted to, and I will tell you a small aside story. Not only was he continually supportive while I was a temp instructor, and a lot of temp instructors got no voices at these research institutions like UGA which eventually became my alma mater, but he always kept a tab on me for an opportunity. UGA was a huge growth spurt for me. I got involved in the Continuing Ed department; they would always come over and help and ask the communication professors to come in and do presentations on public speaking or sales or some other topic. I did a lot of work in continuing education, and I found that I was great when I worked with eighteen year olds—of course, I was much younger. But when I was a twenty-eight year old or a thirty year old, and I walked in a room full of older adults, they didn't want to hear what I had to say. So I thought, hmm, I'm going to have learned more about how adults learn because when I'm working with my eighteen year olds, we have a whole different gig going on here. So I started peeking around and looking back in education

classes and found a program called Adult Education. I applied, and I got a Kellogg Fellowship from them, and I got my college paid for, my doctoral program, and I'm not bragging about that. What I'm saying is that there were two slots open, and Kellogg was rewarding anyone who was going to dedicate themselves to working with adults. So I applied, got in 1986. I went to my first class and specialized in adult transitional learning periods and communication and decision-making. When I ended up wanting to look for a college, Kennesaw was a perfect place for me to look because demographics were older students coming back. The non-traditional—which I can't stand the name non-traditional—I like the “blended life,” the Pat Cross term.

TS: Who's term?

JD: Pat Cross. She's an adult educator; I think her background is in nursing. But she coined the term “blended life.” I don't like—the “non” is negative, and I wish Kennesaw would remove that term because you're not non-nothing. What is that non-traditional? So the traditional sounds okay, and if you're non-traditional that doesn't sound very okay. So I consciously use the term “blended life.” I was a blended life student at eighteen, so it's age differential. If you're the kind of student who's coming here who has responsibilities other than being in class full-time, if you have to work, if you have children, if you are married, if you have an infirm parent or grandparent that you take care of, if you just have to take care of yourself, that to me is a blended life student and I wanted a population like that. So I looked around for a school that would match what I had studied, and that was really one of the reasons I was called in here. But interestingly enough, I was also told that Dale Leathers wrote me a letter of recommendation and the communication department was impressed. Not only, I'm not bragging about me but that Dale would be my mentor because he was such a great leader in our field. I sort of answer questions for a long time but anyway . . .

TS: No, that's great.

JD: I love what I do, Tom.

TS: When you came to Kennesaw, what courses were you teaching here?

JD: Interestingly enough, when I first came to Kennesaw, I was hired by the communication department. My colleagues that hired me were George Simcoe, John Gentile and Richard Welch and, of course, the interview with Dean Beggs and Ed Rugg. And, of course, all of them liked the adult ed/communication background. We were not even a department then; David Jones was our chair. I think he interviewed me too, but I'm trying to remember, I'm sure he did.

TS: Department of Liberal Studies.

JD: I'm sure he did, absolutely, he was our chair. And George Simcoe was really the architect for the department, and my duties were to teach as many classes in communication as humanly possible any time of day! And at the time, I had a three year old, my daughter was three, so that was really a stretch and most of the classes were during dinner hour, and what did I teach? As I said, I taught really a variety: I think I had thirteen preps within my first three years here, which is quite amazing. I mean I have that down as being insane. But I taught, let's see, Public Speaking, I taught Principals of Communication, Persuasion, Advanced Speech Writing. I don't think I had any right to be teaching in oral interpretation, but somebody asked me to teach that. There was a lot of expectation of pinch-hitting and kind of stretching your expertise to fill the need. At that point, we were not part of general education, so we had quite this variety. I also taught in the beginning Western Rhetoric, Western Thought, Rhetorical Theory, I mean, you name it. It was Tuesday, Joanie had another prep! [laughter] So it was like, okay. Luckily, I love my field, so I did that.

TS: When you're teaching that many preparations, you really don't have much time for a whole lot else, I wouldn't think.

JD: Not really, no.

TS: So other than some service and what-have-you.

JD: Well, actually the first year, even Dean Beggs advised me, "Don't jump in too heavily. Get the courses formulated, get your expertise developed." But I immediately hit the ground running. I got put on every committee going. I was on, oh gosh, what was I on? Even right away, I think that one of the first things I did, Dean Beggs had said, "Put her on judicial, her father was a police Detective!" [laughter] I'm serious. He said, "I know you'll be interested in this." I think he's the one that recommended it to me. But don't hold me to it, but I remember that coming out of his mouth.

TS: Sounds like it.

JD: I was on Senate, I was, you know, you name it, the big ones. I immediately got on the bigger university-wide. But I tell you, I think it helped me and one person who did help me out a lot was George Simcoe. It's funny, I'm so consumed with portfolios now as part of this chapter of my academic life for the students to enhance their learning, but he's actually my portfolio guide here. And when I came here, he said, "Let me give you some advice Joan, of how to work it at Kennesaw." I remember him saying this as clear as a bell. And I said, "What is that, George?" And he said, "Get a box and put everything in it, and then once a year go through it and sort it out and that's your portfolio." And I went, "Okay!" So that's great advice! And I did, I'm not making fun of him; it was actually good advice. I didn't realize I was going to live in a paper trail kind of place, and

I was like okay; it wasn't until later on that I got the nuances of the rhyme and reason of tenure.

TS: So you came to Kennesaw, and you fit right in and taught everything under the sun and got on every committee in the world. Let's see, it was '96, I believe, you won the Distinguished Teaching Award. I wanted you to talk a little bit about you teaching and what worked for you in the classroom and what made you a distinguished teacher, do you think?

JD: Oh, that's a big question, Tom. I think, for me, that was another major life-changing transformational affirmation of my choice of career, and I can't think of a more affirming award that I have gotten because at the time it was generated by the students. Now, the way we do it it's a little bit different. And that's not taking away from the current thing because I've been sitting on that award committee. But in those days, it was generated from the students and then went to committee, and I just felt that one of the things I wanted to bring to every class I come to is, number one, a sense of freedom to learn and really honoring—I say now honor—understand and connect your learning. I wanted to always create goals of what I was teaching, a situation where that would go on. I tried to do that from day one and really give back to my students the kinds of teaching I had experienced from the Forbes Hills in my life; the Bob Cathcart; and the Dale Leathers. I had phenomenal teachers at the University of Georgia: Ron Cervero and Sharon Miriam—I started having female professors now. I have a lot of women on my committee, a lot of female professors at this point which are tremendous mentors, and I really followed their teaching philosophy. They're more than just a teaching style. Not to worry about the literature of learning styles—I mean, there's so much out there; I think the thing you bring in is an excitement to want to explore and want to learn, and I tried to do that in every class. What's really neat is that that award really confirmed that for me, and it was just a life-changing event, and I think that I wanted to bring that in every class. And I will tell you—can I tell you some funny narrative sides that are just terrific?

