

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH RANDOLPH A. SMITH

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Location: CIE/CETL House

TS: Randy, let's just begin with when you were born and where you born and a little bit about where you grew up.

RS: I was born in Corsicana, Texas, on June 6, 1951.

TS: I guess you grew up in Texas since you were born there.

RS: I grew up in Texas mostly, but as a very young child my dad was a Navy pilot. I don't remember any of this, but I know when I was three he was stationed in California. He developed cancer and died when I was about three and a half. My younger brother was born a couple of months after he died. Mother moved us back to Beaumont, Texas, which was where her parents were, where she grew up, that sort of thing. Then when I was in first grade she remarried, and we moved twenty miles from Beaumont to a little town called Silsbee, Texas. I spent all of my public schooling there. I graduated from Silsbee High School in 1969.

TS: Then straight to the University of Houston?

RS: I went straight to the University of Houston from there. It's about 100 miles from Silsbee. I'm not really sure what attracted me there. I think back then—that was the late '60s—they had pretty good basketball and football teams. Maybe that's what did it. As an undergraduate it's hard to remember why you did what you did.

TS: Did you play football and basketball?

RS: No, I didn't. I was involved in the athletic department, but as a student assistant.

TS: How did you get into the field of psychology? Did that start as an undergraduate?

RS: It did. I went off the University of Houston as a psychology major and never changed. Obviously, back then, no background in psychology was required. I don't think, well, there may have been some places, but there was no high school psychology in Silsbee.

TS: How did you know that you wanted to major in psychology?

RS: You know, a bunch of people have asked me that, and I wish I could figure it out or remember, but I don't. I guess it just seemed interesting to me.

TS: Were you reading stuff in psychology?

RS: I don't think so. It just sounded interesting. I went off to college and took introductory psychology my first semester and just never changed.

TS: Okay, so you got your undergraduate degree in '73, I guess.

RS: Yes, 1973.

TS: One of the things we've been asking everybody is about mentors along the way. Do any of your mentors go back as far as undergraduate college, or maybe even before?

RS: Yes, they do. Well, if you want to go back before when I did my award address [for the 2006 Charles L. Brewer Distinguished Teaching of Psychology Award] at the American Psychological Association, I credited the first person as being my sophomore and junior high school English teacher, Mrs. Flowers. I don't remember any specific lessons or rules or whatever that she taught me, but I do remember being impressed with her. She was not at all, at least for there, your typical high school teacher. I didn't know it at the time, but it was more like a college situation.

TS: Critical thinking?

RS: A lot of writing and paying a lot of attention to your writing. So I think a lot of the editing skills that I have started back then.

TS: Do you remember what her first name is?

RS: I think it was Lee. I actually, I have my high school annual in my office right now because I scanned some pictures in from my talk, but I'm pretty sure it was Lee.

TS: Okay. I guess in high school they didn't have first names.

RS: No, they didn't. And they seemed ancient then and they're probably half of my age now, or something like that. But at University of Houston, I really lucked out because I think it was about 26,000 students then, I don't know how big it is now. So it was very large, and they had a graduate grade of programs in the Department of Psychology and probably almost everywhere, so as an undergraduate it was probably fairly unusual to get very much individual attention. But I lucked out and actually had two people who were important enough in my development that I—at least one of them, I definitely would refer to as a mentor—that was Eric Brown. I took a learning course from him, I believe, and I really can't remember how we got hooked up together other than I was in his class and I assume I did okay. But for some reason or another, I ended up spending time in his office with him.

TS: Is he the one you played chess with?

RS: I remember playing chess while he was eating his lunch. I don't know why; I guess he liked chess. I was no good at all, but he took an interest in me. When I left, actually I applied to graduate school at not very many places. I wanted to stay in Texas. That's the kind of narrow view you have, I think, at that age, and actually applied to the University of Houston and was, my memory at least was, that I was the first alternate for my program. Both the other people who were accepted were from Houston, and so they took the spots. So I left and lost touch with Eric although, and I don't know how I knew this either, but I think he did not get tenure at the University of Houston, probably for spending time with undergraduates maybe, I don't know. I was finally able to track him down just this summer in preparation for the address. You can track people pretty easily on the Internet, but with a name like Brown or Smith it doesn't help a whole lot.

TS: Is he still in academics?

RS: No, he's not. He's sort of in industrial organizational consulting firm, but he's still in Houston. So I e-mailed back and forth a few times and got a picture of him to put into my presentation.

TS: Were you attracted to him because of what happened outside the classroom?

RS: I was probably attracted to him, partly because of the class. When I applied to graduate school I couldn't decide if I wanted to apply in social psychology or learning, which is the course he taught. I ended up applying in social, but ended up actually doing learning because I got a research assistantship when I got to my graduate department, so I know the topic was interesting to me. So that's probably what initially attracted me, but once he was willing to spend some time with me, I think that's a very powerful force for students when they have a faculty member who will take some time and deal with them. Then another person in the department was Richard [M.] Rozelle, who was a social psychologist. So both of the people at my undergraduate school put me on to the areas that I really liked. I served on some sort of committee with him. I can't really remember what, and then he ended up giving me some sort of graduate school advice. I wouldn't really call him a mentor, but it was, again, someone else who was more than just a passing faculty member in the hall. And so, again, I think to get any kind of attention from two faculty members at such a large school with so many undergraduates was certainly meaningful to me. And I think probably ended up influencing what I did then later on as a faculty member, although not at a large school like that initially.

