

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH MARJORIE ECONOMOPOULOS

CONDUCTED BY DEDE YOW AND THOMAS A. SCOTT

EDITED AND INDEXED BY JOSHUA AARON DIX

for the

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Thursday, 1 July 2004

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

TS: Marj, let's just begin by asking where and when you were born.

ME: Wow, I was born between VE Day and VJ Day, July 18, 1945. So, I'm before the Baby Boomer group by a couple of months.

TS: By their definition nowadays.

ME: I'm not quite making it. I was born in Pittsburgh. I'm the first of four children, and we lived in Pennsylvania until I was in the fifth grade. Then, we moved to Florida, and I went to middle school, junior high, and high school down there.

DY: Where in Florida did you live?

ME: We lived in Pompano Beach. I grew up under the sea grape trees on the ocean before it was all built up. It was a real nice era. It's changed a lot; it's different.

TS: So, you all got there fairly early then.

ME: Yes, pretty early, it was in the middle '50s.

TS: But, that would explain why you went to Florida State for your bachelor's degree. Did you get your bachelor's in education?

ME: Yes, Mathematics Education.

TS: And then started teaching.

ME: And I met Vassilis.

TS: You met him while you were working on your bachelor's?

ME: At FSU.

TS: I noticed that he got his masters at Florida State the same year you got your bachelor's.

ME: Right. That's how we met; he was a graduate student, and I was an undergraduate. His roommate was torturing him for dating an undergraduate; he thought that was terrible!

TS: You got your bachelor's. You got out and taught awhile. Didn't you?

ME: Our first job [was] together—he got a job in Statesboro teaching at Georgia Southern-- and in those days, I hate to say it this way, but they got me a job at the high school. They sort of introduced me, and paved the way. I was a math teacher, so it wasn't that hard to find a position. They helped facilitate that, once they wanted him. He had his master's degree, and he was a new instructor. It was before they had a football team! [laughter] It was a little, small, sleepy, southern Georgia town. I was kind of wondering if we should move to Georgia; it just sounded so rural. Even having lived in Tallahassee for four years, Georgia just sounded real . . .

DY: It was in South Georgia and still is.

TS: Well, one of the things that we've been doing with these interviews is talk about mentors, who inspired you as you were along your way. It could be public school, college, or graduate school teachers. Did you have any particular mentors that you thought were inspirations along the way?

ME: Yes, I did. I had a high school math teacher and a high school English teacher who had that passion and that love for their subject and for kids. My English teacher actually taught Latin also. I had a dose of her twice a day, for so many years. Both of them were instrumental—I knew I was going to be a teacher for a long time.

TS: You always knew that?

ME: I felt as a kid that I had a choice, as a woman: nurse, secretary, and teacher. That was basically what you selected from. I did do some work in a summer setting in the hospital, and I learned how to be a nurse's aide to see if that was it.

DY: You were smart to do that.

ME: I knew I didn't want to be a secretary. I didn't have to do much testing the waters on that. But it was just a matter of what subject would I teach, and my two choices were English and math. Interestingly enough, those were the two people that had inspired me. I took the easy way out. I took the short way out because it was much easier to do math than it was to write all those big papers! [laughter]

DY: Maybe for you! Not for some of us!

ME: So, I became a math major in college.

TS: Well, in terms of marketability, I would think math too.

ME: That probably might have been helpful.

TS: So what was Vassilis doing in Florida in '67? Why don't you talk a little bit about him? He was born and grew up in Greece, and got his bachelor's degree from a university in Greece, in Athens.

ME: He was some kind of clerk with an import-export business, and it was sort of a menial job. His degree was in political science, and he always wanted to come to the U.S. to study. He got a Fulbright Scholarship, and they paid his expenses to travel; they put him on a boat—I know this is giving the immigrant image—and it was like a two week trip. He had a sister who lived in Canada at the time—I think she was in Canada, I'm not sure if she was in Canada or Baltimore. He met up with her. She was married, and in the States. Then, he got an assistantship to come to Florida State.

DY: What part of Greece did he grow up in, Marj?

ME: He grew up in Kalamata, which is in south Greece; it's across the mountain from Sparta.

DY: Right. I've been to Sparta; I have not been to Kalamata.

ME: If you see Kalamata Olives, they grow in that area. If I spelled it wrong, you can check a jar of olives. [Vassilis'] father was a teacher, and he always had that learning business. He was a very respected member of the community, and the teacher of the village; it was a small town, not a village.

TS: And what did his father teach?

ME: Religion. He was [the country's] equivalent to a lay preacher. He taught high school and his subject was religion, religious topics.

TS: I remember Vassilis, telling me years ago, about growing up at the time of the war in Greece, when the Communists were trying to topple the government, right after World War II, and the time of the Truman Doctrine. I think that's where he lost his leg, isn't it? Didn't he step on a mine or something?

ME: Yes. There were a group of children who were—some of this I may not be accurate on but it's the image I have—going home from school, and there were some of them that were more brazen than others. He was standing back, and there were two kids messing with an uncovered, unexploded mine. That's basically the accident. The two kids that were over there with the sticks were killed, and then several were injured. There is a short personal story about [how] he lost the leg, and another kid was injured very seriously, as well. It was after the War, and there weren't a lot of supplies and medical things. He was about probably ten or eleven at the time, and so they had these two kids, both needed antibiotics. They had one dose of antibiotics, which the guys in charge ended up deciding to split it. Both kids survived. Vassilis said his family had picked out the coffin. It was a really serious injury, and they almost lost him on that. Later he went to England there to get a prosthesis—I'm wrong about the age; he was eleven I think when he got the leg.

TS: He was born in '38, is that right?

ME: '37.

TS: '37. The War was in '47. At least from World War II, the Truman Doctrine was '47.

ME: Yes, he was probably ten or eleven, I guess.

TS: So they couldn't fit him with a leg in Greece at that time?

ME: They didn't have the technology, and they had too many folks that were injured. Kids weren't high on the list of priorities. He actually went and lived with a Greek family in England for about a year-and-a-half, and there was another little fellow who had lost the other leg. They'd take the pair of them, and buy one pair of shoes! [chuckle] This fellow lives in Australia because Kostaki went to meet him for the first time, after Vassilis passed away. The kids grew up together, and they stayed in contact all those years. But the family in England was a good family who helped these kids. They went to school in England for a little while, until they took care of him there. It would be hard to let your kid go to another place like that. But that's where he got his first leg. He was on crutches before that. I can't remember the timing exactly, but he was a young boy.

TS: So about how old was he when he got on the boat to come to America or Canada?

ME: He must have been twenty-something, mid-twenties.

TS: He's out of college.

ME: He came in '63 so . . .

TS: Twenty-six, I guess, or would have been twenty-six that year. So he comes here in '63, and what does he do once he gets to America?

ME: Well, he stayed with his sister for like a week or something to get into the country; then, he moved to Tallahassee.

TS: Why?

ME: To go to school. He came as a Fulbright Scholar to go to school. He came as an exchange student. In fact, he was an exchange student; he was destined to go back. He came directly to Tallahassee as a student.

TS: I see. Which sister was it in Canada?

ME: Kiki.

TS: Okay. That's going to be a connection later on to bring him to Kennesaw, I guess. Toli Ziros had been teaching here before he came [to Kennesaw].

ME: Oh, that could be true, yes.

TS: I guess that's where he got the idea of applying to Kennesaw. Wasn't it?

ME: Yes, that's a possibility. I don't know exactly.

TS: Okay. So, how did you all meet--if he's in sociology and you're in math education?

ME: Yes, he was a graduate student in sociology working on his master's, and I was an undergraduate. Let's see, we met when I was a sophomore. I went to one of these little international exhibit things, and he was behind the booth. We chatted briefly, just a "Hello," and "I don't know anything about your country, tell me about your country" kind of thing. And then later, I saw him again in a little coffee shop, sitting. It was just a casual happenstance that we met.

TS: So you went to Statesboro, and that would have been '67 that you started there. How long did you stay in Statesboro?

ME: Let's see, I should have brought my memory bank with all my dates on it.

TS: Well, I know you got a master's by '73 at Emory, so I assume you didn't stay a long time.

ME: No, we left; I tell you because I can tell you dates by way of children because Kostaki was born in Christmas of '69. Vassilis taught three years there, and I taught two years. We left in '70 with a small child so that he could finish his Ph.D. Well, actually begin his Ph.D. The two of us basically worked, and saved enough money to be able to go back to school. That was the goal—boy I date myself on this—but I was going to be the housewife and mom; after the kids came, I would stay home, tend to toddlers, and all that kind of stuff. [laughter]

DY: That's still done, mom.

