

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH RONGHUA [JOHN] OUYANG

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TS: John, why don't we just begin by asking you a little bit about your background? Where you were born and when you were born and where you went to school and things like that, just those early years.

JO: Okay, thank you Tom. I was born in 1954 in a city in the Jiangsu Province, the People's Republic of China. I had my elementary education in a small village and then went to middle school, and there is a long story there in middle school. We had a Cultural Revolution.

TS: I was going to say those were some years to be growing up. Fifty-four is right after the Korean War when China and the United States had been fighting each other, and I don't guess they said too many kind things about America in your schools when you were growing up.

JO: No, no. In fact, the United States and China didn't get the door open until '72, I think.

TS: Yes. When is the Cultural Revolution? How old would you have been then?

JO: The Cultural Revolution started in 1966.

TS: I didn't realize it was quite that early, I thought it was maybe '68, or so. So you were like twelve years old at that time.

JO: Yes. I was just a graduate from the elementary school. Then the Cultural Revolution started.

TS: How did that affect your schooling?

JO: Oh, it definitely affected my schooling. At that time during the Cultural Revolution, all schools were closed, and then the professors were sent to the countryside, and the teachers couldn't teach in the school. There was a movement that intellectuals or professors should be re-educated by the workers and the farmers, you know.

TS: Sure. They'd become too elitist, they thought?

JO: Everyone was a revolutionary.

TS: Right. So were you without teachers for a while?

JO: Yes. At that time I had formal schooling during the elementary education, and immediately after graduation from elementary school, the Cultural Revolution started. Because I was young I didn't have a chance to go to any place in the country for traveling and to join that kind of revolutionary activities. I was left behind and out of school. In fact, I was admitted by the Danyang First Middle School, and it was a key middle school in the province. There were four key middle schools, middle and high schools I should say, and of the four key middle and high schools at that time, Danyang Middle School was one of that. That was the city's name. I was admitted and got the admission later.

TS: So you did real well in elementary school.

JO: Right. There was an entrance exam, very competitive, and at that time only four of us passed that entrance examination in my community. In my little town I really cannot count how many graduates. Anyway, I passed the entrance examination and got admitted, and then the Cultural Revolution started, and the school closed. Then you got a note that said, "Please wait at home because the school closed. We will notify you when the school reopens."

TS: Right, and because you're twelve years old they're not sending you to the countryside?

JO: I was born in the countryside.

TS: Okay, you're already in the countryside.

JO: I was. Everywhere was fighting each other, and the revolution existed everywhere.

TS: So how do you feel about this at that time?

JO: At that time, you didn't know what's going on in that time. First of all, I just felt curious—what's going on—then gradually and gradually you see why the school was not opened again. My school didn't open until two years later. Other schools in the countryside, what we called the "people's communes," started, although they didn't have academic learning and teaching, but the school was open and some older students started to travel everywhere, and for free at that time.

TS: So you didn't go to school at all for a time?

JO: I didn't go to school until 1968. For two years I just stayed at home waiting for the notification that the school was open.

TS: Were you going backward—were you regressing in what you knew in those two years, or did you continue to study?

JO: Yes, for the two years when we were in the countryside at that time, I just did some self-study and did some farming work and helped the family working at home.

TS: That's a big blow to your education to lose two years right at that time.

JO: Yes, I lost two years at that time. Even after the school reopened, you didn't have much chance to have academic learning, and everywhere we still had the atmosphere of a Cultural Revolution. At that time, the leading person was Mao Zedong, and he was at the top position in China.

TS: He was getting pretty old at that time.

JO: Yes, he was pretty old already; he died in 1976. At that time, when I was in the school, every day you got this kind of exciting news coming and saying Chairman Mao had a new talk, a new slogan, coming. Then everyone would go to the street, and then everyone would tell each other, "Chairman Mao said this, said that," and then the revolution would go forward.

TS: So you finished high school about '72?

JO: Yes. After the one year in that key middle high school, there was a movement in education, and that means all youth should go to the countryside to get re-educated by the parents, workers.

TS: Right. All the youth went to the countryside.

JO: So I was in the middle high school in Danyang city, not in the countryside, so we needed to move to the countryside.

TS: As if you hadn't already been from the countryside.

JO: Right, we had come out of the countryside, and then we needed to go back to the countryside! And also the schools were reorganized. We were told, "Instead of having key middle high schools, today we have a school close to wherever you were born. Everyone needs to go back to your own place, get close to your family, and have your schooling." So I was transferred from the key middle high school to what we called a "commune middle school."

TS: So a big drop off in quality of education, I guess.

JO: Not a very big drop, because at that time no matter where you were, it was almost the same, and not much academic learning there.

TS: Everyone is being a revolutionary?

JO: Revolutionary, yes. Of course, if you had peaceful days, then the teachers in the middle high school could teach you. If they could teach you, of course, the school in the city should have been much better. I remember I had only one unforgettable lesson taught by

a physics teacher in the key middle high school. The physics teacher didn't have a textbook, but he came in and introduced atoms, this kind of concept, and chemical reactions. He talked about electrons and neutrons and this kind of basic concept. Back then, you felt so interested in this world, and so we took very, very detailed notes at that time, but only one class [laughter]! Then that teacher was criticized, and the school did not get him back again. That means no one was able to teach us anything. However, when I was transferred to the school in the countryside, at that time the school was starting to teach something: basic math, basic chemistry, and basic physics. So I had a little learning during that time until '72 and graduating high school.

TS: Okay, so you graduated from high school in '72, and so you'd be eighteen years old and you're through high school, but you actually lost a couple of years along the way.

JO: Right, and in fact, you cannot say you are really a qualified high school graduate. At that time, no one cared.

TS: It sounds like a whole generation lost out on education.

JO: Definitely, so that's why the researchers say that the Cultural Revolution made the Chinese lose a whole generation. That's why at the end of the Cultural Revolution, China was in a critical situation, lacking of people and, particularly, intellectuals.

TS: But that's who they tried to suppress was the intellectuals. It must have been awful for teachers in that period.

JO: It is; it is. In fact, when I was in the countryside in middle high school, the teachers still couldn't teach curriculum based subjects. But in the countryside, it's a little different than in the city, so the revolution raised an atmosphere that was a little not so heavily emphasized as in the city.

TS: It looks like you started teaching right straight out of high school?

JO: I was born in the countryside and had education, in fact, the most leading elementary and middle school in the countryside. After graduating from the high school in '72, you know, Deng Xiaoping—the first time—came back. He was out of position [having been purged during the Cultural Revolution].

TS: He was out of power and then

JO: And then in '72 the first time he came back—this person is a mystery person; he came back and forth, back and forth, three or four times. When he came back to the leading position, he said we couldn't let these things go on. We should have schools opened for the youngsters and get back to normal. Then at that moment the higher education and normal school started recruiting candidates. So at that time, I fortunately did get into Danyang Normal School.

TS: Which is a school to prepare you to teach.