TS: How would you describe University of Houston back then? Is it like a Research One institution?

RS: Yes. They have, I'm sure, multiple Ph.D. programs in psychology, so in terms of Texas, it's probably one of those wannabe's because you've got the University of Texas and, of course, Texas A&M [University], which back then really wasn't the powerhouse that it is now. I remember thinking about A&M as a high school student, and it was kind of a joke because it was the military school and whatever, so they've really upgraded significantly since the '60s. So I think University of Houston is one of those that's just sort of a step

behind, or a couple of steps behind. It suffers a lot from being the urban, commuter kind of campus. Being here at Kennesaw, I see some similarities as we've talked about football. When I was at the University of Houston they played football in the Astrodome, which was a pretty big deal, but they still couldn't draw. Now they're in an overgrown high school stadium on campus and still can't draw. As people talk about having football here, I think it's going to be tough to do in terms of where to get your fan base from. Practically everybody in the state is either tied to UGA or Tech, and then if Kennesaw ever got football it would clearly be minor league compared to that. So that's sort of a tough road. But it was a big bustling campus. I think it was probably somewhat like [Texas] A&M; it was on the move up. I don't think it got as high as A&M did.

TS: Psychology of learning, what is it that attracted you to that field?

RS: That's another one of those really good questions. I don't know.

TS: Is this like how do people learn?

RS: Well, the traditional learning class is like the general psych chapter on learning, and it would start off with classical conditioning where you're going to study, you know, [Ivan] Pavlov's dog salivating. Then you'd move up to operant conditioning with [B. F.] Skinner and the rats in the Skinner box pressing bars. I guess I've always been somewhat science/math oriented. I did real well in math in high school, I liked math—I don't think I ever thought about majoring in math, particularly when I got to calculus in college and said that's enough math for me! But I think the research side of psychology held more attraction for me because of that science/math sort of orientation, than clinical or counseling would have.

TS: So you took some statistics courses I guess early on?

RS: Yes. I made a "B" in stat. I really did not do well on the final. That was kind of ironic because I ended up teaching statistics, and it's really one of the courses I enjoy teaching a lot. It's a challenge to teach because students don't want to take it. "What does this have to do with psychology?" So I always looked at it as a challenge to try and see if I could get them at least mildly interested in it.

TS: Okay. So you go to Texas Tech [University] for graduate school.

RS: Yes, I applied to the University of Houston. I applied to Baylor [University]. I applied to Texas Tech; that may have been the only three. I did not get in at Houston. Like I said, I was an alternate. I got in at Baylor and Tech and really that was a tough decision. I remember, I think it was spring break of my senior year, my wife and I drove out to Lubbock—we'd never been out there, knew nothing really about it—and liked it out there, so that's where we ended up going.

TS: Did you get married as an undergraduate?

RS: I did get married after my freshman year in college in 1970. A lot of people were pretty surprised. My wife is a year younger, so she was just out of high school.

TS: What's her name?

RS: Corliss. We started dating in high school, my senior year.

TS: So you go to Texas Tech and what about mentors there?

RS: Two people that I would mention—and yes, I'm pulling up some parallels today that I hadn't really thought of before—they were in learning and social psychology, so like I said, I applied, really ended up applying in social and got there and Phil [Philip H.] Marshall, who ended up being my graduate advisor—I gathered that I was pretty competitive there. I had decent GRE scores. I don't know whether they were fighting over me or not, but I got there and Phil had a research grant, and so he offered me a research assistantship, and that was enough to pull me over into learning.

TS: Yes.

RS: Dick [Richard P.] McGlynn was the social person there, and I ended up sort of at least taking a partial minor in social psych in graduate school, so I worked with him some too.

TS: Why don't you talk a little bit about what it was about those two—Marshall and McGlynn—that made them mentors for you, made them influential?

RS: Graduate school is obviously much different than undergraduate; there's not near as many students, and you do get more attention from everybody. But those were the two that had the courses and the research interests that dovetailed with mine, so that made me naturally gravitate toward them. And I had the research assistantship with Phil, so we jumped in doing research immediately. It was what I did in graduate school, rather than learning starting with the animals, I did human learning and memory. So I was more interested in what is it that helps us get information in there stored away, pull it back out, work with it, that sort of thing. So that again dovetails over to the kinds of interests I have today, which is not as much laboratory research. Learning lists of nonsense syllables, which is what I did in graduate school with students. You try to give them something new to learn and if you use words, words aren't new because they've seen them all before. So there's a little invention, I guess, or concoction, called a consonant, vowel, consonant trigram, so you do a consonant, vowel, consonant, and of course that fits the form of many of our words. So we'd make long lists of these and have students try to learn them, and we'd vary different aspects of those to see if they would learn them. So I don't know, Phil and I, we worked well together. Again, it would be interesting if I could go back then and say, how old did I think he was and how old was Dick because they're both still at Tech. In fact, I'll be seeing them in, I guess, two or three weeks.

TS: So they couldn't have been too much older than you.

RS: No, it's probably one of those things again where something about their position makes them seem older and wiser. I got along well with both of them. They both had interests outside of psychology, some sort of sports kinds of things. I really like academics and all that, but I think you've got to put some balance there. You've got to have some things outside of just psychology or just academia to deal with, and I think our interests out there clicked. Not necessarily exact interests, Phil was from—where was he from? He did his graduate work in Illinois. Anyway, he had a big lacrosse interest. I'd grown up in the southwest. I knew nothing about lacrosse. I knew what the game was. Dick had gone to Loyola [University] of Chicago and he still reminisced about their national championship basketball team. Of course, that was many years ago back when basketball was so much different.

