KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH

CRAIG E. ARONOFF

CONDUCTED BY THOMAS ALLAN SCOTT

EDITED AND INDEXED BY JAN HEIDRICH-RICE

for the

KSU ORAL HISTORY SERIES, NO. 23

WEDNESDAY, 15 DECEMBER 2004

Kennesaw State University Oral History Project
KSU Oral History Series, No. 23
Interview with Craig E. Aronoff
Conducted by Thomas Allan Scott
Edited and Indexed by Jan Heidrich-Rice
Wednesday, 15 December 2004
Location: CIE/CETL House at Kennesaw State University

TS: Craig, let's just begin, if we could, by talking a little bit about your background. Where you were born, when you were born, where you went to school and such?

CA: I'm an Atlanta native.

TS: Which is a rarity.

CA: A rarity. My father and his father were born in Rome, Georgia, and my family before that came from what is now known as Belarussia, around Minsk. We're part of the great wave of Russian Jewish immigration that happened on both sides of the turn of the twentieth century. We always have to say which turn of the century any more.

TS: Which century nowadays, that's right. Do you know what year they got here?

CA: Right before 1900—like 1898. My grandfather was born in Rome in 1901, so just before that. They had some relatives who had washed up in Rome one way or another and . . . that's how those things work.

TS: Is there any story on how they got to Rome, Georgia?

CA: No, all I know is that there was a small Jewish community there, and some of their relatives were already there. Every small town in the South, as you're aware, had the Jewish merchants [in] certain industries—scrap metal and clothing and things of that nature. Jewish folks sort of migrated until they found a community that had a need for the kinds of skills and interests that they brought.

TS: Do you know what they did in Belarussia, before they came here?

CA: No, I've heard that we had a match factory; I've heard that we were dairy farmers. Tevye of *Fiddler on the Roof* was literally my direct ancestor—not literally, but, you know, that sort of thing. There was persecution from the Russian Czar and from the pogroms. I have a great-uncle who has now passed away, but his story was that he was conscripted into the Russian Army before World War I. He was captured by the Germans, escaped from the German prison camp and headed west—you know, [he] just kept going. My grandmother—my father's mother who was born in Atlanta—had six siblings, so we had a pretty substantial family here in Georgia. I was born in 1951 at Piedmont Hospital. In those days, Piedmont Hospital was where the Atlanta Stadium is now—or [where] the old Atlanta Stadium was.

TS: Which is right in the center of where the Jewish community was.

CA: That's correct. My grandmother was born on Hunter Street, which is now Martin Luther King Boulevard. The synagogues were right there, as well as the kosher butchers. There was a whole Jewish community. When I first came out to Marietta, I got very involved with a number of community organizations, which I'm sure we'll come back to. A group of us from [the] Marietta Kiwanis [Club] went to a Braves game one night. Since I had [only] recently become involved with [the group], and since I don't really sound much like a Southerner, I was sitting there [when] Matt Flournoy—or it might have been his father, Judge [Robert E.] Flournoy, [Jr.],—said, "Craig, where y'all from?" [laughter] I said, "I'm from right here." And he said, "Oh, you're from Atlanta?" I said, "No, I'm from right here. Piedmont Hospital was on this site where we're sitting right now. This is where I was born." I'm the oldest of three children. I began my life in the Morningside part of Atlanta and went to Morningside Elementary for kindergarten, first and second grade; then we moved over to Margaret Mitchell Drive in northwest Atlanta, and I went to Margaret Mitchell Elementary School. Margaret Mitchell's brother used to come and do an assembly each year and talk about the great heritage of *Gone with the Wind*. [I attended] Northside High School. Then I went to Northwestern University [for] undergraduate school—I was a Journalism major. I had a brief but sort of meteoric career there at Northwestern; I got through in two years, partly because I was in the first class that had joint enrollment, and I took some courses at Georgia [Institute of] Tech[nology] when I was still in high school. I went to the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg School of Communication for my master's degree, also in communications; and my doctorate is from the University of Texas in organizational communication.

TS: I'm just astounded that you got your master's in '74 and your Ph.D. in '75.

CA: Well, I really finished my master's in '73, but there were some typos in my master's thesis that needed correcting, which slowed me down. I graduated from high school in '69, went to Penn in '71, went to Texas in '73, finished in '75 and came back as an assistant professor of Management at Georgia State in '75. I was twenty-four, and the first course I taught at Georgia State was an organization behavior course in the MBA program in the evening. I was the youngest person in the classroom with the least business experience. But I just persevered.

TS: [laughter] What was your father's business?

CA: He was in the wholesale clothing business.

TS: Wholesale?

CA: Wholesale clothing. Down around Pryor Street—sort of across the street from the courthouse—was Atlanta's answer to the garment district in New York. There was some manufacturing done down there [and] a wholesale district all devoted to clothing and apparel. In the mid-60s, they moved out to Fulton Industrial Boulevard.

TS: Who was the work force? Just local labor?

CA: Local labor. Some whites, some blacks. The whites tended to be in sales jobs, and the blacks tended to be in warehouse jobs.

TS: Now wholesale—that means that he bought from the producers and sold to the different stores?

CA: He bought from manufacturers. Right. He either bought from distributors, who were largely in New York, although [their] salesmen would tour the country, and we would entertain them at home, or he would buy direct from the factories. One of his competitive advantages was that when there were factory overruns, he was there with ready cash to take the extra merchandise off their hands. His customers were small independent retailers in all the little towns in the South. There's a book which you may be familiar with called *The Jew Store*, [Stella Suberman, *The Jew Store: A Family Memoir* (Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2001)] which is a good book. It's about a little retail clothing store in a small town in Arkansas. Well, those guys—usually not so far away as Arkansas—but those folks throughout the Southeast were customers of my father.

TS: Right.

CA: When he first started in business, he actually had a small retail store in Rockmart, Georgia.

TS: Rockmart?

CA: He was from Rome, and he could migrate over to Rockmart.

TS: Yes, it wasn't that far away.

CA: White's Department Store in downtown Rockmart—he purchased that when he was probably twenty or twenty-one years old. He ran that retail store and married my mother, who was from Atlanta. He took her to Rockmart; they stayed there about long enough to conceive me, but my mother couldn't stand living in Rockmart. They used to take the train to Rockmart from Atlanta. I remember jumping on the train.

TS: Yes. Well, the Silver Comet Trail runs up to Rockmart now.

CA: Exactly right.

TS: I guess that's the way the train ran.

CA: That's right. So my father kept the store for many years; his father came over from Rome and ran it for him. Sometimes we'd go out there on the weekends because Saturday was the busiest day. I remember being in that little store on Christmas Eve when the last shoppers were out.

TS: So you worked on the Sabbath then?

CA: Oh, yes. We distinctly became Reform Jews in time—thoroughly assimilated, I guess, into our culture. I would work in the store a little bit [as I was] growing up. It was very clear to me that I didn't want to be in my father's business; I didn't want to work for my father. My father always said that his business was a dying business. He said, "I always ran it as though it was a dying business." And he was right. In 1990 I was hosting a conference here after I had come to Kennesaw for an organization called The Association of Private Enterprise Education. We managed to attract Sam Walton to speak at that conference, and he absolutely lived up to his public image. He was modest; he was self-effacing. Everybody wanted to have his or her picture taken with him, and he kept thanking everybody for doing that. Forgive me for bouncing back and forth, but when I started with Family Enterprise Center here at Kennesaw and the Family Business Forum, part of my motivation [came from] know[ing] that much of what we teach in a formal business curriculum has limited applicability to smaller family-owned businesses; it really ignores a lot of the reality of that kind of business in favor of thinking about large corporations or what it takes to climb the corporate ladder. So I really thought about what kind of program would be useful. My younger brother had gone into the business with my father, and they were having their normal conflicts that exist in these kinds of [situations]. I never really expected my father or my brother to take advantage of the program, but thinking through the issues that our family faced helped me put that together. Dad had not come to many of my programs at that point, but when he heard that I had Sam Walton coming to one of my programs, he called me up and said, "I want to go!" I said, "Dad, not only can you go, I'm going to see to it that you sit at the same table as Mr. Walton." It was interesting because all these stellar people were calling up and wanting to sit with [him]. Fran Tarkenton called up and said, "I want to come and sit at Sam Walton's table." So we were down at the Waverly Hotel; my father and I are standing there, and Mr. Walton comes in the room. I go to greet him. My father's with me, and I say, "Mr. Walton, I'd like you to meet my father, Marvin Aronoff. He's in the wholesale clothing business. Dad, this is Sam Walton." And my father shakes his hand and says, "I always wanted to shake the hand of the man who's putting me out of business."

TS: [laughter]

CA: And Sam Walton said, "Oh, no, I'm sure that's not true." And Dad said, "It's true." Walton was kind of back-peddling a little bit, and my father said, "Don't misunderstand. I say this with complete respect. What you've accomplished is remarkable, but the reality is, you sell Hanes underwear cheaper [at] retail than I can sell it wholesale. I just can't compete with that." And that was that interaction. But those merchants in small towns, which Wal-Mart has replaced in our economy, were my father's customers, and they are no longer.

CA: That was my dad and my dad's business. He was a very wise businessman. Unlike a lot of people who constantly put more money into their business trying to grow it, his goal was to keep it a size that he could control. I think at its largest, he had about six employees. He ran it as though some day this business was going to end. I guess that was a self-fulfilling prophecy, but ultimately it has ended; but he was wise enough to be able to take the money that he made and put it away.

TS: How many siblings do you have.

CA: I have a sister and a brother. They both live in the area.

TS: What was your mother's name?

CA: Patricia Sabin. She was born in New York, but her family moved down here when she was four years old. She's got the strongest Southern accent of anybody in the family.

TS: Well, you've been here all your life. You ought to have a strong Southern accent.

CA: Well, you know, I went to journalism school. When I was eleven, I thought I wanted to be Chet Huntley when I grew up . . .

TS: Oh, so you worked on not having the accent.

CA: Exactly.

TS: Okay. I was listening to Sam Massell's accent the other day, and his is very Southern. He was doing something with the Buckhead Coalition and had an opinion on something the other day, and he certainly has not tried to suppress his Southern accent.

CA: Well, that's right.

TS: Of course, he's in politics.

CA: He's in politics.

TS: So you went through school with lightning speed. Any mentors along the way that we should make note of?

CA: Well, while I was at Penn, I had a professor named Ray Birdwhistle. And Ray Birdwhistle was the father of the study of body language, or kinesics. I went to Penn in part because I was so impressed with him. I went to Penn thinking that I wanted to be an Ivy League professor. When I got to Northwestern, I thought I was going to be a lawyer when I grew up, and I went to journalism school because I figured in journalism school they taught you how to gather, organize and present information. I figured that would be pretty good for law—or really almost anything. But once I got to Northwestern, I sort of fell in love with the academic lifestyle. As I got to know my professors and saw their lives and their careers, I thought, "Being a college professor would be a pretty good thing." I wasn't sure what kind of college professor I wanted to be; but I was a pretty good writer, and I was studying social psychology and communication as well as the writing part. So I went to the Annenberg School of Communication, which was really the premiere graduate school in that field. Birdwhistle was one of the star professors there, and he took me aside one day. He walked with a cane, and he took his cane and rammed it down on my toe. [Then he] said, "Do I have your attention?" I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "You've got to stop being a wunderkind." I was twenty years old, probably the youngest person there in the graduate school. And he said, "You've got to stop being a dilettante." I was in theater, enjoying my life, and he says, "You've really got to focus. If you'll really focus, you have the opportunity to be among the kind of people that I associate with." I thought that was kind of strange. He said, "Yes, there are only about twenty people in the world that I even care to talk to." And then he listed these people. They were people like Margaret Mead and all these brilliant cultural anthropologists. I was extremely flattered by all this. He said, "If you'll apply yourself, you could aspire to this level." That conversation was kind of an epiphany for me. I went to my room in Grad Towers that night, and I said, "You know, I don't want to live in a world with twenty people."

