

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH BOWMAN O. DAVIS, JR.

CONDUCTED BY THOMAS ALLAN SCOTT

EDITED AND INDEXED BY JOSHUA AARON DIX

for the

KSU ORAL HISTORY SERIES, NO. # 2

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Location: Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning House at Kennesaw State University

TS: Bowman, let me just start by asking you some questions about your background, where you were born and where you grew up and things of that sort.

BD: Okay. I was born in Kingsport, Tennessee, in the Tri-cities area of northeast Tennessee, grew up in that area . . .

TS: What year?

BD: I was born in '43.

TS: We're the same age then. I was born in '43 also.

BD: All right.

TS: And grew up in Knoxville.

BD: Oh, not far away.

TS: No, not far away at all.

BD: I spent a lot of weekends in Knoxville. [Chuckle]

TS: Kingsport's a nice town.

BD: Yes, it's a little industrial, but that is not bad. The surrounding area is really beautiful. I went to undergraduate school at East Tennessee State.

TS: Did you go to public schools?

BD: Yes, went through public high schools and elementary schools.

TS: So you went to East Tennessee State University—was it university then?

BD: During my tenure there it became university I think, yes.

TS: Did you major in biology?

BD: Yes, had a biology major, was interested in pre-med, and then I found out I didn't like sick people. [Laughter] I just stayed with biology and sort of oriented myself more toward research and teaching.

TS: How did you get interested in biology? Was there any influence on you along the way that . . . I mean, you must have known before you went to school if you started out majoring in biology.

BD: Yes, I had always had an interest in outdoor activities, you know, living things just intrigued me all along. I always had a curiosity about what makes things work, and living things are the ultimate in mechanics.

TS: Right. Were there any influences on you that steered you in that direction?

BD: Not really. Not early on. I had a major influence in graduate school, a professor there, J.D. Moore, at East Tennessee probably had more influence on my gravitation toward teaching. He was truly a master teacher. He had excellent communication skills, mastery of subject matter, and he was very influential in my moving toward teaching as a possible career.

TS: He encouraged you to go in that direction?

BD: Not really. I just sort of emulated his style of student motivation and it just lead naturally in that direction. Then, my major professor at Emory, C.G. Goodchild, had tremendous influence on my research interests.. He was an extremely detail-oriented individual and I guess left me with the impression that details aren't laborious. [Chuckle]

TS: Right. What did your father do for a living?

BD: He [Bowman Davis, Sr.] was a bookbinder at Kingsport Press.

TS: Oh yes. You've got a pretty big press out there, don't you?

BD: Yes, yes.

TS: They used to do the books for University of Tennessee Press.

BD: Yes, they did. They did *World Book Encyclopedia*. It was a large book binding operation and I think there was a paper plant right next door, Mead. We had a paper plant just across the street, so it was pretty much a package deal there. You could get the paper and make the books and do everything. I spent a couple of summers working in a plate vault there storing those lead printer plates and cleaning them.

TS: Was your mother a traditional stay-at-home wife?

BD: She [Louella Davis] was a housewife, yes.

TS: Do either of your parents have college degrees?

BD: No.

TS: So you're first generation then.

BD: First generation, yes. In fact, neither of them had high school diplomas.

TS: Neither had high school diplomas?

BD: No.

TS: Did they grow up in that area themselves?

BD: My father grew up in southwest Virginia and my mother grew up in [the] Kingsport area there.

TS: Did she have any brothers or sisters?

BD: Oh gosh, yes. I think there were about six brothers and sisters on her side and I think five or six on my father's side.

TS: Of their brothers and sisters.

BD: Yes.

TS: What about you?

BD: I just have one brother, John Davis.

TS: Did he go to college too?

BD: Yes, yes. He's dabbled in a number of careers. He's primarily in sales and marketing; [that] would be the best way to describe him. He's held several positions in that area.

TS: Did you feel like the schools up that way prepared you for success?

BD: I did until I got to Emory. [Laughter]

TS: Okay. Now, you have an M.A. from East Tennessee State. How did that work out?

BD: Strangely, it was in title only. They just didn't offer an M.S. degree, but it's not what the degree implies.

TS: So it's really a biology degree?

BD: It's a biology degree. They just didn't have a Master of Science, so if you had a Master's it was an M.A.

TS: So I gather you were more zoology-oriented than botany-oriented?

BD: Oh yes, yes. Zoology, more specifically physiology.

TS: Was it a zoology degree or a biology degree?

BD: I think it was a biology degree, yes, but at that time they didn't distinguish subdisciplines.

TS: But what you were really interested in was physiology?

BD: Physiology. Actually I was interested in parasite physiology and I was trained as a parasitologist.

TS: Trained after you got to Emory?

BD: Well, both at East Tennessee State and Emory. My Master's and my Ph.D.

TS: Is that what Moore's field was?

BD: He was a parasitologist, yes.

TS: So you followed him into . . .

BD: Yes, it was fascinating: I had never seen it before.

TS: Something you'd never heard of. How long did it take you to decide that you didn't like sick people?

BD: Oh, not long. [Chuckle]

TS: I think East Tennessee's got a medical school now. Doesn't it?

BD: They do now, yes, but I did a couple of visitations through hospitals there. It became immediately apparent to me that I was not comfortable around sick people.

TS: Well, you were smart to check it out.