TS: Absolutely.

JD: Coming here, I immediately just started getting a lot of positive affirmation from students and faculty and, almost immediately, I was always put up for semi-finalist for the Distinguished Teacher—the bridesmaid and not the bride, all of that. I was a finalist one year, and I really didn't talk to my students much about it, but they knew because they used to generate info in the ballot box. Well, one year when I was, I think I was a finalist that year, but I kept not getting the award but, of course, I had just gotten here, and so I mean, to get it in my sixth year was really remarkable. But I don't say that as self-serving for me; it was so humbling and moving. But one year, I was teaching Comp. Theory, and I had just not gotten the award, and I don't come running into the classroom: “Guess what, I didn't get it!” Pity to have in the papers or something. Well, I taught in the old

Wilson Building in that big auditorium, I think it's 103. I was in Comp. Theory with a gazillion students sitting there, and it was so funny. Well, I come walking in after not getting it. I was a finalist, which I was thrilled about too, and they decided to give me an award. They had this ceremony that was the funniest thing I have ever seen in my lifetime. They modeled it after Susan Lucci who was on soap operas for years and years—she's still on—and every year she'd be up for an Emmy, and every year she'd lose. And she finally won, but after like eighteen years of this. They gave me the Susan Lucci Teaching Award, and they went out and they got a Barbie doll that they found it in my hair color, and they put it on a stand they made. One of their boyfriends made a stand for this doll, with my name, I mean, the whole thing. It was like Joan Dominick Award. They got me a tiara, and one of the girls in the class was a beauty contest winner, and she donated the crown. They stopped the class; they wouldn't let me start the class. They said, "Wait, an award has been given to you, and you've won this Susan Lucci Teaching Award. You're always this close, and you never make it!" Well, it was the funniest thing; I laughed so hard, and they made me wear the crown while I taught Comp. Theory. So I did. But we had a blast. And how could you not want to teach? How could you not want to come in and just say, this is your precious human life that we have, and let's make it the best, and let's make it a best. I don't care what you're teaching. This is all going to be exciting, and no one's going to be left out. But you see, I get that so much. I give to them, Tom, and you get back gifts from the students, you get back so much it's almost embarrassing.

TS: Well, you know, I was thinking when you were talking about mentors, some people, when they're talking about mentors would say, "Well, so-and-so is just a great lecturer," or different things. Your emphasis seems to be on the personal relationships, the mentoring. It sounds to me that is what you're really describing too, that what you like is to have that kind of close relationship with students. And of course, you can't with everybody, but at least with some—or maybe you can—but at least with some students.

JD: Well, they reach out to the point that they don't all have to feel close to me, and that's not my goal. But to begin to mentor each other: one of my happiest days in the classroom, truthfully, when they're not looking my way anymore, and they're looking to each other for help. This is really what I'm thrilled about right now, teaching student success classes, particularly in the portfolio development, which is a very intimate learning project because it's about themselves. But it takes awhile to win people over to talk about themselves!

TS: Well, I want to maybe make a transition to that. But also about the same time you were getting the award, it must have been about when you became department chair for awhile in Communication and now you're out of the Communication department altogether and in University Studies. Is that a department?

JD: We're the Department of University Studies and now part of the new University College. I have a new title reflecting my constantly evolving career at KSU, I am now the Director of Portfolios for the Student Success Programs & The Senior-Year Experience Program. I can honestly say that my constant growth and development at KSU are thanks to the best departmental chair I have had in my long academic history, Dr. Rebecca Casey. I have served under six chairs at three institutions, and she is the best chair I have ever had the honor to work with! Before joining the Department of University Studies, I was in the Communication Program and then the Department of Communication. David Jones was head of the Communications/English/ Language.

TS: Yes, Language was in there at one time, even.

JD: Right. And then when we separated off . . .

TS: And Philosophy.

TS: Once you became chair, did you make any changes or is there anything that you're proud of that time that you were chair?

JD: Serving as Chair of the Communication Department was a remarkable service I did for the university, to step up to bat when I was asked to do that and lead a department as a young, junior faculty member going up for tenure.

TS: Were you an assistant professor?

JD: I was an assistant professor, I was going up for tenure, and I was asked by our leaders of our school to step to bat, they needed help. Truthfully, that was not something that was in my dream to do, but I was asked several times and [our leaders] really made an impassioned [plea] to really come and help out and at least get things quieter if you could. And so, you know, Tom, when I think about it, it was a very brave thing for me to try, and I had absolutely no aspirations to be a chair. However, I learned that I enjoyed the leadership part of the position. I chaired as I teach – help other honor, understand, and connect their learning from self to global society for a just, equitable, and peaceful world. I think as was quoted by Jim Myskens who is now the president of my college when I was the Regent's Distinguished Professor as well, and he gave a lecture and said, "One of the worst jobs I ever had was chair." Ed pulled me aside and said, "Don't listen to him!" I said, "But it is true." It's a very tough job and I think very tough for people. If you talk to chairs, it's a very isolating position in the sense that [it has] limited power and a lot of responsibility. So anyway, I did step up to bat, and one of the things I did was set up a program for us where we did everything as a complete unit. I could just only run it the way I know and the way I live, is "Okay, everybody, we're going to make decisions as a whole." My goal was to get everybody on the right committees for them for their tenure, in the right

service track, the right scholarship track for them. I did not tell them how to do that, but we made everything as a group. We all did very well.

