

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH DANIEL J. WILLIAMS

CONDUCTED BY THOMAS A. SCOTT and DEDE YOW

EDITED AND INDEXED BY JAN HEIDRICH-RICE

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Location: CIE/CETL House at Kennesaw State University

TS: Dan, let's just begin by letting me ask you when you were born and where you were born?

DW: I was born the 8<sup>th</sup> of May, 1948, in Cleveland, Ohio.

TS: You're a young guy then.

DW: Yeah, right!

TS: Would you talk just a little bit about your educational background?

DW: I completed public school in the Cleveland public school systems. Both my elementary school and my high school have been torn down since that time. I did my undergraduate degree at a little liberal arts college outside of Cleveland called Hiram College in Hiram, Ohio.

TS: I was wondering when I saw Hiram College in the descriptions in the catalog. I wasn't familiar with Hiram College, but it did sound like a private school.

DW: It is a private school. It's one of the many four-year liberal arts colleges in the state of Ohio. We used to joke that you could look under about any rock and you could find a liberal arts college in Ohio. It ranked up there with places like Oberlin [College] and Antioch [College] and others. It was originally a Disciples of Christ school. Basically I did my undergraduate work there and got a bachelor's degree, actually a bachelor of arts in Chemistry, but it was an American Chemical Society-approved degree. They didn't give bachelor of science degrees in that particular school. It was all BA. I got married right after; we graduated one weekend and I got married the next weekend.

TS: Did she go to Hiram College, too?

DW: Yes, she did; that's where I met her. Dr. Marty [Martha] Williams. She's currently at Southern Poly[technic State University]. She was the chair of the biology department at Mercer University Atlanta before they closed their doors in 1990. We went down to the University of Georgia to get our Ph.D.s.

TS: That ought to be interesting in itself. Of course, you bypassed the master's and went straight into a doctorate; both of you went into the doctoral program.

DW: That's correct.

TS: That might be worth asking about. First, why Hiram College, and then how on earth did you get to Georgia from the cold country up in Cleveland?

DW: That's exactly why I went to Georgia! I had actually interviewed at Ohio State and went down to Columbus, and it just overwhelmed me. It was like a gigantic city in itself; it was a huge institution and that didn't impress me. Hiram was only 35 miles from home where I grew up. Of course, I was going to live on campus. They offered financial aid, and they had a very good reputation as a science school at that point in time.

TS: So you already knew before you went to college that you wanted to major in chemistry?

DW: Yes. The only other direction I may have gone would have been music. I turned down a scholarship for French horn at Indiana University to study under Philip Farkas, who was one of the top French horn players in the world. I had done very well in French horn; I had been in the All-Ohio Boys' Band. I'd been in the Cleveland All-City Band for several years as a second chair horn player there. Music was a love of mine and still is today. But I decided I really loved the sciences; I would rather do that for a living than try to make a living at playing French horn!

TS: It's probably a steadier income.

DW: Yes, it is.

TS: How did you get interested in the sciences, do you think?

DW: I can go right back to a sixth grade science teacher who just lit my fire with respect to the sciences. She was great.

TS: Well, one of the things we're interested in is mentors. Do you remember what her name is?

DW: No, I sure don't. I wish I did. I remember my kindergarten teacher and her; she in particular was the one who just got me excited about the sciences. She just made things come alive for me. And then there was a high school chemistry teacher; he was an old industrial chemist who was basically doing his second career as a high school teacher. He was just fascinating and had all kinds of great stories to tell. Again, he made the science live.

TS: I guess you don't remember his name either?

DW: Samuel Umans. I remember him very well.

TS: And you called him an industrial chemist?

DW: An industrial chemist.

TS: So he actually had worked in industry?

DW: Yes, he had worked in industry. I don't know what company; it might have been Sohio.

TS: Sohio?

DW: Yes, Standard Oil of Ohio. They've changed their name now; it's all part of BP or something. There were many industrial chemists in the city of Cleveland.

TS: Well, yes, because that's where [John D.] Rockefeller was from.

DW: Right. He was just a great, great teacher and mentor. He'd even let me take some chemicals home sometimes, which got me into trouble once in a while! Stunk up the house—filled it with smoke!

TS: What was it about him that made him a great teacher, do you think?

DW: His personal experience. He spoke out of his experience. He could tell stories from when he was doing this or doing that in the company that he worked for. He was the kind of guy that says just put your notes and pens and paper down. Don't take any notes; just listen. Then he told stories. And he weaved in the content in the process of doing that, and you were just, "Wow! Yeah, cool!" Then you could read the book and do the other things.

TS: Did your parents have a scientific bent?

DW: No. I'm the first one to finish college in my family. My father was a shop foreman with TRW. Actually, old Thompson Products in Cleveland, Ohio, which became TRW [Thompson Ramo Wooldridge, Inc.]

TS: What kind of a shop was it?

DW: It was a machine shop—making automobile parts. He had worked up as a machinist to that level. He generally worked the night shifts. I didn't really get to see him a whole lot during the week, but we did spend some special time together on the weekends, which was really great. He finished high school, but my mother didn't. She had to drop out to take care of the family, but she worked as a clerk at one of the local department stores. So they were both basically just high school-educated or even less.

TS: Right. Were they natives of Ohio?

DW: No, my father is a native of Pennsylvania, and my mother was a native of Ohio.

TS: What is your father's name?

DW: Arthur Hartman Williams.

TS: And your mother?

DW: Eleanor Bertha Williams. Eleanor Bertha Engel was her maiden name. It's German. We were a mix of the Welsh and the Germans.

TS: But I gather they were supportive of what you were doing.

DW: Extremely so. My father died when I was thirteen years old. He died of colon cancer. My mother basically raised the family and worked a full-time job. Our grandmother was living with us—her mother.

TS: What was her name?

DW: Mary Price. I almost gave you the old German; originally, her name was Preuss, which is like a double "s" in German.

TS: So you decided it was a lot simpler to get along with Price.

DW: Price, yes. So I was raised basically by my grandmother and my mother after the age of thirteen.

TS: Right. I cut you off before you actually explained how you got down to Georgia other than the weather.

DW: Well, believe it or not, my wife Marty is a native Georgian. She was born in Columbus, Georgia, in 1948. Her father was in charge of a tuberculosis eradication program in Columbus, a study through the [U.S.] Public Health Service.

TS: What was his name?

DW: George W. Comstock. He is still alive today and just retired from Johns Hopkins University in the school of epidemiology. He's an incredible guy; he's got hundreds of publications. He's world renowned as a tuberculosis expert for epidemiology.

TS: What's his degree in?

DW: He has an M.D. from Harvard and then a master's in public health from, I believe, University of Michigan. He also has a doctor of public health from Johns Hopkins. He's taught at Johns Hopkins for many, many years. At the time, I believe, he was with the Public Health Service and assigned to Columbus, Georgia, for the tuberculosis eradication program in the late '40s. He had just been to Alaska doing some work with the native Alaskans way up in Bethel, Alaska.

TS: Columbus would have been a booming place with the expansion of Fort Benning at that time.

DW: Exactly.

TS: But still a lot of poverty, I guess, that would contribute to the tuberculosis.

DW: Very much so. That's where Marty was born. He moved shortly thereafter. I think when she was seven years old they moved to Laurel, Maryland just outside of Baltimore, and I think that's when he took the position at Johns Hopkins University. Eventually they moved him out to Hagerstown in western Maryland, about seventy miles west. He became in charge of a field station for Johns Hopkins in Hagerstown in the public health building there. Just last year they named that field station after him.