TS: Back in the '60s?

RS: Yes. So it was kind of a constant

TS: That's a Jesuit school, isn't it?

RS: Yes, I think so. It was a constant joke because they weren't doing very well then, so I'd give him a hard time about Loyola [laughter].

TS: Oh, I see. Right.

RS: And I guess, really, now that I think about it, the age difference wasn't that great. Some of the other faculty in the department were clearly senior people and I liked them and respected them, but I guess probably the minimal age difference helped. Again, that's something I've never thought about until just right now.

TS: Right. I was trying to remember whether you had actually started doing any research projects as an undergraduate, or is it after you got your master's.

RS: I had with Eric Brown. He got me involved with some of his research. And, again, a funny tie to statistics, which I had already taken by then: I remember, sitting in a room and there was one of these, at that time, big calculators, with the glowing LED lights on it for the read-out. I'd never had a calculator before; I bought calculators when I went to grad school. But he had me in there doing an analysis by hand on a calculator, which today no one would ever dream of doing it by hand. You'd plug it into SPSS [Statistical Package for the Social Sciences] and do it in three seconds. But, yes, when I go back and look at my vita, two of my earliest entries on it are conference presentations where I was one of the authors along with Eric Brown. So, yes, I got started back then.

TS: So that's one of the things that probably attracted you to him too, that you got a chance to do research with him—and publications.

RS: Yes. I didn't know how important those were back then [laughter].

TS: And then, of course, you're doing some serious research as a graduate student then with professors as a research assistant.

RS: Yes. So I did the research assistantship for two years, and some stuff came out of that. I don't remember how much exactly, but I know there were a lot of conference presentations and, I think, two or three publications. Then the last two years I was there I had a teaching assistantship, not a very formative teaching assistantship. Rather than having a class of my own, I was a lab assistant for a guy who was teaching a research class for undergraduates. I can't remember if they had to do a project or just do a proposal, but there were two of us who were these teaching assistants for the class. So they came to us with all their questions about how do we do this, how do we put these ideas together, that sort of thing. I didn't teach my first full-time class until my very last semester at Tech. A very small private school about forty miles north had called the program director and asked, "Do you have anyone who can teach an experimental psych class for us?" So I drove up there a couple of days a week and taught my own class.

TS: What year did you graduate?

RS: I left in '77. I left after four years. As many graduate students do, I had it plotted where I would finish my dissertation, and things, of course, always take longer than you think they will. So I ended up running participants for my dissertation in the summer of '77 when I had already gone on the job market and had a job. So it was really close. My joke about it is I was practically running subjects the day I walked out of the department. But it was very close to that, so that's when I ran all the participants for the dissertation. I moved to my first teaching job, which was pretty heavy and the dissertation sat on the shelf until Phil called me sometime in November and asked, "How is it coming?" And I said, "Well, it's sitting here on the shelf; it hasn't moved."

TS: Now is this Ouachita?

RS: This is Ouachita.

TS: So you go there as an instructor or as an assistant professor?

RS: I don't remember. I'd have to go back and see if I can find my old contract. It may have been as instructor, I can't remember. But they didn't have too much trouble with that; they were used to hiring people who hadn't finished.

TS: So this is 1977.

RS: Nineteen seventy-seven.

TS: And then you got the degree in '78?

RS: Yes. I picked the dissertation up off the shelf after Phil called me in November. There was a graduate student still at Tech whom I was good friends with and who had actually—this was in the old days of computer cards—taken my big stack of computer cards to the computer center and run the analyses for me and then mailed them to me. The funny story—it wasn't really funny at all then—was that none of the results that should have come out came out at all in that set of data.

TS: It didn't come out the way you expected?

RS: No. I was trying to figure out an explanation for this extremely strong effect. You find it all the time. You can do almost anything and find it. I didn't find the effect, so I certainly couldn't come up with an explanation for it. Phil and I decided I'd ended up running some students at Tech, and I actually had to go to another college to get enough people to run, and we just decided that maybe the summer school students weren't representative. So I actually re-ran my dissertation, I think it was the spring of '78, with Ouachita students. So my dissertation actually has Study One and Study Two, and Study One is really just garbage; there's nothing in there at all

TS: It's Ouachita Baptist University.

RS: Right. In Arkadelphia, Arkansas.

TS: Okay. Actually, I got my doctorate in '78 and I did a computer study also. I had 60,000 IBM cards when I finished.

RS: Wow, that's a lot!

TS: I've still got them stored somewhere.

RS: I think when I moved here I threw away my last stack of computer cards [laughter].

TS: So you did two samples, one at Texas Tech and one at Ouachita

RS: Yes. I don't know what happened. I guess his phone call motivated me because somehow or other, despite a heavy teaching load, I went ahead and re-ran the study, analyzed it, finished the write-up, and actually graduated in the summer of '78.

TS: What kind of an institution was Ouachita in '77?