One of my best things, I'm going to share two things as chair that I—actually three—that I'm very excited about and happy about: number one, the three people that were hired under my watch, I was still serving as chair because I was sort of in this transitional period, when I was deciding to work in senior year, and not only did they get tenured, but the committee that I served on said those were impeccable, fabulous portfolios. I'm not taking credit for their beauty, but I am taking credit for the wisdom of how I advised them to go up for tenure. They have all credited me for that and that is wonderful. The second piece was with George Simcoe. There was a new program called the Governor's Teaching Fellows and that had just started, and one of my former students was heading it up. Ron Simpson, who I had done incredible amounts of volunteer work as an instructor with, was the head of it, and this was a Zell Miller Special Initiative to really keep faculty invigorated. Get time off, get a couple of thousand—I don't know what it was at the time, but maybe about \$5,000—and I encouraged George to do that. You know what he said to me? The first person that really got something, and he took it, he loved it, he ran with it, he became Governor's Teacher—in fact we're having a reunion of the Governor's Teaching Fellows next Thursday, and I'm going. And under my watch John Gentile went, Katherine Kinnick went, I went. I eventually sent myself! [laughter] And of course, you had to be nominated by the president and picked on committee, and it wasn't just because I knew these people; I mean there were panel picks, and they had to have a certain reason why you'd want to go. But many of my people went. It was that kind of thing that I did. I was always on the lookout for making sure that there was positive growth.

So the third thing that I decided that I really wanted to devote my time to was more of my doctorate in the adult education. Up until that time, I was using it, but I was using it mostly as ways to help me teach, but not theoretically in the classroom. I really did love my Adult Ed. work as well—that I'd missed. I really made decisions for a lot of reasons. I felt like I needed to begin to utilize my doctorate work and my interests, and I'll tell more about that transition. But when I left, my entire faculty got together, and they made me a plaque of the "Best Chair," and I thought that was remarkable. When there were new chair openings, and I've known all the chairs that have come in since me professionally in different capacities, they even asked me informally if I would come back. I said, I really feel much happier in what I'm doing now, but I felt that was a tribute. And that's something I don't want. I didn't grow up to want to be a chair, ever, or a VP or a Dean or any of that. I figured, wow, so that's pretty cool.

TS: I'd forgotten about your winning the Regent's Award.

JD: Yes, I was the first Regents Distinguished—there were twenty-nine of us. But that was an add-on piece, and I have a lot to talk about with that. That same year

I was also a Governor's Teaching Fellow. And those are important, Tom, because one of the things I am good at is looking at opportunity for others, but I also take care of myself. I don't put myself in front of other people, but I look to say, "Okay, where am I getting rust or where do I need some growth? What's happening?" And in the midst of all this other stuff going on, I decided that, okay, I'm going to have to do some growth in some other ways and see what's happening with me. While I was chair, a couple of things came together—you know how your life triangulates sometimes, the naval term; things don't seem like it in the middle of it. Oh, there's so much stuff I have to handle, and it's so difficult--but certain opportunities started popping up for me in 1996 and '97. The first one was a very simple one. I was very close to my students in terms of tracking them, and staying in touch after they graduated or {following] how the internships were going. I always thought we had a great internship program, and we were doing such a great job, and my students would still call me, and say, you know, we need to factor more time into using the career services or we need some more hand-holding--because my students were most first generation college out there. That thing is happening while I am chair. I chaired from '94 to '98, so that's in that four-year span. But consciously, the first two years I was just really trying to be a chair and teach, I was always teaching too.

TS: You began chairing in '94? I didn't realize it was that early.

JD: Yes, I was chair in November '94, and I served until June '98, although I was in a transitional period all of '98, like from January to June, so I was doing both things. I served four years. But in 1996, President Siegel sent a group of us, which included Linda Noble and some other people that aren't here now. But anyway, we all were asked to go to the Students in Transition Conference, it was a Senior Year Experience Conference. Actually, it's the bookend to the first year. Well, it's now the Senior Year Experience. I keep calling it its newer name.

TS: It's now . . . ?

JD: Now it's called Students in Transition, and it incorporates sophomore year experience, senior year experience, transfer students, so the thing is enlarged.

TS: We need to talk about all that and explain it to me. I met Ed Chan recently; I didn't even know we had a sophomore-year experience.

JD: We have a sophomore-year experience, yes we do! We have one. But anyway, so President Siegel sends me off to do that, but she had had—and part of the reason she sent me was the senior seminar course that she taught was housed in my department because see, while I was chair—let me add this other piece which explains my transition more—guess what? I also chaired the first year experience program that lived in my department budgetary. I didn't do the assigning of the teachers, but it had no home; it was homeless academically, so it was in my department. I looked down at our budget, and I'd see First-Year Experience, and

I had always wanted to teach it. I went to training immediately with John Gardner. I never got released time to teach. So anyway, because I thought Adult Ed., perfect match for me but Communication just didn't have any release time capability, and I guess that was that. So in that also lived a course that she taught with Dr. Mike Tierce—her senior seminar class which was a senior transitional class that President Siegel started in 1990—I'm thinking it was 1990—based on a student, she tells me. A student asked her, "Why don't you help seniors if you're helping first year?" So they had a conference in 1990 with Gardner here in Atlanta, and so John Gardner who is our head of this whole movement of the first year, credits President Siegel as being the movement person. So she taps me to go along with, as I said, Linda Noble, and I'm trying to think who else went. But it'll come to me. Anyway, we all go off and she said, "Hey look, check out the senior stuff, maybe you want to resurrect that class." I forget all the pieces but with all the stuff going on in the department, she hadn't taught the class in a couple of years under my watch, and so she wanted to resurrect it. With all this picture going on, here we are, Fall, 1996, and I get sent off to do that. It's the year that I won the Award. So we go, I go to that; I learn about Senior Year; I also become at the same time, the Governor's Teaching Fellow. Actually I didn't become, I'm trying to think. I actually got the award in 1997; I'm getting confused in my years of awards.

TS: For the Governor's Award?