ME: Little did I know that wasn't going to be our destiny. When we moved to Emory, I was not working; I was a housewife taking care of a small kid and [Vassilis] was a student. We, effectively, had zero income. He didn't get the fellowship or scholarship that he had hoped to get. We basically spent all of our money in the first year. We were hoping that he would pick up something in the next year, and he did; he got an assistantship once they met him, knew his work, things like that.

TS: So you got a MAT, a Master of Arts in Teaching, in Emory in '73. Were you thinking about teaching on the college level already when you got the MAT degree? Was that geared toward college?

ME: Well, no. What happened was being a housewife and mother was not satisfactory for our family stability, and Vassilis basically said, "Go to work, go to school, do something, you're driving us crazy." He said this with a small kid. I really didn't have any ambition to do anything, but it made sense to go to school. I was going to take one class, but at that point I believed that a master's degree was for smart people, and that I really wasn't possibly a candidate for that. I [had a] very low self-esteem. [I was] not real adventurous. So Vassilis was a big push to me getting out of the house. But an MAT at Emory, it's not what we call an MAT today; it's not what I'd call an MAT here. In our environment, it would be a degree to learn to be a teacher if you had a degree in just like say, straight math. What it was at Emory was exactly the opposite, and I still don't know who was right and who was wrong. I took almost all math courses and almost no

education courses because I already had a degree in mathematics education. So they really added a high level of mathematics.

DY: Expertise, yes. Specialty area.

ME: In a graduate level course, courses that I'd never known existed, fields that I didn't know about. It was really interesting, and I enjoyed being a student.

DY: So you were intellectually engaged, then.

ME: Yes, and I worked part-time to be able to afford that; I worked at a day care center, and I had a small kid that I plopped in the middle of that. Actually, it was the first Montessori school that was expanding to daycare in Atlanta.

DY: Really? In the Emory area?

ME: It was over on Edgewood Avenue, and they had rented an old building for a dollar a year or something. It was a Montessori school with an attached daycare. I was the assistant to the teacher. I wasn't qualified to be a Montessori teacher; I was kind of a teacher's aide. That was a good experience; I learned a lot about little kids and Montessori schools.

DY: I like Montessori; my daughter went to Montessori. Very interesting system, isn't it?

ME: It really is. I didn't mean to get off the subject.

TS: No, that's all right, that's great. Let's see, I know you got your doctorate. You went on to Georgia State to get a doctorate.

ME: Yes, what happened was my mentor professor moved from Emory to Georgia State, and he took us with him. I actually got my Ed.S., which is an education degree, specialist degree which is about half way. But in the meantime we had moved to Milledgeville, so I got my Ed.S. and doctorate degree long distance. I commuted 100 miles each way.

TS: So you went to Milledgeville before Vassilis got his doctorate?

ME: Oh yes. He left ABD, and that data stayed under the bed for about four years before I could get him to finish so I could start. [laughter] Vassilis was a procrastinator, if you knew him.

TS: So that explains why there's ten years between his master's and his doctorate.

ME: I'm trying to think. When we finished—when did it say I got my master's?

TS: You got your master's in '73.

ME: I think that's when we moved to Milledgeville, the year after that.

TS: So he's at Georgia College?

ME: Yes, we were at Georgia College for six years.

TS: So both of you are doing long distance degrees then.

ME: Yes. He was mostly; he finished all his course work before we went there. He only had his dissertation.

TS: Oh, I see. So it's just a matter of writing his dissertation. Well, I know about that when you're working full time.

ME: It's hard.

TS: He got his doctorate in '77, and then you got your doctorate in '78; you [were] both doing it long distance. I guess it was harder for you because you were still taking course work.

ME: I was taking courses. But in the middle of all that, in '75, we had a second kid, Andreas.

TS: Well, it must have been incredibly difficult to go through a doctoral program when you had young children, especially a baby in hand.

ME: Yes.

TS: Slows you down a bit.

ME: But it was good though. See, Vassilis was more of the nurturer, caregiver person at home than I ended up being. And he was, in fact. One summer, I went to Dahlonga to work on the Governor's Honors Program, and he kept both kids. And he would take them to Greece. He was the one that was there when they came home from school. We somehow had some reverse roles.

TS: Yes, I can see him doing that.

ME: He liked that.

TS: You mentioned a professor that you followed to Emory; what was his name?

ME: Jack Downes.

TS: What was it about him that would cause you to change schools, to follow him from one place to another?

ME: Well, I think more than anything, Jack believed in people, and helped them figure out that they could do things that they didn't know they could do. That's basically the answer for Jack. He was a really good teacher.

TS: If you had low esteem, I guess that was important.

ME: It really was. He just, you know, pulled you up wherever you were, and he was a really good teacher, a really good person.

TS: Is there anybody in particular that you modeled your own teaching after?

ME: I almost had two teaching careers separated by eleven years in business. So I'd almost have to say that my first career of teaching, it was chalk and talk. A math teacher didn't need a lot of equipment to go to a school.

TS: You just write on the board.

ME: You try to build patterns, and show students what to do, but it was all about telling them what you knew; it was delivering your knowledge to the next group.

TS: I teach over in Social Science. On that second floor, where the math people used to be, they've got those sliding boards out there that drive me crazy. You have to slide one board out of the way, and now we've got maps there that keep them from sliding so you can't move the boards.

ME: That's kind of how I learned to teach. Then, I went out into the business world for eleven years—I had a big break in my personal teaching career, and I worked in basically the high-tech graphics industry. My introduction into that world was through training the teachers to teach the equipment that we were selling. I ended up doing a lot of different sorts of things in that life. When I came back to teaching, the world was significantly different. How I taught math wasn't how you do it any more.

TS: So it had changed that much in those eleven years?

ME: Absolutely. It probably hadn't changed across the world that much, but I thought it had. I had to adopt a whole new way of doing things, and, rather than incrementally doing it, it was a dramatic shift. Tina Straley hired me. I worked in the math department for a year as a temporary instructor, before, I was hired in Education. The math department handed me a graphing calculator to teach Earth Algebra. This was Nancy Zumoff and Chris Schaufele's application driven Algebra class.

DY: Oh, they had already started that?

ME: It was a pilot kind of mode, and we were supposed to work cooperative groups. They also had me teaching some of the elementary math classes with math toys and stuff that I'd never seen before. I'd say, "What are you talking about?" And the whole concept of teaching was now about facilitating learning, rather than direct teaching, and bringing people to the table, and having them figure out things: guided discovery, whatever you want to call it.

DY: Excuse me, Marj, explain to me the difference between facilitating learning and direct teaching? Essentially what's the difference?

ME: The first way I learned to teach was to share what I knew with people. Sort of like a lecture.

DY: Right.

ME: Some people still do lecture. That doesn't mean it's wrong; it's just one way of doing it. It's not the only way. That's all I knew.

TS: But I've got the knowledge, you take notes, and then you'll have the knowledge too.

ME: Yes, exactly. Mathematics was taught very procedurally. Let me show you how to do this, and then you do it. Then, take home for homework, and do it some more. Then, you'll know it. That is because of learning theories and other research that has been done in the last twenty years. That's not necessarily the most efficient way to know something, especially something that's conceptual rather than just memorizing dates. I would imagine it would be, other things would work with it, like science for sure, and I think some of the other areas as well. Understanding the concepts of history, rather than just memorizing dates, time lines, trying to put things together in a meaningful way, you take away more and you know it longer. You can do it, and use it. It's not that everyone in the world has changed to that broader perspective of how to learn mathematics, but I thought they had. I had to switch like that. I had to learn how to, and it wasn't incremental. Barbara Ferguson said, "This is what you're supposed to do." "Okay, I'll figure that out."

TS: So the world may not have changed but our math department had.

ME: There were some leader people here that told me this is how I needed to be, and it didn't take long for me to figure out that it mattered. The very first semester that I taught earth algebra, and this was really earth shattering. It changed the way I viewed the world at that one point in time. There was a test in about the middle of the semester, and the test covered two chunks of material. The first chunk, they had worked on cooperatively, and tried to figure out--the course is driven by data. You're given all these situations, and it's basically task and problem oriented. Here's what you need to figure out, and then you have to go about figuring out how to figure it out. That's how that course is designed. The second half of the material for which this test covered, I had only done the wax eloquently lecture part, where I was telling them all about natural logs and blah, blah, blah, filling the board. [I was] setting up this stage so they could go to the next piece. Anyway, the test crossed over both of these pieces of material. When I graded them, I found out that the first part--which they were involved in the doing--they knew. The part that I had so clearly explained, they missed. [chuckle] I said, "Whoa!" I became a believer. They had to engage with the material, and be a part of the process of figuring [things] out in order for them to go about knowing how to do it. Whatever "it" is.