BD: Yes, you do not want a physician who's not comfortable around sick people. [Chuckle]

TS: No, probably not. [Chuckle] How large was East Tennessee State when you went there?

BD: Oh, five or six thousand, I guess.

TS: I remember when I started at University of Tennessee it was something like seven thousand. It seemed like the largest place in the world to me at that time. But really it wasn't that big. So you went through, you got your Master's degree and I guess the Master's is the last degree you could get at East Tennessee State wasn't it, back then?

BD: They may have had a Doctorate of Education. You know, the typical academic progression. But to do it in the hard sciences, you had to go somewhere else.

TS: Right. Did Dr. Moore help you get into Emory?

BD: Yes, he was a student of Goodchild's, who was one of my professors. He pulled several strings--I'm sure behind the scenes.

TS: Well, you really graduated from Emory with incredible speed: you got through by '71.

BD: Oh, they won't let you fool around, no. They give you three years and then cut you loose, ready or not, here you go.

TS: And then you started at Kennesaw before you had your Doctorate, I guess, didn't you?

BD: Before I actually had the degree in hand, yes.

TS: Okay, you had finished everything. You came to Kennesaw in 1970, and, of course, I came here in 1968, so we both remember those days very well. It was a little junior college at that time: I guess my question is, what is it that drew you to Kennesaw? I would think with a Ph.D. from Emory you would have many options of where you might have gone to in '71.

BD: Actually there weren't many options.

TS: Really?

BD: Well, let's see . . .

TS: The job market had tightened up that fast?

BD: The job market was extremely tight. In parasitology there were, I think, two or three positions that I could identify across the country. When I graduated, there were four parasitologists from Emory in my graduating class. So, [yes] the market was extremely tight. Parasitology was not really an option there. I had to move on, take advantage of some of the physiology in my background and go in that direction.

TS: So by—that's the year Herb Davis comes too?

BD: Yes, Herb was at Emory, yes.

TS: Did you know him at Emory?

BD: Oh yes, yes. He came to Kennesaw, I think, the summer before I came out. I think he came out as a, what did we call them, a division chair?

TS: Yes, he replaced Wesley Walraven as chair right about that time. So, did he recruit you to come to Kennesaw?

BD: Yes. I think I'd identified three possible positions: one was in Oneonta, New York.

TS: Where?

BD: Oneonta, New York. It was in upstate New York. I went up for an interview and I noticed that all the ranch style houses had tin roofs. I told the driver I thought that was unusual, and he said, "Well, shingles wouldn't survive the spring thaw." So, I thought, not an option.

TS: Didn't want to go where a shingle couldn't survive the winter.

BD: Not at all. And I had another opportunity at St. Mary's City College in Maryland, beautiful along the . . .

TS: Sounds like a good option.

BD: Oh, it was great, but they had an extremely liberal program there. You know, that was the time when we were experimenting with degree formats. They had a no major degree where you simply completed a certain number of hours.— You didn't have to have an emphasis or major. You just took courses you liked. And as long as you met the hours, you got the degree. I didn't think that was going to survive, so that wasn't an option. So then, we were down to option number three, which was Kennesaw. [chuckle]

TS: So you came here in 1970. What were your impressions, when you got here at that time, of Kennesaw?

BD: In all honesty, I was just treading water until I could find a job. [laughter]

TS: Another job?

BD: Another job.

TS: So what happened? How come you stayed here all these years?

BD: Well, the congeniality [collegiality] sort of grows on you. We had a sense of community then that, as I'm sure you remember, couldn't be duplicated anywhere. After a couple of years you begin to weigh which is more important, and I opted for the congeniality. [Laughter]

TS: So obviously, in those early years, when we were a junior college, about all you're doing was I guess Biology 103.

BD: Oh yes, yes. Ad nauseam. Well, no, I taught nurses a lot with anatomy and physiology, human anatomy and physiology.

TS: So you did have a little variety.

BD: A little variety, not much.

TS: But you taught at least your share of survey classes.

BD: Oh gosh, yes. Did my tour in the trenches, yes.

TS: Students had an option of taking biology, chemistry or physics, and for some reason it seemed like 90 percent of them took biology.

BD: That's apparent, yes, because there's no math requirement. You know Math is entrenched in fears.

- TS: So you taught the masses, and apparently you learned to like it.
- BD: Oh yes, yes, the teaching was very rewarding. Each group had its own personality and different challenges.
- TS: Before we get too far into Kennesaw, you've said a few things about what Moore and Goodchild did to influence you. You referred to them as your major mentors when you were in school. Could you say a little bit more about what kind of influence they had on, say, your style of teaching or whatever? Did you copy them when you were in the classroom?
- BD: Yes, well, I guess I stole the styles or certain aspects of the styles of each of those fellows. J.D. Moore had a mastery of material and communication skills that was extremely effective.
- TS: So he was a good lecturer.
- BD: Excellent lecturer, yes. And Goodchild had such a depth of understanding of the course material that he could bring it down to whatever level he had to in order to communicate it, and that was extremely influential.
- TS: So you learned a lot about how to stand up in front of a classroom from them.
- BD: Oh yes, and, more importantly, how to get the classroom to respond back to you. Neither of them was, I guess, a true lecturer in the strictest sense of the word. They were more rhetorical in their approaches. They would ask rhetorical questions and expect to stimulate thinking in their students.
- TS: How would you define a master teacher?
- BD: One that churns out master learners. [Chuckle]
- TS: How do you do that?
- BD: Oh gosh, there is no silver bullet. There's a myriad of things that are involved there. You've got to have a knowledge of the material that is deep enough that you can draw upon [for] approaches or aspects that will appeal to any given class at any given time. You've got to have communication skills sufficient to impart that information. Nowadays, you literally have to be an entertainer. Students are no longer motivated by the material; lecturers have to be entertaining as well. They have to be part ham as well as instructor, and you've really got to get to know the students. You have to learn how they're thinking in order to level the playing field, so to speak, and meet them where they are.
- TS: When you say nowadays you have to be an entertainer, was it different in 1970 when you started?