JD: For the Governor's, I was 1996—97, I was a Governor's Teaching Fellow. So what I decided to do was to be efficient and effective. Here I am, still chairing and still teaching, but I decided, okay, I went to the Senior Year; I got very turned on at that conference. I really thought, "I want to learn more about this." And plus, President Siegel told me she wanted to plan on teaching this class again. So when I was a Governor's Teaching Fellow at the same time, they said, okay, everybody, get a project to work on, and I said, what I'll do is design this class as my project. I got everybody to help me. Sarah Eby-Ebrsole, the speech writer for Governor Zell Miller, and I became close. We became friends and acquaintances, and that's another whole long story because of a course I taught at Kennesaw. I called all the speech writers I could find at the university because I had to teach Advanced Speech Writing. I didn't know what anyone meant by that. So I thought, okay, I'll get an expert's opinion. Well, she was the most giving to Kennesaw; she's given a lot. And we'll talk more about her. And so anyway, I call on Sarah who was Zell Miller's speech writer, and I call on Annie Hunt Burress, and I call on all these wonderful mentored women that helped me to put this class together to say, "All right, what do we need for seniors to get them ready career-wise? What do we need citizenship-wise? What do we really need?" I put together the working vision of the Senior Year Experience. It got applauded at the Governor's Teaching Fellows, and then it got applauded by President Siegel, and we taught it in Spring of '97. It was terrific, and when I say terrific, the students just got so empowered and what was so exciting about it was having a place to learn how to graduate and learn how to put all their learning

together. We also taught with Sybil Myers; she was part of it, the three of us taught.

TS: I saw her yesterday.

JD: Tell her hello. She was our service piece, and Siegel was our leadership piece, and I was the organizer, you know and got the thing going. I taught the template of what I had designed, and I knew I was home when I taught that class. Even though I love my communication classes, something happened. I thought when I taught public speaking I saw intimacy in learning to watch people grow. But I never saw anything like it, and yet it was really scary to teach a course like it because it's discipline-free, and I was always very happy to teach Cicero and teach Persuasion and teach the History of Comp Theory and teach all sorts of things about . . . whoa! I was on new land here, but I thought the excitement level was just too much. So I knew that something was happening here. So we taught it another time, and then with all the other pressures happening, and the lawsuit where we go to court in 1997 in August, and we come out of that, and I thought to myself, you know, life is short. How can I best serve Kennesaw, myself, my students? Where is the potential for growth? I thought, "I want to see if I can do this Senior Year development full time." I asked for it, and at first, nothing like this existed, you know? What is this? I was like the quasi-chair; I was like the half a chair and half teaching. But I had a new mentor emerge in my life, and of course, I do want to say, and I'm not just saying this because she's my boss who has mentored me, and kept an eye on me since day one is Betty Siegel. I mean, she is my other mentor. I made her sign a picture for me when I went to a banquet run by Cobb County Chamber of Commerce with the teachers. I'm sure you went to the same one, and they wanted to take photographs of us. It was for pre-K through higher ed teachers.

TS: No.

JD: Maybe they didn't have it for you.

TS: I don't think they had much when I was . . .

JD: Ask for a recall, anyway, we want that back. But anyway, they wanted to take our pictures singly, and Betty Siegel was the keynote, and I pulled her in, I said, "We're not doing this alone. You got me into this so you're going to . . ." I yanked her in, and I made her sign in gold pen that she would be my mentor, and I framed it. It's in my office. We had enjoyed so much teaching together and had so much fun with the students and everything. So I asked for this, and everybody kind of scratched their heads; they're going, "What is the Senior Year Experience director? What are you going to do? What is the course?" But I got it. I got it. The argument I made, not even an argument, the appeal I made was, I hold a doctorate in Adult Ed., haven't even begun to tap into it theoretically, other than I use it on the street day to day in what I do. The growth chapter of my life has

been remarkable in terms of the kind of work I've done on a national and international level. And not so much about me, but the student stories I've taken are student stories around the world, with the portfolios.

TS: I was wondering how many places have a program like this?

JD: More and more each day. In the last, when I started this with the university, we were one of the few out there; we were pioneers. So we're like down in the early history of it. And John Gardner was my mentor; Betty Siegel introduced me to him, and I had known him anyway, but he actually had me up there to meet his best people and look at the students' syllabi and everything else we were doing. He mentored me; he still does, today. I mean, everything I do I always credit him or I put a blurb on to him as well. And now, we've become you know, sort of the people that people turn to for Senior Year but mixed in with--I can't say Senior Year for me without portfolio. I do it now with the first year students as well. But when I first started teaching the class I remember sitting with my seniors and I said, "Okay, we're going to write a resume." And everyone's looking at me blankly saying, "How do you get your life boiled down to one page?" And I said, "That's a good rhetorical, interesting, communication question." And we decided to start doing paper portfolios as far back—with the seniors I did them in 1998 and the freshman I did in 1999. It has grown since so for me I can't separate out you know, any of the student success programs without portfolio attached. I do have a new title that will officially be in my contract next year although they've already gone downtown to change it because it kind of got skipped, but my new title, I'm no longer just the Senior Year Director, I'm the Director of Portfolios for Student Success Programs and the Senior Year. I am thankful to say that I have had the honor to work with, teach with, and be mentored by the best...President Betty Siegel.

TS: Well, I noticed that . . .

JD: Wow, you did do some copying.

TS: Yes, I did, I copied a lot of stuff. Your senior seminar, it looked like the main thing you do in there is to do a portfolio.

JD: Yes, it is. It's to do a portfolio, but I actually call it Folio Thinking, Tom. I do this both in First Year and Senior Year and my new, I think, role at the university, at least within the Student Success Programs are going to be teaching about what I call Folio Thinking. I'm not too married to the electronic platform; we use them and we use them all, but I really, truly believe that to best prepare our students for the work world and for the life world and to also understand, not just for work, but to understand themselves, is to teach them how to be their own archivists and basically what I do is a lot like you would do in history where they begin to archive their learning story. I refer to it as Archiving. In fact, they have an option to keep their portfolios private and just archive for theses if they would like to do

that. So Folio Thinking for me is a place where students can really honor what they learn, understand and connect.

That is truly my philosophy boiled down into a nutshell. For self and society. And that can range from your neighborhood to international issues. The reason is—and this is where the Adult Ed. comes in—I feel that if students can understand their learning and connect it and connect how they're needed to the big picture, how much more valuable a learning experience it will be. Then I actually have students create the portfolio, and we use three electronic portfolio buffets. I work them through the one, and I can get into way more detail about that because I could talk about this—you'll have to go to Eckerd's and buy more tapes—but we use the electronic part not just because it's trendy, and it's like what I said earlier when we talked in the hallway about Web CT; it's I truly believe that what technology--now paper is wonderful too, and it is a technology as well—but some of these new ways of looking at yourself using different software and technology, I move that to the next phase—although everything we do with Folio Thinking. I call it kaleidoscope thinking where we can put in things that we would see ourselves as paper, and then use the electronic portfolio as a kaleidoscope, and all those wonderful learning events are inside. The students have different ways and angles of looking at themselves. It's remarkably empowering and very easy and cheaper to add, to use because my students at first were making portfolios much like we do for tenure and promotion. But when they wanted to give them out it was costing them \$50.00 or \$100.00. Who has this kind of money? So the technology became efficient, effective and also allowed different views. I've made my own electronic portfolios as well, and it has given me a different view of my own learning story and history. It just gives you different ways, not necessarily that are better than paper, but it's just like getting new glasses: you know, or knew different focuses of you. That's why I like the kaleidoscope as the best way to see that you can kind of tweak it a little; you can turn it, and you see yourself slightly differently.