JO: Prepare one to teach in the elementary school. I was really fortunate to be admitted to Danyang Normal.

TS: And this is considered a college?

JO: Considered a junior college. When I was admitted, they said it would give us an opportunity to teach after we graduated from there, after the two years of learning there, like a normal junior school. Unfortunately, after we got into the school and within one year, Deng Xiaoping was out of position again [laughter]. Then the school said we couldn't let you have what we promised before. At the very beginning, they said you would be graduated from this training school, and then you would be assigned to teach. At that time in China the job market was a totally different situation. Even when I graduated from higher education later on, in the whole of China, it is not looking for a job; it's giving us a job in the school, at that time. Everyone can get the job.

TS: So you didn't have to go out and shop around. They told you where you were going to go.

JO: Yes. So they were supposed to give us a position, and also the status should be "teachers." Of course, the teachers should be paid by the government. But when we got to one year they said, okay, it couldn't be that way, so we had to shorten the training

TS: Because of the lack of teachers?

JO: Not because of lack of teachers, because of the political games at the top level.

TS: Just games.

JO: Yes. Then they said you should go back to the countryside and you could teach in the school, but teachers were not to be supported by the government.

TS: Not supported by government?

JO: No. We should be supported by the commune, by the parents, by the locals.

TS: Sounds like total chaos to me.

JO: Yes, total chaos. And also the pay rate was very, very low at that time, and that partially we would be paid yearly. I think at that time, of how much I got, if converting fifteen Chinese dollars a month it comes to less than two dollars—on today's rate—less than two dollars a month [laughter].

TS: Wow, how did you live on that?

JO: The other part: you get the rice and the farm products from parents.

TS: You got paid-in-kind by the parents.

JO: By the parents.

TS: And the state paid you two dollars a month.

JO: Not by the state. It was still paid by the locals.

TS: Because the state didn't have any money to be paying out? They were broke at that time?

JO: No, the state didn't have any money. So at that time, after one year training in Danyang Normal, then I came back to teach in the elementary school and the middle school. In fact, the middle school was only at junior level, not including the senior level. They combined it with the elementary school. Used to be, elementary and middle schools were separated. When I went to teach, they were combined, so that means all kids could start from kindergarten and move up through the middle school.

TS: Kindergarten through eighth grade in the same school?

JO: Yes. Although most children could not finish the eighth grade, but the system was set that way. I started teaching in that type of setting. So you're teaching in the elementary school as well as in the middle school. I taught six years in three different schools. Wherever they needed you, they moved you to there without argument at all. The Cultural Revolution ended in 1976, and then in '77 the education system was restored in China, and the main higher education started nationally recruiting candidates.

TS: So one year after Mao died everything is restored.

JO: Yes, everything was starting to be restored after Mao's death. I was so lucky at that time because I was in the school, not fully in the countryside, working on the farms, although probably one-third of the time in the year you were working on the farm, because you had to make a living at that time also. Of course, you couldn't make much every day, but you needed to make a living.

TS: So if you had to go back to work as a farmer again, you'd know how to do it?

JO: Sure. I know most of farmer work [laughter]. So in '77, the system of entrance examination for higher education was restored, and in '78 I passed the entrance examination and got into the Nanjing University.

TS: Right. So you finally got there in '78.

JO: That was the turning point of my life.

TS: That's the turning point, to get to the university?

JO: Getting into the university, that's the turning point of life—totally changed your life. You started from there, getting higher education. Otherwise, you would stay in a poverty situation forever.

TS: Right. So when you got to the university, did you get any credit for that junior college experience that you had in the normal school?

JO: No.

TS: So you started as a freshman.

JO: As a freshman.

TS: Let me see, I think you actually majored in English language and literature?

JO: Yes. I should let you know I am really, really grateful to a middle school teacher, when I was teaching in the countryside. In fact, when I was starting in the middle school, after I was moved from the city—key middle high school, to the countryside—and went into the People's Commune Middle School. There was an English teacher there. He was punished by the government, or whomever, because he was caught as a rightist, you know, leftists and rightists.

TS: He was a rightist?

JO: Rightist.

TS: He was anti-Communist?

JO: Anti-communist in the late 1950s. He was punished, and they sent him to the place I was living. He was born in Hunan Province in a land far, far away from where I was living, and then he learned because of his so-called "mistake," or anti-Communist act—in fact, it was not—he was punished by being sent to teach far away from his family.

TS: Right, right. I think Dr. [Jiayan] Zhang in our history department has made the point that he grew up in the countryside and actually got good teachers in the Cultural Revolution when teachers were sent from the cities to the farms.

JO: I should say I was very, very fortunate to have him in that school. When I was moved into that school, he was feeding pigs on the farm, and he was not in the classroom. He was [the] kind of person, you know, more supervised or watched by others.

TS: Constantly supervised?

- JO: He was monitored by others, and his job was feeding pigs on the farm every day. Of course, when we were students, we were supposed to work there also, so when we worked together then we met each other.
- TS: I see. So he isn't actually teaching in school, he's feeding pigs, and when you're out feeding pigs you get to talk to him?
- JO: Yes. Then he saw me and one of my classmates—two or three of us talked, and then he found that we were very eager to learn. Then he started to teach us secretly under the table. He started teaching us English. Of course, at that time, the whole country thought that learning and schooling were useless; no one cared about learning. He found us to be very real and anxious to learn something, so he started to teach us. Of course, this could not be in public or in an open situation because it was really an anti-revolutionary act.
- TS: To learn English?
- JO: Particularly teaching English. That was a very dangerous thing that he did.
- TS: What was his name?
- JO: His last name is Tang; his first name is Huaxing. I'm really grateful to this teacher in that critical, dangerous situation, and he dared to teach two of us.
- TS: He was probably grateful for you because you were interested in learning.
- JO: Yes, because he was a teacher, he would like students to learn, because nobody at that time was learning anything. So he ordered three copies of a book from the United States that was called *English 900* [*New English 900, Book 1*, by Edwin T. Collier (New York, NY: Macmillan Publishers, 1977)]. *English 900* was published by Macmillan Company and broadcast by the VOA [Voice of America, Washington, D.C.]. So we could use the shortwave radio to learn by listening to the VOA's teaching
- TS: Shortwave?
- JO: Shortwave radio—receive the instruction from the VOA. That was a really dangerous act at that time.
- TS: Voice of America.
- JO: Yes. If someone knew this
- TS: Oh, you could get in trouble for listening.
- JO: Oh, not only trouble, probably you would be killed. Seriously! No one dared to learn at that time, and now you were learning English, all to listen to the Voice of America. That is typical anti-revolutionist. You could easily be put into the guilty position and be

killed. But he said to us, as advice, “You get to learn, go ahead. Sooner or later, what you have learned will be useful.”

TS: So you were anti-revolutionary, anti-cultural revolution very early on.

JO: A little bit, but in that time I didn't think about it [laughter].

TS: But you must have known it was dangerous to listen to the shortwave radio.

JO: We knew it was dangerous listening to shortwave radio.