TS: Good for you! [laughter]

CA: I want to be in the world where, yes, I'm part of academia, but where I have an opportunity to have an impact on people and communities in a more direct way. It was that night I decided that the Ivy League was not going to be the direction I wanted to go. If [Birdwhistle] was the angel sitting on one shoulder, I had another angel sitting on the other shoulder whose name was [Michael H.] Mike Mescon.

TS: Did you know him before you were teaching at Georgia State?

CA: Yes. Mike grew up with my mother, who was terribly concerned that I was squandering my youth by going through college too quickly. [She thought] that I should slow down and take advantage of all the opportunities. I think I finished first in my class in the School of Journalism, but I was in theater, and I was involved in politics. This was the Vietnam era, and I was organizing marches on Washington. I ran for homecoming queen. I don't think I slept literally for two years, but it was incredible. My mother was saying, "Slow down. Why are you rushing through this?" I said, "Well, I've decided I'm going to be a college professor. I'm going to be in college all my life, so I may as well get on the other side of the desk and get paid for it." She apparently ran into her old friend, Mike Mescon, knowing that he was a professor at Georgia State, and she said, "I wonder if you'd mind talking to my son?" He said, "Sure, send him over." This was spring break of my first year of college; that's when I became a junior at Northwestern after two quarters. I went over to [Mescon's] house [even though] I wasn't sure what this was all about. He said, "Tell me what's going on." I told him what I was doing. He said, "You know, your mother told me that I should tell you to slow down. I think you should speed up. You're on a roll, and you ought to just go with it. You're in communications. We have a tremendous need in the business school for people who specialize in communication, so if you'll just hurry up and get your Ph.D., I'll offer you a job on the faculty at Georgia State." Now, this was spring break of my first year in college. At that time, it was Georgia State College. I had gone to Northwestern because I really wanted to get away from home and family. As far as I was concerned, business schools were complicit in the business industrial complex that was responsible for the Vietnam War.

TS: I was going to say, your politics were a little different than Mike Mescon's at that time.

CA: Right; that's correct. He was considering running for Congress as a Republican at the time.

TS: Well, you know, when I was going through the [Howard] "Bo" Callaway papers, [Mescon] was giving like twenty-five dollars a month to Bo Callaway even after Callaway was defeated.

CA: Right. And Bo Callaway was giving money to [Mescon] to support this Chair of Private Enterprise at Georgia State. So, when Mike first [suggested a Georgia State position], I thought it was ridiculous. Nonetheless, most of the time when I would come home, he and I would get together. Well, when I was sitting there in my dorm room at Penn, [thinking] I didn't want to go to the Ivy League, I said, "You know, if I went to a place like Georgia State, [it's] right in the middle of a city." By this time, I was living in Philadelphia, and I was saying that Atlanta's a good place. I was getting my head around coming back to Atlanta—and not just throwing away the contacts in the community that I had gained growing up here. I began to say, "You know, business has a huge impact on what happens. If I can have an impact on businesses, then I can have an impact." So that night I guess I succumbed to the siren song of Mike Mescon and decided that I would aim [for] Georgia State instead of aiming for the Ivy League. The next time I saw Mike, I said "You know what? I think I've come around to your way of looking at things." He said, "Great." I actually worked for him the summer between my master's and my doctorate. I said, "If I stay at Penn, it's going to be forever before I get my Ph.D." He said, "Right." I said, "Do you care?" He said, "You've got to get your Ph.D." I said, "Should I go out and work and get experience?" "No, no," he said. "Just get your Ph.D. You'll get experience once you get on the job." He was [like], "Move on through." I said, "Do you care where?" He said, "You know, just a decent place." So I decided not to continue at Penn. My sister was [then] an undergraduate at Texas and getting married. I went down there for an engagement party for her—went to Austin and stopped by the Department of Speech Communication while I was there. [I] had an impromptu interview with the head of the graduate program, and he said, "If you'll come to Texas, we'll give you freedom and money." I said, "Okay; I'll come to Texas." So I went to Texas. That was September of '73, and I finished up in May of '75.

TS: That's still incredible to go through a Ph.D. program in two years.

CA: I was a tenured associate professor before anybody in my class at Penn got their Ph.D. For a guy in a hurry, that turned out to be a wise move. Yes, Texas was very flexible.

And you know me some [from] over the years; I tend to take initiative. Rather than sitting around and finding the professor who would tell me what I should write my dissertation about, I went out [and found my own topic]. My dissertation, which was really more of a journalistic one, was on why newspapers accept or reject press releases. I went down to the *Austin American Statesman*, which today is a Cox newspaper—how the world is interwoven—and I said, "I need to borrow your newspaper for a week." They said, "What do you want to do with our newspaper for a week?" I said, "Every press release that comes in here, I want to follow until it's either in your newspaper or in the trashcan. And every article that you run, I want to trace back to find out where it came from. Then I want to figure out how the decisions were made to either put [them] in the newspaper or in the trashcan." So I started up my own dissertation, went to work, spent a week, and got a ton of [stuff]. You know, five or six thousand press releases come into a newspaper a week. So I had a huge database, and I wrote my dissertation. There it was.

TS: What did you find out?

CA: Local angle was most important. You know, one of those obvious things.

TS: Right.

CA: But I had my credential, I had my union card, and I had been communicating with Mike. And lo and behold, that September, I reported for duty at Georgia State as an assistant professor of Management.

TS: And he was the Chair of Private Enterprise?

CA: He was the chairman of the Management Department, and he held the Chair of Private Enterprise. I became an assistant professor of Management and what we called associate to the Chair of Private Enterprise.

TS: And it didn't matter that you didn't get your doctorate in a business area?

CA: Well, apparently not. [chuckle] Organizational Communication was the Ph.D., which meant that I took a lot of Management and things of that nature.

TS: But I'm sure you checked with Mike ahead of time to make sure this field was okay to be in.

CA: Oh, he seemed to think that Communication was a benefit; he really wanted a Communication person. When I got to Georgia State, I also taught a few courses in the Journalism Department for their Communication people as well.

TS: Any mentors at University of Texas in particular?

CA: No. A lot of the professors were relatively young—thirty or thirty-five, not twenty-one—but they were more like peers and friends. There was one professor in the business school named Al Shapiro, who didn't have a Ph.D. and who was a professor of Entrepreneurship of some reputation. He and I hit it off, and he was another one [to] say, "What you need to do is get out of here and get to work." He was not the chairman of my dissertation committee, but he was on my committee. When it came time for orals, he would say things like, "I've talked with Craig enough; he knows what he's doing." He also pointed me in the direction that led to my first major journal article publication, which was in the *Journal of the Academy of Management*. So again, I was gaining some credibility in that discipline.

TS: Okay. So you get to Georgia State in '75?

CA: Right.

TS: So you're there eight years before you came to Kennesaw.

CA: That's correct.

TS: Briefly fill in what's going on in those eight years. You start writing books and all that kind of stuff.

CA: Yes. I was teaching the behaviorally-oriented business courses for the most part, undergraduate and graduate. I was working with Mike; I was promoting, publicizing and programming for the Chair of Private Enterprise, which means I did a monthly newsletter. I did some public relations and got some press coverage for him, and then I started setting up conferences on private enterprise-related subjects. One of the first ones I set up was called "Business in the Media," which was a hot topic that seemed to blend my interests. We invited twenty or thirty leading people who had things to say about [the topic] and got them all to contribute papers. I published a book out of that; it was an interesting sort of model. Mike said, "I want you to develop programs for the chair. You can put [program] budgets together, and then you need to find the money to support them. If you want to build some compensation for yourself into those budgets, that's okay; but you put together the program, you find the money, and you run the program. If it works, then maybe you can get some pay out of it." It was a very entrepreneurial approach to academic programs. But I did that.

TS: So you benefit in that you're part of Mike's program, but it sounds like you were really taking the initiative and running with these ideas.

CA: Yes, and that's what he wanted me to do. He would bless it before I would go running off in some direction, so it certainly was not *carte blanche*. And I wasn't looking for *carte blanche*. I looked at Mike as an academic entrepreneur, which is a bit of an oxymoronic kind of statement. But, you know, even [when] putting together the family business programs that we put together here, I can see the model that I learned while I was working with Mike in operation here.

TS: So you guys could have made a zillion bucks if you had just been in business.

CA: Jack Dinos, the guy who provided much of the funding for my chair here, once asked me why we didn't franchise the Family Business Forum idea instead of giving it away. He said, "You know, 150 schools are using your program, and you're not making a dime off it." I said, "Well, that's not the way we do things in academia. It's more like, it's the First Church of Private Enterprise, and we're out trying to get more congregations to get started and join up." I was teaching; I actually started a Master's in Business Communication program at Georgia State, which lasted about as long as I was there. But I was in close contact with the Atlanta chapters of organizations like the Public Relations Society of America and the International Association of Business Communicators. I saw that as my primary constituency, people who were communications professionals working in business environments. That was going along fine, but it was an interesting situation because Georgia State went through its huge growth in the '60s and had huge faculty recruitment in the '60s. The Management Department, which was a very large department, had, as I recall, eighteen full professors, and six associate professors. I was one of two assistant professors.

TS: They had been hired in the '60s so they had made it to full professor in '75.

CA: Right. And I was doing fine. I got tenured, and I would have been promoted to professor the next year if I had stayed. Nine years was the minimum for that. But in a lot of ways, it was like you couldn't see the sky because of all the—I was the little tree, and all these big trees had grown up over me. I was young; I was younger than all the graduate students. Dorothy Brawley, Gary Roberts and a lot of the people that are faculty members here now—and some of them who have retired, like Jerry Sawyer and Tina Christianson—they were all graduate students, and they were all older than I was. I was a young professor there. So the first thing I had to do when I got there. . . . I mean, my hair was down to my shoulders.

TS: Oh, I can't believe that.

CA: Oh, yes. And a full beard. I used to wear muscle shirts, tank tops and things like that. So I had professors take me aside and say, "You're not a graduate student any more. It's time that you at least put a shirt on, if not a suit." And I had to learn to interact with the business community. They were supporting the Chair of Private of Enterprise, so pretty quickly I had to shape up.

TS: Yes, I bet they didn't care for that long hair.

CA: Well, I don't remember exactly when I got shorn, but it was some time in that period.

TS: What did Mike Mescon say about that?

CA: Well, you know, that's the way I looked when he hired me, and it didn't stop him. He might have been somebody who told somebody else to go tell me, but he didn't confront me with it directly.

TS: Well, this was the '70s; we can all be blackmailed with pictures of what we looked like back then.

CA: Yes, and I had just come out of Austin, Texas, which is still hippy land today. I think the Chair of Private Enterprise had a very conservative constituency that supported it, and I've always had a lot of trouble with labels. When I was in college, I was against the [Vietnam] War and marching on Washington. [I] thought that Nixon was evil incarnate, so I had no trouble identifying myself as a liberal and a Democrat in those days. But I [eventually] got to understand that the world was a little more complex and nuanced than we were able to see it in our black-and-white ways in college. It became very interesting. I've always felt that business, especially in Cobb County and places that are seen as conservative, is nonetheless in many ways a very progressive element.

TS: Well, if you look at the Chamber of Commerce, when has it ever been opposed to a penny sales tax to improve this or that or the other?