DY: So that might translate into another situation to class discussion or students working in groups or an interactive sort of classroom.

TS: In the case of our math department, they had to be under intense pressure from the administration because there were so many complaints about the high percentage of students that were flunking their classes.

ME: I think in some ways it's almost gone back to lecture, the math department.

TS: Really?

ME: Well, it's easy. It's so hard to do what I'm describing, and it's what we're about teaching our teachers [and science teachers] to learn how to do. It's equivalent to the science teachers doing labs, and posing questions, [asking] why this works this way, and wondering, inquiring, learning rather than just, "tell about it." It'd be like, "Go do writing; don't have five rules on a paragraph; do something." I think there are analogies in all the areas.

TS: Let's see, you're down in Milledgeville, and then you both get doctorates. Vassilis actually came to Kennesaw two years after he got his doctorate, the year after you got yours.

ME: Yes. We basically made a family decision. I taught one year in Milledgeville as a temporary, part-time instructor and—I want to say it this way—the town wasn't big enough for the both of us! [laughter] There was one college, and there really weren't opportunities, professional opportunities for both of us in our own areas. There wasn't really a place in the math department for me, at that time. His idea was to come to a bigger place, where we could both have opportunities for jobs. That's how we moved to the Atlanta area. So the goal was to find a big enough market place where we could both work. He came to Kennesaw, got the job, and we got anchored near Kennesaw. I worked, initially at Riverwood High School in a talented and gifted program.

TS: Riverwood?

ME: Riverwood had a couple of feeder schools. I was the talented and gifted math teacher, and I got to work with fourth through twelfth grade. They issued me roller skates; I had three elementary schools and a high school. It was sort of a pull out program. Anyway, Vassilis agreed to cook, and I agreed to drive. [laughter] So we moved near him, he was stable. I was the one that ended up moving around different places.

TS: Now, I'm getting my years a little mixed up.

ME: I'm not sure about years.

TS: I thought you said eleven years in private industry.

ME: Riverwood is before I went into the private sector.

TS: Oh.

ME: From there is when I left.

TS: I see.

ME: So he came here, and I got a job in the high school in Fulton County. That's basically that piece. I was there three years, from 1979 to 1982. And then again, at Vassilis' urging—he was good at thinking that I should do stuff. [chuckle] He says, "I wonder,"—now this is true—"I'm at the age where I'm thinking if I had made this choice instead of that choice. If I had gone into industry, and had been a demographer, I would be making

lots of money right now. Marj, you're young; you go into industry, and make lots of money. You might like that." So it hadn't really occurred to me but it began to. I went to Georgia State; I got accepted into the MBA program. I took a course in accounting, and my goal was to learn the language, so that I could at least go and speak to these people. I had knowledge of the outside world, outside of education really. I did that, and my professor was in a graduate level accounting class. I'd never had the first course in accounting in my life--he was a master's degree student who talked to the chalkboard. I got the words that I needed, and I went in, interviewed, and I got a job in Norcross. So I drove to Norcross from here, essentially.

TS: What was the company?

ME: It was Executive Presentation Systems, a computer graphics company. That was in '82, if you want to anchor a year.

TS: Yes. So that's where you stayed for eleven years, with that company?

ME: I was in several companies that were in the family; the same CEO owned them. I was at Executive Presentation Systems. I was at Intecolor.

TS: Intecolor ?

ME: These companies came and went. The companies' names really don't matter; they were all in the computer graphics business, and they ended up in the color copier business. But in those years, I started out as a teacher person, and then I became a manager. We opened eleven branches in the country in one year, and I was on a plane for most of that year. I hired people, and I managed people; I was responsible for bottom line and budgets. I was a big shot; I made lots of money! [laughter]

DY: What did you find carried over from your teaching?

ME: Well, in the beginning, I was the teacher. I was the person who was training both the customers and the sales force to sell this equipment. I created all of the curriculum; I designed all the manuals; one of the things on my list of things to do was write an operations manual. I went to my boss with this, and said, "What is an operations manual? What does that mean?" I did a lot of documentation about the products. I was the liaison between the programmers and the customers. I would field telephone calls, and try to get things fixed (the software). Everything about teaching carried over. I didn't initially know it, and when I was first there my first month, I came home crying every day because I didn't have a clue what they were talking about. I finally made a rule; if I heard the same word four times, I'd have to stop and ask them what it meant. If I asked them every word, I would be interrupting them all the time. They talked in alphabet stuff. But once I found out that my skills transferred, I was fine; I was just scared in the beginning.

DY: A new culture shock.

ME: Oh, it was different. Well, we do that to new people here. We're crazy with the acronyms. It's the same thing, just a different world. I traveled a lot; I was the boss of eleven male branch managers at one point in my career.

DY: Did you miss the classroom?

ME: Yes, I did, but I never really thought about it. I always liked what I was doing.

TS: Too busy?

ME: I was always doing something that I liked or most of what I liked. There was one point where there were about six months of the job that I hated. I should have gotten out quicker than I did. I moved around in different kinds of jobs.

TS: Do you look back on that experience now as something that helped your teaching when you got back into the classroom? Or, is it just kind of a period in your life that's just kind of a break between teaching? Are you glad you did it in terms of your professional career? Or, did it just set you back?

ME: No, I don't have any regrets about doing it. I'm trying to think if it helped my teaching. It might have because I brought a little bit of reality to the classroom. In some way, when I came to Kennesaw, I was really frustrated at the bureaucracy that [I] couldn't move fast enough to do anything. We had a group of managers; four or five people, sit around and decide something. Then, tomorrow you're doing it. Here you've got like a year before you can change a comma in a book. That's crazy! I'm still frustrated about that. As a department chair, my experience in business did not prepare me at all for the way we run the business here. It's exactly upside down, opposite of what makes sense in a business environment, where you need to do things, and you need to make money, and you need to be responsible for budgets. If you save money at the end of the year, that's a good thing. Here, you have to hurry up and spend it.

TS: Right or you won't get it next year.

ME: It's crazy.

DY: What do you think was the biggest change when you came back, and you stood in that classroom again? I mean, as you stood there, and you see this classroom full of students?

ME: Oh man. I want to say I was more confident, but I don't know if that's true because I was scared to death! [laughter] In every new situation, you're sort of refreshing it again. I was back in a college environment, which I wasn't that comfortable with. But I did bring some experience to the classroom that I didn't have before from that business world. In some ways, I was more believable, and in some ways I was less believable. I'm not sure . . . I don't know if I was better or not.

TS: But it looks like you at least had some credibility in being able to say now, "Look, teaching this type of math in the classroom is important because this is what business needs."

ME: In the beginning, I really did apply math to the business world, in the earth algebra class. I was also teaching statistics. When I taught statistics, I was really believable because I had been there. “Hey, pay attention. You’re going to need this.” I did have a certain credibility having been in the business world for so many years.

DY: So, it sounds like there might have been a little bit of . . .

ME: I came with a lot of computer skills which, when I got here, we didn’t have the computers. I mean, “Where are you Kennesaw, and what is your problem?” We were so far in the dark ages that, that was pretty out there.

TS: Were we in the dark ages compared to other universities or colleges at the time?

ME: No, I don’t know. I doubt it.

TS: But certainly compared o the business world, we were way behind.

DY: What year was that that you came back?

ME: When I came back here, ’93.

DY: And we didn’t have computers in our classrooms yet?

ME: You hardly had them in the offices. The little systems, the little DOS based computer systems with little disks and stuff. Yes, I know, it’s hard to remember.

DY: I’m trying to remember when I taught my first composition class on computers.

ME: E-mail was fairly new; yes, it was new.

DY: So I guess that’s . . .

ME: But right now, I have Windows 98; come on, it’s 2004.

TS: Yes, it’s six years back.

ME: It was that kind of a gap. So we haven’t changed much on the gap.

TS: We’re still way behind.

ME: Yes. Now, one year after all this color computer stuff, I did one year of free-lance things; I worked in about four different environment settings, which was why I was ready to make a change. At that point, I was working very hard, and not making any money! Again, Vassilis, “[Marjorie], you may be working hard but I haven’t seen a good check lately.” One of my friends here, Pam Drummond said, “We have a temporary appointment, a one year. Just come and talk to her.” One year was enough to put me back into this environment.

DY: So, Vassilis was feeling productive and happy and at home at Kennesaw? Was that one of the things that drove you to teaching here or why you would even consider coming and teaching?