TS: And Mr. Tang had the radio?

JO: Yes, he had one.

TS: Was he a doctor?

JO: No, he's not doctor; he's just a “Mister.”

TS: Is he still alive?

JO: No. In fact, every year I came back to China I paid a visit to him. Just two years ago he passed away. He should be glad to see that some of his students eventually changed their lives and made a contribution to the culture. So starting from there I learned a little English. That's why I immediately caught the opportunity to get into Danyang Normal. So getting into Danyang Normal, I chose to major in English. After that I finished training there, then went back to teaching. The major class I taught was English. In addition to the English, of course, I had to teach Chinese and math, music, art, all subjects, even physics and chemistry, although I didn't learn it, but I had to teach it [laughter].

TS: A good way to learn it is to teach it.

JO: Yes, it's a good way to learn, and, of course, you can learn by yourself and then you go back to teach the kids again. I would honestly say, in English class I was successful. In the physics or chemistry class, I didn't do a good job because none of my students in those classes, after the high education system restarted, none of them got into higher education as majors in physics or chemistry. But several of them majored in English in higher education.

TS: That's a good assessment, tool of what they learned.

JO: I think I taught English classes well, but I felt guilty teaching them a subject I didn't know well. But it was better than nothing.

TS: That's right.

- JO: If I didn't teach them the subject that means no one was teaching them at that time.
- TS: So when you go to the Nanjing University you're going full time there, not teaching.
- JO: Yes in 1977, the higher education started and restored the educational system nationally. Colleges and universities started recruiting candidates through the entrance examination. Before that it was called recommendations to the university. You're the historian, you know, theoretically, if we look at that time, before the system restarted, Chairman Mao Zedong said, "We should send the best younger people to the college and university," although the schools were not opened. Then after '72, the schools started to open, but at that time, not everyone could get into the colleges or universities. They were supposed to recommend people to have a college and university higher education. As a result, what happened was, if you were the father of a young kid, and because you were the top person in that unit or an important person, politically, you could say, "Let my son go to college." And that kind of situation happened. Those who were really good or qualified candidates were left behind.
- TS: Right. So it's who you know and not what you know.
- JO: Yes. So after '77 and the higher education system restarted, then it was a big change in China. After Chairman Mao Zedong died, then Deng Xiaoping was permanently put into the leading position. So he led the whole reform for the education system and the political and economical reform.
- TS: Right. I believe '77 is when we had full diplomatic relations with China and the United States.
- JO: Starting in '72
- TS: It started in '72 but it was full by '77.
- JO: In '77, I think so.
- TS: Did that have any effect on interest in people studying English?
- JO: Oh, yes. After that the universities and colleges started recruiting English majors and they totally changed the whole situation. Everyone thinks that is the normal university and the normal education. It was not normal before. It has become normal now. English majors came to the colleges and universities learning English and the chemist majors, you know, all majors, we had to start recruiting the candidates. For being admitted to have a higher education, you have to pass a six-subject entrance examination. There are three tracks. One track is liberal arts; another track is science; the third track is foreign language (English, French, German, Spanish, Russian, Japanese, etc.); and no matter which track you try to get into, you have to pass six major subjects. I chose English in the foreign language track, because I was trained to teach in English in Normal School

and believed that I was capable of learning in English. I didn't choose the science tract because I knew I couldn't pass those subject tests in science. In the foreign language track, you take the testing in political science, Chinese, mathematics, history, geography and one specific foreign language, such as English for me. Then in the liberal arts track you have to take Chinese, history, geography, math, and English, and political science. In the science track you have to take chemistry, physics, Chinese, math, English, and political science. Of course, math, chemistry, and physics were weighted heavily for the science majors. In the liberal arts track, Chinese, history, and geography were weighed heavily.

TS: Right. So you're basically taking the same stuff, but a lot more chemistry if you're a science major.

JO: Right. The good thing is you did not need to take chemistry and physics in the liberal arts track, and in the science track, you did not need to take geography and history. So I passed my entrance examination, which was very, very competitive at that time, because so many people were participating in the test.

TS: It sounds like graduate school here, to get into undergraduate school.

JO: Getting into undergraduate school here is not so competitive. At the time I took the entrance examination, only about 1 percent could get into the university, about 1 percent. Nowadays, it is getting better. Probably 60 percent can get in college and university now.

TS: From 1 percent to 60 percent?

JO: Yes, today it has reached 60 to 70 percent in China.

TS: Wow, that's a huge change. So it's becoming more like American universities.

JO: Yes, nowadays China is getting more open. Of course, there is another issue coming up, that is graduates from the university, not as the graduates from the university before, are finding the job market to be more competitive.

TS: Right. So you were in a very elite group then going through the university.

JO: Yes, I was very fortunate getting into the university at that time.

TS: So I guess they expect you to study real hard.

JO: Yes. To tell you the truth, when we got into Nanjing University, Nanjing University was one of the top universities in China, so since I could get into that university that means that the performance on those tests was much, much higher than others. We knew that the opportunity was not easy for us to get here, so everyone was so dedicated to the learning.

- TS: Any mentors that were especially helpful when you were going through Nanjing University? Were there any people that were really helpful to you?
- JO: When we were in the Nanjing University, the professors maintained very close relations. The higher education system was just restarting, and the professors who came back from the farms were eager to teach, also. They knew they lost so many years already without good students, and everyone was also grateful of that opportunity, so the relationship between professors and students was very close, and we were on the same page, I would say.
- TS: So you learned a lot in four years, to make up for what you lost.
- JO: Definitely. We learned a lot during those four years, particularly in the academic area. And we got up very early and also went to bed very, very late. Sometimes the university had to force students to go back to the dormitory. But even after they had made students leave the classroom or library, after the officials left, the students came back to the classroom again [laughter]. And also another good story, some students knew they had lost those years for learning and really cherished new learning opportunities. They even read under the quilt, using the flashlight to study. That's a true story at that time. Those four years were a very, very productive learning time.
- TS: Right. So you graduated in '82 and then you became an instructor there.
- JO: After I graduated, of course, at that time, all graduates were assigned to work or teaching. Nanjing University was a top university and the top university today in China. All graduates from Nanjing University, generally speaking, can get a better job than other universities. I was assigned to stay and to become an instructor teaching there. That is why I was teaching in Nanjing University until '87.
- TS: So you were teaching English?
- JO: Yes, I was teaching English as a second language and not teaching English majors, but students in other majors who were learning English.
- TS: I see.
- JO: Everyone was required to learn English in the college or university. Nowadays in China, in middle school, everyone is required to learn English. Even in elementary school, starting in the third grade, in the cities, students are required to learn English.
- TS: So you're teaching not the majors, but everybody else that has to know just a little bit about English.
- JO: Yes, just teaching them ESL basic English: speaking, writing, listening and comprehension.

TS: Right. I guess the next big story, is how did you get to the United States?

JO: Yes, that's a good, interesting question, also. I was teaching in Nanjing University and got married. Life seemed to me to be peaceful.