CA: Or to lead the drive to bring public transportation into Cobb County, which is another story in itself.

TS: Yes, we might talk about that.

CA: So there I was surrounded by conservatives. One really strange experience [occurred when] I was working with an organization that was affiliated with what we were doing. It was sponsoring some of these conferences that I put together. It was called the Fiscal Policy Council, and it was headed up by a guy named John Perry who was out of West Palm Beach, Florida. He owned newspapers, and he was an entrepreneur—he had submersible submarines. His idea was called the National Dividend Policy [which said that] what we really should do is run government as a business, assure that there are surpluses out of government revenue every year, and then rebate the surplus to all the citizens. If you did that, then citizens would have a vested interest in having the government not spend so much money—you know, making sure there was a margin there [so] that they got their money back. That was his idea. And we were holding national conferences; I was inviting all these conservatives who were opining about this and getting to spend time with the young Alan Greenspan, and Secretary of the Treasury Bill Simon, and all these kind of people. And the guy that this John Perry had to head up his organization was none other than [General] William [C.] Westmoreland.

TS: My goodness.

CA: I was traveling around the country with General Westmoreland.

TS: You were marching against that guy earlier, weren't you?

CA: Yes. And it was very interesting to go through airports with him and [see] all the people who would come up to him and say, "I served under you, sir, and I want to shake your hand." Of course, he was a very thoughtful, intelligent guy. He lived in Charleston. So I was getting exposed to these kinds of folks. I had an interesting experience once I came out here: Fletcher Thompson was the Republican Congressman representing the Fifth District of Georgia when I was in college and marching on Washington, and we occupied his office.

TS: Oh, no.

CA: It was hysterical. I organized this busload to come in from Northwestern; and I walk into this guy's office, and about half the guys I went to high school with—and who had gone to MIT, Carnegie Mellon and Tulane—were all sitting there. It was like a reunion of all these Jewish liberal smart kids who were a year or two out of high school.

TS: These are the ones that are protesting?

CA: Yes. We're all sitting in Fletcher Thompson's office, refusing to move until he grants us an audience, and he finally does. He tells us we're a bunch of idiots and what's wrong with us. Well, many years later, after I'm holder of the Chair of Private Enterprise at Kennesaw State, and I'm making the round of every civic organization and speaking everywhere—I'm speaking to the Smyrna Rotary Club. And who is the president of the Smyrna Rotary Club? A lawyer named Fletcher Thompson, who is also on the board of the Chamber with me at this point.

TS: How'd he get to Smyrna?

CA: He set up his law office there.

TS: Oh, really?

CA: I think around Vinings somewhere.

TS: I just talked to the Smyrna Rotary Club last week.

CA: I don't even know if he's still alive. So we're sitting there at the head table, and I'm going to make my speech about private enterprise. I said, "Fletcher, do you know the first time we ever met?" He said, "Well, I guess it was at the Cobb Chamber." I said, "No, [it was] when you were in Congress." He said, "You weren't one of those guys, were you?" I said, "Yes; I've grown up some." And we chatted about it. So he got up to introduce me to the Smyrna Rotary Club, and he said, "I had all these remarks about Craig—all the stuff he's doing at Kennesaw and all this stuff about his career, but I want to tell you …." So he goes [on to] tell the Smyrna Rotary Club about how we first met. And he said, "Those guys had a point." But he [also] said, "Craig, as you're speaking to us today, I just want to say one thing: Welcome to the establishment."

TS: [laughter]

CA: So, it was interesting.

TS: I worry about some of these people [who] seem to be in a time warp and are still thinking the same way that they thought back thirty years ago.

CA: Yes. Bert Lance was the chairman of the advisory board for Mike's Chair of Private Enterprise, and I got to know him fairly well. Actually, he wrote me a recommendation letter when I applied for the job out here. [KSU President] Betty Siegel said, "How do you know Bert Lance?" I said, "Well, I figure he lived on the other side of Kennesaw, so he might be a good one to have write a recommendation." It was that sort of thing; I was busy, I was teaching, I was writing. I think I co-authored or edited probably four books in those eight years.

TS: I was thinking there was a bunch by the time you got here.

CA: There was a Public Relations textbook that went through about four editions that was fairly successful; there was [one on] Interpersonal Communication in organizations; there was a Business Communication book and this Business in the Media book. Then there were some other books that I edited where we were running [related] lecture series around the country. One of the things we started at Georgia State was the Association of Private Enterprise Education that I mentioned. As we got Mike's position more publicity, more people at more universities got interested in getting chairs of Private Enterprise for those universities.

TS: So Georgia State was ahead of the curve.

CA: Georgia State was the first one.

TS: First one anywhere?

CA: Yes. And it wasn't really a chair. I mean, it was run on annual donations. So to the extent that chairs are supposed to be endowed positions, it wasn't endowed at that time. It was a constant fundraising process, and we raised thirty or forty thousand dollars a year to support this thing. But professors and administrators from various universities would call us up and say, "We'd like to come down and talk to you about how we get one of these at our place." One of the people that came to see us that first year I was there was a guy named John Ward, who was an assistant dean or associate dean at Loyola of Chicago. Over the last thirty years, John and I have now probably written twenty books together. He and I have done all this work in the area of family business, but that's where our relationship started—because he was there seeing how to get a chair of private enterprise for Loyola of Chicago. When enough of these people kept showing up, I said, "Mike, doing this one at a time is very inefficient. Why don't we have a conference on what is a chair of private enterprise and how your university can get one and what one does?" So we called a meeting, and we had about twenty universities show up. That was the beginning of what became the Association of Private Enterprise Education, and I was the first president of that. John Ward was the second, and Mike Mescon, the third. We had to get it up and running so that Mike didn't have to do anything, you know, before he had to be president. That was one of the other accomplishments of that era.

TS: So you really came to Kennesaw in part because you wanted to get away from Georgia State, which was top heavy with full professors.

CA: Yes. Again, it was sort of an eight-year dizzying pace [filled with] lots of accomplishments. [I was] seen as Mike Mescon's boy in a lot of ways. I began to feel like I was doing the same things and began to think that maybe I ought to be doing something else. It was Kennesaw Junior College and then Kennesaw College; and then, lo and behold, I heard that a chair of private enterprise had been created. The Georgia International Life Insurance Company/Cobb County Banker's Association Chair of Private Enterprise had been created up here. Actually, I think they searched in '82 unsuccessfully, and Jasper Dorsey held the chair on an interim basis for a year. Well, the way I heard about it was very strange. Mildred Landrum was the communication person on the management faculty here, and I had kind of gotten to know Mildred through all this management communication stuff. Jerry Sawyer and others were students there at Georgia State. Well, by this time I got married [in '79] and I was living in Morningside again—I had gone back to my roots. A guy named Nick Ordway lived around the corner from me, and he had been a professor at Georgia State. Actually, he'd previously lived around the corner from me; he'd moved, and I think he was teaching at Texas. He came by my house one day, and he said, "They've got this chair of private enterprise at Kennesaw, and I'm one of the finalists for it. What do you think about it?" He was talking to me because he knew I knew the chair of private enterprise at Georgia State. And I said, "Gee, I didn't know they had that out there." And he says, "Yes, and they're paying terribly." I think the initial salary was to be $25,000 or something.

TS: Well, even in '83, that wasn't much.

CA: Ordway wanted a whole lot more money than that, so I said, "I want to stay in the Atlanta area; my family is here; I know the area. I'd like to stay in academia, and I'd like to consider an alternative to Georgia State." The minus was what the hell is Kennesaw? It's a little school out there. The plus was it was going to grow; it was going to develop. It was a green field; and if one wanted to have the opportunity to influence institutions and communities—going back to what I was thinking about eight years earlier—that'd probably be a pretty good place to do it. I think Jerry Sawyer was heading the committee, and I called him up. I said, "Jerry, I didn't know that you had this chair of private enterprise out there." He said, "Oh, yes."

TS: I wonder how they advertised it if you hadn't heard the word at Georgia State.

CA: Well, what might have [happened is when] I heard the salary was $25,000, [I] just didn't pay any attention to it. I said, "Well, I was talking to Nick Ordway. I know you're potentially in negotiations with him, and I couldn't do it for $25,000." Jerry said, "I think we've realized that we can't get what we need for $25,000."

TS: Well, was $25,000 the interest off the endowment?

CA: No, it was a $150,000 endowment, so it wouldn't be off the interest.

TS: Oh, $150,000?

CA: Yes, that was the whole endowment at the time. You know, Jasper Dorsey didn't need the money. Twenty-five thousand dollars might have been just fine because he was retired.

TS: It was public service as far as he was concerned.

CA: Right. And he was a great guy.

TS: Yes, I interviewed him.

CA: So I said, "Jerry, I know I'm very late in this process; I know you're practically through it. But if the salary was more reasonable—and I don't know how you'll react to me saying this, but—I think I'd be interested in the job."

TS: You didn't want to take a cut in pay to go to Kennesaw?

CA: Right. I wasn't getting that much more at Georgia State, but it was more. I said, "You know, this is really presumptuous of me, but if there was a more reasonable salary, I'd be interested. If you were not able to successfully conclude your search, I'd be willing to submit my resume as part of the subsequent search." I don't know if that had any impact. I think probably Ordway and Kennesaw could not come to terms, and Jasper was a good interim solution. They opened up the search again the next year, and I put in my credentials. There were a hundred-some people that applied for the job, and they decided I was the right guy for the position.

TS: You're talking about '82 when you first heard about it.

CA: It was '83 when they reopened the search and when I was selected.

TS: Well, you're talking about Kennesaw being a little place. Of course, Betty Siegel is here by then; we're about four thousand students, I guess. How would you describe the intellectual climate at Kennesaw when you got here?

CA: That's an interesting question. Most of the interaction that I had, it was chaos. The business school had just been created.

TS: Was Harry Lasher here?

CA: No. Faye Rodgers was the acting dean; Mildred was the acting chairman of the management department. They only had "acting"; acting dean, acting chairman.

TS: I'd forgotten about Faye Rodgers as an acting dean.

CA: Yes. The faculty was small; there were eight people associated with management. I actually served as management chairman from '84 to '86. I guess the way that I can best answer your question is that of the eight faculty members I had, I ran off six. A number of them sort of made a decision should I teach high school business courses—or business courses at the junior college? So it was a very green field, at least in that discipline. I really enjoyed the search committee that interviewed me. Mildred was on it; Jerry was on it; some others were on it—I don't even remember who all they were. I enjoyed the business people that were on the committee: Campbell Dasher. Ed Andrews.

TS: Who?

CA: Ed Andrews. He was head of Trust Company Bank in Cobb at the time. They asked hard, straight questions and challenged me. I enjoyed that. Campbell Dasher said, "Why do you have a beard?" And all the academics were about to crawl under the table. I said, "Well, Mr. Dasher, I'm thirty-two years old, which is still fairly young for a position like this, and I have a double chin. My beard helps hide both of those facts."

TS: [laughter]

CA: I interacted a lot with [Edwin] Ed [A.] Rugg—he wasn't academic vice president; he was Betty's assistant—and with Betty. You know, "first impression" is Betty's strong suit. Ed seemed like a likeable, hard-working guy. I wasn't sold on what was here, but I was sold on the potential of what was here.

TS: Right. And you were impressed with the business leaders in the county.

CA: Yes, I was. I met a few other people; Pat Taylor in art, for example, I enjoyed very much. He and I did some interesting projects together over time. [S.] Alan Schlact in business law, who's a bright guy. I don't remember whether I met you at that time; you were around.

TS: I guess you were here before we met, but I do remember you reaching out to people all across campus.