TS: How many students are going through this program?

JD: At this point, typically, we have four sections, five sections, sometimes six sections. In my class, I'll have twenty-five to thirty students, you know, and we have Mr. Dick Grover teaching and Dr. Debbie Smith, Coordinator of the Senior-Year Experience Program teaches it; Dr. Dan Paracka teaches with me so we have the whole cast of people that want to do this. But the numbers have stayed at one level. Usually, I have two sections in the summer, maybe a couple in the fall and like right now, we have four in the fall and we usually have more in the spring; this spring we're going to have six. But we can't go too far because it's an elective, and a lot of our seniors don't have room in their curriculum, so our biggest customer is the College of Humanities and Social Science—Communication, Psychology. Then I have big customers with Human Service—the customers are pulling them—but users of the elective, because it isn't required, and then the College of Business is equally big where you have almost

every major represented. College of Ed does their own portfolio so they really don't—occasionally, I have an Ed person; nursing has their own portfolio, and so occasionally I'll get a nursing student. Occasionally, like art students, but they create their own portfolios as well.

TS: It looks like it would be very good for our public history certificate program for students to go through this.

JD: Yes. Because I have created and published a system of having to go through this, what I call the Folio Thinking, and it's a five step process which you probably saw on the website: Reflect, Assess, Collect, Connect, and Express. The first three are the true archive parts like an historian would go through. Look for the documentation; if you don't have any, create the narratives. I've created all the forms to help you do that; I have great supportive websites—and when I say “great” I've had other wonderful colleagues help me around campus that are portfolio people: Dr. Leigh Funk in Education; Dr. Dan Paracka's been incredible; Ben Cope and Jennifer Leifheit-Little, in the Presentation Technology Center, have helped me, we all work as a really tight unit and present together and write together and do this together.

TS: So this has really become your area of scholarship, hasn't it?

JD: Absolutely, yes. That's where I do all my conference work now and any writing work, and if I'm asked to speak, I'm asked to speak about that.

TS: Right. You mentioned internationally even.

JD: Right. We were just in Maui at the International First Year Experience, and of course, my piece on it was an institutional panel presentation on Student Success Programs, but I didn't talk about Senior Year—because I teach them both, I'm a bookend teacher; I teach First Year and Senior Year. I actually like to do [both] because it gives me a really wide parameter view of them. I see portfolio as the connective piece for them. But that's not just me, that's an international movement in higher education. It is Pre-k through twelve as well, but that's another metro group I would like to mention on tape and give credit to. My mentor internationally is Dr. Helen Barrett, and she was up at the University of Alaska; she took a year off to work on fed grants in portfolios with Pre-k through higher Ed. She's another one. I wrote to her out of the blue a couple of years ago and asked for some advice, and we haven't stopped writing since. She invited our group to present at her conference panel at the recent [conference]—and I'm not bragging—the reason is I showed her our student portfolios, and she flipped out, I mean, here's our international leader in electronic portfolios, and I showed her the work that Kennesaw students were doing. It was on a global theme.

Our new chapter, what we're interested in is e-portfolio, passport for global citizenship. And it's not just a buzz term; it's to say, what are we educating

people for? What's up? We're getting people to do a constant connect, which is why Dan Paracka is so interested in what we're doing, is to hold up the international learning outcomes in our programs and to have our students address that in our portfolios. Because whether they stay in Cobb County and start their own business, they'll either have an international client or international neighbor or something. You don't have to move to become international today. So we really have put that in the forefront since Kennesaw has won the ACE Award, (that's American College of Education)—I should know all the buzz terms—but they've been nominated, cited as one of the top schools that are integrating international learning in their curriculum. I keep that, and I took what I do with the students, and I integrated it with the international learning outcome. So my students actually have a five-part program that they can piece their reflective learning together, but keep the mission for the international learning in front of them. That's what I teach with Dan. It's pretty cool. I'm a kind of a make-believe history major because I love history, but that whole archivist [part] and we start on paper. So we were out in Maui talking about that, but it was Helen Barrett that a group of us went to present with at the International SITE Conference which is the Society of International Technology for Educators. That to me was one of the most profound presentations because we were asked to come to the table to showcase the theory, the work of our students as well as how we got to that point. That was cool.

TS: In your department we've now got the sophomore year experience and how did that come about? Are the sophomores different than freshman and seniors?

JD: From my understanding, there really is a research point of sophomore slump when we're losing students. [There's] a high probability that they'll leave the university at that point, so Mary Lou Frank is really into what she does—her background's in psychology. She is very dedicated. She does many things at the university with general education, but the student success piece is really linked to the general education piece in her mind. Where the foundation is backed [and so on]; we'll go through all of that. They really wanted to look at—not only just keeping people—so we have numbers of humans at Kennesaw. We have attracted people who feel connected. What are we going to do? So the sophomore year, as it's developing—but you could talk to Ed Chan on an interview with that one—basically is going to be a more formalized mentoring program. They're trying to hook up. He knows more of the details because it hasn't been fully rolled out yet. They're still trying to explore and experiment, and they have an advisory board and all this other stuff. But basically, I think the match will be right as people are declaring majors, hooking them up with seniors in their major.

I don't know how academically that's going to be, whether it involves an internship or some kind of co-op. They're exploring all options to retain students, but in more than just a headcount, you know. They feel connected to the community of learning. But we do a lot of integration between the first year and

senior year consistently. I usually have a teaching assistant or a Resident Assistant; I mean, that's not their formal title—our school has been really remarkable: I do want to do a plug for this, Kathrine Kinnick has been remarkable and many people over in the business school. I have had a lot of seniors take this class that end up staying another semester or two, and they want to come back and do an internship and either work with first year students or the senior students and help them with their portfolio/discipline and be a peer facilitator. I have many students to do that, and this is where Kennesaw is quite remarkable and new age for the learning, which is great.