TS: How did you have time to get married when you were studying?

JO: At that time in colleges and universities, you couldn't get married, even dating. It was against the rules. So after graduation we married. At that time, I was already close to thirty.

TS: What's your wife's name?

JO: My wife's name is Liang Chen. She graduated from Kennesaw in 1997 in nursing. Now she is teaching in the KSU Nursing School.

TS: She's teaching here?

JO: Yes. This is her second year. She graduated here in 1997 and then went to work in WellStar Kennestone Hospital. Then she went back to school, studying at Emory and working at Crawford Long Hospital. She graduated from Emory graduate school in 2005. However, she still keeps her job at Crawford Long, also.

TS: So she works in Atlanta also?

JO: After she graduated from Kennesaw she worked in the hospital as an RN.

TS: But back in China she was a student at Nanjing?

JO: When I was a student at Nanjing University as an English major, she was at Nanjing University as a Chinese major. That's why we have Chinese and English translated for each other [laughter]. We met in our senior year. Of course, it was not open [laughter]. After I graduated, I was teaching in Nanjing University and had my family. In the early '80s, China opened its doors to the world. More and more younger people came out of the country to study abroad, to see what was happening outside of the country. Then, in fact, China really opened the door and made China in the track of reform. So I came to the United States in 1987.

TS: Did they encourage you to go abroad?

JO: Exactly. At that time I was teaching in Nanjing University, and my former classmates, because they were English majors, most of them—not 100 percent, but at least 90 percent of them—after graduation, sooner or later had the chance to go abroad, either learning or working or short-term training, whatever. I was a little left behind in this opportunity, but I didn't regret it. One day my chair came to me, calling me by my first name Ronghua, "Are you interested in going to the United States to have further learning?" One of my

former classmates who was assigned to teach at Nanjing University, also had been sent to England for further study.

TS: What's the name of the chair?

JO: The chair, at that time—in fact, it was a dean's position because it was at the college level.

TS: What's his name?

JO: He is Professor Yang. His first name is Zhizhong. He said to me that there was an opportunity for me to go abroad to study. Nanjing University is a top university and has a lot of opportunity for teachers to go abroad. But there was a condition for me. It's not financially supported by the University. I had to find the financial support by myself [laughter]. "But we can let you go," the chair said. So at that time I said, "How could I find the funding and support?" Also, I needed to take the TOEFL [Test of English as a Foreign Language] and the GRE [Graduate Record Examination] for applying to schools. He said, "Anyway, we have this opportunity; if you would like to go, you need to get those ready and apply."

TS: The TOEFL is the test that international students have to take, is it an English test?

JO: TOEFL is the test of English as a foreign language.

TS: Well, you should have done okay on that.

JO: Yes, you have to. Otherwise, you cannot get the admission to the university. So I started hunting the universities in Australia and in the United States and sent applications. I took the test in Nanjing University. The TOEFL test was very popular in China in major universities. So Nanjing University was the site of the testing. In fact, before that we were training people to take this test because we were teaching English. We were training those people who wanted to go abroad to take the TOEFL test.

TS: So now you took it yourself.

JO: So now I got to take the test by myself. I just took that advantage of training others. I passed the test and got admitted to Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

TS: Does Indiana University of Pennsylvania have a large program in English as a second language?

JO: Yes. At that time they had a very good program. They have a doctoral program in English as a second language. And also Indiana University of Pennsylvania had several professors who visited and taught in China. I think it was Dr. Dan J. Tannacito [Director, American Language Institute], who taught in Shanghai Foreign Language University for at least two years, so he recruited quite a number of students from Shanghai Foreign

Language University and other universities in China. I came from Nanjing University, and I got admitted there. I applied for the English, Applied Linguistics and Rhetoric major. I came to the United States in late August, 1987. Before I came to Indiana University of Pennsylvania, the provost of that university visited Nanjing University, so probably the two universities had some relationship. I didn't realize it until I got here. In fact, I applied at the same time to a university in Australia. I almost went to Australia.

TS: Well, I'm glad you came here.

JO: I was admitted by Indiana University of Pennsylvania. I choose to come to the United States.

TS: Right. So you got your master's degree in linguistics.

JO: Right. I got a master's in rhetoric and linguistics. Then I started looking for doctoral programs. Originally I thought I should go in rhetoric and linguistics because I thought after a few years of finishing the degree I should go back to China and still teach English and maybe teach English majors in research and that area. Unfortunately, I didn't get financial support in that area, and as I said, Dr. Tannacito had students from the Shanghai Foreign Language University, and he would give the scholarships to his students in the exchange program first. I was from the university, not directly connected to the exchange program at that moment. So the English department said, "We can't support you in the doctoral program. You can have financial support by yourself or you can work to support yourself while you are in the program. Although you are a good student, unfortunately, we cannot have a scholarship for you in the doctoral program." Also, they had another reason. "We would not recommend that a student that has the masters in the same program move on to the doctoral program because most of the courses are taught combined together."

TS: Right. So you really needed to change your major?

JO: Yes, you can go to another university or change the major. I fortunately got support from the College of Education at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Dr. George R. Bieger was the coordinator of the doctoral program, so I went to him. Of course, I applied to several other schools at that time. Dr. Bieger said to me, "Yes, we can think of it" [laughter]. He looked at my credentials, and he looked at my test scores, and then he said, "Just apply; we can think of it and offer you the scholarship." That's why I went into the education program immediately. I was admitted into the doctoral program in education, and that was '89. What happened in '89 in China? The Tiananmen Square event.

TS: Oh my goodness, was that '89?

JO: Yes, '89, the Tiananmen Square event happened. I was in a program anyway at that time. After I finished my doctoral program, because of the '89 incident in Tiananmen Square,

President Bush issued an executive order that all folks like us could stay in the States. They tried to protect us from being punished in China.

TS: Oh, from the Bush administration. Oh I see, so in terms of visas, and all that.

JO: That's right. That's why I didn't spend much time or headache, you know.

TS: So you thought at that time that you would go back to China?

JO: Yes. I didn't have any difficulty getting a visa and green card.

TS: So George Bush, the first

JO: Yes, George Bush, the first Bush, issued an executive order.

TS: So you would have become suspect again with your interest in English and your presence in the United States?

JO: Not only suspected in this way, but also suspected, "Did you support the '89 incident?" At that time students were involved in the movement in Tiananmen Square in Beijing, and there were lots of connections.

TS: Were you involved in any of that?

JO: I didn't get involved at that time. I just concentrated on my learning. But we watched the movement on TV and followed the news, and it kept us updated with the progress.

TS: So at any rate, it looked like that was a turning point that you were now determined to stay here?

JO: Yes, originally, I thought I would just finish my program, and then I would go back and teach at Nanjing University again, because the university I worked for was expecting me to go back. Also, Nanjing University in China is not a bad university.

TS: Sounds like it would be a great place to go.

JO: Very good place to work.

TS: But you didn't have any obligation because they didn't pay you to come here.