TS: Wow!

DW: So he was honored. We're rather proud of him.

TS: So I guess the question is how did Marty get to Hiram College?

DW: Well, she was looking for a small liberal arts college. Her oldest brother went to Antioch, and her next oldest brother went to Oberlin. So those are two schools she didn't want to go to. She would have to follow in their footsteps. But she was still looking for—

TS: But that got her into Ohio anyway.

DW: Right. So I met her there in our freshman year. We dated off and on the entire four years, then decided to get married.

TS: All right.

DW: And then we moved down to Georgia. To her, Georgia wasn't a big deal because she was born here. But to me, it was like going, "Oh, my gosh!"

TS: Well, did you apply to a bunch of places, or you knew you wanted to come to Georgia?

DW: We had applied to Cornell [University]. We were looking for schools that had both a good ecology department, which is her area, and a good chemistry department. Cornell was one of those that fit the bill. I forget some of the other schools that we looked at. Ultimately, Georgia really fit the bill because, of course, E.P. [Eugene Pleasants] Odum is the father of modern ecology.

TS: Oh, yes. So that's what really pulled you to Georgia?

DW: Yes. Thankfully, Georgia also had an outstanding chemistry department. But E.P. Odum, everybody knows that name in ecology. He's well-known. So that was the big draw to Georgia. It was rather a fearful event for me because the furthest south I had been was West Virginia. I had all kinds of misconceptions and prejudices about the South.

TS: Yes, everybody was barefoot here?

DW: Right. Of course, this was right after I graduated in 1970. This was the end of the '60s, and I had hair down to here!

TS: Oh, no; I can't believe that!

DW: I did! I've got pictures to prove it.

TS: You can use those for blackmail some day!

DW: You really could. Don't put those on the Internet!

TS: I've got to see that; I can't even imagine it.

DW: I was SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) all over.

TS: Well, did Marty have the hippy look, too?

DW: Yes, she did. She had real long hair; we all had the beads and everything else.

TS: I tell you what: The faculty of that age had to be long suffering with all the students coming in in the '70s.

DY: They were part of it! They cheerlead it!

DW: There you go!

TS: Yes, they corrupted the youth, I guess. [chuckle] So you got to Georgia in 1970. So I guess you had a deferment as long as you were in graduate school.

DW: I had a very high draft number. It was in the lottery system at that time.

TS: I couldn't remember when the lottery system came in.

DW: My draft number was like 300-something.

TS: So you didn't have to worry about that.

DW: No. I had looked actually for some jobs in the chemical industry, but it was a down time for chemists at that point. So I said, "Well, okay, let's go on." And I really had in the back of my head that I wanted to teach at some point in time. I

- tried my hand at high school teaching. My last year at Hiram, I actually took a bunch of education courses to get certified to teach.
- TS: So you taught in Georgia, or you taught before you came here?
- DW: I taught before I came here. It was a practice semester, and it was a school just outside of Cleveland, the eastern part of Cleveland. I decided at that point in time I really didn't want to teach high school. I really wanted to go on for an advanced degree and try my hand at teaching college.
- TS: Right. So you're in a doctoral program, and you're down at Georgia. It's the 1970s, and I'm trying to think—actually, you got through in incredible speed; you had your degree by '74.
- DW: Right. Actually, it took me only three and a half years to get it done. My major professor was moving. He went on to work for the Office of Naval Research, but we were far enough along that I could get my program finished.
- TS: What was his name?
- DW: Kenneth J. Wynne. He was an assistant professor and probably not much older than I was. He was a great guy, just a wonderful mentor.
- TS: Why don't you talk about that a little bit?
- DW: He got me into research projects almost immediately, and I worked in his lab. I wish I could remember this [other] guy's name, but [Wynne] had a postdoc working in the lab for him at the time, and he had some graduate students who were about to finish up. That little family sort of took me in and helped mentor me along with him. It was just a great situation, and I really enjoyed it. We worked with some chemicals that had some pretty bad odors—we did selenium chemistry.
- TS: You're in inorganic chemistry?
- DW: Inorganic chemistry, right. And if you can think about how bad sulfur compounds [smell] . . . you know, think of a paper mill, put that on steroids and you've got selenium chemistry. It's just horrible!
- DY: Is that one of the components that our body needs?
- DW: Yes. Micronutrients. It's a good antioxidant. We do need small amounts of it. The larger quantities you don't need. It's fairly toxic and the odor is relatively [awful] in some of the selenium compounds. I would come home just reeking of the stuff, and my wife would say, "Change your clothes outside or do something!"
- TS: She was in the sciences; I guess she understood!

DW: Twenty years later I have books that were in the lab, and you can still smell a little of it.

TS: Right. What did you do your dissertation on?

DW: It was [about] making some new compounds of both arsenic and selenium that had never been made before, then characterizing them with just a small hypothesis that we were testing and then going on to support it or refute it.

TS: Right. Did Marty finish about the same time you did?

DW: Actually, she didn't. She finished about four years later. Her major professor didn't give as much guidance to her as mine did to me.

TS: Yours sounds like they really wanted to get you through.

DW: Get me through, yes.

DY: Do you think gender made a difference at that point in time in the discipline?

DW: That's a good point. It may have. She was a field ecologist, and at that point in time there was a lot of prejudice against women in the field. Of course, she broke that paradigm because she could handle herself as well as anybody else could in the field and still can! But, actually, at that time there were a lot of women in the research group that she was in. It was kind of an even mix of the two. I'm not sure exactly; I don't think she got focused on where she was going until about the time I was ready to get done. When I got finished I actually did a postdoctoral fellowship for her major professor as an environmental chemist. That was like switching areas again, but I was applying my inorganic chemistry to environmental situations. That was 1974-5, so I was an environmental chemist before environmental chemistry was cool!

TS: What was his name?

DW: His name was James E. Schindler. Like *Schindler's List*. She was on Schindler's list! He was at Georgia for many, many years. Then he left Georgia and went to Clemson, but that was after Marty had finished. When I was doing the postdoctoral, she was still working on her dissertation and her research. I was about to finish up when I got a job at Baldwin-Wallace College in Cleveland, Ohio. It was a position that's much like a Dreyfus Fellowship, except it wasn't Dreyfus; it was what was called a Strosacker Fellowship. I was the first Strosacker Fellow at Baldwin-Wallace College. B-W, as it's affectionately known, had an endowment from Dow Chemicals, and that's where the Strosacker Foundation came from. It was a teaching-research fellowship. I was to teach half-time and start a research program. It was all undergraduate, principally an undergraduate institution.

TS: That's kind of unusual, isn't it?

DW: It was at that time. So I did both. I taught a couple of classes, and then I got a research group going. I had funding to do my research through Strosacker.

TS: Was this like a one-year deal?

DW: Actually, it was for two years. At that time, Marty was still living in Georgia. I was up in Cleveland—well, Berea, Ohio, which is just outside of Cleveland. We were commuting back and forth, making late night telephone calls. So finally she got to a point where she had done all her laboratory research, and she moved up to Cleveland. Of course, when you are away from the situation, it puts more years between the time [you start and finish]. She finally said, “By golly, I’m going to get this done.” And she did get it done in ’78. She was also teaching at a school, Cuyahoga Community College in Cleveland, Ohio. Just like the river, the one that caught on fire! I didn’t set it! But she came up and taught there for a couple of years. She was actually an excellent teacher and still is today, and that’s where she got the love of teaching. So she finally decided, “Okay, I’m going to get this done.” She did; she finished her dissertation and defended the whole thing. She didn’t walk graduation. She decided “This is done. I’m finished.”