BD: I was different. I don't know that it was. I was not as entertaining as I am now. I don't know that I was as effective as I am now

TS: Did you teach any at Emory?

BD: As a student-assistant, yes.

TS: You actually had your own classes?

BD: Oh no, we just team-taught. Well, you team-teach with a professor, and then when he doesn't show, yes, you've got your own class.

TS: So basically Kennesaw is where you've had your whole career then?

BD: Well, I taught also as a student-assistant at East Tennessee.

TS: But you haven't been a faculty member anywhere but Kennesaw?

BD: Oh no, Kennesaw was the sole experience, I guess.

TS: When we went four years, what became—I gather you started teaching physiology at that time--what became your major courses?

BD: You're challenging an old man's memory here. Let's see. I was teaching anatomy and physiology for nurses before the conversion, which I think at that time was a sophomore level course, and still is. I taught some invertebrate zoology, an upper level course for majors. But, I guess the major change in my teaching protocol was probably the addition of a pathophysiology course for nurses, which was a course [that] explored the physiology of disease states.

TS: So I guess your work with parasites fit in there.

BD: Oh no.

TS: Not at all?

BD: No, I haven't looked at parasitology since I left Emory.

TS: Really?

BD: Really.

TS: So in effect, you lost your field.

BD: Yes. Correct. Exactly.

TS: By teaching classes at a junior college for years and years.

BD: Sure. Well, in the sciences, if you're out of it for two years, you're out of it, period.

TS: Did you develop any other specialties would you say, along the way?

BD: Well, I sort of took it upon myself to expand my background in physiology, and I did a lot of research in neurophysiology and physiology of aging.

TS: Okay.

BD: I just took advantage of whatever was available.

TS: I know you got deeply involved with the Freshman Experience after Betty Siegel arrived, didn't you?

BD: Yes.

TS: Would you want to say a little bit about that?

BD: Well, it was a good idea. It was very difficult at that time to get faculty aboard for it. I struggled terribly to get faculty to teach it and to get department chairs to support it. But the principle and the idea were sound. It was just very difficult to handle.

TS: Right. So we have the course that we called KSU 1101 today: I guess it was KC 101 back then?

BD: KC 101 then, yes.

TS: And what did you conceive that course as being? What were you supposed to teach in that class?

BD: Well, ideally, you were supposed to teach primarily study skills, but it wasn't so much a teaching course as it was for building student-faculty relationships. In other words, you wanted to build a peer group among students, which helped insure their success. You also wanted to allow those students, very early in their careers, to establish connections with faculty members that they would feel comfortable going to should problems arise. So the plan, as it was conceived, was a great idea. It was just very difficult to implement. Our teaching loads were so heavy then and the course was hard to do. It took a lot of preparation to do it. And [the] faculty wasn't too eager to take on that responsibility, especially with no reward structure in place.

TS: So that was the primary reason you had trouble finding faculty support, you think?

BD: Oh yes, yes. The workload in that course was so heavy. We did a little research on it, and we knew we'd have a lot of faculty that would teach it once. But we had very few faculty that were repeat performers. Because, with the other teaching responsibilities, it was extremely difficult to justify taking that much time to put into a course like that. And it wasn't real clear that it was built into the promotion, tenure reward structure at that point. So, they weren't sure they were getting rewarded for all that tremendous effort, and you can't really blame them. I wouldn't do it either! [Laughter]

TS: Did you have an official title with that program?

BD: I was working with Nancy King. We were Co-Coordinator, I think, of the New Student Experience or The Freshman Experience. You know, the names kept changing.

TS: And that was kind of Betty Siegel's baby when she came, wasn't it?

BD: Yes, I think. I don't know where it originated, but she was a strong advocate of it and supported it very heavily. I got interested in it, I think, through a workshop. What did they call it then--faculty training workshops or something like that, where you take a weekend and . . .

TS: Are you talking about the Leadership Kennesaw or was it before that?

BD: No, no. I can't even remember what they were called at that point, but once or twice a year we'd get thirty or forty faculty members together and isolate them for the weekend in the library and go through different teaching strategies and tactics and things of that sort. I thought, hmm, most of what I'm seeing here will work. Even though I wasn't successful in promoting it, I at least incorporated it into my own teaching.

TS: Right, right. How long did you do that?

BD: Too long! [Laughter] I can't remember, eight or ten years.

TS: I wanted to ask you some questions, of course, becoming four years was a big turning point. Changing presidents was a big turning point with Betty Siegel coming in in 1981.

BD: Oh yes, the styles were completely different.