RS: It was a very small, private—obviously with Baptist in the name—denominationally affiliated college in the middle of nowhere in Arkansas. Arkadelphia is about halfway between Texarkana and Little Rock in Arkansas. It's right on the interstate, so a lot of people for years and years would say, "Yes, I've heard of Arkadelphia, I've driven through it." I'd say, "Well, if you ever went from anywhere down to Texas through Arkansas, you probably drove by it." It was a really strange situation because the town, Arkadelphia, is very close to the size of Silsbee where I grew up, very small. Arkansas is

more south and Texas is more southwestern, so there's a little difference there, but very similar sorts of environments. But the big difference was Arkadelphia actually had two colleges there. There's actually a state college campus right across the street from Ouachita, Henderson State University. They are bitter rivals athletically, and, of course, the typical kind of competition that goes on between two schools in the same city. So for most people who would hear Arkadelphia, Arkansas, think that's clearly the end of the earth. But with two colleges and probably 4,000 to 5,000, maybe even 6,000 students in my twenty-six years there in a town that size, it changes the character, and it's not your typical small town.

TS: That's a pretty good-sized institution, 4,000-6,000 students.

RS: Well, that's the total between the two. Ouachita probably ranged from about 1,200 to 1,500 in my years there, and Henderson probably had 3,000 or 3,500, something like that.

TS: I got on the Internet and noticed that Ouachita goes all the way back to 1886.

RS: Yes. We celebrated the centennial when I was there. It was a pretty big deal, you know, full year, that kind of stuff. A little bit like an inauguration except you make it last a whole year.

TS: Right. The current president is a Baptist minister. I guess they all have been clergymen, the presidents?

RS: No. Actually the president when I was hired was a political scientist from Vanderbilt, but his father had been president of Ouachita back in the '30s and had led the school through, if you can imagine, a very small, private school in the Depression. It was really tough, and so he had sort of led the school out of that and got it back on its feet. So the president who was there when I was there actually grew up on campus; not when I was there, but they used to have a president's house on campus. So he grew up on the campus. I guess he got his undergraduate degree at Ouachita, but he went to Northwestern [University] and got a Ph.D. in political science and then was teaching at Vanderbilt, so he had really good academic credentials. Unfortunately—that's an editorial comment—unfortunately it has gone down since then in terms of presidents and their qualifications. But the guy who followed him had been in college life a long time. He did have a Th.D., so he had a religious background—he wasn't a preacher in that sense of the word. Then the guy that followed him was not a preacher, but he wasn't really an academic either. He did get an Ed.D. in Higher Ed. Administration while he was working at Ouachita. He actually graduated from Ouachita and almost never left. It's really kind of an odd story. I think his first job was running the student center. He did go to U of A [University of Arkansas] and get a master's in political science, but he just sort of gradually worked his way up the hierarchy at Ouachita. It was really an odd story. Then he went on to be president at Samford [University, Birmingham, Alabama], and then they brought this guy in who was pastor at First Baptist of Little Rock, no it wasn't First Baptist, it was one of the other ones, I can't remember the name, but it was

[President] Clinton's church. I don't know how much Baptist politics you know but there's a real

TS: The Southern Baptist Convention and those battles over what you can teach?

RS: Yes. One of the things that had happened with the guy who followed the political scientist was that he had gone through the trauma with the Arkansas Baptist Convention of having the board of trustees be self-perpetuating, so that the state Baptist group did not appoint the trustees. Not that there's any such thing as a liberal Baptist, but the less conservative ones.

TS: Moderate conservative?

RS: Yes, moderate. A lot of people on the outside had pretty negative stereotypes of what it was like. Certainly there was the religious element, but there were a lot of good people there.

TS: The self-perpetuating board meant that

RS: They elected their own

TS: When the conservatives took charge of the Southern Baptist Convention they couldn't change the board.

RS: Exactly, right.

TS: So that gives the president and I guess everybody a little bit of control that they wouldn't have otherwise.

RS: Exactly. That's what, I think, if you look at the Southern Baptist colleges, the better ones have tended to move in that direction to keep the fundamentalists out of control.

TS: I know Shorter's [College] gone through trauma in recent years.

RS: Almost everybody's gone through it, or will face it.

TS: Right, and have lost a lot of faculty as a result.

RS: Yes.

TS: In fact, I guess that's why our new chair of the English department is here instead of there.

RS: Yes.

TS: Okay, but when you go there you've got somebody with real academic credentials as president and part of what attracts you there, I guess, at that time.

RS: Yes. The job market in psychology in 1977 was not good at all. I guess I could have gone four different places. One was a real fluke because one day I got on the elevator in the Psych department building and saw a notice posted in the elevator that they were looking for a faculty member in a small, private place down in Texas, which was where I really wanted to be. I went down and interviewed there and they offered me the job. Somebody had died in the middle of a semester, and so they needed someone very urgently. So they were offering a one-year position with absolutely—they would never make any promise or any hint that if you did well that it was renewable. So I just couldn't see doing that. The place that I had taught that one course offered me a position. It was also a Baptist college, but it was in west Texas, up in the panhandle. Once you hit Dallas in Texas you start getting into what looks more and more like desert as you go west. So having grown up in southeast Texas, which is very much like Kennesaw with lots of trees, a lot of green, I just couldn't see living out there. Actually, this is an odd story and you may not want all of this, but I actually had a job at another Baptist college in Kentucky. Then Ouachita recruited me after I already had that job and it turned into a very awkward experience for my first job. The chair was making a circuit in Texas, and back then there was a Southern Baptist Education Commission with which you could register your credentials. I had done that, so that's why I got all these feelers from those schools. So he wanted to come by because he was driving around Texas and trying to interview people, and I said, "Well, you can, but I've already signed a contract to teach out in Kentucky." He said, "Let me just come by and talk to you anyway." I said, "Fine." So he came and talked, and he said, "Would you consider coming to Ouachita in a year after you do your year out there?" I said, "Well, yes, I think that would be above-board." It wouldn't be what the other place wanted, but I said, "Yes, I can see doing that." So they brought me to campus and did the interview and everything, and I interviewed with the president—again being a small place you interview with everybody. I interviewed with the president who was the guy in political science, in his office on a Saturday morning, with him in his tennis clothes. They had a big campus-wide thing where they brought in people, and so anyway he was playing tennis that day. I remember sitting in his office, and he said, "Well, I know the president out at that other college. What if I called him and asked him to let you out of your contract?" And, boy, I just sat there and thought, "Oh no, this is not the way you're supposed to start your career!"