JO: No, no, I didn't have an obligation to go back to work there. Since I had the opportunity to stay after graduation, I stayed here and was offered a job.

TS: Right. Okay, so you went through your doctoral program and got through in '92 or '93?

JO: In '93.

TS: Let's see, seems like there's a technology component by this time, too.

JO: Yes, in fact, when I got into the master's program, I was expecting to have the computer-assisted learning major. Unfortunately, they didn't have this major. Why I was so interested in computer education was because when I was teaching in Nanjing University, I was starting to use the computer to assist in language teaching and learning. I already did some research in that area. Also, I wrote some programs to help the Chinese student to learn English at computer in China in 1986, with a very old computer called XT—not the 286 yet, an XT model.

TS: This is before the Internet.

JO: Yes, before the 286 model; we are having Pentium 4 and above now. When I got to Indiana University of Pennsylvania, I purchased a computer that was a 286 model. At that time I used it with a computing language called Basic. I used the Basic language and wrote some programs for language learning and also used the Basic language to write some programs for testing score analysis. Although it's not very easy to understand the reliability or the validity of those kinds of research designs, however, I followed those formulations and had the scores compiled and analyzed with those formulations on computer, determining the reliability index and the validity index of each tested item. I had already done lots of research in China before I came to United States, so I was very interested in learning in that area, teaching and learning English as a second language with the support of computing technology. At that time, I started to look for some learning opportunities in computing technology assisted instruction. Of course, in the master's program they didn't have those kind of courses, but they did have some projects—a major project I was doing using the computing technology to support the rhetoric and linguistic learning. The professor, of course, was very excited at my project. I have to say it was very impressive at that moment, although it was not a very comprehensive project, but at that moment it seemed to me very impressive.

TS: Yes, well, when you're coming in on the ground floor like that

JO: Yes, when I got into the doctoral program in education, the more I was learning the more I realized technology should be the future. More and more teachers need to know how to use technology to help the younger children to learn. Therefore, I put my focus in education meanwhile on looking at the educational technology. At that time, the doctoral program in Indiana University of Pennsylvania didn't have the instruction of technology major. If they had, I probably would have moved into education technology major. Because they didn't have it, I took my elective courses all in those areas. So I took the courses with Mr. Johnson—he was a very technical person at that time, and he was the principal of the lab school. He was so happy to see I'm the person who worked for him, so he had me do some projects with the younger children there, teaching younger children using basic computer technology. Then I started looking for the courses in the computing science majors. So I went to the computing science major catalog and looked at some courses. I took some basic language, starting with Pascal and children's

computing called Logo that is written by one professor from MIT. Every younger child learned Logo, so I learned it using the Logo to create some dynamic learning on computer. Starting from there, I put the emphasis on computing education in addition to the theory research in early child education. I had almost a minor—they didn't call it a minor—but I have all my elective courses in that tract.

TS: Right. So you graduate in '93, and they offered you a job as assistant professor there.

JO: Oh, that is an interesting story, also. After I graduated from Indiana University of Pennsylvania—that's why I say the turning point is 1978: getting into the university, then started from there all my life flowed almost smoothly to the top, mostly moving on. Just before my graduation, of course, the Bush administrative executive order was already made, and I started looking for a job—several job hunts to different universities. Of course, it was not easy for us because we didn't have those kinds of experiences of looking for a job. We were used to being given a job. So looking for a job is a learning process, also. How to write application letters, how to package your application packages. It took me about a half year to learn before the graduation, sending letters and sending resumes and sending recommendation letters, and so on and so on, and it was a good learning experience. But nothing came out. Almost every letter came back saying, "Thank you so much, but we regret to tell you . . ." [laughter]. It was a little disappointing when you got those letters. What was going on? Then close to graduation, one day the chair of the Department of Professional Studies in Early Childhood Education at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Dr. [Edwina B.] Vold came to me and said—she called me "Ronghua" and pronounced it very clearly—"Would you like to stay for a year?" Because at that time I was teaching in the lab school for two years already and had my intern in public elementary school, private elementary school and Children School of Carnegie Mellon University.

TS: So she called you Ronghua and you're not going by John?

JO: No, no, not John. I can't tell you where John came from later. Dr. Vold asked me, "Would you stay for another year?" Of course, I immediately said yes. She liked for me to stay because I had already taught in the university lab school for two years and had my intern in the Carnegie Mellon Children's School, had an intern in both public and private schools. I taught in Carnegie Mellon's Children School, a lab school. I had also taught at another two schools; one is public, one is private. That means I had all those experiences. Meanwhile, in the last year in my doctoral program I had a good teaching experience of supervising student teaching under the supervision of the professors. Probably, the evaluations from students were satisfactory or not so bad. When the chair said, "We'd like to have you stay for another year," I said, "Yes." But she said, "Now, this is not a tenure track, but it is temporary." I said, "That is fine" [laughter].

TS: Right, a job is a job.

JO: See, I didn't have a job at that time, and you can offer me a temporary job and I should be grateful. That's why I stayed at Indiana University of Pennsylvania for another year after

graduation. In the meanwhile, I was still sending letters and applying for a new job. After that point, it seemed to me, things were getting better. Every letter that came back, wasn't strictly saying, "We regret." Sometimes, they were saying, "You are on the first cut."

TS: You made the semi-finals?

JO: Yes, made the semi-finalists [laughter]! Sometimes, I made it to the finalists, "We'll call you for an interview." I did have some telephone interviews already at that time, before Kennesaw gave me a call. Kennesaw was the third one for an interview that I got. It's really interesting that when I got my first call for an interview from a private university, they said, "We would like for you to come to campus for the interview." Then within two weeks, I got six or seven letters saying we would like to invite you to come for an interview [laughter].

TS: That's great.

JO: That was what happened [laughter].

TS: Well, I think a lot of people wanted you to have the degree in hand and some teaching experience.

JO: I think so. As soon as you have the degree in hand and you are teaching also at that time, it makes the difference. Probably, it was also because I made the revision in the application package by adding those teaching experiences.

TS: So why Kennesaw? Why did you come here?

JO: I went to a private university's interview first. The second was in Queens College, and the third one was here (Kennesaw State University). The fourth one was to be in New Jersey, but I didn't go to fourth, fifth, sixth; I turned down those interviews because I had already accepted Kennesaw's offer. I found the private university was very nice, family-oriented. When you went for the interview, they put you in a house and not in a hotel, and a very nice situation. But it's a small, private university. Queen's College was also a very good college. Particularly, I had a very good impression on their resources in the library. The library resources were so good. When I went into the library, and they showed me, I immediately liked that library. Then I came to Kennesaw towards the spring, and when I came—you know, Indiana University, Pennsylvania is just beside Pittsburgh; it was so cold and snowing heavily there, but here, you know, already the flowers are blooming everywhere. When I came here, "Wow, such a beautiful place" [laughter]!

TS: So warm weather attracted you.