TS: '78, of course, was when we started teaching junior and senior level classes, and so she came not too long after that. I know she's told the story a number of times over the years of, I think, you going to her and asking her if it was okay to write books or something like that. Do you remember that?

BD: [laughter] Yes.

TS: Do you remember it the same way she does?

BD: Oh, I remember how she tells it, yes, and I remember the situation at the time. I'm not sure she was aware of the situation, as it existed before she came.

TS: Maybe we ought to talk about that a little bit because I really want to get into the campus climate and maybe how it's changed over time. What was the attitude toward scholarship in your college, your division at that time?

BD: Oh, it was virtually non-existent. If you did it, fine. But as far as release time to pursue it to develop ideas and things of that nature; that was non-existent. It was pretty much all volunteer work if you did any kind of scholarship activity.

TS: So it's not formally discouraged. Nobody says, "Don't do it." They just don't do anything to encourage it.

BD: No, but the problem—and I don't know if this was just rumor or whether it was a real fact—there was an atmosphere where we did not want outside involvement through grant monies and things of that sort because of the complications that were necessary in managing the budgets. At least, that was the impression. Now whether or not that was real, I have no idea.

TS: So, "Don't go get grants."

BD: Well, don't get grants that are going to require a lot of administration and auditing of record keeping and things of that nature. It's just going to be more hassle than it's worth. Like I say, that was the impression, but that could have very well been faculty rumor; I couldn't tell them apart. So, I knew that if I were going to write this textbook that it was going to require some outside involvement, and I thought it [was] best to find out whether this was real or not. So, I went over and asked Betty Siegel, and she was amazed. [Laughter] And I felt like an idiot! [Laughter]

TS: Did you ever get your textbook written?

BD: Oh yes. Seven years later. It took forever.

TS: Takes awhile, doesn't it?

BD: Yes. It took seven years to write it and it stayed in print, I think, for five years.[Laughter]

TS: This is a textbook in biology?

BD: Human physiology.

TS: Human physiology. And so did you use it at Kennesaw in the nursing program?

BD: Yes, we used it while it was in print.

TS: Who was the publisher?

BD: Charles Merrill started out with it, and then it went to Scott Foresman. The contract got sold several times there. As a matter of fact, I don't even know who owns the copyright now. It's been passed along for so long.

TS: So at any rate, what you're saying is that prior to 1980, at any rate, the teaching load is so heavy that that practically defines the job in itself.

BD: Sure, sure. Especially if you're a new faculty member right out of graduate school, where you have to develop all your courses. The teaching expectation was not only that you could do it, but you would excel at it. You not only had to be a teaching faculty member, but you had to be a good instructor as well.

TS: How many classes did you typically teach a quarter?

BD: I think it was three. But you add the labs to that--each of those courses had a lab with it--so that amounted essentially to another six contact hours. No, no, they were three hour labs so it would be another nine contact hours each week with the laboratories.

TS: So you had to be in the lab the whole time?

BD: Yes, oh yes. There were no lab assistants here. [Laughter]

TS: You were the lab assistant.

BD: Well, the institution did have a philosophy there that they put their faculty in contact with their students, not only in lab but in lecture as well.

TS: So in the sciences you had a heavier load than the rest of us did then, in terms of contact hours?

BD: Probably, I don't know. How many courses did you guys do?

TS: Three.

BD: Three.

TS: So fifteen hours is normal.

BD: Well, you see, credit hour-wise it's probably about the same because, they counted a lab, a three-hour lab, as only one-hour credit so on the books it looked similar.

TS: So basically, you did two hours--wait a minute, we have five-hour courses--so you did four hours in the classroom . . .

BD: I did four hours in the classroom a week and then three hours of lab; that's seven hours per course.

TS: So seven times three. So you were, you had twenty-one hours of contact compared to say, fifteen hours in history classes.

BD: But, now, Herb Davis really made a significant contribution there by allowing us to—how did he do that? He doubled lecture sections. He'd put two lab groups in one lecture class. So that way, you would do one lecture and then you'd split out two labs, which saves you, what, four hours a week there.

TS: Okay, so that gets it back closer to . . .

BD: Closer to norm, yes. But that was years in coming.

TS: So how many people were in the classroom then? What were the sizes of your classes?

BD: A large class would have been forty. A typical class would be twenty-five or thirty.

TS: Okay. So if you've got one of these double sections, that's forty and there's twenty in each lab section. Is that what you're saying?

BD: Well, I think the lab would run twenty or twenty-four. So they'd usually fill lectures to forty or fifty, allowing for withdrawals to bring it back down to what we could hold in the labs.

TS: So how many students would you teach in a typical quarter then?

BD: Oh, let's see, you'd probably have one double section and one single section, which would be probably seventy.

TS: Seventy students a quarter?

BD: Yes, but you'd see them both in lecture and then again in lab.

TS: Right.

BD: And then Herb also came up with another idea of doing an open lab, and that had mixed benefits. Administratively, it was ideal because then you didn't have to meet a specific lab commitment. You just had to put in so many hours a week in this open lab.

TS: I see. And as far as the students are concerned . . .

BD: They could come at any time.

TS: And so they didn't have to sign up for a lab from nine to twelve.

BD: Right, right. Now, the only disadvantage to that was that you missed the one-on-one contact with your own students because you may have someone else's students in the lab. So that had pros and cons. But as far as time saving, it was a considerable pro there.