TS: But he made the call?

RS: He talked to him and that was another funny story. They weren't happy, of course, and they said, "Well, we will let him out if we can find somebody to fill in for that year." So we left it at that and it was kind of funny again, not being as much in the know about academics, the VPAA was out of town when I interviewed in Ouachita, so my contact was really the president. So late spring and summer I would actually call him, or he would call me, and say, "Have you heard from him?" "No, no," and it got later and later and later. We had given notice on our apartment in Lubbock because we had to move and rented a truck and everything, and it came time to pack up and all that, and still had

not gotten an answer from them. So I called Dr. Grant and said, “What do I do?” He said, “Why don’t you drive here?”

TS: What’s his first name?

RS: Daniel R. Grant. “Why don’t you drive to Arkadelphia and we have a place we can put you for a while.” So we drove there. Of course, I had to give up the truck, so I unloaded the truck. They had an old house that was scheduled to be torn down. It was a duplex and a guy in the Spanish department was on the other side. They said, “Here, unload your stuff here.” I don’t remember exactly how close we were to the start of the semester, but it was in August and sometime after I was there they finally said, “Okay, we’ll let you out of your contract.” We had moved half way across the country without knowing for sure where I was going to teach or what or anything. So that was something.

TS: They must have found a replacement.

RS: I guess they did. That would have been a very awkward year to teach at that college.

TS: I guess so. Well, now, was there a psychology major at Ouachita?

RS: Yes. That’s one of the reasons that attracted me. Besides the fact that Arkansas was closer to Texas than Kentucky was, Ouachita had a three-person department and Georgetown College in Kentucky had a two-person department.

TS: Oh, Georgetown, yes. You would have been way over in the eastern part of Kentucky.

RS: It would have been way, way out.

TS: Up in the mountain area.

RS: So in my mind I could see a three-person department being a little bit more of a legitimate department than just a two-person department.

TS: Sure. So you go there and stayed twenty-six years.

RS: Yes. The teaching load at Ouachita when I started was fifteen hours a semester.

TS: Three-hour classes or five-hour?

RS: Three, five classes. I was the first Ph.D. psychologist there. The other two guys in the department had Ed.D.’s from seminary counseling programs, so I was a real break for that kind of school. But having my degree in an experimental area of psychology and coming straight out of graduate school, I said, “I need to be doing research. That’s something that psychologists do who are in this side of the field.” So I negotiated with the president a fifteen-twelve load instead of fifteen-fifteen, thinking that will let me do some research, and of course it didn’t.

- TS: No. I know that you said the job market is really, really tight at that time, but were you looking for this kind of an institution? You mentioned getting on the list of Baptist institutions.
- RS: I think at that point I was simply looking for a job. I had absolutely no experience in that kind of school, having gone to University of Houston and Texas Tech.
- TS: Were you thinking at this point, I've been doing all this research because that's what you've got to do to get a Ph.D., but I really want to teach, or are you thinking I really want to do scholarship?
- RS: Well, you're so indoctrinated into it in grad school that the way you get ahead is research, research, research. So I envisioned myself in research, but, yes, I was interested in teaching. I just didn't have very much experience at it at all, I know, compared to some of the people we hire, even coming out of graduate school, who have tons of experience compared to what I did. I knew, or at least I thought I wanted to teach. I just didn't know all that much about it. It turns out I did enjoy it a lot. I think it was a hard learning experience, especially first semester teaching five courses. I had one duplication. I taught two sections of General Psych and other than that I taught four preps and five courses. Really, for almost all my career there, I had very few duplicates ever in twenty-six years. A small department, the courses I taught were not courses that the other people who were there were prepared to teach, and people who we hired subsequently were prepared or wanted to teach.
- TS: You mentioned Mrs. Flowers earlier; did you put a writing component into your classes?
- RS: Not teaching that many classes [laughter]. Anytime I taught a junior-senior course there had to be, initially, a term paper. I branched out into other kinds of writing assignments. I do remember starting off in the introductory course doing some essays on exams.
- TS: A lot of papers to grade.
- RS: Yes. That's why that dissertation sat on the shelf for three months without getting any attention at all.
- TS: Sure. During those years at Ouachita, your teaching philosophy develops and what you think. Somewhere along the line you started getting students involved in research too.
- RS: Well, I was hired to teach the research courses. In fact, it was odd, the very first semester there I ended up supervising probably about eight students doing research projects who'd actually proposed them in the spring under this other faculty, so that was kind of odd.
- TS: I guess so.