TS: Well, I guess she was the influence on you getting into environmental chemistry.

DW: Yes, she was, very much so. Prior to that time, the fields were so totally different from what I worked in. Synthetic inorganic chemistry—you’re in the lab, you’re making things, and you’re doing characterizations and instrumentations. It’s totally different than when you’re out sloggng in the mud, dodging snakes and whatever you’re looking for and taking environmental samples, which are really dirty and messy in terms of “what’s in this thing?” So it’s a totally different thing. I loved it; it was a different challenge.

TS: Great. I guess the next logical question is how on earth did you get to Kennesaw College in ’77?

DW: Kennesaw Junior College in ’77.

TS: That’s right.

DW: I had a situation. When I had just finished up my Ph.D. at Georgia and got all the paperwork in and then was hired by Marty’s major professor, I was diagnosed with cancer.

TS: I didn’t know that.

DW: It was a testicular tumor. It was one of the ones that had a very low survival rate, like 5 percent. It’s an embryonal carcinoma. That was prior to the drug Cisplatin, which is very effective nowadays for testicular tumors and also for breast cancer—terrifically effective. But it was just in the experimental stage at that point, and it hadn’t been on the market. So the doctor was going on the statistics that he knew. Of course, you’re just twenty-four years old and just finished your

Ph.D., and they say, “Guess what? You’ve got a 5 percent chance.” Of course, that threw me in a tailspin for a little bit.

TS: I guess so.

DW: But I had the surgery done at St. Mary’s [Healthcare System] in Athens, where we were. Then I had a follow-up surgery at Emory University. Then, I had to go through follow-up procedures even when I was up in Ohio. I had to come back down to Emory to do follow-ups every six months. Obviously, I’m okay. I’m in the clear [laughter].

TS: Yes, it’s been a few years since then.

DW: It’s been a few years; I’m a survivor—I give God the credit for that!

DY: Did you take advantage of that drug even though it hadn’t been FDA-approved yet?

DW: No, because at that point in time, the physician there at Emory said there were no chemotherapeutic agents that will touch it. So I couldn’t take advantage of it. And radiation wouldn’t touch it either. Fortunately, it was encapsulated; they were able to take it out. They were checking for further spreads, so I underwent a real involved procedure where they actually cut you open and do the retroperitoneal lymph node dissections to see if there’s any further spread. But there wasn’t. Had it spread, we wouldn’t be having this conversation.

DY: Had you had the drug, would that [invasive procedure] not have been necessary?

DW: Right.

DY: Has that influenced or affected your view of FDA approval of drugs?

DW: Not really. I can’t really tell you where in the process the Cisplatin was at that point. I really didn’t know where it was, nor did this physician—and this was Emory University Hospital.

TS: But you knew that it existed at that time?

DW: No.

TS: You didn’t even know it existed?

DW: I didn’t even know it existed. I think it was literally in the experimental stages at that point in time. Emory is pretty on top of things. Especially, this was an Emory clinician in the medical school and was going to be on top of stuff. I had the utmost confidence in this gentleman. But the thing it did do is render me sterile; that’s why we don’t have children today. But getting back to the original story, as I was coming back to Emory over and over again, there was one

professor that I knew at Emory, Ron Johnson. He was a chemist at Emory, and I thought, “I would love to teach at this place. I love the campus.” I still do today. It’s a beautiful campus, and I said, “Ron, do you have any jobs down here for teaching?” I knew the Strosacker was going to run out; I only had two years for it. He said, “No, but I think Kennesaw Junior College is looking for somebody.” I think one of the chemists—I can’t remember his name—went on to get a dental degree. So I was going to be that person’s replacement. So I said, “Okay.” I had already set up an interview to go to the Montana Institute of Mining [IM] in Butte, Montana, of all places. I was about to go when Kennesaw called me for an interview. I went down and met with people like Vera [B.] Zalkow and Frank [W.] Walker. As you remember, it was a tiny little place at that point in time with very few faculty. It was still a junior college, but I knew they were going to go four years, because that was the plan. Horace [W.] Sturgis also interviewed me—and Gene [Eugene R.] Huck. So I said, “This is kind of nice.” Those two winters at Cleveland were the worst winters on record as far as low temperatures and record snowfall. I remember a stretch of about thirty days that never got above freezing. It was mostly closer to zero! So I said, “Enough of this!” We both enjoyed our experience in Athens, and we wanted to come back. And that’s how I got to Kennesaw, through Ron Johnson’s recommendation. I actually called Montana Tech back—it’s called Montana Tech now, but it was Montana IM then. I said, “I’ve accepted a job already, so thank you very much.” The funny thing about that, just two years ago I ran a race in Helena, Montana, as one of my state capitals I was running in. It’s a pretty little town, so I said, “Just for the heck of it, let’s go down to Butte to take a look at it.” And I am so grateful I didn’t take that job!

DY: The road not taken!

DW: Right.

TS: It’s still not that impressive today?

DW: No! It’s a mining town. They still have active mines there, and it’s just kind of dingy in some respects.

DY: What do they mine?

DW: Oh, gosh . . . minerals. Copper, I believe, is one of them. It’s just a gigantic operation. Thank God I went to Kennesaw!

TS: Well, we’re grateful you came to Kennesaw, too! So the climate, the faculty and being near Emory are all factors that brought you here?

DW: Actually, the Emory connection still stuck when I got here for my first year at Kennesaw. It was still a junior college, but Frank Walker and Vera and I were starting to look and think about putting together a program for a chemistry major, a four-year degree.

TS: So we didn't have one to begin with, did we?

DW: No.

TS: We only had biology, I guess.

DW: We only had biology, and there were still associate degrees. I think you could get an associate degree in chemistry, but the only thing we had were the lower-division courses, like General Chem., Organic Chem., and one Qualitative Analysis course. I taught the Qualitative course and also the General Chem. I did not teach Organic Chem. Frank Walker taught all the organics. He was a great mentor, too; he was one of my earliest mentors at Kennesaw. He was just a terrific guy.

TS: I guess by that stage he had the beard, didn't he?

DW: Oh, yeah!

DY: Who did not have one!

TS: No, I remember when he first came to Kennesaw; he had very short hair and seemed very conservative. Then all of a sudden, he had a personality change, I guess.

DW: He did! This was like walking into a little community of chemistry regulars that sort of hung around a lot in Frank's office, and these were typically nontraditional students. I remember an ex-Cobb County police officer and a few other guys who were there all the time, hanging around Frank. Then Frank would have them over to his house for pool parties and volleyball games that generally lasted into all-night affairs because of the adult beverages! [laughter] It was just like a little community.

DY: I knew B.J. [Walker] very well.

DW: B.J.? Yeah. Great lady.

DY: Wonderful woman.

TS: Did you still have long hair at that time?

DW: Yes, I did. That was something else.

TS: I'll have to look back at an early annual.

DW: I think finally a couple of years later, I did shave it off. Cut my hair.

TS: I can't remember you with long hair.

DW: I may have cut it to come back to interview.

TS: It doesn't sound like it would have hurt you to have long hair!

DY: I was going to say . . .

DW: Maybe with Dr. Sturgis.

TS: Probably so.

DY: Did you have long hair, Tom?

TS: Well, it was more kind of like an Afro.

DW: I'll have to see pictures of you!