TS: Okay, so when you started out, teaching was everything. What's the next phase in our evolution as an institution, do you think?

BD: You mean from where we are now? Or from where we were then?

TS: From where we were then to going toward what we are now, is there some place along the line where the teaching load becomes less?

BD: Not for me, no. [Laughter]

TS: You know, when you think about this now, if you have about seventeen to twenty hours of contact . . .

BD: Well, after Herb had made those innovations in the scheduling by doubling up the lab sections in a lecture and by opening the lab, I think those were about the only changes that affected our time throughout the rest of my career. We would occasionally get release time as the institution began to mature in its attitude toward research. They would give release time, but I don't recall a lot of release time for research. Most of the release time was done for administrative or committee work. At that time, institutional service was considered one of the major factors in faculty performance.

TS: I guess kind of what I was getting at was, you've got fifteen to twenty hours of contact a week. How much time goes into preparation and grading and things like that on top of that? How much of your week is devoted to teaching?

BD: That's hard to say.

TS: It's hard to measure those things because it varies.

BD: Right, you don't really know. You know, lab reports require an inordinate amount of time to grade. Testing on the other hand suffered because you were forced into objective testing then. You couldn't use essays any more because of the time factor. So we evolved the Scantron test mode, out of necessity, I'm sure. But, I don't know, Tom. We never had trouble filling up the day, you know, and well into the evening.

TS: So you may be up close to forty hours just devoted to your teaching, by the time you add all this up? Thirty hours, forty hours?

BD: I would think so, at least. Yes.

TS: So when you do service and scholarship, that's on top of a teaching load that already is what most people would think of as a full week's work.

BD: Oh yeah, yes, the workload was tremendous.

TS: Is service the next stage in terms of what you would add to your job description?

BD: To my job description?

TS: Yes.

BD: Probably not. No, because that was not one of my favorite aspects of academics. I did it because it had to be done, not because I enjoyed it.

TS: So scholarship became ?

BD: Scholarship I enjoyed, yes.

TS: Became your second area?

BD: That was my second area.

TS: Why don't you talk about that a little bit. You were talking about the lack of financial support or even released time.

BD: Well, you just do it pro bono. It comes out of your own time.

TS: Say a little bit more about what you were doing in terms of research. You were talking about it just briefly a little bit earlier in terms of neurophysiology and physiology of aging. Did you publish some papers or make some presentations in this field?

BD: Oh, yes, for quite a while. I guess in the middle '70s, I had known a couple of guys that were on the faculty of Georgia Tech, and they secured a grant to study the biology of aging. Well, they needed a physiologist. They gave me a call and said, "Would you like to play around with this some?" And I said, "Yeah." Well, what the institution did do to support that was to schedule my classes in such a way that I would have Fridays off. So for several years there, I would go to Georgia Tech on Fridays and work Fridays and Saturdays down there on research projects and then come back and do the teaching here for Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. That was a lot of fun, yes. And we, gosh, we got two or three papers out of that. The grant lasted, I guess, three years or so, but I continued to work even though we didn't have the funding to support it. When you run out of money you have to keep working in order to secure more.

TS: But at least a grant is what made it possible.

BD: Oh yes, yes, but it wasn't one of my grants; It was one secured initially by David Dusenbury at Georgia Tech.

TS: Dusenbury? Had you known him before?

BD: Not him, no, but I knew one of his colleagues, Gary Anderson, who is now at the University of Georgia. The two of them secured the grant. Gary had been a friend of mine for some time. So, I went down and played in their labs for awhile. See, we didn't have lab facilities here to support research.

TS: At that time?

BD: Oh yes. Our labs were all instructional labs; they weren't research labs.

TS: And you were in the little building that is now the nursing building.

BD: Right. So you can imagine.

TS: Has that changed over time? Are there adequate lab facilities for faculty research now at Kennesaw?

BD: There were for three or four years, but I think now we've outgrown even the new building. Office space is minimal now. Laboratory space, see, if we're going to train students in research, we have to have labs that can be set aside for student research. It's difficult to share labs like that because the next person that uses the lab behind you may not respect your data or your equipment, and the multi-use just doesn't work in a research context. So no, we don't have adequate space yet, I don't think, to do serious student research. We can do minimal.

TS: To do serious student research?

BD: Right.

TS: What about serious faculty research?

BD: Oh, that would be even more difficult because that requires you to isolate lab space and dedicate it specifically to faculty research.

TS: And it hasn't happened?

BD: No, no. Well, it's difficult to get the grant money to buy the necessary equipment. It's difficult to find the space to put the equipment once you secure it. It's really awkward to do.

TS: I really hadn't thought about it in that way, but you have problems in the sciences that we haven't really had to deal with in history and fields like that.

BD: Oh, yes, but see, Patti Reggio, you know Patti; she's a classic example. She managed to continue research in the environment here by doing it in such a way that didn't require a lot of lab equipment. She went the theoretical route where she could do most of her research through computer modeling and things of that sort, which you could isolate and protect. She was very successful with it. Now, the wet lab facilities here just were not suited for faculty research.

TS: The wet lab?

BD: Yes, the actual lab bench space with equipment, plumbing, et cetera and so forth.

TS: Oh, wet lab meaning you've got plumbing connected.

BD: Yes, as opposed to a theoretical lab that's done by computer modeling and things of that sort.