CA: And I found some good people, so I'm not saying this was an intellectual desert. It wasn't—or maybe it was—but there were seeds planted; it just needed to be watered.

TS: Well, it's a very infant institution when you got here.

CA: Yes. So it was the potential that sold me. The business community grabbed me, and again, I guess I reached out. I just marched into the Chamber of Commerce and said, “Hi, I’m the new chair of private enterprise at Kennesaw State, and we’ve got to start doing things together.” And we did. Joe Daniell absolutely took me under his wing in every way. I mean, from “If you need a swing loan to help you get out of your house in Atlanta and into your house here, we’ll take care of you” to “Here’s who you need to know at the Chamber” and “Come on to the Kiwanis meeting” and “You need to join either Kiwanis or Rotary. I’m in Kiwanis, and I think you should join Kiwanis.” I mean, he just literally took me under his wing.

TS: Are you still in Kiwanis?

CA: No. I went all the way to be president of the Kiwanis, which was, I believe, [in] ’90 or ’91. By that time, I had made a huge commitment to family business education, consulting and speaking. I was increasingly traveling.

TS: You couldn’t make the meetings.

CA: I had so-called perfect attendance for many years. By the time I was president, I was still making about three out of four meetings; but by the year after I was president, I was probably making about one out of four meetings. In ’93 I moved over to East Cobb. I actually lived off of Burnt Hickory Road when I first came back. So I sort of gravitated away from the core of Marietta and really focused my energies on the whole community of family business as opposed to the community of Cobb County. Mack Henderson took me to lunch at the Georgian Club, and he said, “Your position is very important. Thirteen banks and our biggest insurance company have put money behind your position. We think Kennesaw College is an extremely important part of the overall community. We want a good business school, and we want a business school that is focused on real business in a practical way. Don’t be Harvard in the Pines. You need to find some way that will distinguish the business school. So relate to local businesses; don’t be overly academic or intellectual. Keep it practical and applied, and find a way that we can distinguish ourselves.”

TS: Which was tailor-made for what we were at that time and what we are today.

CA: Yes. And that’s what’s happened. You know, I don’t know that that happened because Mack suggested that it should, but it was certainly a prescient diagnosis of what was needed and what could be done. [George] “Buddy” Darden grabbed me. He said, “I’m going to have an economic advisory task force,”—he was a Congressman at the time—“and I’d like you to be the chairman.” I said, “Sure. Thanks.” Cobb Chamber calls up pretty soon and says, “We’re going to have a blue ribbon committee on transportation; we want you to be on the committee.” “Why do you want me to be on the committee?” I ask. “Well, I don’t know. You’ve got a Ph.D., and you can talk, walk and chew gum all at the same time. We think you ought to be on the committee.” So all these opportunities rapidly presented themselves and gave me a chance to become extremely involved with the community. Since I wasn’t exactly sure what I should be doing as chair of private enterprise, and since nobody was really saying, “Do this . . . .

TS: Nobody else knew what you should be doing either.

CA: Right. So it seemed to me certainly consistent with Kennesaw's community mission—Betty Siegel was cheering as I got involved in all this stuff—to go out and to make this a focus, to say, "I'm from Kennesaw College, and I'm not here to take; I'm here to give and make a contribution," I thought I was representing the school appropriately and well by doing that. In the meantime, it really gave me a chance to immerse myself in the business community here, which I felt was necessary if I was going to figure out how we could distinguish ourselves.

TS: You know what you're doing is very much the way Daniel Boorstin talks about the businessmen that became the boosters of their communities and developed Chicago and different places. In fact, I think he says the original definition of businessman was not necessarily economic, but somebody who was active in the community. That seems to be what they were looking for in Cobb County.

CA: Yes. Literally, they were looking for that. [It was] tremendously inviting. Now, in the meantime, I'm still thinking of myself as a Jew from Atlanta. When I bought my house in Marietta . . .

TS: And you were worried about being…. Cobb County's reputation was not good.

CA: Doris Little was my real estate agent. Do you know the Littles?

TS: Which Little?

CA: Doris.

TS: Doris.

CA: Yes. She's passed away now, I think. And I finally said to her, "I'm going to ask you, because I don't know who else to ask." She said, "What?" I said, "Can a Jew live in Marietta?" And she said, "Oh, yes, there have been presidents of the Marietta Country Club that are Jewish and presidents of Marietta Rotary that are Jewish. And Goldstein's been on the City Council forever." So I accepted that, but I didn't know how I was going to be received.

TS: How were you received?

CA: No problems. I was conscious of not being a native of Marietta.

TS: But Marietta's the only place in Cobb County where it really matters, I think. Or maybe in the towns.

CA: Well, that was it. But I was in Marietta. I mean, I was in the Marietta Kiwanis.

TS: Yes, being an O.M. [Old Mariettan] still counts in Marietta.

CA: Right. And I'm aware of that, and that's fine. But immediately I became an officer of the Chamber of Commerce. Very quickly I was put on the rotation of officers in the Kiwanis Club. They put me on the business of public affairs committee, which was the *sanctum sanctorum*, or so it appeared. Otis [Brumby], Roy Barnes….

TS: Willingham.

CA: And Harold Willingham.

TS: Steve Thompson.

CA: Steve Thompson. Everybody who was in Congress or a country commissioner or a state legislator—whatever—they were all involved there. Clearly, I was the newest member of the community that was in that crowd, and I was certainly the only Jewish person that was in that crowd. But, you know, there I was, and we were talking about the things that we needed to talk about. J. F. Shaw—do you know J. F. Shaw?

TS: Oh, yes.

CA: He took me aside one day. He was on the Marietta School Board when they integrated the Marietta schools.

TS: Yes.

CA: So he takes me aside one day, and he says, "You know, Craig, you're all right; you're all right."

TS: Do you know where that was leading?

CA: That's all he would say. Then, one day he said, "Craig, where are you from?" And I said, "I'm from Atlanta." He said, "Oh, I thought you were a Yankee kike."

TS: He said that? You're kidding. Well, he's an older generation.

CA: And he said, "You're all right! You're a Southern boy." So it was being a Yankee kike that would have disqualified me.

TS: And he's not even aware that that might be offensive to say that?

CA: He repeated the story to my rabbi when he met my rabbi.

TS: Is that right? Which rabbi?

CA: [Rabbi Steven] Lebow.

TS: Lebow. Okay. You are Reform then.

CA: Yes, I am definitely Reformed. So you know, I'm sitting there; this guy's practically hugging me and telling me I'm all right, I'm a good guy.

TS: I hate to think of how Lebow reacted to that.

CA: He didn't say anything. And you have to sit there and [figure they're saying] "I'm accepting you. I'm also saying you're different, and that's probably okay."

TS: Yes. It's hard to believe that anybody would not know that that's offensive.

CA: Right.

TS: But still, I guess it's possible.

CA: Right. Or else he was being offensive and testing how I would react to it.

TS: Could be.

CA: So there were little things like that, but as far as feeling accepted, no problem at all. At the Chamber, I was on the board, and there are sort of layers and layers and layers of influence in that organization. I don't know that I was at the absolute heart, but I was probably the membrane around the heart. So a group of the conservative Christians came to the Chamber board and said, "We'd like to have a prayer breakfast, and we'd like to do this quarterly." Or monthly, I don't remember.

TS: They've had prayer breakfasts before.

CA: Yes, but they wanted to have a big prayer breakfast, and they wanted to have it Chamber sponsored. So the Chamber felt like it couldn't say no, but they asked me—among others—to be on the steering committee of the prayer breakfast. Now, I'd never been to a prayer breakfast in my life and really had very little idea of what was going on. But I had the distinct impression, and I don't know that it was ever said to me as such, but it was "Craig, it's your job to keep them within bounds." So we had our first prayer breakfast; I think Joe Frank Harris was the speaker. It went great. A thousand people showed up, and we just talked about the common fatherhood of God and the common brotherhood of man. I don't think they even prayed in Jesus' name one time, which I found shocking. I wasn't in a position to say, "No, you can't say Jesus," but how ecumenical are we going to be here? So we're going forward, and we had Max Cleland as a speaker. He was Secretary of State, and he did a great job. I kept saying, "You know, we ought to have Dale Murphy as a speaker." It seemed like a great idea. MVP.

TS: Sure. Well, Mormon….

CA: I didn't know. I'd say, "How about Dale Murphy?" And there would be silence, and I would be ignored.

TS: So every speaker had been Christian thus far.

CA: Yes. They have different speakers and prayers and stuff; I was on the program, and Lebow came and gave a prayer. The principal speakers, you know, were prominent people. Christians. If I had recommended a prominent Jew—if I'd thought of somebody, I would have recommended it. And I wasn't thinking Dale Murphy because he was Mormon; I was suggesting Dale Murphy because he seemed like a good, God-fearing, prayerful Christian man.

TS: Which he is, as far as I know.

CA: As far as I know. So I kept being ignored. They didn't say no, they didn't say yes; it just would die. And there was this fellow I knew, Russ Osmond. He was a Mormon. He was a [U.S.] Naval Reserve chaplain, and I went to him, and I said, "I've been trying to get this group to consider Dale Murphy as a speaker, and I know you're active [as] communication director for the Atlanta Mormon church. If I'm able to convince them to use Dale Murphy, could you get him for me?" He said, "Yes, I can get him for you, but you're not going to be successful." I said, "Why not?" He said, "The Baptists and the Methodists think we're cultists, and they won't have anything to do with us." I said, "What?" I literally didn't know that, and he explained it to me. I said, "I don't mean to be disrespectful, but as a Jew I could make a case if they're calling the Mormons cultists. I've got to tell you, I know a little bit about the history of the Mormon church, and it does seem strange to me. On the other hand, I'm Jewish, and I could argue [that] all of Christianity is a cult." [laughter] He said, "Well…." So I tried Dale Murphy again, and it didn't work. So I said to the chaplain, "Look, I'm going to invite you to the next meeting of this group, but I'm not going to tell them you're Mormon. I'm going to tell them you're a Naval Reserve chaplain." And he brought to me a part of the Naval chaplain's handbook on how to pray in public so that everybody can be included. So I brought this [to the meeting], and I said, "This is very interesting. I brought my friend here. He's a Naval chaplain, and he's a Mormon." I'm trying to decide whether we should have this in this history. [The Reverend] Charles Sineath stood up and walked out of the room.

TS: Really? From the Methodist church?

CA: He was livid. He said, "If a Mormon speaks, then the First United Methodist Church of Marietta will have nothing to do with the prayer breakfast." And [the Reverend] Nelson Price didn't leave the room, but [he] wasn't far behind.

TS: So maybe we shouldn't have been too shocked at what happened at Mt. Bethel United Methodist Church [where Rabbi Lebow was not permitted to speak from the pulpit at a high school baccalaureate service].

CA: Well, nothing shocks me, but this is all part of my learning about being Jewish and [about] religion in Cobb County. That meeting broke up. Bill Askea later became the county commissioner. He took me aside, and he said, "Craig, I don't know what you want." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Craig, we got Jews on this committee; we got women on this committee. We got blacks on this committee, and now you want Mormons on this committee. What do you want?" I said, "I don't want anything. I thought this was about acknowledgement of the common fatherhood of God and common brotherhood of man and that if a Buddhist wanted to be on this committee, they could be on this committee." He said, "You're pushing this too far." He was pretty friendly about it, but he was trying to explain it to me. Well, I felt that I was on the horns of a dilemma, but I said, "This can't be." Bob [M.] Prillaman, who is another one of the business people that I met early, Buddy Darden, Otis Brumby and many others are members of the First United Methodist Church. So I called a couple of them, and I said, "I want you to know what your preacher did today." They took care of their preacher; he came back, and he apologized.