TS: I think I had short hair when I had my job interview. So you came into an environment where we're just starting the planning of a major in chemistry; you're really in at the beginning. Let's see; it was '78 before we offered any upper-level classes. So you're here a year before we were even allowed to offer a junior-level course, and then the next year we added the senior level classes.

DW: I think it was two years after I got here that we hired Patti [Patricia H.] Reggio. She was another person who was helping to design the program as we were putting together the major. She was a valuable asset.

TS: Right. How would you describe the intellectual life at Kennesaw when you got here in those early years?

DW: It had more of a liberal arts feel, which is what I liked—but, of course, of the lower division type. We were limited, of course, to a certain extent, but you knew just about everybody in all the departments. I knew the folks in English; I knew Joe Meeks [in music]. It was that feel that I liked when I was an undergraduate at Hiram College and then also at Baldwin-Wallace College. B-W has a terrific music program that rivals Oberlin College; it's an outstanding music program. And of course, you know my love of music. I would sing in the Kennesaw Chorale. We had a mix of people—students and older folks like us. Well, I wasn't that old, but . . .

TS: Kennesaw Chorale was a campus chorale.

DW: I enjoyed that aspect of it.

DY: Was Don [Donald W.] Forrester involved in that?

DW: Yes, and [R.] Wayne Gibson. They were very much involved with it. So we kept our music up on that aspect of it, and then shortly thereafter we found First Presbyterian in Marietta, Georgia, which also has a terrific music program. We're still members of the chancel choir today.

TS: So you've been in the choir all these years?

DW: Yes.

TS: A senior choir member! That's thirty years or so, I guess, that you've been in it.

DW: Right at it. But the intellectual climate—I liked it. I knew all the biologists. Of course, we were a division [of Natural Sciences and Mathematics] at that point in time. And the physicists. I think it was Charley [G.] Dobson . . .

TS: Was he still here then?

DW: He was still here. And biologists like Bowman [O. Davis, Jr.], and I think Kathy [Kathleen A. Fleiszar] came here the same year I did. And there were a few others that mixed in very well. The only regret I had was that Marty, my wife, couldn't be hired in also. Dr. Sturgis was a real stickler with respect to nepotism.

TS: Even though it's not nepotism when you didn't do the hiring.

DY: And you're not in a supervisory position.

TS: Yes. It was the same when Fred [S. Frederick, Jr.] and Carole Roach got married. They were both on the faculty, and one of them had to go. So that was the end of Carole's music career at Kennesaw.

DW: Well, eventually it was okay. Being in the Atlanta area, there are so many academic institutions around. Marty found Mercer University Atlanta, and did very, very well there. She loved the setting there and, of course, she eventually became chair of the biology department before they closed the doors in 1990.

TS: That was a shame when they did that.

DW: It was a very negative situation and one that really burned her out with academia.

TS: Barbara [C.] Karcher's husband was down there, too. Chuck.

DW: Chuck. Yes, she knew Chuck very well. There were a few other folks that were just some great people that unfortunately had to be let go because of that situation.

TS: So you really find it an exciting intellectual climate at Kennesaw because of the collegiality, not just in your discipline but across campus.

DW: Again, the liberal arts feel is what I loved about it; I still like that kind of setting.

DY: I think we tend to forget that interdisciplinary can be fostered by faculty just talking to each other. You don't necessarily have to cross your disciplines very literally in the classroom, but it's such a wonderful enriching environment.

DW: It is. Of course, that was still in the days when we had our faculty retreats in some remote spot like the north Georgia mountains. You remember those, don't you? [laughter]

TS: Yes. I managed to avoid a few of them, but I went to a number as well.

DW: Quite interesting.

TS: There are still some war stories about going to the Georgia coast.

DW: Yes. I missed that one, but I got to the ones up in Unicoi.

TS: What about Rock Eagle?

DW: Yes, Rock Eagle.

TS: Well, let me ask this another way then. You obviously had to do a lot of teaching; we all did in those early days. How did you keep up your scholarship?

DW: That's a good question because I think we were doing nineteen to twenty-one contact hours.

TS: Were you doing three classes plus labs?

DW: Plus labs. Yes. I had just come out of a situation where I was mentoring and doing research and also teaching on a much lighter load. I started making collaborative connections with Emory and also with Georgia Tech, out of the box. At Emory there was a fellow who is now vice president of research, but at that time he was a young assistant professor named Dennis [C.] Liotta. He said, "Why not come over and use my lab if you need it and the equipment if you want it?" He and I had common ground in that we were both selenium chemists. He was an organic selenium chemist, and I am an inorganic selenium chemist so there was common ground right there. So he said, "Yeah, come on over any time you want."

TS: Going to environmental pushes you more to the organic, doesn't it?

DW: Yes, it does; it really does. A lot of what I did as an inorganic chemist had a lot of organic components and still does today. Actually, my doctoral minor was organic chemistry.

TS: I guess really what I've been hearing from people in the sciences is that you had two strikes against you: One was the heavy teaching load, and the other was the lack of lab support.

DW: Exactly.

TS: So I guess that's the way you all were doing it, if you did it at all, was to enter into collaboration with people at research institutions.

DW: Exactly.

TS: I think Bowman [Davis] was going down to Georgia Tech

DY: Patti [Reggio] did hers with computers.

DW: She didn't need lab space. It didn't smell bad either. [laughter]

TS: Right. So you're going to Emory to collaborate with Liotta.

DW: Right. And then later on I hooked up with Dr. Donald Van Derveer. He did a special type of analysis called x-ray crystallography, which we didn't have the instrumentation to do here. Also, during the summers—and I had already started this at Baldwin-Wallace College—my major professor, Kenneth Wynne, who was now at the Office of Naval Research, hooked me up with another crystallographer at Georgetown University during the summer. So two years I taught an analytical chemistry course at Georgetown and did research at Georgetown. My first year at Kennesaw was my last year of doing that also. So I taught three summers at Georgetown and did some scholarship there as well, so I had that going on.

DY: I bet that environment was wonderful.

DW: Oh, that was really something else!

TS: Did you ever have any urge to go to a more research-oriented school at that time?

DW: No, I didn't. I really did not. I guess because I'd seen enough of what had happened to people at the University of Georgia, and including this guy at Georgetown University that I was working for during the summers. It was like a rat-race situation of having to write grants and get funded—and the pay wasn't all that great. When I told the guy at Georgetown how much I made at Kennesaw, he about hit the roof! He said . . . Well, I can't repeat what he said! It was like, "Expletive deleted! That's more that I make here!"

TS: At Georgetown?

DW: At Georgetown, yes.

DY: That's amazing!

DW: It is amazing. I was getting paid better at Kennesaw. So I said, "I don't think I want that."

TS: So you got a decent salary, and you're not pressured to do the scholarship at Kennesaw.

DW: Right. In fact, in some regards it was almost discouraged later on to do actual scholarship. You know, maybe ten years later or thereabouts.

DY: In the late '80s?

DW: Yes. We were told, "Don't write grants. You should be doing service work and not publishing papers."

TS: In the '80s you're hearing that?

DW: In your college?

TS: After Betty Siegel got here?

DW: Yes.

DY: That's very interesting. I thought that was just the humanities that were pushed to service. That is very interesting, Dan.

DW: I had to fight to get promoted to full professor. Actually, Leon fought for me.

TS: Leon Combs, who was the head of the chemistry department.

DW: At that time, yes. I had lots of publications with students' names on them [as co-authors].

DY: Yes, you do. They're beautiful.

DW: Thank you. But that wasn't what they were looking for.