JO: Yes, warm weather, and also Kennesaw picked very fast. The first offer was from Kennesaw. Then the second offer from the private and then Queen's College later on,

but Kennesaw—I came for the interview, and I think only three or four days later I got an offer.

TS: So they were ready to move.

JO: They said, “Would you like to come to Kennesaw?” That’s the offer already. When I got an offer, you know, you can see, this is the first job. Teaching at Indiana University of Pennsylvania was a temporary job. So I got the offer, and in the meanwhile, I had planned to go back to China. I didn’t go back to China since I came in 1987. So I planned in the summer in ’94 to visit China.

TS: You had not been back even for a visit?

JO: No, since ’87. I came in ’87 and didn’t go back until ’94. I planned that trip for that summer. Also, meanwhile, Indiana University of Pennsylvania also scheduled me to teach another class in the summer, so I didn’t have much time to bargain or negotiate. That’s why I took the position immediately. After I got here, then I realized why Kennesaw made an offer so fast.

TS: Why did they?

JO: You should know. At that time, Kennesaw was in a critical situation.

TS: Oh, this was the time when the education program was on probation.

JO: They were turned down for accreditation.

TS: NCATE [National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education].

JO: NCATE. Before I came here, some professor in Indiana of Pennsylvania asked me, “You took that offer?” I said, “Yes, I took it.” They ask me, “Why won’t you wait for awhile? Think of someone else. Do you know that program, that accreditation didn’t pass?” I said, “I know.” They said, “Why would you be interested still there, the accreditation didn’t pass at that time?” I said, “I believe they will pass it.” Because when I came for the interview, I met so many professors that gave me the impression they worked hard to get it to pass. So I didn’t worry about it. That’s why I took the position immediately. So that’s why I came to Kennesaw. After I came to Kennesaw, of course, I stayed here, no moving [laughter].

TS: What was your impression of Kennesaw when you came here in ’94?

JO: When I came here in ’94, number one, of course, at the interview time, the weather was good, and when we get into the interview process, I learned that all programs were remodeling and redoing curriculum designing, and then, also, I learned that more particularly, Kennesaw offered me a teaching technology class.

TS: So you could teach technology.

JO: Yes. That's the major, major reason I came to Kennesaw. If I had gone to other universities, my area would have been more focused on the elementary education and curriculum designing and the methods of teaching. Of course, I like to teach these courses, but I was more likely to have education of technology focus, since I worked so long. My dissertation was "A Meta-Analysis: Effectiveness of Computer Assisted Instruction at the Level of Elementary Education (K-6)." Kennesaw offered me, and said, "We need you to teach a technology class and we need you to develop the program."

TS: And your job title is professor of Education Technology.

JO: Education Technology. So because of maybe my transcript or credentials, they looked at it and offered me this position. That is what I wanted because I started working on technology in '86, and now I could have a real formal class to teach. Meanwhile Kennesaw, even on the interview day, said, "We need you to develop the syllabus, develop a course. Start from the zero point." After I got here, I learned that NCATE had turned down the accreditation in part because the technology part was weak. I found that I could do my best in this.

TS: So they offered the job so quickly because you could fill one of the weaknesses.

JO: Yes, and they also met my needs, and that is what I really wanted to do. That's why I immediately took the position. I said, "I'd like to." So that's why I took the position and came here and started developing the courses, developing the program and making an alignment to the standards, and so that's why I think I can do something now instead of always learning something. Also, I can contribute something and I felt so good about it. That's why I came here and stayed here and worked here.

TS: What did you think of students at Kennesaw?

JO: The student at Kennesaw, you know, they are all good students, particularly in education. They did have some weakness in math at that time. Besides the technology class I taught mathematics methods for the student teachers. I found that they lacked the basic concept skills. That's why I put into my education philosophy: one should have some understanding of basic concepts and skills, and aim for creative thinking. We recommend creative thinking, however, we cannot ignore the basic concepts and skills. If you don't have basic concepts and skills, how can you be successful in creative thinking? That's my philosophy in teaching. That's why I expected the student to learn basic concepts and skills and master those things in the content area, then go beyond looking at the whole thing, and creatively deliver. Kennesaw students at that moment, you know better than I, were often non-traditional students, and I found they were eager to learn and eager to get help and support, and also at that moment, Dr. [Betty L.] Siegel always told us "students are always the first, put the student first." I think that's really good. We need to have students first, and student success and student achievement

should be first. I think Kennesaw students did the best at that time. And, gradually, I can see, in these years, the academic level is growing, it's rising, it's getting better. For my students in the methods class, you can see their knowledge base and their skills are getting better and better. I think the program has made a difference for them. Also, based on feedback from the public school administrators, we feel very good to hear them say, "Oh, we like Kennesaw graduates compared with graduates from other institutions." They hire our graduates and they find our graduates are more solid in their knowledge base in teaching and also professionalism and so on. And not only one principal said that; quite a number of principals said that to us that they like our students. So I think that is another reason I think Kennesaw is doing a good job here.

TS: When you got here, the focus was very heavily on teaching and, of course, a lot of service with all those PTEU [Professional Teacher Education Unit] committees and so on; and yet you've done a lot of scholarship over the years too. Why don't we talk, first of all, about your impressions about the faculty when you got here and then a little bit about what you've done since you've gotten here?

JO: Yes. After I got here, first of all, in 1994 we prepared for the coming accreditation review, and I was mainly focused on developing technology programs and courses and putting that component into the review package. Of course, I think I did good; otherwise they could not pass that review. So we got that done and of course, we worked together. At that time, Dr. [Deborah S.] Wallace was the dean.

TS: Right, Deborah Wallace.

JO: And [Jane H.] McHaney was the assistant dean.

TS: Jane McHaney.

JO: And before Jane McHaney there was a gentleman, Ken Pool [Kenneth W. Pool, Director of Graduate Studies in Education]. I think he moved to Washington D.C. after that. So I was focused on those things in the first year. Then later I started service, research and teaching—I think all three cannot be separated; they are related to each other. They are really combined and integrated with each other. When you're teaching you're doing research. The research reflects your teaching, and then it comes back to support your teaching. When we do service learning you can make the service better, and the service encourages you to learn. In the research, all of these areas, I think they are supported and integrated. I start, number one, of course, as KSU required us to do, teaching is always a priority. I saw your teaching—always listed among the distinguished teaching faculty—I really think teaching should be priority, not only at KSU, probably because my whole career starting from '72 was always teaching. Although at that time, I had one-third of time working physically in the farm field. But teaching, I think, is really enjoyable, and I like teaching. I say to my students always, "You should be proud of yourself being in this area because you are the teacher, and you can get something nobody can get. Only you can get. Of course, that is not purchased by you with money, and that is because you are dedicated to working." Because I had a lot of good experience with children, I

always said to my students too, “Some things you can get that other people cannot get.” I shared with them this story I had in Pennsylvania. I was walking on campus on a snowy day on the sidewalk, and suddenly a van passed by. I saw the window rolled down, then a boy started waving, saying, “Dr. Ouyang, Dr. Ouyang, we love you, we love you!” Then the driver slowed down the van and let the boy wave his hands to me. Then I looked at the van and saw the boy was a student I taught one year ago in fourth grade in the lab school. So I shared this experience with my students. I said, “When you have this kind of experience, what would you think? Whatever you are doing or dedicating to the children, children will remember you. You are changing their life.” That is why I said that teaching is an enjoyable job and it is challenging, but it is a really a job that you should be proud of. Meanwhile, I think research is so important because the more research you do, the more feedback to your teaching.