RS: But we had three courses that formed the sequence there. Statistics course was first, and so I taught that, followed by a course in experimental psychology. That's where I taught them the process of doing research. The culmination of that course was a research proposal. They had to put together their plan for an experiment that they would do. Some places around the country have them develop an idea and do the research all in one semester, but I really didn't think that was adequate time for students to get a good background in putting their idea together. It's kind of like students trying to do a term paper or any kind of research project; the toughest thing, I think, is getting their idea. They always say, "I don't have any ideas." Over time I changed that course. It was always a two day a week class. We had a bunch of Monday-Wednesday-Friday classes, but we taught this one on two days a week, so we had slightly longer time periods. So the traditional way to teach it would be—there would be fifteen weeks and two days a week and you'd be in class every day. Trying to get them to come up with better and better ideas, I changed the format over time where I think it was about eight weeks into the semester, about half the semester, one of the class meetings, instead of being a class meeting was a one on one meeting with me in my office.

I had eight different assignments that they had to do throughout the semester that got them from coming up with an idea to finally putting down a research proposal on paper. I think that change is what got me into serving as more of a mentor to the research than simply teaching them a course. They weren't long meetings. I think I gave them ten minutes a piece because the class, being twice a week, met for an hour and fifteen minutes, so at ten minutes it doesn't take very long to far exceed the time allotted for the course. Probably the typical size of the class was maybe fifteen students. I think I got as high as twenty-four one time. When I went into school and said, okay, it's Thursday, it's one of my meeting days, I thought, twenty-four ten-minute meetings. That carved out a big chunk of my day. But I really do think that it helped them a lot. I guess I modeled it a little bit after the experiences I had as an undergraduate and a graduate student, not really modeled it per se that that's the kind of meetings I had, but someone sitting down with you one on one, taking their time with you. And this was not an option. Every one of our majors over those years went through this process.

There were three required courses. So after they had finished experimental, they had come up with their proposal. We did a rough draft of the proposal, and I edited those. In later years, I started adding some peer editing, too. They exchanged papers with two peers so two other peers read their draft proposal, and I did. Then they had about a week to come up with their final proposal, which they gave me usually in the last class or right before the last class. They gave me three copies and during finals we always had what I called proposal meetings. The entire department—all three of us—met individually again with each student. That way the other people in the department got to see what the students were proposing; they got to suggest improvements, things like that. They had an idea of what was going on in the department in student research. Then the next semester they enrolled for a two-hour course called Research Methods, and the whole idea of that course was they then did their proposal. So, some places where you just do a proposal, they say it doesn't matter what you propose, it doesn't even have to be feasible, but these all had to be feasible. Students had to be able to run these experiments. Then in 1984, I

think it was, a good friend of mine from another small, private liberal arts college in the state, Hendrix College [Conway, Arkansas], and I planned an undergraduate research symposium for the state.

TS: What was his name?

RS: Ralph [J.] McKenna. We planned this at one of our regional association meetings in New Orleans. Ralph's account of it was we were on Bourbon Street talking about this [laughter]. But, anyway, we planned this meeting and said that we would hold it even if we were the only ones that brought any students. Subsequent to that, another fellow in the state became interested, and he said he would bring some students. So we had the first meeting at Hendrix College, but the idea was we would constantly rotate this. It wouldn't be at one person's place where they had to do it every year. I think we started off with about twenty students making presentations that first year. We had an outside speaker and things like that. One of my nicest moments came in 2004, after I was already here. I went back to Arkansas in April to go to—we named it the Arkansas Symposium for Psychology Students—ASPS for short—but went back because it was the twentieth anniversary and they gave us both a nice little gift for starting it. But it's still going, twenty-three years now. And I don't know how many hundreds of students have presented their stuff there, but our whole idea was to make it low pressure. Some places, in fact, the one that's here at Kennesaw, there are actually prizes for the best presentation. We never did any prizes. We didn't want students to stress out any more than they already would, which they stress out a lot. But that was another good experience with students. They'd be writing their papers and we'd get together the night before so they could practice. Usually they had a ten-minute limit, so they would practice and get up there and I would always time them. They'd say, "How long was that?" I'd say, "How long do you think it was?" "Oh, I think it was seven or eight minutes." "No, it was two minutes" [laughter]. So there's a lot of shaping of students that goes on with that.

TS: Do you have an honorary fraternity society in psychology?

RS: Yes. Psi Chi.

TS: Were they involved with that at all?

RS: They were. My view on things like that is—and we had a Psi Chi chapter at Ouachita, we had it chartered when I was there, but I always wanted things like that to be as open as possible. The good students of course, can qualify for Psi Chi, but, I think, this is an exaggeration, but good students pretty much are usually going to make their way without as much help, but I think those average students probably benefited a lot from doing these kinds of things. These were not the students who were going to go on to graduate school and have research careers or anything like that, but as I always tried to tell them, "Why do we have to take statistics? Why do we have to take Experimental? We don't want to do this." They wanted to help people, you know, clinicians or counselors. I pointed out to them that, "You've got to know how to ask questions and how to get answers to those questions." For the students who got their four-year degree and went out in the world of

work, they got some tools with them, no matter what they do, that a lot of people around them won't have. A lot of times, no matter what kind of job or business you're in, people are going to say, "Gee, I wonder this? How can we find out if our advertising campaign is really working?" Somebody with a little bit of statistics and a little bit of research background can really help answer those kinds of questions. I think that course is probably where I got my rhythm or caught my stride, or whatever, as a teacher. It's tough to evaluate yourself as a teacher—I've never thought that I was a great or outstanding classroom teacher, but I think

TS: You mean in terms of a stand-up lecturer?