TS: Why don't you talk about that a little bit? Regardless of what they were looking for then, it sounds like it's very much what Betty Siegel would like—that you're doing research with students. That's teaching.

DW: That is teaching, and that's exactly how I looked at it. I didn't look at it as sort of a career-advancement thing where I could just get all kinds of funding from all kinds of agencies and bring more money in. That wasn't my goal. My goal was to take a student like I had done down at Baldwin-Wallace College, who had never done any research before, and get them into the lab and realize that when you do research, it's not all the cookbook stuff like you're doing in regular labs. Things don't always work; I don't even know why things don't work from time to time. I can sometimes tell what they've done. Or sometimes, I say, "Uh-oh," and scratch my head along with them and then together figure out, "Okay, let's try this, and if that doesn't work, then let's try this." It really is an exciting synergy. Then finally when you do get something to work, and it's publishable and you get their name on the paper, and they're all excited, that's a turn-on to me. That's why I do it.

DY: I know this is semantics, but I would say that that's mentoring.

DW: Yes, exactly.

DY: And you had such a wonderful experience with that yourself so, of course, you wanted to replicate it.

DW: Exactly. And that has always been my teaching style. That's the way I like to teach chemistry, getting in there and getting down and dirty and hands-on. It amazes me, now that I am into the grant-writing mode—albeit kicking and screaming as I resisted it for many, many years—it was almost like a perverse pride to say, “I don't have any funding!”—but now that I do deal with people like this one researcher who is a top expert in the particular area of nanotechnology, he can't believe that I'm actually going into the lab and doing the stuff myself. He says, “I've got postdocs and graduate students to do that.” I said, “Well, I don't.” [laughter] I like doing it. I'm still a chemist. I'm not an administrator. I'd rather be in the lab.

TS: I might have been able to do chemistry if I could have sent somebody to do the lab work for me. I was the one that always blew up the lab because I didn't measure anything right or something!

DW: You'd be my kind of guy! [laughter] So that's the joy of [it]—that working together—the mentoring aspect, as you say—and a one-on-one situation. I even cherish that more now as classes are becoming bigger and bigger.

TS: You all have an incredible number of chemistry majors, don't you?

DW: We sure do.

DY: How do you account for that? *CSI*? [laughter]

DW: Well, that's part of it, no kidding.

TS: Kathy [Scott] watches that over and over.

DY: I do, too. It's the frustrated little scientist inside me. That's my favorite part of the show. It's fabulous.

TS: Don't we have one of the largest numbers of chemistry majors in the state?

DW: *The* largest.

TS: The largest.

DY: We do?

DW: We do. Almost five hundred. That beats Georgia Tech, Georgia State, University of Georgia, and Georgia Southern—all the biggies. We have more than they do.

I don't know where they came from. You hit on one of [the reasons]—*CSI*. We have a lot of folks that are just caught by biochemistry, in particular, because of the marriage between biology and chemistry. That's becoming a really hot topic in chemistry now. So a lot of people are coming in as biochemistry majors. We have an American Chemical Society-approved program in biochemistry which brings up another point. I think we got our approval in 1987 for our regular chemistry program, if I remember correctly the timeline on that. We were the first Georgia four-year college to get approval by the American Chemical Society (ACS) for their degree. It's called a professional degree. ACS approval is something that's not easy to get.

DY: So marketability. I mean, students coming in and saying, "Okay, I can take this degree and then I can get a job"—which is what their parents want them to be able to do.

DW: Right.

DY: That's our hard sell with history and literature, for example.

DW: Right. With the ACS-approved degree, you can go right into industry pretty much just like that; not a problem. It's not such a big deal for graduate school. You don't need an approved degree for grad school, but for industry and working in industry, yes, it's a great thing.

TS: But we had it before the University of Georgia?

DW: Well, I said four-year colleges. Universities had it; they almost would have to have it at that point—Georgia State, Georgia Tech and UGA had approval. But none of the four-year colleges: Columbus College, Valdosta, West Georgia—none of those had ACS approval. Georgia Southern didn't because they were not a regional university at that time. But we were the first ones to do it. You have to keep re-qualifying.

TS: What do you have to do to quality? So much research?

DW: So much research, so many publications. You have to have a supporting library to do that.

TS: So our library was up to snuff?

DW: It was up to snuff. We finally got it up to snuff.

TS: And you were doing a lot of publications, and Patti [Reggio] was doing a lot. Was anybody else doing a lot?

DW: Just us two.

DY: Before I forget, I do want to ask this question about the number of majors. Do you think that there's a correlation to our bigger high schools—your biology and chemistry teachers perhaps—are they encouraging students? Are students getting a good education? Are they coming to you well prepared? One, are they coming interested; two, are they coming well prepared?

DW: One, interested. Two, no! [laughter] For the most part.

DY: Okay, I'm not surprised.

DW: We give an exam called the California Exam at the beginning of every general chemistry class that is essentially a high school exit exam that tests the proficiency. We do have a requirement for our Chemistry 1211 that they have had high school chemistry at some point in time. There are forty-five questions on it; the average correct is eighteen. The highest I've seen so far has been like thirty.

TS: So what's considered passing.

DW: Well, it's not a punitive type of thing; it's just to see where they are. If we see anything below a ten or nine . . .

TS: You don't know anything.

DW: Right. "Try taking CHEM 1151 first because that will get you back up to speed again. Then come back to 1211." So [chemistry] preparation and mathematical preparation is awful.

DY: Well, I knew that.

DW: So, no, they're not really coming prepared, but they are coming interested. Sometimes if there's enough desire . . .

TS: Do your chemistry courses require knowledge of calculus?

DW: No.

TS: Just algebra?

DW: Just algebra. If they go on as a chem major then yes, of course, they will have to take that. We have a couple of high school teachers who teach for us part time. [Dr.] Martha Manly is one of them; she is great teacher—terrific teacher! But she says, "Listen, unless they've had at least AP [advanced placement] or IB [international baccalaureate] chemistry at the high school level, they don't really know that much." AP really is a mirror of what we do. I personally don't have a lot of contact with the local high school teachers. I have had some in the past, the ones at Kennesaw Mountain and North Cobb [High Schools]. I know a few folks there. But one of our chemistry education people, Greg [Gregory T.] Rushton,

whom we just hired last semester, is establishing more contacts there, which is good.

TS: Isn't [Mike] Petelle at North Cobb High? Is he in chemistry?

DW: Biology. We went to grad school with him, believe it or not.

TS: He has a doctorate.

DW: Yes, he does. Pic Petelle. He also goes to our church—First Presbyterian [in Marietta]; so I see him from time to time.

TS: Okay, so I think you've given us a good description of what the intellectual life was like when you came here. How do you see it changing over time?

DW: We're becoming more isolated, I think. We're less and less of a liberal arts emphasis. I feel it's moving more toward an R-I field—a Research I institution field—with all the emphasis now being put on scholarship and grant writing. In fact, in our school now we can't even choose service as a second strength.

TS: Really?

DW: No.

TS: In your school.

DW: In our school. The College of Science and Math. Service is a third [area]—sort of down there someplace.

TS: I didn't know that.

DY: I didn't know that either. I didn't know that was allowed.

DW: I've been at enough T&P [tenure and promotion] meetings to know that. Some of the old timers who are still around had a very strong service background. They are still grand-fathered in more or less.

TS: But the new faculty better do research.

DW: You darn well better do the research.

TS: So you say we've got a Research I feel; we're not Research I, but it's the way it feels.