TS: Right. So it's really unrealistic to expect a whole lot of faculty research in the sciences unless it's done in collaboration with other institutions. Is that what you're saying?

BD: That's the impression I get. Yes, it's difficult. With the workload and the available facilities it's going to be difficult to sustain any kind of significant research. Now, that doesn't mean that you can't do research. You can always do research. But significant research that's competitive in the grant-funding environment is going to be difficult to do.

TS: You mentioned Patti Reggio and student research as an important part of the curriculum. Now of course, she's done a lot of that. Is this true in biology or throughout the sciences that this is one of our strengths at Kennesaw or are we any different than anybody else in emphasizing students working with faculty on research projects?

BD: I think it's unusual for a primarily undergraduate program, yes. There was a movement in academics. I think it probably came about the time the new student experiences [concept] was catching on. One of the best ways to mentor students is to get them into a faculty research program early. Just incorporate them into faculty research because they establish that mentorship immediately right there. So the two sort of evolved in parallel. And we were able to explore that. But we weren't the only undergraduate institution that did it. There was an entire national program promoting undergraduate research for the

same basic reasons. It's an excellent opportunity for an undergraduate student to get in some research experience. It teaches them that learning is not just the memorization of facts; it's actually the exploration for facts.

TS: How many majors do we have in biology nowadays, would you say?

BD: I have no idea. [Laughter]

TS: How many of them are involved in this kind of research projects with faculty, I guess is better.

BD: Oh well, it's getting more prevalent. We have faculty now that have research projects that are going that are encouraged to tailor those projects so they would be suitable for student participation, which means, well, it's sort of self-defeating because student research rarely leads to external funding. And unfortunately, research of the caliber that's going to lead to external funding is not the type that you would want students to cut their teeth on. So there are literally two major research avenues there that don't necessarily overlap. Research for external funding is much more rigorous and, how do we say, sophisticated than research that students can actually learn research skills with and things of that sort. So it's difficult to merge the two. Even Georgia Tech, when I was down there, most of the students that were participating in research were graduate students. I did not see a lot of undergraduates participating, a select few, but not many.

TS: Do you see us expanding our Master's levels programs at Kennesaw?

BD: I would hope so, yes.

TS: What do you have in the sciences in the way of Master's level?

BD: I don't think we have anything outside of education. I'm not sure. You know, I've been out of touch for two or three years now.

TS: Okay. Not that I know of. We certainly don't have a Master's in biology.

BD: I don't think we have anything at the graduate level, but I could be wrong. There's a new biotechnology program coming in [at the undergraduate level].

TS: Of course, the emphasis has been on programs that nobody else has.

BD: Well, and the politics force you into that.

TS: Right. Talk to me a little bit about the intellectual climate at Kennesaw as you found it and whether it's been changing over the years. You were talking about earlier how . . .

BD: There are two intellectual climates that exist at an academic institution. One is the professional intellectual climate, which is not very strong here, and then there's the more informal intellectual climate, which is stronger here than I saw at any other institution. In other words, the collegiality here where you get together with people from history or

English or political science or whatever and just exchange ideas around a table over coffee in the morning. That informal intellectual atmosphere here was stronger than I have ever seen at another institution. The professional intellectual atmosphere here left a lot to be desired, yes. We did not draw prestigious speakers, you know. Most of our faculty research was, well, it was highly specialized in a particular area. That is to say the interest is rarely shared by anyone else outside the area! [Laughter] But that's true of any institution. But I'll have to hand it to Kennesaw that the collegiality provided an informal intellectual atmosphere that was unequalled. I never saw anything to beat that and that's one thing that I miss most about retirement. You miss the stimulation of the over-coffee-debates and arguments.

TS: Right. I guess we ought to put on the tape what year you retired.

BD: Oh.

TS: It hadn't been long.

BD: No. It was '02, I think.

TS: So you've been retired two years.

BD: Two years.

TS: We were talking about the intellectual climate and you retired in 2002 after a career here of thirty-two years, I guess. We were talking, the intellectual climate—you were talking about the collegiality here being strong from the '70's on. Has it changed over the years, I guess I should ask?

BD: Oh yes, yes. It's deteriorated.

TS: Less today?

BD: Yes. Well, you'd expect that as an institution gets larger and, as time constraints become stronger, then you have less time to sit around over coffee.

TS: You were earlier talking about inter-disciplinary type discussions: historians and biologists and . . .

BD: Oh yes. You can always walk down the hall or in the departmental office and exchange ideas with colleagues in your own discipline, but the real stimulation came from getting different perspectives from faculty members across campus.

TS: My experience nowadays is unless you're on a particular committee or something, you hardly ever see people across campus the way we used to.

BD: That's probably true. Since I tried to avoid committee work, I really suffered from that! [Laughter]

TS: I see half the biologists over in the employee fitness center. I think they're the major users over there. That's about the only . . . other than that . . .

BD: That's true.

TS: I guess there's a little collegiality although nothing seriously intellectual going on over there.

BD: No, no, you can't engage in a lot of discussion on a treadmill.

TS: But certainly the biologists and chemists and so on are making better use of that facility than anyone else in terms of the faculty, I think.

BD: Oh, it's great to have, yes. You can't beat the price either!

TS: Have students changed over the years?

BD: Have they changed? Yes. They're less well prepared. I think they're actually more intelligent, as a whole, than they were back in the '70's, but they're less well prepared, if that makes any sense. The raw material is still there. It's just a little more difficult to cultivate it.