TS: Did he really? Great! Roy Barnes was a member there, too.

CA: Yes. I don't remember involving him in that particular one. I think I called Bob Prillaman first; I just felt like I had the kind of relationship with him that I could talk with him. And we compromised. We didn't have Dale Murphy as a speaker. We [asked] the city manager of Smyrna, who was a Mormon, to be one of the people leading one of the prayers, so he was on the stage. And then it was decided that the Chamber should no longer be in the prayer breakfast business.

TS: Good.

CA: But there I was. I didn't have to fight for the recognition of Jews, but I felt like I had to fight for religious tolerance. It was an interesting position to be in, and that particular story has never gotten any coverage in the newspaper. A few people know about it.

TS: Well, it tells a lot about Cobb County. It's a good story.

CA: So, I did not find it an impediment to be Jewish. I think what I learned was that you should be proud of your religion. I think a lot of Jewish people, fearing prejudice, kind of play their religion low key.

TS: You're not going to hide it.

CA: When Lebow became rabbi of Temple Kol Emeth in East Cobb in '85, we joined Temple Kol Emeth. My older daughter was four or five years old at the time—time to start Sunday school. So we went to interview this rabbi, and at the time he had a dingy little office in a little strip shopping center over off of Roswell Road near Merchant's Walk. [There was] no synagogue yet. We talked, and he said, "What do you want out of a synagogue?" I said, "Well, I want a place where my children can get a Jewish education and understand who they are and be raised Jewish." My wife at the time—we've since divorced—was not born Jewish, and I said, "I want a place where she'll be comfortable. I'm involved in this community, and people are proud of their churches and their religious affiliations. I want a rabbi who will go out in the community with me." The fourth thing I said was, "I want a synagogue that I don't have to be president of." Which shocked him. On at least three occasions since, I've had the occasion to remind him of what I said then, which has helped me not be president of the synagogue. But he did [join me in going out into the community]. I think we've been accepted. I think Sam Olens, Philip [M.] Goldstein and many other Jewish people are very important to this community and are thoroughly accepted and are able to play leadership roles in this community. I don't feel like I was a groundbreaker. I feel like they reached out to me, and the fact that I was Jewish had nothing to do with it. I did find, though, [that] in the bus wars, to be able to say that I was a liberal Jewish college professor from Atlanta was a way to deflect the accusations that I was a racist, and therefore against [the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority] MARTA and trying to establish a separate bus system—a separate transit system to Cobb County.

TS: Let's talk a bit about the bus wars. You mentioned the Chamber asked you to be on the transportation committee. That's where it starts, I guess.

CA: Yes. That's where my involvement starts. I was vice chairman for transportation at some point there, and they set up this task force. This was about '84, and the principle issue really was road building. The most important thing that came out of that task force was the local option 1 percent sales tax that could be devoted to road building and leverage.

TS: Right. '84 is the year that Earl Smith is elected commission chair following Ernest Barrett, and [Smith] was the one that was commission chair when the legislature approved the one-penny sales tax.

CA: Well, Joe Mack Wilson was on that task force. The first thing we did was study [to] see how much needed to be invested in roads in Cobb County. Mack Henderson was very involved in that. We had a meeting, and the number was going to be revealed. I was sitting there thinking, gosh, they're going to come back and say fifty million or eighty million or some huge number. They came back and said four hundred to five hundred million.

TS: A lot more than you had possibly imagined.

CA: I was going, "How the heck did that happen?" We started [advocating] a local optional 1 percent sales tax, and a group of people said, "That can't be done; the state won't let us do that." Joe Mack Wilson was sitting there very quietly in the corner with a sort of Cheshire cat grin, that signature Joe Mack Wilson face, and he said, "Boys, that's what we're down there for is to change these laws." So that whole idea of passing that 1 percent tax, which was then applied statewide and for a variety of purposes, really came out of that task force. The 1 percent sales tax at that time generated fifty or sixty million dollars which, over a series of years, would move toward that [bigger] number. But the whole idea was if we spend local funds to do this, then we can leverage that into federal and state funds as well. John Williams was running around with all these guys. It was a lot of fun and very interesting in that, "Gee, I want to have an impact on my community." The other two issues that were under the umbrella of transportation were McCollum Field and the airport.

TS: Expanding it for jets and all that?

CA: Well, yes, just getting a tower built and making it more user-friendly and a greater asset. Tony Dinos actually was the chair of the aviation subcommittee. Several years later when I began having these family business programs, I decided at my first program I should have a panel of leading family businesses. So I called up Southern Tea and asked to speak to Tony. He wasn't there, but his brother Jack was. So I asked Jack to be on the panel, and that first contact with the Dinoses lead to the funding of the chair [the Mary and Jack Dinos Distinguished Chair of Private Enterprise].

TS: So they live in Cobb County?

CA: No. Their business was in Cobb County. They came to Cobb County with Cobb County-backed industrial bonds and had a strong feeling about how Cobb County had helped their business. Then somebody needed to head up a discussion of public transportation, and it was sort of like, "Let Mikey do it." I didn't have enough sense to not jump into that barrel. We went around and had these public hearings all over the county; huge numbers of people showed up for these things. Kind of spontaneously one night I said, "How many people here would be in favor of Cobb County joining MARTA?" And, fortunately, they didn't have tomatoes because….

TS: Yes, zero.

CA: And I said, "Okay. Well, how many people here would be in favor if it was not associated with MARTA [but just] having public transit, having some buses?" We were getting big majorities of people who said, "We ought to have some means of getting around without a car, but we don't want to be part of MARTA." I don't know if I was the first one that ever did it, but we were able to say public transit does not equal MARTA. It was like Coca-Cola equals soft drink.

TS: Right. Well, that's the way it had always been since the '60s.

CA: Yes. We were able to say, "How about if it wasn't MARTA? What if it was a public transit system that was operated in Cobb?"

TS: Did you have any sense whether they thought MARTA was just too expensive and [that] it would take forever to get rail out here? Or was it because of race?

CA: All these questions have nuanced answers. A 1 percent sales tax would have been generating fifty-five or sixty million dollars a year. When we really studied what MARTA proposed to give to Cobb County for fifty-five or sixty million dollars a year—the bus system that we started was what MARTA proposed to give to Cobb County, and it promised that some day you might get rail—it actually cost about six million dollars in local funds to get that started. So I don't know that anybody had ever put those numbers to it, but, clearly, it was paying way too much to get way too little. And the reality was MARTA wanted ten times more than what it actually cost.

TS: You'd be subsidizing rail in Atlanta.

CA: Exactly. To a huge degree. And when you would present that to MARTA people, they'd say, "Yes, but the suburbs owe that to the city."

TS: Which the suburbs didn't feel was true.

CA: So that was one piece. There was a second piece that saw MARTA as a bloated bureaucracy, unresponsive. A promise someday of rail, but, basically, they made it clear that since Cobb didn't get in at the beginning, they'd have to wait until the end.

TS: Do you think the "bloated bureaucracy, unresponsive" charges had any merit?

CA: Some of the people working at MARTA were very good people. The chances of Cobb getting rail from MARTA are the same as Cobb getting rail from [the Georgia Regional Transit Authority] GRTA, which means if we'd joined MARTA, we'd be in the same position we are today relative to rail.

TS: We'd still be waiting on the rail.

CA: Yes, we'd still be waiting on it. So I think unresponsive is accurate. The governing structure of MARTA since that time has proven to be very questionable. Cobb would only have a very small representation; it really wouldn't have an opportunity to have a real impact. Behind closed doors, there were those who held public office who said we will not make a deal with these people.

TS: These people?

CA: These people because we don't want to go to jail with them. There was a sense that there was widespread corruption in Atlanta City Government and its entities.

TS: Which there was, wasn't there?

CA: [nods yes] There was. And again, you know, if you ever said it out loud, what you'd hear quickly is, "That's the race card." Now, I will tell you that one of the bus routes that we would [have] run would be a Six Flags-Mableton-Austell kind of loop that would also interconnect with the western MARTA station out there.

TS: Hamilton Holmes.

CA: And, basically, that part of the county said, "We don't want that." I think it was because of their fear of blacks more easily accessing their part of the county.

TS: Well, that part of the county has a large African-American population today.

CA: Yes, it does.

TS: Of course, it didn't then.

CA: Yes. And there was talk about black folks riding out to Lenox Square, robbing Lenox Square and jumping back on the MARTA train.

TS: Which I always thought was the most ridiculous argument I had ever heard. What thief is going to use public transportation?

CA: Well, I think—yes. You know, are there no bigots in Cobb County? Are there no people that were not motivated by racial concern to oppose mass transit? There are certainly some people. Dent…what's his name?

TS: Dent Myers?

CA: I was told.

TS: I would hope that we would never use him as an example of what Cobb County is.

CA: Right. I didn't go investigate this for myself, but I was told that when I was leading the fight to bring buses to Cobb County, one of my newspaper pictures was posted to his wall and that "bullshit" was stamped on my forehead.

TS: Could have been worse.

CA: Yes. But I think [racism] is there. Certainly for me, the economic argument was a prevalent argument. Now, the argument that we made was that this system must interconnect with MARTA, and the deal that we made was that the transfers were interchangeable. If you paid to get on MARTA, you could ride on Cobb's system, and if you paid to get on Cobb, you could ride on the MARTA system. What we were told by MARTA is, "That's terrible." The way that things should go is that there should be one unified system in the whole metro area, and that's the way to do it. I kept flying in and out of airports. You know, I'd fly into San Francisco airport, and I'd see eighteen different buses at the airport that said "Oakland." All these communities had their own little bus systems; there needed to be coordination, but they didn't all have to be part of the same system. So that [was the] model. Of course, we brought in consultants who studied it and helped to set up the routes. But that model made huge sense based on the surveying and the responses that we got in those public hearings. We clearly said, "These are our buses, and they're going to be managed cost effectively." But a lot of people said, "Are these things going to break even?" I said, "There's no way; it's going to require a subsidy." One of my arguments was, if you're talking about developing business, and you see sites for businesses advertised, and they say all utilities or rail frontage or whatever, what you're really advertising in a Cobb County business site is all utilities except public transportation. So how does your work force get to your place of business? The other argument we made was "The Four Too's," meaning public transportation is for those who are too old, too young, too infirm or too impoverished to have their own transportation, and we needed that as a service. We scheduled the vote on a special referendum where nothing else was being voted on that day; so there was nothing else to drive anybody to the polls unless they cared about this issue. And more people cared enough to show up and vote yes than cared to show up and vote no. So we had public transportation in Cobb County.

TS: I think that's actually after Phil Secrist became chair that it was fully implemented. But all the ground work, I guess, has been done when Earl Smith was commission chair?

CA: Yes. The wildman, who was the East Cobb commissioner.

TS: Yes, Emmett Burton.

CA: Emmett Burton. When we first started doing this, he was all for it. When we finally brought it to the commission, he said, "This system needs to stop at the river. It should not connect with MARTA." I told him in the floor of the council chambers that that was not the position he had taken originally, and he said, "You're a liar." I said, "No, sir, if there's a liar here, it's not me." So he and I got along famously. But I made speeches all over the county, and, obviously, there was a significant task force in favor of it. We got the thing passed. Then came the Transit Advisory Board, which had no power but [merely] advised.

TS: Yes, there was something about [Burton wanting] to get rid of one of the chairs of the advisory board.