ME: I don't think his being here had any impact on me coming here.

DY: But the experience he was having? Or was it?

ME: Oh, he was very happy here. Vassilis was happy anywhere. He helped build the environment that he lived in. He was satisfied here. [True,] it would be nice not to drive halfway across the world; that was a big advantage of coming to Kennesaw. But I didn't know that much about the math department, and his environment wasn't anything near mine in terms of who the people were, the players. It was in the day when George Beggs was his boss. Kind of a small town college at that point.

DY: He was our boss at that time too.

TS: As far as being dean, that's true.

ME: No, he was not a dean yet. Well, he might have been when I came.

TS: Right, when you came.

ME: When Vassilis was here, he was division chair or something.

TS: Right, that's exactly correct. Yes, I remember the first time I saw Vassilis when he came here to apply for the job, I guess.

ME: I was the wife of the faculty member, so I knew some of the people here. I was kind of familiar with that role. It wasn't really my role! [laughter]

TS: You were making the money in the family, and he was teaching at Kennesaw.

ME: Definitely, that's true. I remember my boss one time asked me. I went in and was going to talk to him about a raise and—I still love this guy, his name is Jack too, Jack Solomon, he was a good teacher to me—but he's sitting there and he says, "Well, now how will he feel if you make more money than your husband?" I started to laugh. I said, "I'm already making more money than my husband!" [laughter] I said, "He will laugh all the way to bank." Which is his statement: "Go get it, go, go!"

TS: Need to support him in the style to which he was accustomed.

ME: That's it.

TS: Let's talk a little bit about Vassilis and his career at Kennesaw. What made Vassilis such a good teacher, do you think? He won the Distinguished Teaching Award in 1995.

ME: I'll answer that with a story because in your Quality Circle, for the tape's purposes, the Quality Circle was a men's group that met in a bar once a week. [They] drank beer and solved the world's problems, but—you were a part of that.

TS: No, never was.

ME: You never went to that?

TS: No.

ME: Okay. Well, after he passed away, they had a Quality Circle memorial meeting with beer. A lot of people were invited that didn't usually go to [the meetings]. This was at Grady's Restaurant.

TS: Yes. Gird Romer was involved in that one.

ME: I forget who all was there.

DY: It was the one that used to be at Little Red Heads.

ME: I met a student of his who came to me. He actually works in the administration—I actually know him pretty well now, but I didn't know him at all at that point. He started to tell me about my husband and how much he'd meant to him. It was real touching, and I was glad that he was sharing that. I asked him, "What class did you take with Vassilis?" He didn't know. He had no idea what the class was. The way [Vassilis] became a Distinguished Teacher was not about what he was teaching, but how he cared for his students. It was the relationships that he built with people. I mean, the kid couldn't even remember what class he was studying, but he knew that he had made a change in his life. That kind of is representative of what he did, and how he worked with people. The students were always in his office; he was always listening and willing to help them, whatever it was. A lot of it was personal. I still remember this one lady's bank statement came to our house with our address on it, and I'm asking, "What is that about?" Well, she was in some kind of an unsafe setting. In danger from her husband and all these other things. So, Vassilis went and let her put our address on her bank statement. He would do anything for anybody. I mean, whatever they needed in any kind of a way, he was there to help them. You find out sometimes, after the fact, what all he was involved in. There were projects and things. He was very actively involved in the church. There were people who came to me and said, "But what about this money that he was giving for this student to go to college in Greece?" I said, "What are you talking about?" "Well, how is the student going to finish college now that he died?" I didn't even know. Things that he had done and given to that I had no knowledge of. Some of it I knew, for example, the book man that comes and gives you money for books . . . he never kept any of that money. That always went to somebody who needed it. So it was ways of caring about students that made him good. And his sense of humor, I guess. The second major piece was he would make you laugh every day at something, and his kids kind of got some of that; he'd spend an hour to put together a joke that would last for about a minute! [laughter]

- DY: So his subject matter was appropriate then; I mean, as a sociologist, working with groups of people, and understanding how people work. It sounds to me like he worked from the heart.
- ME: Yes, in fact, one of the things that's on the marker on his grave—he had a little saying and it showed up everywhere, boxes I was unpacking, other things—“a good life is inspired by love, and guided by knowledge.” He believed that; he had passion for everything.
- DY: It's sort of a wonderful little capsule, a little teaching philosophy, isn't it?
- ME: It's kind of like that “Walk beside me, not in front of me, not behind me.” He had a lot of those little things written down in just little pieces of how to walk with somebody, not pull them along or push them along. Except me, he always used to push me! [laughter]
- DY: But beside you too, it sounds like.
- ME: Yes. No, we did a lot of “beside us.” We had a lot of good conversations, decisions, and discussions. We did things together in life.
- DY: I always believe that that carries over too into your home, work, relationships with people in general in the fact that he could connect with students where students were. That's what you're saying. There was no, “I'm up here on Mt. Olympus.”
- ME: Right. Well, he also did what I alluded to earlier, that my Jack Downes did. He told people, he made them the best that they could be, and he helped a lot of them have a vision of going to graduate school, and things that they might not have assumed they were capable of.
- DY: How do you think he did that? Just as a teacher myself, I'm always looking for ways to do that. That's what we want our students to do, to go beyond where we can take them.
- ME: Right, right, right. He had high expectations for people. But he also, like you said, met them where they were, and helped them see themselves in a way that they could be the best. He used to talk about being a sculptor. He had lots of parables and stories, but even for me, as I said earlier, I didn't come with high self-confidence or high concept and he would say, “You're good material, you just need a good sculptor to help carve out the parts that don't need to be there.” But he saw students like that; “You're good material, you're going to be something. You need some work but you're going to get there.”
- DY: True of all of us, no matter where we are.
- TS: Sure. Was he able to keep up his scholarship after he came to Kennesaw? Or was he so busy teaching heavy teaching loads that he moved on to other things other than scholarship after he came here?
- ME: Well, in those days, when you came to Kennesaw, you really had a choice; you could be an excellent teacher, and either work in service or in scholarship. He tended to be toward

the service side. He did a lot. At one point, I think he said he was on thirteen committees. He was trying to get rid of the committees over time. But he chaired the University Tenure and Promotion Committee at one point; he did a lot of work up and down, all the different kinds of levels of things. He wasn't really interested that much in details, but he had help. He figured out how to do them. He was the timekeeper in a lot of those meetings toward the end. He would sit there with a watch: "Next!" [laughter] Even after he retired, he'd sit in some of those meetings because he just enjoyed being the one who kept them on schedule.

DY: That's a very important role.

ME: I know. But as far as scholarship, he stayed current on things, but he didn't have a passion to do a lot of research. Now, I do know he did some studies, and helped with his consultants, and did some stuff with the United Way, but it was more along the lines of service scholarship. They asked me to be a consultant on that study. That's how I know he was involved with it, and I did some of his statistics for them.

TS: What was his dissertation on?

ME: It was, oh gosh, I can't tell you the purpose of it, but I can tell you the population was dentists and preachers. He was trying to compare occupational roles, expectations, and behaviors and he was kind of taking a sort of, two divergent types of groups where you'd expect different kinds of behavior, and did an analysis. I'm not exactly sure what the variables were beyond those.

TS: He did a lot of service, I guess, of what we'd call a non-professional variety through his church as well, didn't he?

ME: Oh huge, huge involvement in the church, and he was a chanter in the church.

DY: What church was this, the Greek Orthodox?

ME: This was the Greek Orthodox Church. He helped begin that church in Marietta [Holy Transfiguration Greek Orthodox Church], which has just been finished. It's a fabulous Byzantine building in the middle of a neighborhood [on Trickum Road in east Cobb County]—I don't know if you've seen the church--but he helped mentor and start that group along. They met in a storefront for a couple of years, and he said, "It's exactly where a church should be, between drugs and alcohol." There was a drug store on one side and a bar on the other side. [laughter] He said, "That's where we should be, where the people are." So he helped grow that church. He opened the place; he was at all the baptisms, he was at all the weddings, and he was like the lay minister at that church. He also started a church in Macon, years before, when we lived in Milledgeville. He helped get that thing off the ground, and helped get the priest. Yes, they missed him at the church.

TS: Were you Greek Orthodox before you got married?

ME: I'm not now!

TS: You're not now? I didn't know that.

ME: No. I went to the Church, all of the festive things. If they had food, I would be there; otherwise, I was not usually there.

TS: Okay. Let's maybe just talk a little bit more about teaching. You talked about what Vassilis's strong points were; would you view him as a master teacher, and what do we mean by that term master teacher, do you think?