I'll add one other thing because I know you probably have a question. I do want to say I have been teaching or in higher ed for twenty-six years. I thought I used to teach great classes in terms of my students felt empowered. They're going to be speakers and what-have-you. Now, Tom, I have my seniors clamoring to come back who have graduated to show the next generation of seniors their portfolios and how to use them and what to do without me asking. I have now had my first years that did paper portfolios come back to do their electronic ones as a senior and bring their first portfolio in to show me how they've kept it; it's been amazing. I have never seen anything as intimate.

TS: So you've stayed in contact with all these people then?

JD: Yes.

TS: That's great. That's the wonderful advantage of e-mail these days, staying in contact.

JD: Yes, and they also physically show up, unexpectedly.

TS: One of the areas that I wanted to talk about was the intellectual climate on our campus, and it's obvious you're very excited about your part of the intellectual climate. How would you describe the intellectual climate when you came here in 1990, and has it changed over the last fourteen years, do you think?

JD: Okay. Well, I think like anything else, the culture of the campus has changed, and it has to change, I mean, because the university ages in growth. I mean, we celebrated our fortieth anniversary, and now we're almost into our what, forty-second year, where are we now? I don't know.

TS: Forty-first.

JD: First and a half, is that what it is? And you know, when I came the mission truly in the forefront was excellence in teaching, and we did have scholarship and service and people were doing scholarship and service, but I still feel when you and I won this award it's when teaching was at the heart of the institution. Not

- that that has left, Tom; but as the institution has grown, when we became a regional university, I mean, when I came it was a college.
- TS: You came; you actually got the award the year that we became a university.
- JD: Right, right. So, quite honestly, the award, as it withstands, you know, and our intellectual scholarship, or—what was your term, your intellectual—what’s that term you just used, how you’re calling it, intellectual something . . .
- TS: Intellectual climate is the term I used.
- JD: The mission, although it hasn’t changed in writing is certainly remarkably different, and I kind of see us as yes, still attending to teaching, but there is a big reward for scholarship and a big reward for service. But the scholarship I see is the piece that has mutated, grown and the demand has developed. We’re on a super-fast growth phase, and we’re also at a point, I don’t have the statistics and you’ll have to go to Siegel’s office, but I heard her say something at a presentation that like right now, most of our faculty have been hired within the last five years. You’re getting people that have been also raised on a different cultural doctoral track.
- TS: Amen.
- JD: Really. It’s a different universe. And so with all of that going on, it reminds me of I feel like reading books like by Edgar Shien on Culture Theory—he’s our culture theorist on communication—and I almost feel like that at Kennesaw, when I came it was sort of in an adolescent phase with slight maturity. I would say young adulthood. Now, I feel like we’re not in full maturity, and this is not putting down our institution, please hear me say that, but I feel just like our age, okay, we’re forty-one, although I kind of feel like we’re more like thirty-five, like I was when I was thirty-five where you feel like you can beat the world and go out and try to conquer. So we’ve grown into this incredible—I mean, you think about the difference; the residence halls, think about the type of faculty.
- TS: You can take the five years that we transitioned—three years I guess—before we actually had classes, and we’re closer to thirty-five, in terms of when we really began.
- JD: We are, and I almost feel like we are as I was as an adult in your thirties where everything is possible, and you’ll do it all at once and then collapse, and you don’t know when to stop! It’s almost too much. Yet the growth is exciting, and the possibility is exciting. But I tell you, even serving on one committee, I can’t stop service of these two, of these tenure and promotion committees. I’m always on departmental, university-wide; it’s such a different ball game. It’s such a different deal. I have to have the departmental requirements with everyone to kind of have

an interpretation as if we're living in another land, so I don't see a lot of universal commonality as we did when I came here.

- TS: I am very glad I got through all of that. I'm doing my post-tenure review portfolio now, and it's really nice that I don't really care what anybody thinks about it. I can put what I want.
- JD: Absolutely. I came to live my dream.
- TS: To be the best you could be.
- JD: I'm loving what I'm doing, but I'm loving what I'm doing tenured.
- TS: I have a couple of questions, and they're kind of wrap up questions, and they're kind of repeating what we've already talked about, I suppose, but maybe there's a new slant on it. We've asked everybody for a definition of how they would define a master teacher, and I was just wondering if you'd want to take a stab. I think maybe we can see in what we've said earlier, what it's probably going to be, but maybe there's a different way of looking at it too.
- JD: I think a master teacher has to be a master learner simultaneously. I think in order to really begin to think about what it means—and a master teacher is also someone who has dedicated themselves to teaching, whether it's in the hallowed halls or in whatever capacity that they want to learn. But I think master teachers dedicate themselves to continuing to learn, to share and to generously throw out the learning to others. Try to set up an environment where your learners learn, and then your learners give to each other, and the learners give the gift back to you. I think regardless of what you're teaching, Tom, or what you do, it's not so much the topic, you know, or the accolades or anything; but I think the master teacher is a master learner who sets up an environment for others to learn to then teach others, and to give back. It's almost the circular community of learning. Learning is about living, and I really believe that. That's what a master teacher does. I don't care if they're teaching how to change oil in a car or how to change the global universe.
- TS: It sounds like you've also gotten into mentoring other faculty, especially when you were department chair, and maybe still are as well.
- JD: Yes, I still am. Yet, they're mentoring me as well. My new mentoring is very interesting. I took a leap of faith, and let me tell you, even though I've jumped into this technology head first, and I have all our wonderful units on campus supporting us in our work. Presentation technology was here today with us, on-line career portfolio. Everyone who is involved in technology on our campus has been instrumental in helping us. It was a leap of faith for me because I never viewed myself as—of course, I used a computer—a graphic person in anyway. I have found that it has allowed me to open up, and I don't teach my classes alone

any more. Everybody is a part of that. But yet, anytime I do any kind of presentation or any writing, I make sure everyone is included who wants to be. I always ask people, and so it's a win-win for everybody, and then we get to show off our students' work that I ask permission of all the time, and they're thrilled. That's the circle of what I try to do. But you see, I constantly learn from my students, as well as the tech people. That's one thing I do want to add, and this is not a wrap up, and I know you probably want to go home because I could talk about teaching until the cows come home because I love it.