TS: Why do you think that is?

BD: I don't know. I'm inclined to blame early education for it. We have students come in whose entire concept of learning has become just rote memorization where they expect to be given detailed objectives, which they have to meet. Then you're expected to adhere to those. They want study guides; they want test reviews. In other words, they want you to do the work for them. The, I don't know what you would call it, the intellectual initiative doesn't seem to be there like it was in the '70's.

TS: So the demands on faculty's time have increased? They want you to do more for them?

BD: Oh, they want you to do more for them, yes. And I would assume, probably falsely, but I would assume that that comes from their early educational backgrounds.

TS: Do you find them more grade-oriented?

BD: Well, see, I've taught nurses so they've been grade-oriented all along! No, that hasn't changed.

TS: But they have higher expectations of what you're going to do for them.

BD: Exactly.

TS: You know, we used to have a whole lot of students that came in here with deficiencies in math or English. I guess you didn't really see them in the biology classes until they had mastered those deficiencies, did you?

- BD: Oh no, no, we would see them. Yes, we would see them. Just because they had met certain criteria to be exempted from a particular math deficiency, didn't mean they had mastered math. I guess the expectations were low enough then that mathematics weaknesses and, for that matter, grammatical weaknesses would still leak through, even though they had jumped through all the hoops in order to meet the requirements.
- TS: You won the Distinguished Teaching Award in 1988, I believe it was.
- BD: If you say so! [Laughter]
- TS: I looked it up today; it was 1988. Of course, you'd been here eighteen years by that time, and we were a four-year school at that point. Let's just talk a little bit about where you were as a teacher by 1988. Obviously, you had always taught a variety of courses because of the nursing program. But in 1988, I would guess that the bulk of your students were still the general education students.
- BD: I'm trying to remember. By '88, I think I was still involved with the Freshman Seminar Program at that point. I was teaching a pretty heavy nursing load—I think we were doing patho[physiology] then, so we had that. Plus at that point, I think by '88, I had begun some faculty research. Yes, that's right. I was writing a textbook at that point, and we had a limited amount of student research going then. Student research didn't really catch on until the mid-'90s. The department developed--well, I don't know, it may have been institutional-wide. I think at that point, it was a 4490 course or something like that, where it was a directed study credit. At that point then, we began to attract more students into the research labs then. So then, it really began to blossom.
- TS: Well, without you having to be too immodest, what do you think your attributes were as a teacher that contributed to this award?
- BD: I really have no idea! [Laughter] I really don't.
- TS: Well, maybe I'll just ask another way. What was your philosophy of teaching?
- BD: Well, basically, again, drawing back on the mentor relationships I had had in my earlier training, I just always tried to present materials to students in a context to which I thought they could relate. I've always had the philosophy that education is a simple process. It's merely a matter of understanding. If you can make someone understand something, they'll never forget it. You only forget the stuff you don't understand and have to remember by association. That, you'll forget. Anything you understand, you own. So I just undertook a development of lecture styles and material approaches to where I thought I had put content into a context that they could understand. It seemed to work; they seemed to remember it.
- TS: Right. Did you establish any close relationships with any particular students over the years?
- BD: Oh yes, yes. Nursing students are notorious for that. [Chuckle] When you turn the tape off, I'll tell you a few situations. [Laughter]

TS: That's probably the thing that ought to be on tape!

BD: Well, let me put it this way. When you train nurses, you've got to be awfully careful when you walk into a physician's office or a hospital. You may actually encounter someone you know. You may see them in a completely different context than what you expect! [laughter] So you don't want to engender any sort of ill feelings!

TS: They may jab that needle especially hard!

BD: They may find you in a very compromising position!

TS: Why did you stay at KSU all these years? You talked a little bit about why you didn't get a job, when you came in you were looking for other jobs . . .

BD: Yes, I was just sort of treading water until the job market loosened up. And, well, the place grows on you. You know that, as well as I do. Well, again, it goes back to the collegiality, the relationships you develop amongst faculty here. And, at that point in time, your classes were small enough that you actually got to know students. So, there's no substitute for that. A research environment, even though it's stimulating, doesn't compare.

TS: What do you see as the situation at Kennesaw today as far as teaching? Do you think we're doing as good a job today as we did say in the '70's? Or a better job? Or worse?

BD: Well, by nature of the situation, we have to be doing a better job because look at the demands that are being put upon you now. Class sizes are huge. You still have a responsibility to educate students and an environment in which educating students becomes increasingly more and more difficult.

TS: Are our classes larger now than they used to be?

BD: Oh yes, oh yes. And unless you lower your expectations of students, you have to be doing a better job because the environment is just not conducive to easy education. It's more challenging now.

TS: You had said that forty was a large class.

BD: We thought it was.

TS: What's a large class now?

BD: Well, I've been in lecture halls now with over a hundred and in a science course where you have to rely on student feedback in order to tell whether or not something's getting across that's difficult.

TS: So classes have really greatly mushroomed in the sciences in the size of classes.

BD: The lecture classes, yes. Labs still stay twenty to twenty-five students. I found over the years that most of your teaching seemed to transition from the lecture hall, where you rarely got to see the students because of the large size, into the laboratory where you got them in smaller groups.