DW: It's the way it feels. And the catch on that is, of course, your teaching load is not that of an R-I.

DY: What about facilities?

DW: We're busting at the seams with all these majors. The labs are inadequate. Dr. Combs and Dr. [Ronald H.] Matson and [others] who helped design [the science] building did as good a job as they could given the constraints that they had. They did a good job setting it up, but it still isn't good enough. It's a far cry better from the old nursing building.

TS: The current nursing program, which was your old science building.

DW: Leon Combs—I love the story he tells—when he first came to interview here at Kennesaw, he walked into our research lab in that old building, and he almost went home and withdrew his application. He said it was a nightmare. The labs there were actually dangerous, the teaching labs, because they only had one entrance and no exit; only one way in and out. If there was a fire blocking that door, we would all have been literally toast. So it was very dangerous.

TS: You couldn't jump out the window?

DW: Well, weren't those windows really narrow?

DY: The building had a catacombs feel to it anyway.

TS: You could make it through a narrow window!

DW: I could make it through, but some of my students couldn't!

TS: I'm surprised the fire marshal didn't close you down.

DW: Oh, I don't think he even came near it. But it was an interesting situation. So the new building was quite a welcome relief, even though the office spaces were smaller. I had to store most of my books and journals; I couldn't fit them in my office at all.

TS: In the new building?

DW: In the new building.

TS: Yes, that's what it's going to be like when we get to the new Social Sciences Building. My office is going to be downsized to about half the size it is now.

DY: Why is that? You can't let that happen. You must demand seniority!

TS: Give me two offices and knock the wall out?! [laughter]

DY: Yes! You run a center.

DW: So it's getting more of that feel. There is more emphasis on writing grants, and you kind of feel like a *persona non grata* if you don't. I only this year, because I worked for the last three years for the Army during the summer, am I now finally writing a grant to the Army Research Office to continue doing what I've been

doing. But three summers ago—I don't know if I mentioned this or not—I was actually awarded a National Academy of Science senior fellowship award—senior research fellow. It was to do work at Aberdeen Proving Ground—Aberdeen, Maryland, in finding environmentally friendly ways to destroy chemical warfare agents.

TS: I remember you talking about that.

DY: I read a little bit about that.

DW: Unfortunately, some bureaucrat up at Aberdeen screwed up the paperwork, and I had to turn the award down. It was a disappointment to me, but I was hired then by their subcontractor at that time, Geo-Centers, since I was already up there. They were bought out by a bigger company, SAIC. I was actually up there and starting to do the work because the guy that was sponsoring me as the senior research fellow said, “Why don't you just go ahead and do the work. When the paperwork comes in, we'll just switch you over to this paperwork.” Well, because the bureaucrat up there, some overpaid GS whatever, said, “Oh, yes, we can get him started in October.” And we said, “No, we can't!”

TS: Particularly not for a summer job.

DW: That's right. I've got my day job I've got to get back to! I said, “Oh, okay.” Then my sponsor just said, “Well, why don't you stay on with Geo-Centers and we'll pay you that way.” And they did. So I was up there for the full twelve weeks working. Then the next summer we did the same thing, except I didn't stay up for there for the full twelve weeks. I then had students working for me on a related project, not with actual chemical warfare agents, but with things called simulants—things like pesticides work very nicely as simulants. I had been working on a project here and mentoring them at the same time I was going up to Aberdeen and doing work with the actual warfare agents. Actually, I was never allowed to touch or handle the chemical warfare agent personally, which is okay!

TS: Why were you not allowed to?

DW: Well, they have what's called a PRP, Personal Responsibility Program. You actually have to go through training. There are army chemists that are actually trained to do that. When they actually do it—I was in the room with them; I had my gas mask available should something go wrong—they actually get paid combat pay or hazard duty pay when they are there doing the work that I'm directing them. I'm just in the room, but I have to get approval to be in the room. But that continued, and then last summer we did the same thing again involving students. I actually took one student up to Aberdeen last summer. He enjoyed it; it was a great time. In that project now I finally wrote a research grant through the Army Research Office, which will be paying me through Kennesaw as opposed to through the subcontractor. It wasn't actually a contract. I wasn't doing contract work for the Army. It was my idea, so they were paying me to do

- it. My sponsor gets loads of funding for this sort of thing; so he just put my name on the project and said, “Keep going.”
- TS: So it sounds like where we’re going as an institution is where you’ve always been. On the other hand, I was thinking when you were describing why you went to Hiram College, that what we were at Kennesaw Junior College was more what you wanted—a small, liberal arts feel—than what we’ve become. You might not have come here if we were what we are now back then.
- DW: Right. I often say if I wanted to work in an R-I, I would have started at one thirty years ago. If I wanted to write grants and do research, typically at a big postdoctoral research organization and have other people working for me, I would have done that back then. But that was not my direction.
- DY: With this move that we have going on—and certainly in your department with the number of majors, there’s this proliferation of part-time faculty—we’re getting a two-tiered faculty. How do you see that as affecting the intellectual climate of the institution?
- DW: It was hurting us for a long time. What hurt us was we didn’t get contact enough with our students in the very beginning so we could get to know who they are. With a lot of part-time people teaching labs—our major contact is in lab—Dr. Combs rightly insists that we be in the lab for the full three hours, that we don’t go walking off some place or sit in our office while one of our teaching assistants is taking over for us. And I don’t want to do that; I want to be in the lab with the people. The only time I’m not in the lab for three hours is with my directed study students because I want them to get to feel more independence. So I’m not there all the time. But I do check in, especially with the more dangerous stuff they’re working with! [laughter]
- TS: Right. So do you not teach the introductory chemistry class much any more?
- DW: Yes, I do.
- TS: You still do.
- DW: That’s one of my major loves in the fall, general chemistry.
- DY: I noticed that when I looked at your teaching schedule. Then you teach the upper levels in the spring. So you’re able to go in there and recruit or find your students that you want to work with.
- DW: Exactly. And I still want to stay with the freshmen. If I had to give anything up, I would give the upper-level courses up to the younger faculty.
- TS: The upper level?

- DW: Yes. That is one of my major recruiting areas. I can bring people in from that and working them right into a directed study program. But I love teaching the freshmen.
- TS: Right. What size gen chem classes are there? How big do they go?
- DW: Well, we have in the past had up to seventy, almost eighty.
- TS: Oh, my goodness.
- DW: Now they've put a cap on it. I think they've lowered the size of it this semester to sixty.
- TS: That's still large. What about the upper level?
- DW: Upper levels are very small. In my intermediate inorganic course there are only six students.
- DY: You can have that if you have those huge intro levels.
- TS: And then do you get credit for these directed studies that you're doing in terms of course load?
- DW: No. That comes out of our hide.
- TS: But you enjoy doing it.
- DW: Oh, yes. Even in the summer, when I've had two students register or one student register for two hours worth of Chem 4100 last summer, there was no pay from Kennesaw to do that. That's always been the case. It's never been compensated for.
- TS: I know you do a lot of teaching—you've done a great job of that—and a lot of scholarship. I know you've got just an incredible list of publications over the years. But your service has always intrigued me, too. Not only the service that's campus-related, but probably the type that you don't get that much credit for. I wonder if you'd talk about some of the things that you do. Like, I know you work at the hospital. Why don't you talk about some of your service commitments?
- DW: I do. As you mentioned, I'm a volunteer "chaplain" at WellStar Kennestone. I started doing that almost eight or nine years ago; I don't remember how long it's been now. I wanted to do it for two reasons: One, I wanted to give back, more or less. I feel grateful for being alive as a survivor of cancer. And secondly, I wanted to overcome a fear of mine, which is that I hate hospitals! [laughter] Absolutely! I'd rather take a beating than go to a hospital!
- TS: I knew about that because you called me up when one of our former neighbor's daughters had died. She had been killed in an auto accident.