ME: Let's see, a master teacher would create a love of learning in their students. He did that; I think he created a love of life in his students, as well as a love of learning. Maybe, there's a level above master there. He wanted them to value education, learn as much as he did; he tried to impart that.

TS: Well, when you came in '93, you came in the College of Education?

ME: No, I came to the math department. I worked for the math department for a year.

TS: Okay. So how did you make the transition from the math department to education?

ME: Well, at the end of the one-year appointment, there was actually a job search in both the math department and the College of Education. I applied for both of them. The College of Education made me an offer. That's how I got there. It's very simple; it's not about anything complicated. [chuckle]

TS: By the time you got there, it was called the Department of Secondary and Middle School Education?

ME: Yes, pretty much. I think so.

TS: Who was the department chair at that time?

ME: Actually, Linda Webb.

TS: Linda Webb?

ME: Yes, Linda Webb hired me. Bob Driscoll had been before and after, I think Linda, so it wasn't long before he was the chair. We've had lots of chairs in my department over time, temporary chairs, most of them.

DY: When did Bob come down?

ME: The first year I was here was when we lost our accreditation. The reason I got hired in the College of Education the next year was because they were so short of people; they had lots of searches. [Dean John] Beineke was then gone. Driscoll had been dean before that, and then Deborah Wallace became the interim dean at that moment to help us get through the NCATE business. The PTEU all that stuff was going on right when I got here.

DY: That was a major change in the institution, and certainly in the way that Education and the disciplines interacted.

ME: It was a major change in formalizing it.

DY: Yes.

ME: It really wasn't a major change it what we did.

DY: Because there had been communication.

ME: We grew up from small to larger, and that sort of was there underneath. As far as the structural change, it was huge.

DY: So it was just reflecting what had already been going on in kind of an informal way to provide a structure for us bursting at the seams.

ME: It actually is a structure that is being touted now across the state and nation as a structure that works. I firmly believe in working on making that structure work, that PTEU business, which is the shared governance, really, for people who are responsible for teacher education.

DY: It's quite a good model really. We looked at that in restructuring the English department because we got so large.

ME: You are too big.

DY: Yes, so that was a wonderful model.

ME: Your whole college is too large; that's a separate subject but you all need to . . .

TS: We are very large with the number of faculty and all.

DY: I know it. And it keeps getting large.

TS: PTEU stands for what?

ME: Professional Teacher Education Unit.

TS: This is a formal structure we established when we were going through that probationary period for NCATE. But you're saying that we really already had it informally. We were just creating the committees and putting it down on paper.

ME: I think that's true.

DY: What are the units Marj? Would it be too much to just give a quick run down on that, just sort of a sketch of the composition?

ME: I'll give you some examples. The major groups that are housed in the College of Education are Elementary, and my department is Secondary and Middle Grades by name, but it's primarily middle grade certification with accompanying associated masters programs. In our college, we also have Ed Leadership, which is only graduate, and Special Education, which supports the undergraduate, but is primarily graduate programs. All the other teacher education programs are housed in the disciplines: Math Ed is in the math department, Science Ed is in biology—well, obviously biology and chemistry; Social Science is very complex because under social science, you've got history, political science, and the geography/anthropology group. You've got English Ed. That distributed effort makes life so hard when you're trying to do something, but it makes it so wonderful because everybody buys in. They've been at the table from the beginning. The P-12 programs, which means preschool through twelfth grade, are made up of the foreign languages, which would be French and Spanish, music, art, and physical education, and all those are housed in their own individual colleges. The nation is trying to do something similar to what we have at Kennesaw. Like I said, it's not easy initially to do it. You've got to convince up and down the chain, the high level, the medium level, the deans; everybody's got to have a buy-in. But it works really, really well.

DY: Do you think it's truly a shared governance model?

ME: It truly is, yes. It works better in some areas than others, and we've made huge strides—my department is totally intertwined and integrated, and it needs to have this buy-in. Our masters program is truly inter-disciplinary. Half of the courses in the English cohort are offered out of your department; half of them are offered—well, not half because you've probably got three-fourths in history, one in geography, one in political science—but those students, they come to me for five education classes. They go over to the disciplines for six classes, and have an elective. We've got to talk to each other; we've got [to] know what we're doing. The accrediting agencies have forced down upon us this requirement to have certain courses, which fill parts of the puzzle. It's real different than just owning a literature course; in the class that you teach for this program, you have to agree to do these things. The accrediting agency didn't tell you what to do, but they said, "Here's the standard. Here's the performance objective; here's what has to happen." Then, the faculty sits down, and builds the ideas together as a group. It's powerful. It's real different than faculty owning a course. As we get new faculty on board, it's important for them to understand how they fit into that big picture. I've got one new person that's coming, and she thinks she can just go pick the books. No, it's a committee who owns that course, not one individual. I may preach to the choir a little bit; maybe, English could learn for their basic English course a little more about that kind of shared responsibility. You go in to the bookstore and every section's got a different book. How do you know what to pick? I think that teaching becomes less personalized in some respects, but more functional in others. You have that shared concept of what this course is supposed to do in the bigger picture. We're building teachers. The teacher has to know how to do geography, but they also have to know how to teach it. What part do you play in the big picture? When you teach those Adolescent Ed folks about the local history, when you do your field trips, how do those assignments that you do fit into this big drawing over here? How do things that they do in your course impact their teaching

in the public schools? How do they write about it in their portfolio? It's complicated, but when it's done, man it's just way wonderful.

DY: I teach a lot of English Ed students, and so I'm often addressing that. So when you teach, and Tom and I do the shared Georgia Writers/Georgia History and say, "Now you can carry this into your schools as a social studies unit." Is that something that you find in common or do you find that commonly the professors in the disciplines are working to help guide your education students?

ME: In some arenas it's more developed than in others. I wouldn't say that across the board it's equal. English is a big leader. Math is also. History has been slower to come to the table for multiple reasons. One is they've got very big complexities. They've got three departments to pull together for one purpose, but sometimes it's the amount of folks that are available to come to the table to help facilitate the process. There are various reasons. English has been a leader in bringing the conversations together. I think we're all trying to get there. It's just that do we do it in our own way, and at our own speed. Science is at a big disadvantage now; they've lost their Science Ed folks this coming up year. Both of them are not going to be here next year. Those are huge problems when you're trying to do collective thinking. We have accreditation agencies, and all those other things now. But anyway, I got a little bit carried away.

TS: So which year did you become department chair? How many years ago, three, four, five years ago?

ME: It's terrible, I mean, I don't even know the answer to that question! Probably four or five years ago.

TS: So you really weren't here that long I guess when you became chair.

ME: No. Jane McHaney was the dean, and I got a phone call. They had decided—Bob Driscoll had just come back from the PSC. He came back to be the department chair of our department after a leave of absence to be on the Professional Standards Commission, and I think he moved in that office and he was there two weeks. It was when we moved into Kennesaw Hall.

TS: That was '99.

ME: Was it '99?

TS: Yes.

DY: Five years ago?

ME: Are you sure?

TS: Yes.

ME: So anyway Jane called me up, and she said, “Would you be the department chair?” I said, “You mean that I am going to be able to do less teaching and more meetings? Can I think about that?” [laughter]

DY: You mean Jane’s only been gone five years?

ME: McHaney? Yes. She got us through the last NCATE. She was here for the last NCATE thing. That’s how I know.

DY: She and I were on so many committees together.

ME: So yes, being department chair was a hard choice because I gave up what I loved, and that was teaching.

DY: So you do love the classroom?

ME: Oh yes. And I miss it. This is a funny story. This past spring, everything that could happen to my department happened. I mean, one of my faculty’s parents were in an automobile accident, and her dad ended up being in the hospital dying. Anyway, it was a horrible semester. But a bright spot, and I hope I don’t regret saying this on a taped setting, Lynn Stallings, who was teaching a math course that I love, and I love Lynn, ended up with an emergency appendectomy. So I got to teach her class for a week and a half. She sent me these notes, “Here’s what we’re doing,” but I had a blast. I cannot lie. She was real grateful that somebody could step in and do it. I’m rusty on that stuff. It took me forever to be prepared to teach her class, but I do like the teaching. I do perceive my role as a chair is as a teacher, in a lot of ways.

DY: Well, I was going to ask you about that; how do you see that carrying over into the administration? How is an administrator like a teacher?

ME: A good administrator should be able to listen and help facilitate stuff, which is what I think a good teacher can help do.

DY: Right, as opposed to your old model.