TS: I was looking at your research and a lot of it very definitely is related to your teaching, and it looks like you’ve also been doing some things to interpret America for Chinese audiences as well.

JO: Yes, that’s true too. My research area mainly focuses on education technology and implementing it for effective teaching. Recently, in these two years I started looking at critical language learning and assessment. Also, I like to link both cultures together and learn from each other. That’s why I’m involved in encyclopedia entry writing for introducing Chinese education to American English readers, and meanwhile introducing our education here to the Chinese readers. That is mainly what my research focused on.

TS: Right. Service, you won the Distinguished Service Award this year. You’ve been on every committee in the world, and I think you’ve been on the faculty senate as well as all the education committees, but someone was telling me yesterday about all you do with international faculty here to help them with English. Could you talk a little bit about that?

JO: Yes. The service part at the department level, college level, and university level committees, I am actively involved. Because we are working here, it is our duty, I think, to contribute time and work for this university, for this community. In the meanwhile, I worked for the international level, number one, with a Chinese Proficiency Testing Center. This center, I had the idea in 1996. Unfortunately at that time, KSU was not ready to establish this kind of center.

TS: Ten years ago?

JO: Yes, ten years ago. Then we got into 2003 because more and more people were interested in learning Chinese, and also because China started offering scholarships and opened the door for students from here. I think it’s the time now, so I started the proposal and asked the support from the dean, and the Chinese government to establish this kind of center at Kennesaw State University. Georgia State wanted to have this center at that time, and we proposed why we thought we could do better than Georgia State. We have support from the faculty, the president’s office, from the dean’s office, and from the

college level and the university level. That's why we got this opportunity to establish this kind of center at Kennesaw State University. We serve the seven states in southern America and offer annual proficiency testing for those who are learning Chinese. This test helps the learner to determine what kind of proficiency level he or she has in language skills. Just like in English TOEFL, we sometimes call this Chinese TOEFL.

TS: Right. So the main function of the center is to test?

JO: Yes, provide the service of testing and providing the scholarship of learning opportunity for the students from this community and southern states to learn in China.

TS: So you say that the TOEFL comparison is that the people who would be taking this test are people who want to go to China?

JO: Yes. Those who want to go to China and get into the undergraduate or graduate school.

TS: Oh, so this is a service for the universities in China then?

JO: Not only service for China, but also for the individuals from here. They can get their certification to certify what kind of language label they can get. Meanwhile, they can get this opportunity to study abroad and also help those who will be competitive in the global job market. Because they can have this kind of certification to certify what level they get into, they can go looking for the job that requires the Chinese language skills, and this is the kind of certification they can have to prove their proficiency level.

TS: How often each year do you do the testing?

JO: So far it is once a year, but this year we started twice a year now. In fact, this year in May in Memphis, Chinese academics would like to host this testing, so when we went to Memphis the candidates and the students can take tests on that site, but still under this center. This year I had twelve students who got scholarships to go to study in China for one month. Last year I had thirty students studying in Beijing and Nanjing for one month. The year before I had five. Now, starting from last year I started thinking we should have more students get the opportunity to learn more in China, so we put in a learning period of one month in the summer, plus one week at the beginning and one week after for learning about Chinese culture there. The first year I had a half-year for three people, one year for one person, and one five-year in a university in China. This gentleman is in his second or third year now, majoring is international affairs. This gentleman—we call him Johnny—he graduated from an Atlanta high school. He is a black gentleman from a single parent family and living, I would say, not so rich. He lived near the airport in Atlanta. I was deeply moved by his learning eagerness and attitude. He worked in McDonald's and any place when he was in high school. He made a little money and took the train to a Chinese tutor at Emory for learning Chinese. He changed the train back and forth, and he insisted on learning Chinese and focused on that culture. Then, when he came here to take the test, because he didn't have car he took the public transportation.

TS: It would take three hours to get here.

JO: He stopped in Town Center [Mall], anywhere.

TS: Right, the CCT.

JO: Finally he got here, but he made it. Also, in high school he kept learning Chinese. It wasn't easy for him. He was interested in pursuing his higher education in China. Then I talked with some professors and visited his teachers in high school, and the high school teachers gave him very high recommendations. Then I said I will do my best to help him. Probably I was thinking of my teacher in middle school.

TS: Sure, oh yes.

JO: So I said, "Well, John, if you are so interested in learning, let me see if I can find a scholarship for you." So fortunately I got him a scholarship with support for five years. In the first year he could learn Chinese language and achieve a higher level of proficiency. Then he could get into the major. I asked John, "Are you interested in applying?" He said, "Yes." So I let him apply. Of course, I wrote a supporting letter for him, and I asked his teachers for support letters and asked the administrators for support letters as well. Finally, I sent his application packet to China. Then he got approved! He went to China and was admitted to a very top university. He kept writing to me. Six months, after one semester, he told me, "Dr. Ouyang, I've already passed six levels now of the Chinese Proficiency Test." There are eleven levels in total. When he passed the sixth level that meant he could get into the program. That's the gateway. He said, "I can get into the program a half year earlier now." I said, "Great, thank you, you are working so hard." He can finish his undergraduate supported by the scholarship. And all students who went to learn Chinese in China supported by the scholarships are from Kennesaw, from the Atlanta community, and also one from Tennessee and one from Virginia. Most are from this community. The scholarship covers tuition, boarding, books, and meals—everything except their international travel. All of those scholarship winners were so excited with this opportunity. Of course, some Chinese-Americans here, their children, received the scholarships too. They went to learn Chinese in China last year. After they came back, they told me that they were so excited to learn more about the Chinese language and the culture there and not like what they had in social studies here. More important, the big change is their learning attitude and eagerness. And also, their parents were happy. They found their children, after they came back from China, had become more dedicated to learn and more eager to work and collaboratively help others and more respectful of their parents. It is because of the impact of Chinese culture.

TS: Right.

JO: Just a few weeks ago, Mr. Emory, a student from KSU who went to China in the summer of 2006, came to my office and said, "Dr. Ouyang, you are the first person I came to see. Do you know how grateful I am that you handed this opportunity to me this summer?" I

said, "What do you think of the learning experience there?" He said, "I was so excited and learned so much there, and it changed my attitude and my life!" I said, "Great, I'm real glad to hear that." Mr. Emory went to learn Chinese in China with the support of the scholarship offered by the Chinese Proficiency Testing Center at KSU. So I think what I'm doing helped the Kennesaw students and promoted Kennesaw State University becoming more involved in the global community.