One of the interesting things about being a master teacher, and whoever wants to put themselves in that pot, I forgot to tell a wonderful piece that goes with all this triangulating here from 1994 to 1996. Yes, I mentioned the Governor's Teaching Fellow. I did the senior year after Siegel sent us to the Senior Year conference, and I liked it. Well, when I was the Regents Distinguished Professor, Ed Rugg pulled me in, and he goes, "You know, you have \$45,000; we're getting close to the Olympics. You have to think of a project so start thinking." I was like, "What are you talking about? What is this award?" I didn't even understand what I had won. I started thinking, and I closed my eyes, and like mentoring, I had said I would like to set something up like our National Communication Association, which was endorsed at a particular school in Virginia I went to showcase and some kind of communication across the curriculum by using technology. PowerPoint had emerged, and not that I'm a praised PowerPoint person, because I'm not, but I do use it. I thought [that] technology is coming around the corner; we've got to get a little more ready. I was thinking most of my communications students. I did some research, and my National Association helped me, and some professors helped me who were phenomenal. I went to Ed Rugg, and I said, "What I think we need is something called a Presentation Technology Center." They were looking to redirect the IRC [Instructional Resources Center], and then the next thing I know, it happened. I was on the committee hiring Karl Aldag. That unit was set up, I live in today non-stop. The technology trainers wrote the PTD Pocket E-Portfolio Process for me that I now use in the KSU 4401: Senior Seminar, KSU 1101: First-Year Seminar, and the Honors Program. Thanks to Ben Cope and Jennifer Leifheit -Little, of PTD, who designed the current desktop publishing portfolio process for my students. Patti Dunne has joined them to teach the Adobe Acrobat. She created a quicktime movie for my students, which allows them to teach themselves the PTD Pocket E-Portfolio Process using PowerPoint and Adobe Acrobat. Shannon Cronin has been instrumental in finding me wonderful STAR Students to help me learn the latest technology at PTD. Manish Singh, my STAR Student, and Kevin Kinnett, my former student who is also a STAR Student has helped me tremendously. All the STAR students have helped my students create their PTD Pocket E-Portfolios since Spring 2003. I think that's pretty neat. Also, Sid Kemp and Rifka Myani, of ITS has worked with me to customize a seminar entitled ITS Webfolio using MS Publisher for all my students. Dr. Randy Hinds has been incredible by assisting me with the latest technology & hardware to help me work with my students. Also, Karen Andrews

of Career Services credits me with inspiring her to develop the Online Career Portfolio Program in her division.

We co-authored a text for KSU 4401: Senior Seminar, with Dr. Debbie Smith, entitled *The Complete Graduate: A Textbook for College Seniors (Second Edition, Kendall Hunt 2003 & First Edition, Houghton Mifflin 2002)*. In both editions, I developed my *College Portfolio Process for Folio Thinking: Reflect, Assess, Collect, Connect & Express*. I wrote about the emergence of the electronic portfolios in higher education. Karen called me one day after attending a conference in Florida, where she saw a version of a college e-portfolio. She said is “got it” and put me on her committee to develop the Career Services Online Career Portfolio. Therefore, thanks to great collaboration on our KSU Campus, our students now have three electronic portfolios formats to choose from: PTD Pocket E-Portfolio, ITS Webfolio, & the Online Career Portfolio (*which can all be integrated*). The importance of the process is that students learn to *folio think*, which best prepares them for the world they are entering. The world today requires our students to folio think becoming global citizens that think as entrepreneurs and providers of community service for the better good of the world. They will honor, understand, and connect their learning from self to global society to better our world.

TS: That’s great.

JD: But the other units help me too. So anyway, that’s another aside. But that’s the glory of Kennesaw, and that’s also our thinking as a young institution that can change and be pretty flexible. It’s like the gifted just keep giving.

TS: The Governor’s Award and then the Regents award, how did those two things come about?

JD: Well, the Governor’s Teaching Fellow, I don’t know if it’s an award, it’s a fellowship, and you apply for it, and you get a recommendation from your president, your bosses, and a reason why you want to go. That program started in 1995, and I just started hearing about it. That’s what I sent to George, and he had such a good time. I sent myself, but that was after some other people. That award was something that we would see advertised through the system. As a chair, I felt I should advertise that. I applied for [it] in ’96; I did it in ’96 and ’97. I actually received the Distinguished Award in ’97, but it was for the year of ’96. I was unaware of what the Regents Distinguished Professor Award was; I had gotten the Distinguished Teaching Award, and then shortly after that, I got a call from Ed Rugg. I don’t know the history. You’d have to ask Ed, but that was the first year of the Regents Distinguished Award.

TS: So the institution nominated you, in other words?

JD: Yes. Each university had their own way of doing it in their first year. The award doesn't exist anymore, I don't think; it's mutated into more like a specialty award, like in the Regents Distinguished of Teaching and Scholarship. All that stuff didn't exist yet, so this was the first way to award through the system. Not the first but, I shouldn't say that, the system's been around for a long time; awards I need a historical archivist and a dean to figure that out in modern time in my life.

TS: Well, there wasn't anything when I had it in '94, I know that.

JD: No, it was born right before the Olympics, and each school did it differently, and so I did that. But you had to have a project. Actually, the project got so much praise, and my friend Sarah Eby-Ebrsole was putting something together for the Governor, and we made the budgetary award that went to the state legislators as a top three creative reasons why—the top three programs. The other two, I have the other two programs somewhere, why they should keep the award because every other state legislator was like, “Why are we spending this money? What is this?” They kept it. Then several other recipients of our Distinguished Teaching got it after that; there'd be a project along.

TS: Well, really my last question is why have you stayed at KSU all these years?

JD: Why have I stayed at KSU?

TS: What has held you here?

JD: Let me think. So many reasons have held me here, from the philosophical to the practical. Philosophically, I stayed here because even with what I would call, you know, an incredible ride here, I felt that I was growing to such a point. Really, being able in my lifetime to really reach a dream of what I wanted. I wanted to be a doctor. I wanted to teach. I wanted to share the joy, and it was really happening at Kennesaw. That's the reason I stayed here, philosophically. I've worked since I was fifteen. All jobs were worthwhile—but this one was a career goal for me—to become a tenured college professor. I wanted to be a professor, wanted to get tenure, and wanted to do this. I've done it. I have a lot of great friends here, another reason to stay. Also, I have had the great leadership of Dean Mary Lou Frank, University College, under whose leadership, I have experienced the most support, growth, opportunity. She has the “new day” approach to being a Dean. She is the best Dean I have had in my academic history.