RS: Yes. I enjoy it if I have enough time. You know, when you're doing five classes there was never really enough time to feel prepared. But I really think a lot of my strength is working with people one on one. Not just students. That's why I enjoy a lot of things that I do now. It's what attracted me to come here and be a chair here—the opportunity to be able to work with a lot more faculty. I had no idea that it was going to expand this much in this short period of time, but I knew there was a lot of room for growth. So we'd be bringing in a lot of young faculty and a chance to work with them and mentor them. And I think a lot of the things I've done throughout my career, when I look back on it, or sometimes even when I think about it upfront, is I can do this and it will affect a lot more people than just people that are sitting in a classroom that I'm teaching. If I write a book and it's any good—it's a textbook—a lot of students are going to benefit from that that I would never have under my tutelage. Editing a journal that's geared toward teaching—faculty read these articles, get good ideas to go in the classroom and it helps their students and I would never see their students. Mentoring faculty, again, I'm hoping that they go out and are really good teachers and I can affect students that way.

TS: Right. When does your career kind of change focus from scholarship of discovery to scholarship of teaching? Maybe I should ask along that line too, when did you get exposed to Ernest Boyer along the way?

RS: Yes. Well, pretty quickly

TS: Was it '90 or '91 that Boyer's "Scholarship Reconsidered" came out? [Ernest L. Boyer, *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1990)].

RS: Right. Pretty quickly it became evident that even with my negotiated twelve-fifteen hour load, that scholarship was not going to go like I thought it was. I wasn't going to be a research machine at all. So a lot of it became living vicariously through student research and then starting the research conference. The same year that we started ASPS, 1984, I got a brochure in the mail from the University of Southern Indiana [Evansville, Indiana] now. I'll have to figure out what it was called back then [Indiana State University, Evansville campus, until it was re-chartered as an independent university in 1985]. It was a place that I'd never heard of. A guy was starting a teaching conference, Joe [Joseph J.] Palladino.

TS: Bill [G. William] Hill talked about him, by the way, in his interview.

RS: Exactly. I have no idea what I would be doing in my career right now if it weren't for that conference. Part of it was going to the conference and getting the information from the conference. But a whole lot of it was going to the conference and finding out that there was a journal about the teaching of psychology, meeting people who were dedicated to teaching, and not just to the teaching, but the scholarship of teaching—the phrase wasn't around then, scholarship of teaching—but who were approaching teaching in scholarly ways. They were doing very similar to what you do in the lab. It wasn't a lab because it's the real world. You can't do classroom research the way you can do laboratory research, but they were doing things in the classroom and trying to assess their impact and things such as that. I met a bunch of people at that conference many of whom I'm still close with, friends with, collaborators, colleagues, et cetera. Between '77 and '84 when it dawned on me that I wasn't going to, unless I moved somewhere, have the career that I thought I would in terms of research—disillusioned is a pretty strong word, so I'm not sure it was that—but I actually for two summers had NEH [National Endowment for the Humanities] summer seminars because Ouachita was so small, so few faculty, about 100, you got to be friends across disciplines, you had to. The Social Science Division was sort of the youngish, professionally oriented, although not super professional—but Ouachita had a lot of faculty who had been there a very long time, kind of like the two guys in the department, seminary Ed.D.'s, good guys, good teachers, but they just didn't have the professional orientation. So in that division that's where I found a lot of friends within a few years of me, more Ph.D. orientation than other places. So I started identifying with them, and the history department was a very large department. It had a lot of good teachers and a lot of good friends in it. Those NEH summer seminars were a big deal at Ouachita back then. They said, "You ought to go to one of these." And I said, "Well, I'm not an historian." "But you just have to write this." So I ended up doing that.

TS: What were the ones that you went to?

RS: One of them was Eric Foner, "Radical Tradition in America."

TS: That's a far cry from Ouachita Baptist University.

RS: Yes! What was the other one? That one sticks with me more. That was the first one. To spend eight weeks in Manhattan, the intellectual atmosphere in the seminar and all that was wonderful, and reading those sorts of books was wonderful, but it's such a different world. Visiting New York for three days is one thing, but living there for eight weeks is just so, so different. So those were great experiences. But the teaching conference in '84 made me realize that there is something in psychology still forming. I can do this kind of stuff, I like this kind of stuff, and that's where I would say my career

TS: Right. So there weren't any NEH summer institutes in psychology per se?

RS: No, all humanities.

TS: Right.

RS: But there was a link in both of them because I was doing a little bit of research on the side, not just the student research, I was doing a little bit, and I got into some sort of sex roles research, and that was really interesting. So both of the seminars had a sort of women's aspect and angle to them, and I think there was a lot of lore around the school about how you get selected and having a weird name like Ouachita attracted people's attention. Probably being out of the discipline in that context helped me because they thought, "Oh, he can bring in a different perspective." But I have no idea where I would be without the teaching conference things. There's a big national conference that pre-dates that that I've actually been to, but although they advertise it as a teaching conference it's primarily big name people, primarily textbook authors coming and talking about their research. It's not really as teaching oriented as these smaller teaching conferences are. So I went to the one in Indiana for a long time. I can't even remember how long for sure. A good friend of mine started one in New York; I went to that. Bill started this one here.