CA: Yes. That's how that happened. It was a two-front battle. I mean, there was the battle to get Cobb County to support it. There was a battle to keep Cobb County in line—that it had to be connected with MARTA; otherwise, we'd be running around in little circles inside the county. And then we had the battle of Atlanta, where we were being called racist because we were proposing alternatives to MARTA.

TS: That just fit into all the biases about suburbs.

CA: Yes, that was another experience I never had. All of a sudden I was a racist. What do you say to, "Obviously you're doing this because you're against blacks"? I would say, "You're proposing to charge us sixty million dollars for a six million dollar job." "Well," [they'd reply], "I never heard these statistics before; I don't think they're true." I said, “They’re true.” And pretty soon MARTA is saying, “Well, how about a ½ percent sales tax?”

TS: So you’re paying thirty million dollars.

CA: Exactly. I had that discussion with Sam Massell one day. He said, “You know, it’s going to cost more than six million dollars.” I said, “Okay, let’s say it costs twelve million dollars. Those are still obscene profit margins, Mr. Mayor.” Ultimately, the Atlanta Regional Commission and even the people of MARTA were saying, “Better to have buses out there than not to have [mass transportation] at all.” And I think what we did, ultimately, became a model for what’s happened in Gwinnett, what’s happened in Clayton, and what’s happened with GRTA, to some extent.

TS: Well, when I was writing my book, I did do a little research on this. It seems to me that it couldn’t have been done better than it was done.

CA: Yes, it really was done well. We had some very professional people, hired good people [to make decisions] right down to the color scheme and the design of the buses, I think, was done very well. It was something that Cobb was proud of and accepted. Given Cobb’s very good propensity for responsible government and balanced budgets, that six or eight or ten million dollars, or whatever that line item is in the Cobb County budget, could have been attacked many times. I don’t think it ever has been since.

TS: Do you consider this your biggest achievement in terms of community service?

CA: I guess if I had to pick one, I’d pick that one. I never ranked them.

TS: Right.

CA: I felt proud. I remember the day we started it up. We were all excited, and one of the buses was late. Something happened, and I ended up giving somebody a ride home because the bus didn’t quite work right. But even then, when I’m out in traffic and I get behind a CCT bus, like other drivers, I try to get in the other lane to get around it. [laughter] But you know, people get on and off that bus; people are obviously going to work. And I think, “I had an impact there.”

TS: Well, the first schedule was a little unrealistic. I rode into Atlanta the first week and came back in the evening. It seemed like it took us about three hours to get home.

CA: It took forever. I’m in the process of cleaning out my office, and, of course, it’s a very nostalgic thing. I’m finding all sorts of things that I forgot about. I came across a column that Bill Shipp had written for *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution,* and it was about the Cobb bus system. Basically, the column concluded that Cobb’s motivation was not racial and that this was the best possible solution under the circumstances for the transportation problems that were there. So again, it was very gratifying—the opportunity to serve, the opportunity to make a difference. The huge education about how things work made it great. My role here at Kennesaw allowed me to play that role in Cobb County.

TS: Right. Well, let's talk a little bit about Kennesaw again…how you developed the chair of private enterprise and how that led to the family—what do you call it?

CA: Cox Family Enterprise.

TS: Cox Family Enterprise Center.

CA: Well, when I came out here, I wrote a lot of stuff in the applications and letters and things about what I'd do and what I wouldn't do, all of which was chalk on the blackboard that was easily erased. But I got out here, and I got very institutionally involved very quickly. I guess I was hired in April or May to report in September. Kennesaw was trying to hire the first full-time dean of the business school at the same time, and I met this guy and participated in some of the interviews in his process. At the last minute, he backed out. I wasn't working for the university yet officially; I was teaching summer school at State. Betty called me in and said, as I recall, "You have three choices." I said, "What?" She said, "You can be dean; you can be acting dean; or you can head the search for a new dean." I said, "Thank you. I'll head the search for a new dean." Well, Harry Lasher was hired as dean. He got here, and he had a good academic background. He had been associate dean at Syracuse, had a Ph.D. from Syracuse, and had also acted in industry, human resources and training. So he was a good combination of academia and real world, which I think very well fit what we were trying to accomplish here. But he turned around and asked me to be management department chairman, and that was quite a task. As I mentioned earlier, we cleaned out the people that were here, and we were hiring people right and left. I don't remember how many people we hired in that three-year stretch, but it was dozens. Some of them worked, and some of them didn't work; but I was pretty involved in searches and all that sort of thing. At the same time, [I] was becoming very involved in the community.

TS: As if you didn't have enough to do.

CA: Well, fortunately, they were only asking me to teach one class per term, and I think that actually got reduced after awhile. I was probably making at least a speech a week to civic and chamber groups within a fifty-mile radius of here. Probably once a week I was out doing that sort of thing, so I just immersed myself in the community. We ran a program called "You and the American Economy" for high school students.

TS: "You and the American Economy"?

CA: "You and the American Economy," which was a program that [Dr. Francis W.] Bill Rushing, who was a prominent economics educator at State, and I had put together at Georgia State. We just started versions of that for Cobb County. I had a nice experience with Pat Taylor. There's something called the Leavey Award for economic education that the Freedoms Foundation gives out. It's a $7,500 award that's given to ten or fifteen people around the country each year for innovative, economic education. I had won this award when I was at Georgia State, so I had an idea one day. I said, "Pat, how would you like to share the Leavey Award with me?" He said, "What's that?" I said, "Well, it's half of $7,500." Of course, he was an art professor, so that was a lot of money. He said, "What are you talking about?" I said, "Well, we're going to have an art contest for the high school students in Cobb County. We're going to get some businessman to give us five hundred dollars to give to the student who's going to have the winning piece of art. The theme of the competition is "Seeing the Invisible Hand." The kids are going to have to understand what that means, so they're going to learn something about economics. In the meantime, they're going to have to give us some kind of depiction of this." So we did it. Bob Spratlin came up with the five hundred dollar purchase prize; he's [since] moved on to more radical things. I think it was Bowman [O.] Davis's daughter who actually won the thing. But we did it. We submitted it to the judges of the Leavey Award, and we won the Leavey Award for innovative economic education programming. So that was part of the reaching out across campus and doing things in creative ways. One of the things that I distinctly learned when I was out in the community—and I'm not saying this merely because you're here interviewing me—dealt with the love and pride and interest that people in this community have for their history. The way I put it was, "We can sell history." And we did. Obviously, the effort to support some of your work and the oral history area which I got involved with came because I knew we had that skill and interest at Kennesaw. [I thought] that could be applied to the interests of the community. That's a nice way to extract a few dollars from them and become more involved as well. Of course, later that led to my getting involved in writing some history myself with your help. [That] was the bank history, which turned out rather well, I thought.

TS: That was the First National Bank of Cobb County, but it stopped being that to become Barnett?

CA: The History of Cobb County and its Bank, Unnamed. Barnett just didn't make it. Of course, that name wouldn't have stayed around very long.

TS: No, you don't know what Barnett is any more.

CA: Of course, on the board of that bank at that time, in addition to John Williams, was his good friend, [J. C.] Bud Shaw. When [Shaw] decided that it was important to tell the history of the carpet industry, [he] came to us again, and we had a meeting. I said, "Oh, my God, I don't want to do this." And then he called Betty Siegel, who called me in and basically said, "Isn't this exciting? It's wonderful. You need to do this!" So, I guess I needed to do this. We raised a substantial sum of money from Mr. Shaw to support the multi-disciplinary task force that produced the carpet history, and that effort has led to creation of a Southern Center . . . ?

TS: The Shaw Chair for Southern Economic History. It's not going to be a center. [Randall] Randy Patton is the chair-holder.

CA: [Randall] Randy Patton and the other fellow.

TS: David Parker.

CA: Yes. Is he still here?

TS: Yes, he's still here.

CA: Well, those two guys were hired and brought to Kennesaw specifically to be part of that project. Or, at least, in part to be part of that project.

TS: Well, we were in the process of hiring one person who was going to help teach Georgia history. We ended up getting two people out of it. I think technically Parker came in under the original job description, and Patton came because of the carpet project. Of course, he has brought in a million dollars since then from Shaw.

CA: Well, Patton's a good guy. I really enjoyed working with him.

TS: I do, too.

CA: I think he continues to do good work.

TS: He's moving on now to family businesses in Georgia.

CA: Yes. We've talked about that some. The fact is that we had a position for Randy Patton because Bud Shaw got to know me a little bit while I was writing this history of a bank.

TS: Well, we're very grateful to you for that because we wouldn't have had Randy otherwise.

CA: Well, he's a good guy. So, different little [things] can have an impact. I was out there in the community really trying to figure out my strategic thrust. By '86 or '87, I'd been here three or four years. I was really needing to take my old Professor Birdwhistle's advice, not be such a wunderkind, and start getting focused. Politics was attractive to me; I explored the possibility of running for mayor.

TS: I think that was a smart thing [not to do] after all.

CA: That was right at the beginning of the [Bill] Dunaway-Joe Mack Wilson wars, and there's no way I would have survived through that stuff. I was also on the planning and zoning committee for the City of Marietta during that period, so I don't think I ever went home.

TS: Yes. '89 was when Joe Mack Wilson, after having been defeated for the legislature the previous year, beat Dunaway for mayor. That was really kind of a dirty campaign.

CA: Yes. So I was flirting with [politics]. Having been management department chair and offered the deanship, [I also] gave some thought to academic administration. At the time, Betty was interviewing actively with a number of other colleges and universities. There was much talk about her successor, and there were people in the business community talking to me about being her successor. Some of them sounded like they didn't really care whether she actually left or not, but they were rather disaffected with her at that moment. You know, "If she wants to go someplace else, let her go someplace else."

TS: Just the fact that she was looking around was upsetting.

CA: Yes, and so publicly. That was what was so upsetting.

TS: A jilted lover.

CA: Right. And she actually offered me—I don't remember if it was vice president or special assistant or some kind of role that related to community relations. [But] I decided that to be part of her cabinet was not a good idea.

TS: You would have lost your independence.

CA: Oh, boy! Among other things. In the meantime, at a number of these speeches that I was giving at chamber and civic events, business people would come up to me and say something like, "Doc, I've got this business. It's [been] a pretty good business over the last twenty or thirty years. And my son's in the business, Doc, and he needs a little work. Can you give me some advice about how to get my son straightened out so he can take this business over some day?" And younger guys would come up, and they'd say, "Doc, I'm in this business. It's been around for awhile; it does okay, but it really needs some changes. We need to buy computers; we need to bring this business up to speed. I kept suggesting to the boss that we need to make these changes, but I can't seem to get the message across. And by the way, the boss is my father. What I really want to know is how I can move him out of the way. I want to get rid of him so we can bring this business up to date." This happened many times. At the same time, I had obviously grown up in a family business. My friend and colleague John Ward was up at Loyola, and he had gotten his Ph.D. in business strategy. He was working with small and medium-sized businesses that were not behaving the way they said they should be behaving in his Ph.D. program at Stanford. But they were doing very well anyway by doing things they really were committed to, and they were family businesses. So this theme of family business kept coming up, and I was very conscious of the extent to which the standard business curriculum—undergraduate and graduate—didn't address [it]. Family business, where you mix family and business together, was an everyday reality, and huge issues were there. I said, "If I can develop some programs that are responsive to that need, I think we can do something meaningful." So we did. I found a fellow who was a consultant. Actually, he found me. He came up to me at a Cobb Chamber Business After-Hours program, and he says, "Aronoff, I see your name everywhere. You're terrific at promotion. How can you help me?" I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "How can you help me to get more business?" I said, "What do you do?" He said, "I'm a consultant." I said, "What do you consult on?" He said, "Productivity and profitability enhancement." I said, "What if I could put you in a room for a full day where the owners of medium-sized businesses would talk about their deepest felt problems? You wouldn't be on the program; you'd just be there. You'd be the host, and you'd be able to hear all these issues and then to relate with these people." He said, "That'd be great." I said, "What kind of businesses do you work with?" He said, "Manufacturing and distribution." I said, "How many employees do they need to have for you to be meaningful?" He said, "Fifty." I said, "Okay. It's going to cost you six thousand dollars, and it's going to be one day. I'm going to get twenty manufacturing or distribution businesses with at least fifty employees from north Georgia in a room, talking about their most serious problems." He said, "What are you talking about?" I said, "Family businesses. And, oh, by the way, they don't usually talk to consultants." So he gave me six thousand dollars. I called John [L.] Ward out of Loyola University and got him down here to talk about it. I set up a panel of family business owners that included Jack Dinos, [James] Jim [C.] Richards of Southwire, and somebody else—I don't remember who. We [spent] a day discussing the issues that confront family businesses. I only got eighteen families, but the consultant told me that he had gotten seventy thousand dollars worth of consulting assignments out of that day. He said, "Let's do this some more."