This past academic spring 2005, Dean Mary Lou Frank asked me to serve on the QEP Steering Committee, headed by Dr. Valerie Whittlesly, who was a great leader! The QEP –Quality Enhancement Plan, which triangulates the SACS Review of 2006, resulted in the selection of the QEP of *Global Learning for the Engaged Citizen*. When asked for topics for the QEP, I suggested that we have a QEP on Global Citizenship, Dr. Sandra Bird and Ms. Anunshar Poddar immediately volunteered to work on this proposal, along with Dr. Dan Paracka

and Dr. Adebayo. I had been working intensely with Bethanie Izar, Dr. Dan Paracka, Manish Singh, Dr. Leigh Funk, Lynn Boettler, and Dean Mary Lou Frank (who suggested I connect with Dr. Dan Paracka at the opening of KSU 2004 to collaborate - see our resulting work on [www.eport2passport.com](http://www.eport2passport.com)) The rest is academic history at KSU! Our QEP was refined, researched, and voted on by faculty, students, and staff. Ours was chosen!!! The other QEP Topics were terrific, but ours got at the heart of the institution...to honor, understand, and connect learning from self to global society for a just, equitable, and peaceful world. I am very grateful and fulfilled to make a difference by having my voice heard, shared, and supported by colleagues at KSU. We are heading to a better world...

In closing I would like to include my latest professional bio that appears on the faculty website, the Senior-Year Experience Website, and the website I share with Dr. M. Leigh Funk, Dr. Dan Paracka, Ms. Jennifer Leifheit-Little, & Mr. Ben Cope, my wonderful KSU Colleagues. I have also included the websites for all my professional work and awards:

With over twenty-five years of successful work in higher education, Dr. Joan E. Leichter Dominick is an award winning college educator with a professional history in the disciplines of Adult Education and Communication. Dr. Joan E. Leichter Dominick holds a Doctorate in Adult Education from the University of Georgia (1990) and Masters Degree (1975) and Bachelors Degree (1973) in Communication Arts and Sciences from Queens College, City University of New York. As a doctoral student, she was a University of Georgia Kellogg Fellow. Currently she is the Director of the Senior-Year Experience at Kennesaw State University. This program, which she designed during her tenure in the Governor's Teaching Fellowship Program 1996-1997, prepares seniors for their post-university experiences as productive national and global citizens.

Since joining Kennesaw State University in 1990, she has chaired the Communication Department, won the 1996 Distinguished Teaching and the 1996 Regent's Distinguished Professor of Teaching and Learning at the university. Her academic project for the 1996 Regent's Distinguished Professor of Teaching and Learning award was the design and implementation of a Presentation Technology Center to enhance the technology presentation skills of students across the campus. She now collaborates with the Presentation Technology Center facilitators in creating the innovative E-Portfolio Initiative for the college students in her KSU 4401: Senior Seminar and KSU 1101: First-Year Seminar based on her RACCE (Reflect + Assess + Collect + Connect + Express) College Student Portfolio Process, copyright 2002. Dr. Joan E. Leichter Dominick is the co-author of *The Complete Graduate: A Workbook for College Seniors* (Kendall Hunt, Second Edition 2003).

Dr. Joan E. Leichter Dominick was the recipient of The Department of University Studies Distinguished Scholarship Award 2003 and was a semi-finalist for the

Kennesaw State University Distinguished Scholarship Award 2003. She has lead academic presentations locally, nationally, and internationally in the areas of student success, the college student e-portfolio process and its integral connection to the discipline of Communication, higher education, and global citizenship. Her academic teaching, scholarship, and service have the all-inclusive academic mission of creating the E-Portfolio: Passport to Global Citizenship, which triangulates student reflection and connection to society for a just and equitable world, the ultimate goal of higher education.

Dr. Joan E. Leichter Dominick's Academic Awards:

1996 Kennesaw State University Distinguished Teaching Award:

- [http://www.kennesaw.edu/general\\_ed/Faculty/Previous\\_Faculty\\_Awards.htm](http://www.kennesaw.edu/general_ed/Faculty/Previous_Faculty_Awards.htm)
- <http://www.kennesaw.edu/cetl/teachrecipients.htm>

1996-1997 Governor's Teaching Fellow

- <http://www.uga.edu/ihe/gtf-fellows.html>

2003 Department of University Studies Scholarship Award & Semi-Finalist for the Kennesaw State University Distinguished Scholarship Award

Dr. Joan E. Leichter Dominick's Websites:

Kennesaw State University Faculty Website:

- <http://ksuweb.kennesaw.edu/~jdominic/>

Senior-Year Experience Website - Content Provider:

- [http://www.kennesaw.edu/university\\_studies/sye/index.shtml](http://www.kennesaw.edu/university_studies/sye/index.shtml)

E-Portfolio: Passport to Global Citizenship - College Student Portfolio Initiatives:

The E-Portfolio: From First-Year Experience to 21st Century Global Citizenship

Dr. Joan E. Leichter Dominick and Ms. M. Leigh Funk:

- <http://edtech.kennesaw.edu/21c/>

RACCE (Reflect + Assess + Collect + Connect+ Express) College Portfolio Process, Copyright 2002:

- <http://edtech.kennesaw.edu/21c/racce.htm>

College Student E-Portfolio Initiatives with Presentation Technology Department:

- <http://ptd.kennesaw.edu/eportfolio/>
- <http://ptd.kennesaw.edu/Templates/html/facultydevel.html>

In closing, Lynn Boettler, has inspired me once again by supporting my new interest in *From Facebook to Folio Thinking: Exploring Your College Experience in the Digital Age*. She has invited me to be part of an academic proposal for the National First-Year Experience in 2006. I have also begun to plan a Learning Community for Fall 2006 with the same title – I want to look for new ways technology connects us to learn and improve our selves for a better world. I want to explore the new and emerging ways we can help people *Honor, Understand, and Connect Your Learning from Self to Global Society for a just, equitable, and peaceful world...my purpose for higher education!*

TS: Great. Well, I really appreciate the interview.

JD: Well, thank you.

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