- DW: Right at the intersection of our street at Chastain. We were there at the time, and it was a real rough situation.
- TS: So you basically counsel people that are in shock, I guess.
- DW: Yes, sometimes I do. If it's a real situation when I know I'm in over my head and that I don't have the psychological background to do it, I send them to professionals. To the chaplain.
- TS: Do you get training for that?
- DW: Yes, we do. It's an informal type of thing. You put on your little blue jacket—your volunteer jacket—they're blue at Kennestone, and you get a list of names of people. Actually, it's a sheet of each person that's in there, so you can take notes on that individual. Of course, you've got to go through all the HIPAA [Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act] stuff so you don't bridge confidentiality on the patients. I have to go through that kind of training for sure. Then [you] just walk into individual rooms and tell them you're from the chaplain service, and you're here in case they need anything. Do they need a home church notified, or is there anything you can do for them? You just ask them. Usually the general response is: "Well, no; I'm fine," or "My church knows I'm here." Or a second [response is]: "I'd really appreciate you praying for me." And I do exactly what they ask. That's been a wonderful experience. I have seen things now that I would have never believed I could have stood or even stomach! Some guy says, "I just had this operation, see?" And I go, "Oh, gee. Thank you!" [laughter]
- TS: When I was in the hospital at Piedmont, I must have had whatever would be parallel to it there come in. I guess she asked what was my biggest concern, and I just blurted out, "Getting back to my classes as soon as possible!" She said, "Okay" and walked out and that's the last I ever saw of her, so I guess that was the right answer.
- DW: That just triggered something for me. When I was at the hospital at Emory—of course, it was a real trying time at that point—a young chaplain—he must have been from the Divinity School at Emory—would spend a lot of time with me, just talking and just listening.
- DY: And that was important to you at that time.
- DW: Yes, extremely important.
- DY: Because you were young.
- DW: Yes, twenty-four years old.
- TS: Yes, you don't expect to have this happen at twenty-four.

DW: No. You're like, "I'm going to buy the farm!" at this point. [laughter]

TS: But your father had had colon cancer.

DW: He had colon cancer.

TS: So there's kind of a history in the family of cancer.

DW: Yes. And he died when I was thirteen. He was fifty-eight years old. Not old.

TS: Not any more! [chuckle] Used to seem old!

DW: Used to seem ancient! [laughter]

TS: I understand better why you got into this kind of counseling now.

DW: I do it now every Friday for just a couple of hours. I go in and do my rounds, so to speak, and meet some very interesting people. I think I mentioned this to you: I met a gentleman that helped J.C. Hyde clear his land for the Hyde Farm. I met him. I actually talked to his wife because he wasn't in all that great of shape at the time, but it was fascinating. I learned some of the history of the county.

TS: J.C. Hyde is the farmer that died about a year ago and had about 140 acres near the Chattahoochee River.

DW: Beautiful land. I really hope they can preserve that.

TS: I do, too. It's up in the air right now.

DW: Yes, it is.

DY: Family squabbles.

DW: But he wanted it to go back to the community—that was his desire—instead of becoming McMansions.

TS: That's right.

DW: But that's a major component of my service. The other service work would be, I guess, through my church—singing with the chancel choir and doing a variety of things related to First Presbyterian.

TS: Do you do the 11 o'clock service, the choir?

DW: Yes. And then our typical concerts. We've been on concert tours. We went one year to Scotland and toured the lower part of Scotland. That was just awesome! I said, "This is really mission work?!" "Yeah, this is mission work." Our senior pastor at that time said, "This is the only place I've been on mission work where I can actually drink the water!" [laughter] Then another year we started in Lucerne,

Switzerland, and went across through Austria and sang at some of the beautiful baroque cathedrals in those areas. We went down to Mirano in northern Italy, where you almost think you're still in Germany because they speak a lot of German—German and Italian are the languages. Just gorgeous places. So that was quite an experience.

TS: Are you involved in any of your chemical associations?

DW: Not as much as I used to be. I used to be active with the local section of the American Chemical Society, and I was in the past chairman twice of the chemistry section for the Georgia Academy of Science. One time I actively sought that position; the next time I was notified that I was elected about midway through my term! “This is nice to know; I guess I’ll renew my dues at that point!” [laughter] And then my other service work, I guess, which is a cross between professional—well, actually is still professional—is that I’m currently the treasurer of the Georgia Lake Society. It used to be the Georgia Lake Management Society, which is associated with the larger body of the North American Lake Management Society. What we do is we coordinate what’s called the Adopt-a-Lakes Program. Like you’ve heard adopt a highway, adopt a stream, and so on. We teach homeowner associations, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts—any interested organization that wants to adopt a particular lake or body of water—and show them how to monitor.

TS: Are you involved with Allatoona?

DW: Yes, I’m on the Lake Allatoona Preservation Authority Scientific Advisory Board.

DY: That was going to be my question, Tom, about Allatoona. Just the problems that lake has had because I live very near it.

DW: Right. Joe [Joseph M.] Dirnberger is the better person to ask those questions about the water quality because I haven’t really kept up with it that much.

TS: Is he involved in that?

DW: He’s involved in that. He’s also on the Scientific Advisory Board. He actually does active monitoring up there. We don’t have any active groups working up there actually doing monitoring of, like, different cove areas at this point. Lake Lanier has a very extensive monitoring program. That’s where our Adopt-a-Lakes Program [came from], but it hasn’t caught on in Allatoona yet. We could get you going! [laughter]

DY: Maybe it’s the economics because you have the homes around there.

TS: Well, you also do a good deal of running. I think we ought to talk about that. Of course, that’s part of the way I know you, too, over at the employee fitness center. Of course, I don’t run like you do any more, but I used to.

DW: I was going to say, I can finally get to first place in my age group. When you or R. C. Paul would run in [the campus Turkey Trot] I couldn't beat either one of you. [laughter]

TS: Not true. When did you take up running?

DW: About twenty years ago. A little story . . . my wife looked at me one time, and she said, "You're obese." I thought she said, "You're a beast," and I said, "Oh, thank you, honey!" [laughter] But she said, "No, that's not what I said!" I started hanging out here [motions midsection]. I became a couch potato, just sitting at home, drinking heavily and eating heavily, so it was just a bad scene altogether.

TS: I guess we ought to define what you were drinking heavily.

DW: Well, yeah; Coca-Cola!

TS: Right!

DW: An occasional adult beverage! She just [made a remark about it].

TS: Wives are bad that way!