ME: Which is telling everybody what to do. The command and control model is gone both in management and in teaching. [laughter]

DY: Well, in some places it is.

ME: Well, a department chair’s role to me is to help facilitate the job of the teachers, which is to teach students. It’s a different place, but my job is to get resources and to protect my faculty from all the stuff when possible. That’s how I see my job. Also to find the places that people want to grow to be for their interests and their strengths. So we’re about ready to hire some new folks, and it’s driving my search committee crazy; “Well, what do you want this person to do?” “Well, it depends on what you all want to do, and where you want to be.” It’s hard to write a job description because it’s not a steady position, it’s not like I’ll teach 1101’s. It’s about teaching where you’re going to leave a vacancy

when you move to do what you're trying to do. So it's like a big puzzle. It's like a human puzzle where you try to grow [people] to be the best they can be. Anyway, it's facilitating the process of helping [people] do the work in the department, but it's in a way that respects the individual, which is the same thing that you do as a teacher.

DY: In a classroom with a student, right.

ME: You figure out where they are, and where they want or need to be, and help move them to that next level.

DY: And figure out what you can do.

ME: Same thing for the faculty, hopefully. We do it together, and sometimes that's challenging. It's arm wrestling, but it's better if we're all there at the table.

TS: You're in a unique position in that you had ties to Kennesaw before you came here; you've been a teacher, and you've been an administrator, now, for five years. How would you describe the intellectual climate at Kennesaw today, and do you think it has changed over the years?

ME: Oh, Kennesaw has changed by the minute; Kennesaw doesn't stand still. When we came here, it was just a few buildings. When Vassilis interviewed here, it was just past, not long after it was a junior college. Yes, we've changed greatly, in terms of how many people are here and the external environment. I hope we haven't changed how we value teaching. I think we're at risk of changing that to the expense of how we value some other things. One of the things that Kennesaw has always wanted was to do more with less. I think we have. We're at a point where we're risking losing people because you can do more with less only to some extent, and then people get tired. The new people that come in are going, "What, are you kidding?" The teaching load is too much, the scholarship expectations are too high, and the service work doesn't go away. This is a real challenge to chairs; how do you manage all that? I think that [Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs] Ralph Rascati has a particularly good idea about looking at the work of the department and not the individuals so that not everybody has to do everything. Instead, they share things. I think the perception sometimes at Kennesaw is that the faculty isn't working very hard, and there seems to be a big gap between the people who are far away from the faculty.

TS: Whose perception is that? Oh, the perception is on the part of the higher administration.

ME: Sometimes the higher administration. They look at you like, "What are you doing?" They don't understand how hard it is to just do the normal stuff; they want to do more and more and more, but they don't want to take anything off the plate. I think it's important to help the faculty figure out what's on the plate and what you can say no to. It was hard for me to say no. I said yes to everything, and then I couldn't get everything done; as you grow in the process of being a faculty or being a university, you have to decide where your priorities are. When you're little, you can be everything to everybody because there's not that many everything's and everybodys. But when you grow up, everybody can't do all the stuff; you have to make choices. I think right now we're in the

process of struggling with where the choices are. It's one thing to have a lot of new students, but do you want them to be freshmen instead of graduate students? Do you want them to be graduate students instead of this? Do you want [to be] a little bit selective? [Looking at Dr. Yow]: You've lost some people in your department because they have a high research expectation . . .

TS: You're referring to English.

ME: Yes, I think there is some pressure to do stuff around here that wasn't felt before, particularly in the scholarship and research arena. Without the realization that you have to re-allocate the work, you can't expect to add that on to people's plates who are already full. I perceive that as a problem, but it's part of the growing pains too. It's not like it's a dead end; we're not going to pass that. I think that more people like me have to speak up as the department chair and say, "Look, my faculty are full up; you can't ask them to do one more thing without taking something away." And again, that's kind of the relationship, the role of the chair. I'm not sure I can do anything, but they listen to me.

DY: We're right now at the five to seven year point where we do strategic planning, and these issues that you are bringing up, Marj, are coming up. Where do we want to go? Do we want to be an institution that's going to offer more graduate programs? And if we do that, then, what are the expectations of our faculty in that sense? Are we going to build a Core, or are we going to have a college of general education. For example, a university college: we're creating tiers, I think, of faculty.

ME: Well, in some ways, we need to be respectful of our size now; we can't [have] a junior college mentality anymore. We haven't let go of some of those things. If you're going to grow up, you have to be an adult, and do the things adults do; you can't hang on to all that stuff. There's a lot of rethinking about . . . once you figure out where you want to go, then you've got to figure out the structures that support it. I don't think we have them yet. I think we're in the process of thinking it out.

DY: Do you think we've figured out yet where we want to go?

ME: I don't know. I don't think we do. [chuckle] I think we're still working on it.

TS: This is something that's been coming through these interviews, almost the metaphor of being a teenager or a young adult with an identity crisis; that seems to be what you're saying.

ME: What's new and what's visible is what's valued, and I don't think that's necessarily good for the core teaching of the job at a university. It's sometimes overlooked. Sometimes, the people are too far away from the business of the university. I think the core business is teaching kids, classes, and students. Sometimes we forget that. It takes a lot of energy to keep just doing that. And doing it well. If we want to do it well. I think we want to do it well.

DY: So you feel like we still have an institutional commitment to teaching.

- ME: I'm not sure that we're not at risk of losing that; that's what I'm saying. There's so much going on, so fast, that sometimes it doesn't stay in the centrality. Part of it is because you have new deans who are bringing different culture—I mean, part of it is our transmission of culture. That's a larger question. But you need to get to the point of where you figure out what you value. Now our department, our centrality is about teaching. I think in my college, that's the case. That's our business. We're in the business of teaching about teaching.
- DY: There also has to be that decision made about scholarship expectations because what happens in your department then? How does that translate over into the college when people's portfolios come up for evaluation? Standardizing, I guess is what I'm saying. Do we know yet what we want? Do we know what our expectations are, or do they vary from department to department and college to college?
- ME: I think there has to be individualization. It's kind of like the old expression that, "Fair does not necessarily mean equal." I think you have to interpret what your expectations are in the context of what you are, and who you are and what you do. This is a problem when you get the PTEU business mixed in; when I have an English educator who's in an English department, which is the standard? The business of the English educators might be to do educational things as their scholarship. Is that valued? In your college, it's sometimes more valued than in some of the other colleges, where there's expectations for scholarship that have to do with counting numbers of refereed journals. I think we're at risk of losing some good folks because you expect that, but you don't give them a teaching load that can accommodate that. It's balance.
- DY: We're way off subject on that, aren't we?
- TS: No.
- DY: No, we're not at all because this is what I'm seeing happening all along, Tom, as we begin to gather material to write a history of the institution. We're looking at a living, growing organism that every time we sit on this couch something different has happened, or someone has come, or someone has gone, and I think this is very relevant, Marj. I think you have a very good perspective on it, just in terms of where you come from.
- ME: You have to look at what you want to be, and then put the things in place to help you get there. If you want to be a college or university that supports graduate programs, you've got to build in that teaching load, if nothing else. What's happened is that everything is so fast that people don't have time to stop and think about where we're headed; we're just heading there. It's been a huge problem in a science arena, and Ron Matson [Dr. Ronald H. Matson, Chair, Biological & Physical Sciences] and I have talked about this forever. We're offering a graduate cohort in social studies for the first time in our Adolescent Ed program. They can't offer one in science because there aren't enough faculty. If Ron gets a new person, they're teaching the 1101 classes. Okay, so we're not being proactive and planning what's going to happen, and where we want to go. We're just taking 50 more freshmen instead of 20 graduate students. Is that what we want to be doing? That's the question. We're making choices by default because here they are—boom! You build

a dorm, and you've got another bunch of them! And, you've got to teach them. If you're going to have bodies in here, and there's a certain limited number of those, that's all bureaucratic management. That's nothing new to Kennesaw.

DY: What do we do to retain them so that they stay with us beyond those first two years?

ME: Well, we have very high retention rates.

DY: We do now.

ME: What I'm talking about may or may not be true, but we keep half of them.

DY: I think that's up from what it has been in the past. I mean, it was a big issue in the '80s—a big issue—they would come here knowing that they would get those Core courses and Gen. Ed courses with very fine instruction, and pop right on off to UGA or something.

ME: Well, yes, we were a transfer school. We have grown up to be a school of choice.

TS: In the '80s, we were just beyond the junior college stage. People were still treating us as though we were a junior college.

DY: That's it, Tom.

TS: But that has seemed to change; we're getting the transfers to come to us now.