TS: Oh, okay, so it's really in the lab where the real teaching takes place today?

BD: Well, that's not so much where the information is imparted. But the real teaching takes place in there, yes, where you actually begin to stimulate students into a mode of learning, rather than simply imparting facts. You can impart facts to twenty students or two hundred students, regardless.

TS: Does the faculty still have the same expectations about being in the labs with the students that we used to have?

BD: See, I'm not sure. Oh, well yes, now in the anatomy and physiology courses we still did the labs. But I think they were shortened to two hours instead of three, so it was a shorter time.

TS: And then our survey class has become a science class instead of biology now. Hasn't it?

BD: I think it has.

TS: Science 1101. You weren't involved in that?

BD: No, no, Ben Golden, Gail Schiffer, I can't remember who else. There were several faculty [members] who collaborated in developing that program, and it seems to be very successful.

TS: So increasingly your teaching load became upper division?

BD: Yes, it became actually more and more nursing oriented. I became more and more focused on the physiology and the pathophysiology and less and less on the non-majors, so to speak.

TS: What do you see as the future for where we're going at Kennesaw? Are you using a lot of part-time people in biology? Or at least when you retired were we?

BD: Well, I'm now a part-time faculty member. [laughter]

TS: You're one of those part-time people.

BD: I'm one of them, yes! I don't know proportionately how many we're actually using.

TS: But that's a good thing when we can ask retirees to come back and teach those classes, don't you think?

BD: Well, I hope so. It's enjoyable and I assume [it] benefits the institution as well.

TS: Right. Well, any last observations that you'd like to make about Kennesaw and your experiences here?

BD: Oh, it was a great ride, yeah! [laughter]

TS: What all are you doing in retirement now?

BD: Well, I had great plans until I injured my back. Now all of a sudden, I'm beginning to look forward to teaching again. [laughter] Golf's no longer in my future.

TS: Did you see any kind of evolution over time in like, you know, did you change what you wanted to get out of the academic world? Betty Siegel talks about Kennesaw being several different institutions since she's been here.

BD: Oh, it has been. That's what we always joke about.

TS: Do you feel like you've changed over time, I guess is what I'm asking?

BD: Oh, you have to, yes. As the environment changes around you, you have to adapt. We used to joke about not having to change institutions in order to advance your career. You can just stand still and the institution will change around you.

TS: Right. We went from being a junior college to being a four-year college to a university.

BD: And the expectations changed each time. The workload changes, so you don't have to change schools. You just stand still, and the school will change around you.

TS: By the way, I meant to ask you about the use of technology in teaching. Has that changed over the years? PowerPoint and all those things?

BD: Has it changed? Yes, there's a lot more of it. Is it more effective?

TS: You're grinning.

BD: Well, the jury is still out on that.

TS: So I gather you're not persuaded.

BD: Not yet, no. Most of the technology I've seen is just an extremely pricey overhead projector. Now, what has changed is the development of on-line courses and on-line instruction. I have participated for two or three years in an on-line course. Now, that's impressive. That's very impressive. I think that particular advancement in technology will prove fruitful.

TS: What's the course?

BD: It's a pathophysiology [course]. we just do an on-line version.

TS: Do you think your contact with students is as great on-line? I mean, you don't see them face-to-face.

BD: You don't see them much face-to-face. But through their writings and through their communications on-line, you get to know them just about as well. As a matter of fact, it's interesting. We do the instruction on-line but we do the testing on ground, so to speak. They come to campus for the testing. And it's interesting that they have to bring ID cards because you've never seen them before, and all of a sudden it's peculiar because you will have gotten to know this person through on-line communication, and your online perception doesn't always match with the person you eventually see.

TS: Right.

BD: I think that has potential. It's not cost-effective but it is . . .

TS: It's not cost-effective?

BD: Oh gosh no. The workload is tremendous. Well, last time we taught we had twenty students and we did it in ten weeks. I had read through 2,500 postings over the term period.

TS: So a lot more work.

BD: Tremendous amount of work for a very small number of students. But the students benefit because they are able to pursue topics more in depth than they would be allowed to in an on-ground course, which is usually paced by the slowest member of the class.

TS: Oh, I've found that e-mail has been a wonderful thing to stay in contact with students. I think there's more communication now.

BD: Oh, it is. Hopefully it will put voice mail out of business. [chuckle]

TS: Right. But in terms of PowerPoint and those kinds of things, you're still in favor of a chalkboard?

BD: It's just an expensive overhead, yes. Yes, it has more bells and whistles, and if it keeps an attention-deficit student focused, then it works.

TS: Maybe I'm disorganized but I find that the problem with PowerPoint is that I don't really know for sure what I'm going to say until I actually get into the classroom sometimes.

BD: Oh yes. If you're an experienced teacher, PowerPoint will drive you crazy because as soon as you put it up there, it locks you in to that particular format. I like a little more flexibility in the classroom. If the class tends to want to move in a particular direction, I like to be free to go with them. I don't always have a PowerPoint for where they might want to go. [laughter]

TS: Right. Well, any last observations? Do you feel good about your career at Kennesaw?

BD: Oh sure, sure.

TS: Any regrets?

BD: No, not major ones, no. It's been quite rewarding.

TS: Well, good. Well, I appreciate your taking the time to come in and let me talk to you.

BD: Yes, I haven't seen you in a long time. [Laughter]

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