DW: She didn't mince any words! I said, "Well, you didn't exactly fall off the Christmas tree yourself!" At that point she was a little overweight, too, so we decided we were going to do something about it. We got a Denise Austin video, and we did the aerobics stuff. We were bouncing in front of the TV one day, and I figured our floor was going to cave in if we kept doing this! So I said, "Why don't you keep bouncing with Denise. I'm going to head out and hit the bricks." I used to run a lot. I never did any organized athletics. When I grew up in Cleveland, basically most of our athletics were disorganized, like street football and basketball with all the accompanying non-rules! But I also used to run a lot because I lived in the inner city of Cleveland. It was a survival process! [laughter] I used to like to walk and run just about everywhere I went. So I just got out my old running shoes and hit the bricks. I thought, "Oh, man,"—the first hundred yards I thought I was going to die. I was way overweight, but I kept it up, kept it up, and kept it up. Finally I got to a point where I was running one day at Kennesaw Mountain. I had been running for a few years, and one of my students—I can't remember who it is; I wish I could—said, "Dr. Williams, why don't you enter one of these foot races, like a 5K or something?" I gave him all the excuses, like, "I might get lost; I wouldn't be able to find my way home!" He said, "Oh, you can't be that bad!" [laughter] So that's when I got into it, and I actually registered for my first race in New Orleans, Louisiana, of all places.

DY: Oh, the humidity!

DW: Yes, humidity! "This is in May! What was I thinking?!" Actually, what it was was that my father-[in-law] was getting yet another award—the Trudeau Medal from the American Lung Association; and the awards ceremony was in New

Orleans. And the American Lung Association, along with the American Bar Association, believe it or not—I don't know how the two got hooked up; you can probably guess—were actually having a 5K fun run. It was called the Lung Run at that point. So I said, "Maybe I'll sign up. I'll be there anyway." At seven in the morning in New Orleans in May: it's like a multi-sport event; you're running and swimming at the same time!

DY: Who sponsored it, Philip Morris?

DW: No. Actually, the American Lung Association did. We try to breathe, you know. It was actually a lot of fun, and I got bit at that point. Then I realized that I had been doing a lot of traveling for various reasons—my wife and I do like to travel—so I kept registering for races every place I'd go. Then I realized I'd been in a lot of races in a lot of states. I'd almost gotten all the fifty states done. So I said, "Okay, why don't I do this?" There are people that have run marathons in every state. There are a ton of people like that, so it's not such a special thing. I hadn't done marathons; I had done 5Ks, 10Ks, maybe a marathon or a half-marathon. So I wanted to do a race in every state capitol. No one else has as far as I know, to this day. So I went back to some of the states that I had already done and did their state capitols. Then I picked places like Bismarck, North Dakota. Actually, I had to go back to North Dakota to do a race, because I had done a race in Fargo. We had another chemical meeting up there. I had to go back to Bismarck and to Pierre, South Dakota and finally finished. I did Juneau, Alaska, this past August. It's a beautiful city, just a wonderful place. That was my last one.

TS: You know, back when I was running [competitively], when you ran a race, you were really running a race; you were running to win and to beat everybody. But it's like nowadays, except for maybe a few elite athletes, nobody really runs to win; it's kind of the camaraderie.

DW: Camaraderie. You see the same people at all the races, especially with the other goal that I've got, which is to run a race in every county in Georgia. I've done 140 so far out of 159 counties.

TS: So you have to organize the other 19.

DW: I'll have to organize the other nineteen. There's one coming up in Warren County.

TS: We've got some very tiny counties in Georgia in terms of population.

DW: Echols County . . .

TS: Probably the Chamber of Commerce would endorse you if you wanted to put a road race on—if they have Chambers.

- DW: Yes. Can you imagine doing one in Long County or Ludowici or something. It could be called the Speed Trap 5K!
- TS: That would do it. If you win the race, you get a ticket! [laughter]
- DW: That's exactly right! Honorary day in jail! [laughter] But that has been a great way to see the state. My father-in-law, when he was in Georgia, visited every county, taking pictures of the county courthouses. He finally gave that collection to the Atlanta Historic Society, but he's got some pictures of courthouses that have since burned down. It's great. I'm not interested in taking pictures of courthouses, but it's great.
- TS: Kathy [Scott] used to work for the Administrative Office of the Courts so she's been in every courthouse in the state. She would be interested in that. Well, I guess the question that comes out of all of this is how do you do it all? You spend a lot of time on your running. You spend a lot of time on your classes. You spend a lot of time on scholarship. And you spend a lot of time on service. Maybe you don't sleep. I don't know; how do you manage all this?
- DW: Well, I guess, the old saying is you make time to do the things you want to do. And that's it; I make time. To me, my most important priorities in my life are Number one, my spiritual life—my relation with my Creator; Number two, my relationship with my wife; and Number three, Kennesaw—my job. I try to prioritize things in exactly that way. So it is literally making time to do the things you want to do. There are 168 hours a week; you can find the time to do it. Occasionally, you do have to give up sleep once in a while! I know when I was going back and forth to Emory to do my research, there wasn't a whole lot of spare time. But you work it in. It ain't over yet; it's still a fun trip!
- TS: Do people ask you when you're going to retire these days?
- DW: Well, I like the word re-fire instead of retire! [laughter] I will actually [retire] in a couple of years. This grant that I have written for the Army is going to give me half-time release to teach and half-time to do the research. If that's the case, I'd like to stay at Kennesaw for at least two or three more years. As we get a new chair in and as brand new faculty are coming in, I like to be able to serve as a mentor for these people. We've got some great people coming in. I really enjoy them. I've enjoyed the younger faculty like Greg Rushton and Janet Shaw. We finally got another inorganic chemist, praise the Lord! She and I can talk. She's a young gal. But the funny irony about it is her undergraduate was at Baldwin-Wallace College. She got her Ph.D. from the University of Akron. I've more or less taken her under my wing, and it's been a great relationship there. I like that.
- TS: Good. Well, I'm at the end of my list of questions. Did you have anything else?
- DY: This has been so delightful.
- DW: Thank you.

- DY: How do you see the future of Kennesaw? We're in the midst of such change and shift right now. You've talked a lot about the intellectual shifts that have occurred and the shifts in terms of our numbers that's obvious, our grounds and that kind of thing. But from your very unique perspective, what do you think?
- DW: Well, for better or worse, depending on how you look at it, it is moving more toward the feeling of a big, state university—which, in my own personal feeling, is not where I really would like to teach. I think personally, [KSU President] Betty [L.] Siegel has done a terrific job. She is a great lady, and I have the utmost respect for her. I always [praise] her to everyone I talk to. I am very honored to have known her as a leader. No questions about that. It is the direction in which we are going that—I think my next—what I do when I grow up [laughter]—is I am thinking of retiring from the state system and looking for a smaller liberal arts college to go back to and teach.
- DY: Oh, how fortunate the students will be!
- DW: I do some other things in addition to teaching. I probably shouldn't mention this, but I have my own consulting business.
- TS: Oh, you should talk about that.
- DW: We actually show people how to get into business for themselves—basically, Internet-based businesses—and show them how to develop relationships with suppliers and get things shipped to you. Then we get a small percentage of whatever business is done through that. I've actually built up quite a significant amount [of clients]. I haven't been spending as much time on that. It's actually a joint ownership with my wife; she is active in it, too. But to have enough financial wherewithal, when I retire, that we could actually equip a lab in a small liberal arts college and just have at it. There's this one guy who was still teaching when he was 103 years old. I think it was Messiah College up in Pennsylvania some place.
- TS: Still teaching?
- DW: Still teaching at 103 and still mentoring students in research at 103.
- TS: Well, maybe that's what you'll be doing! [laughter] At 103. You'll have forty years at a private college!
- DW: Private school! A second retirement! [laughter]
- TS: Right. That was good.
- DY: Thank you. That was a wonderful answer.
- TS: Anything else?

DY: No.

TS: Have we left anything out anything we should have covered?

DW: I don't think so. I've enjoyed it, and, again, I am very honored that you would choose me to interview.

TS: We've certainly enjoyed talking to you.

DW: Thank you.

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