ME: We actually have a very good reputation, in general, but in our area, in particular. The schools will hire Kennesaw students before others, and sometimes, without asking for referrals, which may or may not be smart! They call me when they have vacancies; they value what we do, and who our graduates are. One of our master's students teaches in the high school. She said the perception of Kennesaw has changed significantly in the last ten years, from being a school of default—"If I can't get into so-and-so, I'll go to Kennesaw"—to being a school of choice. I like that language. She said they are considering Kennesaw up on the top tier. "I'd really like to go to Kennesaw." So, just the local students have a different perception of us. We've grown up a lot, in a lot of good ways.

TS: Does that say that our image has changed to the place that you want to go to, if you're a student, at the very time when you seem to be suggesting that we might be losing our focus on teaching that we've had in the past?

ME: I don't think we're losing it; I think we're at risk of losing it, at least where I am.

TS: So we haven't lost it yet?

ME: No. I think the teachers believe in it. I think the people that we have working in the trenches, the regular folks, believe strongly in teaching. We care deeply about our teaching, and do that at the exclusion of family picnics or whatever. All I'm saying is that when you get new people, they look at the load compared to where they could be

elsewhere—I had dinner the other night with a fellow who’s a science educator in Boone, North Carolina [Appalachian State University], and I was kind of comparing notes. He’s a brand new professor; he’s teaching three classes each semester, and that’s his full load. He said there’s no high expectation, and I’m saying, “Well, we’ve got four,”—I’m just comparing mentally—and I think we’re a little behind the country in terms of faculty load and salary. People come here, and they interview, and they laugh at us. Now we old guys, we just say, “Oh well, I know what I really care about doing.” But if you have new scholarship expectations and new faculty, then you have to give them a way to do it. I don’t think teachers will do what we used to do, anymore. I think the young people want more of a forty or fifty-hour week; they don’t want to work like we worked all of our lives. It’s a different work ethic.

DY: I think they’re coming here [also] expecting to be able to continue the scholarship they’ve been doing in graduate school; they want the time to do it and the recognition.

TS: As long as we hire them because of the scholarship that they’re doing, what else should they expect until they get here?

DY: I know.

ME: And we’re also a little behind on salaries. I can say that without any question.

TS: Salaries?

ME: Salaries.

TS: The last several years have not been great for salaries in Georgia.

ME: I’ll make the comparison in the world that I’m familiar with. I’ll give you a historical example: when I started teaching high school, and my husband started teaching with a master degree at a college, he made twice what I made, and now it’s almost reversed. The Ph.D. in a high school, with several years of experience, makes way more than I can offer my new Ph.D. faculty, way more. They tried to hire a science educator. [They] offered about half of what he was making—a high school teacher with lots of years of experience. So in some cases, we’re losing opportunities for good people because we haven’t kept up. And the other piece, and this really may or may not be on subject, is about the—I think the administration is working on this—but the salary compression issues of the folks who have been here a long time is on the edge of being huge.

DY: Well, we were supposed to have gotten some information and assurance about that this year, and that did not come through, and I’m speaking because I was on the University Budget Committee this year. That was something that Lynn [Dr. Lendley C. Black, Vice President for Academic Affairs] said that indeed we would have. But, as usual, outside constraints, the fact that we are in the system, haven’t had to let anybody go, for example, and other schools have in our university system.

ME: But the perception is that if we stay even with money, we’re ahead. But as John Pratte [Associate Professor of Physics] is quick to point out—if you’ve got twenty percent

growth, and you've got the same amount of money, you're doing twenty percent more with the same amount of money.

DY: We know that; we keep saying that.

ME: But we don't. I don't know exactly how to change that. I think that's part of our growing up; we have to deal with those issues.

TS: When you're raising the [compensation] issue, you're saying that where the problem is really the greatest is the new hires, the young faculty, their salaries are so low?

ME: No, when I'm raising the compression issue, I'm talking about the faculty that I have that are in place that have been here ten years and are making just a little more than the new ones we're hiring.

TS: Oh, I thought you were saying the opposite. That the old hands were making too much.

DY: No, we are not making it; we're hiring people that are making it.

TS: Making as much, I follow you now.

ME: It's both. It really is over all. I think you need to look at the work that people do and attracting people to the profession. The work that people do should be valued. I mean, you're worth more than a new Ph.D. coming in because, I mean, my goodness, you know how to do everything. But the new Ph.D., you have to bring him in at a higher level because you can't attract them.

DY: Market value: you don't get them if you don't.

ME: That's not anything that Kennesaw is doing; that's the reality of the world.

TS: That's professional football or any place else.

ME: But I think it's things that we need to address as we grow. Look at a strategic plan.

DY: I agree, and it seems to me that the place, the only place, that it's being addressed effectively is in the Senate, and we have to keep raising those issues in the Senate because I think that that's where . . .

ME: Are you active in the Senate?

DY: No, I'm not, Marj. I never have been in the Senate.

ME: Oh, it's your turn!

DY: Oh! No. [chuckle]

TS: We've emphasized some really negative things the last few minutes. I just wanted to ask you, what is it that has kept you at KSU all these years?

ME: I don't think we've been talking about negative things; I disagree before I answer that question: I think we're talking about growing-pain things, that as long as we're talking about it, it is not negative. We have a community, and an environment where we can talk about these things, and where we just try to get the attention of people who can do something about them. I'm almost on that level but . . . it's about valuing what people do, and keeping good people. That's not negative. Those are just administrative things that you've got to work on doing. Now, what's kept me at Kennesaw is the people. I have a very wonderful department; they support each other; we all care about teaching; and they support me. It's like a family, in the sense of the old Kennesaw days when if something happens, they're all there, and they will help you, and have been, and vice versa. In general, Kennesaw has that spirit of connectedness that we haven't lost; it's hard to pinpoint--with all the change, we struggle to keep that, but we're keeping it. I think that what we do is good, and we know it. We all work hard, play hard, and that's why I'm here; that's why I stay here.

TS: Good. And that's what kept Vassilis here too, all those years?

ME: Yes.

TS: I think maybe your departments—because you're not doing the general education courses—haven't felt the problems with part-time faculty so much, maybe as other colleges; do you have a lot of part-time faculty in the College of Education, in Bagwell College?

ME: Yes we do, actually. I hire part-time faculty to do a couple of things. One is to supervise student teachers, where there is a huge need for quality, that's the Capstone experience where the students need the most mentoring.

TS: Right. Are these people who are teaching full-time in a schools?

ME: No, they can't be because they have to be out in the schools with the students.

TS: Oh, they've got to be in the schools, don't they?

ME: Hopefully, they're retired educators who want to work, but not a full job, and we have had some really good experiences. In early-childhood education, even more than I have in terms of hiring quality part-time people, who have a commitment, who are long marchers, who don't want to give up teaching completely; they don't want a full job. That's where it's worked out really well for us. It's hard to keep part-time people in the same vision, the same philosophy, and the same mindset that you're in. It's a challenge to keep that training, either the same people or the same ideas. We also used them in the Introduction to Education classes on weekends and nights, when my fulltime faculty don't particularly care to teach. We never have enough full-time faculty to cover all the things that we're asked to do, and some of it's because of the constant change. You can play catch up, and catch up, and by the time you get everybody lined up, they want three more of these or five more of those. So it's not a huge number. My department is growing to be about thirteen; we've been six and eight for years.