TS: Is that right? I bet he was happy.

CA: I said, "Okay, but we're not going to hold one seminar at a time because it just takes too much effort and energy to sell these seminars. We're going to have a membership organization that's going to be for family businesses, and we're going to have sponsors. The family businesses are going to pay yearly dues, and the sponsors are going to pay yearly sponsorship fees, and everything we do is going to be focused right where family and business come together." So I went to Harry Lasher, and I said, "Here's what I want to do. I need to find at least three sponsors. They need to come up with ten thousand dollars a piece per year. And I need to find twenty-five or thirty members, and they need to come up with one thousand dollars a piece a year. Do I have your blessing?" He said, "Sure. Go for it." Well, everything was fine until I got my first sponsor, which I believe was First Union. At that point, [James] Jim Fleming went ballistic.

TS: Why?

CA: Because I was fundraising without coordinating it with him. Then, when continuing education heard what was going on, they went ballistic because I was doing continuing education outside of continuing education. So Betty called me over, and we all talked about it. Continuing education came over, and I said, "Okay, I'll be glad to do the program through continuing education. That means you're responsible for selling it. You've got a month. Go sell it." The month came and went; they'd sold no memberships and no sponsorships. So I went to Betty and said, "They've done nothing. I want to do this program. I will coordinate with Jim Fleming. I'm not trying to solicit funds from anybody that you're [already] fundraising from. I'm telling them they need to get this out of their advertising budget or their training budget, not their community relations budget or their philanthropy budget." So I got three sponsors, and I got a bunch of members, and it worked. Anyway, when I first came here, the endowment was $150,000, and interest rates were high. [It was] 1983, and Roger Hopkins was carefully putting ten thousand dollars in six-month CD's in every bank in Cobb County, so I think we were generating twelve thousand dollars a year.

TS: Out of $150,000?

CA: Off $150,000. My salary supplement was $7,500, so I had $4,500 left to go crazy with. I said, "Betty, $150,000 does not an endowed chair make. I don't care what you call it. We have to get a minimum of $500,000." So I did a number of things where I was generating additional funds. Any monies that we made—the history of the bank, for example, produced some excess funds—went back into the endowment of the chair. We were doing some marketing research work for Bellsouth Yellow Pages; that money went back into the endowment of the chair. Periodically, I could convince somebody else to give us a little more money, so I think we probably got the chair endowment up to $200,000 or $250,000 at that point. [We needed] to generate the resources to fund the programs of the chair. We went to external sources to do it, and to the extent that [we] generated excess funds, that went back into the endowment. So by the time Jack Dinos said that he was interested in doing something for us, Jack could complete the funding to $500,000.

TS: To get it up to a million?

CA: No, to get it up to 500,000. Several years later, the state matched it to get it up to a million. That was how we focused on it. We had to get out. I wasn't going back to the university saying, "I need money to do this." I was saying, "I used to run all these programs at Georgia State where I had to develop the resources to do it. I'll be glad to develop the resources to do it, just let me do it."

TS: Right. And of course you named the chair for Dinos at that point—Mary and Jack Dinos.

CA: Yes. Jack was on that panel; he joined the program immediately. We put together an advisory board for the Family Business Forum, and he joined that. He seemed to take a lot of interest in it. His two sons and son-in-law were in his business, and, obviously, his brother was in his business. Jack was third generation in the business; Southern Tea had become the second largest tea packer in the United States. Marietta is a bizarre place for a tea packing company; but Jack's grandfather had started a coffee company that delivered coffee to little Greek diners and various places in Atlanta, and a lot of food establishments were run by Greeks.

TS: I see.

CA: Dinos is a Greek name, right. When Jack came in, he said to his father, "Well, if they've got coffee, why not tea?" He started doing teabags. Their niche was private label teabags, so if you buy a tea bag at Publix that says Publix on it as opposed to Tetley or Lipton, it's probably made by Southern Tea. What Southern Tea did was brilliant. Lipton had the patent on the flow-through teabag, and private label teabags were seen as just cheap trash that you'd buy if you couldn't afford the real stuff. Well, the patent came off the machinery that made the flow-through teabag, and Jack went out and managed to purchase machinery to produce the same quality teabag that Lipton produced. Then he went to the supermarkets and said, "I can make you the same quality tea bag that Lipton produces with your name on it, and you can sell it for a lot less than Lipton does." He called it, "Whatever Lipton does, we do." Follow the leader, but sell it to the private label market. So he was in the program. Then word came that Tetley was buying Southern Tea. What had happened was that Southern Tea had passed Tetley as the second largest producer in the United States.

TS: Southern Tea had passed them?

CA: And the British owners of Tetley couldn't stand that.

TS: Oh. So that's why we've got that Tetley speaker.

CA: That's why we have the Tetley Lecture Series, that's correct. They came when they made Jack and the Dinos family an incredible offer. By this time, we were having four meetings a year of the Family Business Forum, one of which was an annual retreat. We were alternating between going to the Cloister at Sea Island and going up to Zell Miller's place in Young Harris. The state park is there.

TS: It seems like we had a history conference up there once.

CA: Yes. Jack has a house at Sea Island. We were going up to Sea Island, and I said, "I'd like you to share with the group"—this was very consistent with everything we had been doing—"how your family made the decision to sell out. You don't have to give us any numbers or anything, just how did you process that decision?" We were talking about that, and the phone rang in his office. He picked it up, and it was either Scottish Rite or Eggleston. Apparently, Jack was making a substantial donation to them. He was talking to the head of the hospital, and he said, "I want to do something for you guys. At one point, you saved my grandson's life." And I don't remember the number that he said, but it was six figures. "There are a lot of downsides about selling the business," he told me. "But the great thing about selling the business is that now I can do some of the things that I've always wanted to do in terms of giving money away." While he's on the phone, I'm saying, "Do you want me to leave?" He says, "No, sit there." So, he gets off the phone, and he turns around and says, "I want to do something for you, too." I said, "Oh, I just came to talk with you about speaking to the group." "No, you're doing great stuff. What can I do for you?" I said, "Can you let me get back to you?" So [Timothy] Tim [S.] Mescon had been dean for about six weeks at that point. I ran back to the college and said, "Tim, here's what just happened. What do you think we should do?" He said, "Well, you've always said you need a $500,000 endowment. You're halfway there. We're going to go to Jack, and we're going to ask him to complete the endowment. We're going to tell him that he can have the Dinos Distinguished Chair of Private Enterprise at half price." That was exactly the right thing to say to Jack. Now, in the meantime, the Georgia International Life Insurance Company had been acquired and acquired and acquired. It didn't exist any more. And the members of the Cobb County Bankers Association had been acquired by larger banks. So, I got in touch with folks that represented both those organizations, and I said, "If I can get another quarter of a million dollars, would you guys release the name?" Officially, the suite where my office is is the Georgia International Life Insurance Company/Cobb County Bankers Association Private Enterprise Suite. They released the name, and we sold the name to Jack for half price. It was a good deal. He's been a tremendous supporter, patron and friend. I've said publicly many times he's like a second father to me. And then he liked buying one chair so much he bought another one.

TS: What Tim Mescon has.

CA: Yes.

TS: What's his chair?

CA: Mine is the Mary and Jack Dinos Distinguished Chair of Private Enterprise. His is the Tony and Jack Dinos Eminent Scholar Chair of Entrepreneurial Management.

TS: Okay. I guess we should say in passing that you not only chaired the search committee that brought in Harry Lasher, but you played a singular role in getting Tim Mescon here.

CA: Well, you know, when Harry decided that being a professor was a better job than being dean—which [has] always [been] very obvious to me—Betty Siegel called me over. She said, "You have three choices: You can be dean, you can be acting dean, or you can head the search." I said, "Thank you, Betty, I will head the search."

TS: That's one way [for her] to make sure that you're going to head the search.

CA: I guess. But it was funny, because it was the same scene. Tim's father Mike and I have, of course, remained friends all these years. Mike was in the middle of a very frustrating effort to become president of Georgia State. He had by this time become dean of the business school down there. [His candidacy for president] didn't work out, and he was going to retire as dean effective July 1, I think it was 1990. This was late winter of 1990. We have lots of resumes coming in, of course. I got Tim on the phone and said, "Tim, how you doing?" He said, "Fine." I said, "How are things up there at the [Franklin P.] Frank Perdue School of Business at Salisbury University in Maryland?" He said, "Oh, great." I said, "You like living out there on the Delmarva Peninsula?" He said, "Yes, if you're into water sports or hunting or fishing, it's great." I said, "Tim, I don't remember you being involved in water sports, hunting or fishing." He said, "Well, I'm not." I said, "You still consulting and speaking?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Where do you get an airplane out of there?" He said, "I have my choice of three airports. I can go to Norfolk, I can go to Washington or I can go to Baltimore. They're all about an hour and a half away." I said, "Tim, we're looking for a new dean." He'd been dean up there for about three years and done a good job. I said, "Your father is retiring on the day that we plan to have a new dean start. So you can come home, and you don't have to compete with your father." He's an Atlanta boy, and he was thoroughly versed in everything that was going on. He read the Atlanta newspapers, and he saw it as a great opportunity. There were other candidates.

TS: A new building was about to open, wasn't it?

CA: The new building was opening up. You know, the potential at Kennesaw was still obvious, but we were a lot closer six years later to realizing it. There was still plenty of potential to be realized, but we were further down the road so he was interested in coming home. I knew Tim. I won't say that we were close friends. We had been on some programs together. Because of his father's influence on me, there was a sort of common cultural outlook and a certain feeling of brethrenship, which has gotten substantially [stronger] since he's been here. But he was one of our finalists and proved to be the person to be selected. That worked out extremely well. I'm glad that Tim has outlived me as far as Kennesaw is concerned and that I won't be required to head yet another dean search. I headed one other search; that was for the Robert D. Fowler Distinguished Chair in Communication.

TS: That's right; you did head that.

CA: That was interesting. They asked me to do that, I guess, because I had some experience in searching. I think they thought I was kidding when I told the dean that all my degrees were in communication and that I was probably more a communications professor than some of our communications professors were. But they asked me to do [the search]. First, [we did] a sort of strategic exercise [to determine] where to go with this chair. Do you want a classic academic model where this is a cloistered person who does research? Or is this somebody who's going to reach out into the community? They decided on the latter. I don't know how Mr. [Leonard] Witt is doing, but I hope he's doing well.

TS: I think he's doing a pretty good job, from what I understand.