TS: So you're working with the Institute for Global Initiatives?

JO: Yes, and, also, connected to Emory University, Georgia State University, Georgia Tech, UGA, and the Perimeter College.

TS: So you're really mentoring.

JO: Yes, mentoring.

TS: You test, but you're also mentoring those that want to go aboard.

JO: Yes. That testing, in my opinion, is only a kind of tool; it's not our goal. My goal, my expectation, is through this kind of channel to let more younger children or older children, or even adults, be more aware of globalization and be open-minded to dealing with daily life and working conditions. That's why I'm so happy to hear those positive comments from the parents, from the students, from those who are working in China. There was one who went to Beijing for half a year and came back and also wrote to me that he achieved so much, even though he was there only half a year. He's in the computing area, a working adult who took the Chinese Proficiency test and won the scholarship. Now he can contact some vendors and the people in China in promoting the business. That's great.

Another area I'm involved in is the Chinese Professor Association. We name it Association of Chinese Professors in Social Science in the United States. I've been a member of this association since 1996. Every year we have a summer lecture trip to China and share what's the research. We're mainly dealing with academic exchange and cultural exchange and bringing our culture here to China to let them know better what's going on here, bring the research, what we have done here, and let them see what we are doing. And meanwhile we learn something of what they are doing and make the connections and the collaborations among faculty and the professionals and through supporting each other for the professional development and the cultural understanding of each other, and so on. So I served on the board for two terms and managed the association website and so on. I have more and more faculty in United States and professionals in the United States who are getting connected with professors and professionals in China.

Another area is Dr. [Yiping] Wan moved the Sino-American Education Consortium headquarters from Michigan to Kennesaw. This consortium started linking international faculty together. I'm heavily involved in organizing conferences. Meanwhile, two years

ago, we formed the Society of International Chinese Professors in Education Technology. I initiated that association and served as vice president in the association for one term and had international Chinese professors and other professors working together in the educational technology area and had more research collaboration in this area. We, also, launched an online journal, International Journal of Technology in Teaching and Learning.

TS: And you're graduate coordinator now.

JO: Yes, another major area is graduate coordinator. When I took on this duty in 2002 at that moment the graduate program was not so good. We only had twenty-six graduate students in the program. Then, of course, not only my own effort working on it, but all the faculty supporting me so much, chairs supported so much and the dean supported and the assistant dean supported, and the graduates supported and everyone supported me. By 2005 we had about 250 graduate students in the program. It increased about 500 percent. So the graduate program became bigger and more and more candidates enrolled into the program. Of course, we did marketing and working in the community. We went to the schools and focused on the south Cobb area. The program is focused on improving children's learning in the schools. We called it the instruction of leaders and developing instructional leaders, and letting candidates go back to the classroom to improve their children's learning and to change in the situation in that school—particularly in some areas where there is a critical need for those qualified teachers. South Cobb, for example, academically, comparatively speaking, is not so good as east Cobb, so we focused on that area and have the most teachers involved in our program, training them to do the best practicing instruction and curriculum delivering and asking them to do action research. So what I did mainly helped them to be involved in the program. I spent a lot of time recruiting candidates and reviewing applications, leading the program revision and making the program more content-focused, easier to manage, and more assessable to meet candidates' learning needs. I got support from the college and department curriculum review committees and all those areas that had to grant approval. I feel so good, everywhere I go, I always get so much support; that's why I feel so pleased to work here. I always say, if no support and no collaboration, I cannot achieve so much, even Proficiency Testing Center, every time offering the test, I need to contact all people who applied for testing, contact the parents, tell them requirements of the test, test time, location, and so on.. I got support from KSU greatly, from the PTD lab, from reserving the classrooms, and from volunteer professors. Dean Yiping Wan and Dr. Ann D. Smith almost came to the test site by themselves, providing support.

TS: Ann Smith?

JO: Ann Smith, Dr. Akanmu G. Adebayo, Dr. Daniel J. Paracka, and Dr. Mark L. Warner—they were so supportive to come to the testing site, and Dr. Smith even voluntarily served as a proctor once. And also the Chinese professors have supported the Proficiency Testing Center greatly: Dr. Binyao Zheng, Dr. Jiayan Zhang, Dr. Chong-wei Xu, and Dr. Joshua Du, all of them served as proctors voluntarily, volunteering on weekends working

with me. That's why I say, without the support I cannot achieve so much. Of course, these services take time, but when you see the product or achievement, you feel good.

TS: Right. I understand you do a lot of mentoring with faculty here too, don't you?

JO: Yes, and my mentoring to the faculty is mainly on using technology in the classroom. In most of the cases it's on campus, within the department and in the college, whenever they have questions. Before we had technology support staff, I have more duty to do that. Now that we have a technology supporting staff in the college, it has reduced my service load a little bit. However, he was not available, and my colleagues often came and asked me for help when there was a need. For new faculty induction, of course, I served in the committee as co-chair and chair for two terms, and we provided help for new faculty to get used to the new environment.

TS: Right. Well, you've become so thoroughly integrated into the life of the university that this question may be obvious, but what has kept you at Kennesaw for these last twelve years and, hopefully, for the rest of your career?

JO: I think Kennesaw State helped me grow, and I like this environment, I like this university, and I enjoy working here. From the administrators' level and from the faculty, we can support each other, and I feel very good because I get so much support and help. In the technology area, Dr. Randy C. Hinds [Vice President for Operations, Chief Information Officer, Chief Business Officer, and Professor of Information Systems] is very supportive. He supports a lot. I think KSU is an enjoyable place and a good place to work. In addition to my teaching, working, service, research, I got my second master's degree when I was working at Kennesaw—an M.S. in Information Technology from Southern Polytechnic State University.

TS: I was going to ask you about that; I heard that you went back over there

JO: That's why I said that professional development and research and service and teaching are integrated. I find the technology is developing so fast and the change is so fast, I find you should keep learning, so I started taking course from Southern Poly in the year of, I think, 2001. Originally, I just started taking some classes to enrich my knowledge and skills. Gradually, with the courses I was taking, I was getting to the time where you can graduate with a degree.

TS: Might as well.

JO: Without Kennesaw, I could not achieve my second master's degree. It is because Kennesaw supported me to get it. Ms. Amy G. Phillips [Project Coordinator, Human Resources], I should mention, she is so wonderful. Every time it is time to submit registration and TAP (Tuition Assistance Program) application forms, she will remind you of it through the e-mail.

TS: Well, this has been fascinating today. I think we could go on another hour or so, but I guess we've covered the highlights at any rate, and certainly your background is fascinating too.

JO: Thank you.

TS: I really appreciate the interview today.

JO: Yes, anything you need me to provide just let me know. I am really grateful to the university here and that I was nominated as a semi-finalist and finalist in the research area and also have been nominated for the teaching award.

TS: Well, we're grateful that you came here and that you've stayed here.

JO: Oh, thank you.

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