- DY: How many full time people do you have on the faculty?
- ME: There are ten, and I'm getting some lecturer positions, which are almost like full-time part-time, and we're interviewing for some of those this week.
- DY: So there are lecturer positions that are coming in? What are those? Ph.D.'s but non-tenure track?
- ME: They may or may not be Ph.D.'s. They're definitely non-tenure track; they're not heavy, high expectations for research or service, some service.
- DY: What's the teaching load, Marj, for those people?
- ME: Well, I think each college is defining that as we go. Well, one of the things that the College of Education has done is embrace this lecturer concept. There are a couple of reasons: one, we've had problems with instructors because all their promotion-tenure stuff catches up with them; there's so many years, and then they have to have done something, or they have to have a Ph.D. No one wants to go there! And we need to have a kind of position where we can value the folks that: (a) either never want to get a Ph.D. or—their job shouldn't be dependent on it but—(b) it's also not a tenure track. So they don't have the scholarship expectations, as I said, and the service expectations. We're getting our first ones in our department right now. We're interviewing today, and next week. I was able to kind of take one position, and divide into two, and the dean pitched in a little bit of money. I can get two lecturers for basically the price of one point something tenure track people. I've got two people who have been filling this function in temporary positions over the last couple of years, and I'll just describe who they are, and the kind of people that they are. One is a retired school principal; she spent thirty-something years in education; she doesn't want to not do something—she's young, she's younger than I am, I mean thirty years in education, and you could still be in your fifties.
- TS: If you start when you're twenty-one.
- ME: Yes. She has a lot of energy, and has worked in the Atlanta public schools in all kinds of different, various modes. She's teaching the Intro Ed classes, does some student teacher supervision, and would be willing to teach something else for mid to high \$30's. The other person that has been doing a similar position is on the other end of the spectrum; young, doesn't have a Ph.D., might be getting one some day, but right now has a master's degree, and she's been teaching the Intro Ed. In fact, she's been in the CETL temporary teaching position while Kim's [Dr. Kimberly S. Loomis] been gone. So she's been working around mid-thirties, and managing some of the 2201 classes, which are Introduction to Education classes, setting up schools, and doing a lot of the work associated with that. But, she has young children, and she really doesn't want a tenure track position, and wouldn't be able to because she doesn't have a Ph.D. Another one that's interviewing has spent thirty-eight years in education, and wants to teach but doesn't want all that other stuff. So it's a good solution. In Ed Leadership, there are some principals and Cobb assistant superintendents and such who are teaching in their graduate program, in their principalship program, and they don't go to all the committees

or do much service. They come and teach, and they go home. They have a class load, I believe, of three because it's a graduate. Three classes is their full-time lecturer. Ours is four for undergraduate, but not five. You pay them less, and give them more work; you pay them less, and you give them less work is what I view.

DY: Our instructors have had a five-five load, until our college has just created new guidelines.

TS: Ours were five-four.

DY: They're five-four now for us; they have not been in the past.

TS: I think ours have been in history, if I'm not mistaken.

ME: That's just a lot to expect. Now, if they're getting paid as a tenure track position in a "high" level, and have that instead of research, maybe have a higher teaching load, but I just don't visualize doing that.

DY: Well, I think five-five, and they're-hired to teach Gen. Ed. courses, primarily composition. The burn out is just going to be astounding.

ME: Yes. They're reading papers, and they're trying to help on computers, and doing things like that.

TS: So yours are going to four-four, unless it's graduate, and then three-three?

ME: I think so.

DY: That's good. So your college has set up those guidelines?

ME: I don't know that for sure.

TS: Well, four-four is still a heavy load.

ME: Yes, it is, but that's what all my faculty, who are expected to do service and scholarship, have, unless they're 100 percent graduate. Then, they're three-three. I don't have many of those. Most of them are everything.

DY: That's a ridiculous load.

ME: But these lecture positions are helpful, instead of part-time, because you have a lot of consistency, whereas they're not real expensive. Many of our retired people are collecting a full pension and doing this. So this is sort of in addition to their regular earned income.

DY: And they have full benefits.

ME: From other places.

- DY: No, I mean the lectureships carry full benefits, is that right?
- ME: Yes, I think so, but I don't even know that they care about that as much. I'm not sure.
- DY: Well, to be devil's advocate, when we hire non-tenured track people, we really do risk exploiting a class of people and creating an underclass. If we're careful, that might not happen but again, it's done at universities all the time. This shows you exactly what's happening; we're growing.
- TS: The same problem with the part-timers [is] it's an underclass, if they're trying to live on these salaries.
- DY: Well, that's part-time. It's unconscionable what happens to those people.
- ME: They're very difficult to manage because they don't have any investment.
- DY: There's no investment, right. They don't even have a physical place most of the time.
- ME: But always, when you look at it from a business environment, it's contract workers or those extra people. But we shouldn't be counting on them for the bread and butter; they should be emergency when this gets ahead of that. You should plan for the main business, and then have those be the overflow. We rely too heavily on part-time people sometimes, for just the regular stuff. And it's difficult. I listened to a professor talking to a dean at one point—not at my college; I bring that up for anonymity! But the issue was, do you have enough part-time people? Are part-time people teaching all the Gen. Ed courses? That was the question. That's a real issue. But the response of the chair was, "Should I put them in my 3000 level courses? Should they be teaching my majors?" That's not a good choice; the answer is "No." We need some full-time people doing all of it, and those folks should be for particular expertise. Tim Mescon [Dean of the Coles College of Business] has that medical program where they do, whatever, entrepreneur things.
- TS: MBA for Experienced Professionals . . .
- ME: He gets a doctor in there as a part-time faculty member. That makes sense; it's a logical choice. I have a principal or a teacher teaching an Intro Ed class once in awhile, for a good reason; they bring credibility. There's lots of good reasons, plus the overflow idea. We just have to be careful not to rely on those folks for the regular business.
- TS: Did we do enough on technology? [How has] that changed over the years? You were talking about, how, when you showed up here, you had the graphing calculators that you hadn't had before. Also, we talked about the lack of computers on this campus, not too many years back; would you want to say just a few words about how that's changed? You were also talking about how we were so far behind the business world on technology. How has that affected teaching in your department?
- ME: Technology is a huge part of what we do now here—it's almost required. We have a responsibility to help our future teachers know about technology, and how to integrate

technology into their classrooms. We are instantly brought to the table, and required to figure out how to do it so that we can teach them how to do it, practically before the ink is dry. We just bought some, and I love technology. In my business world, they called me a power user. I was one of them that wanted to set up my own stuff, and you can help me, but just don't interfere with what I'm doing. That was a compliment. But we just bought some digital cameras that record to a little mini CD, rather than plugging it into a memory stick, or having discs or anything. Our graduate students are going to be using the technology to help document what they do in the classroom, and we're going to have some things that we can loan out, laptops and other kind of stuff. But I can't get things to work on my computer because my operating system is too old. I have one of those new little scan discs that works on the computer in the office next to me, but not on mine. This morning, I sent an e-mail to John Isenhour [Director of Information Technology Services] asking about when we can get Windows XP on the campus computers. We tend to drag; we're on the trailing end of technology here. People want to be really safe and secure with the decisions in terms of Windows XP. I mean that should be on all of our computers. Having different technologies in different places drives me, and my faculty, crazy. You walk in this room, and you find one environment; you walk over here, and it's a different environment. I tried to take a class—I did take a class last summer—I was part of the teaching. I got to teach some of the things about basically putting web pages up for the teachers to be able to do their own stuff, and getting through the maze here of how to figure out how to do it, and then getting passwords organized, and getting it to work; it's a real challenge. And to make a long story short, I went through all this rigmarole, and I got everything. I got up in front of all these people with the big screen, and I'm telling/showing them what to do. I got to a certain point, and nothing worked. I (a) was mad, (b) I was embarrassed, and I said, "You know what guys, this is technology. We'll come back the next time, and I'll figure out how to get it" And it's one of those things where you have, "Oh, everybody knows that; well, no." But I don't think we have the infrastructure for support for faculty. The faculty needs to be able to do this stuff. Most faculties will try it up to a certain point, and after you've hit your head against a wall so many times you say, "I'm not doing that. It's too much trouble." And yet, our group is very technologically literate. Almost [my entire] faculty have web pages and a web presence. They are using things on the web. And it's not all. Some are kicking and screaming, but we try to figure out ways to use the technology to help the learning process, not just for technology's sake. And I think there are a lot of things that are just hugely changed. The writing process: researching in the libraries is almost all on-line, now. Understanding how to write a paper, and what cut-paste means, versus plagiarism, are ideas that students don't have; we have to look at what we're teaching differently because it's so easy to pick up stuff, and they don't think of it as "cheating." To them, that isn't wrong; it's a way of putting together information, and doing a paper. That's what they think it's about.

DY: Exactly.

ME: So the fact that we are upset when they do that is a surprise to them; "Why are you yelling at me?" So, I think the way we view what we do and we have students learn is different. I think reading is different. When you're reading down a web page, and you've got a hyperlink, it's like reading a newspaper; you're off into something, and you

haven't finished that first page. How you learn is different. There's all kinds of implications to technology that we have to stop, think about, and research. But yes, it's hugely different. We're behind, but we're way ahead.

DY: Well, the faculty has picked up the slack, developed the pedagogy. Just give us the hardware and software.

ME: Yes. And it's also about priorities, and it's about bureaucracy, and it's about lots of things. Again, where do you want to be? You have to have a vision of where you want to be, in order to move the forces to get you there. If nobody knows where you want to be, that's where we're going, which is all over the place. [laughter] But I think we're good. We're good.

TS: Well, thank you very much for the interview.

ME: Well, thank you for the opportunity. I appreciate it. I really do enjoy Kennesaw, and I think we share the passion for teaching and people. That's why we're all here.

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