CA: Good. So that's how we began to focus on family business. Once that began, a couple of things happened. There were a lot of businesses that were interested in what we were doing. There were a lot of potential sponsors—banks, law firms, insurance companies, accounting companies—that were very interested in what we were doing. In some ways, I had to develop more programs because I had other people that wanted to sponsor more programs. We developed a Family Business Academy, a summertime program for future leaders of family businesses. We developed our Georgia Family Business of the Year, which has become a big hoorah and a real love fest. [It's] kind of like what happened to the chair of private enterprise when I first got there; the word got out that we were doing this here at Kennesaw. It got out in part [because of a then-new journal] called *Family Business Review*, edited by a guy named Ivan Landsberg out of Yale. They did interviews with people related to the family business field, and Landsberg assigned one of his doctoral students to do an interview with me about this Family Business Forum thing. His doctoral student was named [Joseph H.] Joe Astrachan. Joe did an interview, and this was published in this journal. Pretty soon, all these colleges and universities and sponsoring organizations became very interested in how [to] get one of these for [their] university.

TS: So Joe actually got his Ph.D. at Yale?

CA: Yale. And the *Family Business Review* was published by an organization called Family Firm Institute, which is the professional association for folks who work with family businesses. I first went to Family Firm Institute to find speakers for my program so I was out talent-scouting. The meeting was in '87 at Brigham Young University, [where] I had what I refer to as my Jimmy Carter epiphany. You know, when they asked Jimmy Carter why he ran for President, he said, "Well, all these guys who are running for President came by the Governor's Mansion. I've interacted with them, and I figured I was as good as any of them." So I listened to all these people talking about family business, and I thought, "Gee, I'm as good as any of them." I did find some speakers, but my confidence for working with, writing about, and speaking with family businesses was increased. I got involved with that organization, and I wound up being its third president. We started sort of proselytizing for family business and starting up all these programs. That was nice. They started calling it the 'K' model, as I'm sure you've heard. So the model we set up here at Kennesaw has been emulated really all over the world now. One of the nice things for me was that many of these colleges and universities would then invite me to come and speak. I have spoken on various topics related to family businesses at about a hundred universities. They pay me for it. When Jack Dinos said, "Why didn't you franchise [the 'K' model]?" his son John said to him, "You don't understand, Dad. Craig is taking the Gillette approach to marketing." Jack said, "What are you talking about?" and John said, "Well, he gives away the razors, then sells them the blades."

TS: [laughter]

CA: So to the extent that I've been benefited by earning some speech fees and selling some of our publications and promoting consulting that way, there's been some benefit in that respect.

TS: Well, you're going to continue to do that, aren't you?

CA: Yes. We have a fairly substantial consulting firm that we've developed, and it's a non-transition to continue that activity.

TS: Now, Joe Astrachan, is he going to be the new chair of private enterprise?

CA: Astrachan. Of course, our Cox Family Enterprise Center—our poor starving one hundred fifty thousand dollar endowment—is now three million plus.

TS: For the family business?

CA: Well, that [includes] the Dinos Chair and the Wachovia Eminent Scholar Chair of Family Business, which is what Joe holds now. Wachovia said, "We'd like to do something." I said, "Here's what I want you to do. Give us $100,000, and tell us we have to match it three times. We have to raise 200,000 to get your 100,000, and that will give us a Wachovia Chair of Family Business." That happened; we went out and raised the money. Over time, we raised another couple hundred thousand, which made it a Wachovia Distinguished Chair of Family Business. Then it was again matched by the state, so that's another million dollars. Cox, of course, has made substantial contributions over the last six or seven years. So, when I say that amount, it's the total of the various endowments.

TS: So Joe doesn't need another chair?

CA: Joe doesn't need another chair. They've also created the Aronoff Professorship of Family Business, which is a tremendous honor.

TS: Is that privately funded?

CA: They used my retirement as another excuse to go out and raise another hundred thousand dollars, which is required to endow a professorship. [A.] Frank Adams, III, who is a finance professor, now holds the Aronoff Professorship of Family Business. This evening I'm having dinner with some guys who are candidates for the Dinos Distinguished Chair.

TS: Oh.

CA: I'm not choosing them; I'm just having dinner with them. They're just trotting me out for atmosphere.

TS: I see. As the legend, so they'll know what they're getting into.

CA: So we've attracted substantial resources over these many years. I'm very happy that we have a well-capitalized, fully functioning nonprofit business tucked into Kennesaw that is the Cox Family Enterprise Center and [that it] will continue to serve Kennesaw and family businesses.

TS: Well, it seems like you've been here longer than twenty-one years.

CA: In some ways, yes. In other ways, it seems as if but a day; it seems like it was just yesterday. Of course, you were there the whole time.

TS: Yes, I came in '68. But I did want to ask you, at the end of the twenty-one years, how you perceive the intellectual climate on campus today compared to twenty-one years ago?

CA: You know, I don't know if I'm a good person to ask.

TS: You don't? Because of your involvement off-campus?

CA: Yes, my focus has been so much off-campus, even as it relates to the business school. I go to a faculty meeting at the business school and don't know half the people there any more.

TS: Tell me about it; I'm the same way on campus nowadays.

CA: Clearly, I think we've always been committed to teaching. I think one of Kennesaw's strengths has been its commitment to teaching. I think that the quality of our students has improved markedly of late, in part because of the HOPE scholarship, and in part because of having dorms here, [creating] a community and being able to attract students from further distances. I think that there have always been quality people here, and I think we've attracted more. I think we're Prometheus; I think we only have our strength to the extent that we stay in contact with the earth. [chuckle] And it may be my bias, but I think [a strength comes from] being integrally connected with, integrated with our community. And I define community very broadly. I mean, I'm part of the community of family business which is of a worldwide phenomenon.

TS: But it's getting out there at any rate beyond the walls of the campus.

CA: And in a defined way. Constituency might even be a better word. I think [of] what's been done in history, which might seem an area where one could be studying things in isolation. But in many ways, the work you do in oral history and other things is very much integrated into your constituency. I think your ability to really grasp and understand and make understandable for others what goes on here is very much informed by and flavored by and improved by the kind of interactions that you have with this broader constituency.

TS: Absolutely.

CA: Instead of being Harvard in the Pines, which is why I decided I didn't want to be an Ivy League professor. In that sense, I think our direction was clear twenty years ago, and I think we're still on that direction.

TS: It was interesting that Mack Henderson would have picked up on that so early because Betty Siegel I don't think ever liked that Harvard in the Pines definition. But I think the faculty really was kind of proud of being a Harvard in the Pines back in the '70s.

CA: Yes. Well, I think the people who had that image didn't really quite understand what Harvard was all about, which is to say those guys who are leading research are integrated into constituencies of their community. That's what makes them effective.

TS: Right. And one of the things I figured out along the way is that these guys up at Harvard and Yale for years have been studying their local culture. And they just wrote these books as though they were writing about the whole nation. So, I don't know….

CA: And they still do. It's called the John Kerry campaign.

TS: Yes, right. So, I mean, reaching out into the community always was more appealing to me than staying cloistered.

CA: I think a tremendous amount has been accomplished here in twenty years. It's certainly been a wonderful environment that supported me and gave me the opportunities to do what I've been able to do. I appreciated it tremendously.

TS: Well, you've certainly been one of the stars, if not the star professor, on campus these years.

CA: Except that's so untrue because the star professors teach, you know. And I didn't teach much. There were years when I didn't teach at all. I have been of high visibility, if that's how you define star. And I've been able to attract some resources.

TS: Well, you know, now that I've been teaching fewer classes per semester—maybe it's self-interest, but I really do feel like in some ways we can have a bigger impact on the campus and the community when we're not teaching five million students all the time.

CA: Yes.

TS: I mean, you've certainly had an impact on some students—fewer of them—but maybe a more quality impact on the few that you've interacted with.

CA: Well, I've never limited my definition of what a university is all about to the students who happened to be enrolled in a given class at a given time.

TS: Exactly. Teaching is more than just what happens in a classroom.

CA: So we've reached thousands of family businesses with important messages through lots of media.

TS: I've been asking people that have won the Distinguished Teaching Award about master teaching [and] how they define it. It sounds to me like you've been doing master teaching. I think Bill [G. William IV] Hill had the best definition. A master teacher is somebody who teaches the teachers.

CA: Well, how many centers are there at Kennesaw now?

TS: There are quite a few.

CA: Well, we were the first center. And how many chairs are there at Kennesaw now? Not that we originated the concept of center or chair. I think what's great about it is that at so many places, a chair is a cocoon that endows somebody to do what they want to do. [The position] insulates them from accountability and from their constituency.

TS: Maybe it makes a difference if you actually go out and get the money for the chair.

CA: Well, yes. But even when I had two million dollars in endowment, we were still out there doing that [fundraising]. Again, it's this academic entrepreneurship. We had this small amount of money that we could leverage. If we reinvest—if we build our capital, if we develop our products, if we gain the support of the, dare I use the word customer, or constituent—we can build something of lasting value. The other thing is that I think universities rarely recognize the value of the things that are created in their own names. Just before Donald Ratajczak retired from Georgia State, I ran into him at the…

TS: The Economic Forecasting Project?

CA: Yes, the Economic Forecasting Project that he created. Just before he retired, I ran into him in the Crown Room at LaGuardia. We sat and talked; this was three or four years ago, and I was beginning to think about my retirement. What was extremely important to me was [that] this thing I had a role in creating would continue to serve the purposes that it was set up for. Don was very blasé. It was sort of like, "Well, whoever they get and whatever they do…." I'm just very pleased that there is a legacy and that it can go on. We've created something that has been meaningful—valuable—here and at other institutions, and to people who face the unique set of challenges [involved in] sustaining these family businesses. I think I've been incredibly privileged to work with family business owners who have this long-term perspective, who are building for the future, and who are themselves richly integrated into their communities. You know, I feel like that epiphany I had that night at the University of Pennsylvania has come true.

TS: I hear of colleagues every now and then [who] want to form a committee. They say, "We need more money from the administration to fund research." I think one of the things that I've learned from you is, "If you want to do research, go out and raise the money to do it."

CA: Well, that's what they do at Harvard. Ultimately, they raise more money than they spend. That's why Harvard's got billions and billions of dollars. This notion that "I'm a member of the faculty and, therefore, it should be given to me" is not what Harvard is all about. Not that the professors at Harvard don't have lots of opportunities and good working conditions.

TS: Well, you're going to have to come back as a consultant to tell faculty what they need to do if they want to do more scholarship, I think.

CA: Well, you know, I've said it whenever people wanted to hear it.

TS: Right.

CA: It's been a good twenty-one years.

TS: You're retiring much too early.

CA: I’m retiring right on time. Actually, with my time off for good behavior—my accumulated untaken leave—I think I have credit for thirty-one and a half years. I think I actually have twenty-nine and three-quarters. Obviously, I could stay, but if I were to stay now, I would have to come up with a new world to conquer. I mean, we’ve done it. We practiced what we preached about succession; Joe is well-established, and it’s time for me to….

TS: Time for the old man to step aside.

CA: Not to be like those people [I’m hired] to help deal with in some cases. I would have to figure out a whole new challenge within the context of Kennesaw. And since the Georgia Teacher Retirement System wants to pay me anyway, I’ll find other worlds to conquer.

TS: I’m sure you’ll find worlds to conquer outside of Kennesaw.

CA: Well, thank you for asking me.

TS: You’re welcome. Thank you for coming. This has been very enlightening. I’ve thoroughly enjoyed talking to you, going over some of these things and learning some new things, too.

CA: Yes. I’ll probably regret some of those things.

TS: Ah, you can always cut them out later.

CA: Okay. [laughter]

INDEX