TS: Bill Hill.

RS: Yes. I've been to this one, and then one of the contacts I knew from my region, he was in Kansas, I was in Southwestern Psych Association, and Kansas was kind of peripherally related to that and he was from Texas, so he came down there. I met him there, but we really met at the teaching conference and sort of bonded. He and I actually started a teaching conference in Texas. It's still running. So again, I think that's the kind of thing where I see myself helping to put on a teaching conference where people can get ideas and go back and ideally affect their students. That guy is—Steve [Stephen] Davis—he's the co-author, or we are co-authors on our research methods textbooks.

TS: Right. So you go to the conference in Southern Indiana and it kind of changes your life and it gives you a new focus, really a new definition of scholarship.

RS: Right. It really did. Yes, exactly, that you can do this and relate it to teaching. It's what I tell my new faculty when I meet with them right before this semester to try to get them lined up for the semester. We're talking about what's your plan for the semester because you have to do an annual evaluation in January, even though it's only been a semester, so we look at teaching and scholarship and service, and I said, "Some people don't like this when they're all intertwined because it makes it tough to know what goes in what section. But when I see those things being intertwined, it's not like you have to stop your teaching and go do your scholarship because they're related." So I think it's the same sort of thing there that the scholarship and teaching can be blended together, and it was a legitimate enterprise, at least to a large group of people—not everybody because some people don't like scholarship of teaching.

TS: But you didn't need Ernest Boyer because you already understood that.

RS: But having Boyer, I think, really lent credibility to the whole idea. A lot of people were out there doing it and practicing it, but when it comes from Boyer

TS: And here's the Carnegie Foundation

RS: Exactly, when it comes from Boyer—and I remember reading it and saying, “Yes, of course this is so obvious.” But to a lot of people it wasn't and I think it's opened up the legitimacy of that kind of scholarly enterprise at a lot of different schools where it probably never would have been okay before. People probably wouldn't have gotten tenure with that. And I think now, at least

TS: It wouldn't have been seen as scholarship.

RS: Exactly.

TS: Okay, so you start in '84 and then you go back year after year after year and start doing your own conferences. How does it change your teaching as you do all of this?

RS: Enthusiasm is contagious, so being around a bunch of enthusiastic teachers is just contagious. And I found out at that first meeting that there was a journal called *Teaching of Psychology*, so I started subscribing to it, and there was a goldmine of ideas there, so I very quickly bought all the back issues. It had only been around since '74 or '76, so the back issues were accessible and affordable. So I did that and I just spent hours looking through them and coming up with ideas. Which then, once I found out there was a journal and saw what was in it, gave me the idea that, okay, I can get back into doing some writing and publishing. In the laboratory research what the big journals were publishing was study one, two, three, four all rolled together in a package, and if you've got a big lab and a bunch of graduate students you can put those together. It's much tougher where I was.

TS: Right. Okay, so you discover a journal, you start reading all of its issues and then somewhere along the line you become editor, don't you? How does that happen?

RS: I think it was at that first 1984 conference, I met Charles [L.] Brewer from Furman [University]; and Charles has had a big impact on a lot of people who have met him. He was the editor then, so I got to meet him. I mentioned the centennial at Ouachita; they had some special money because of that, so I made a proposal to bring Charles to Ouachita, and he did. He gave a public address and he met with students and he looked around the department and gave us a little evaluation. So I got to know Charles over the years, started doing a little bit of publishing in the journal. So then one day he asked me, “Would you like to serve as a reviewer for the journal?” I said, “Yes.” I'd never done it before, I mean, I'd reviewed student papers obviously.

TS: Reviewer of potential articles?

RS: Yes. So when an article comes in he sends it out to three people to review. I still remember getting that first article and just being almost petrified about how do you do this? Because you want to help the author, you want to help the editor, you don't want to look like the person that gives everything that comes across his desk an "A," but you don't want to be overly critical. So, anyway, I sent the review back in and apparently I did okay because he started sending me more reviews and more reviews. Then—I can't remember the year—he asked me to become a consulting editor. So your name goes up on the masthead. He used that for reviewers who did a lot of reviews and who did good reviews. So having the editor give you that kind of affirmation—Charles and I ended up pretty good friends. I'd been grading AP Psych exams since that started in '91. It started at Clemson [University]. So you go to Clemson for a week and read tons of student essays and grade them. You're in a dorm and you have to have a roommate, so Charles and I ended up rooming together at AP exams for many years. So I talked to him a lot about the journal and the ins and outs of it. I felt like I had a fairly good understanding of the process, so whenever the call for next editor went out in '94 I went ahead and applied and was selected.

TS: So you've been doing that for over a decade.

RS: Yes, it's six-year terms and you can renew. The bylaws say normally you renew for only one term, so I'm actually coming close to the end of my term. At APA this year in New Orleans we picked the next editor. I've still got awhile, but you've got to have a long lead-time to get that going. So it was a very odd thing to think that in 1984 I didn't even know such a journal existed, and then to become editor—it was a long time later, but still.

TS: About ten years later. Are you relieved that your term is coming to a close?

RS: I have mixed feelings. I really do enjoy this. I think I get a new mentoring role in this. I get to mentor, not that they're all young, but a lot of the authors, I think, who write for *TOP* are young, early in their career. I know, based on how many times they say, "Can I get this review back in time for my tenure portfolio?" But I think mentoring them in writing, in doing as high quality research as you can to deal with teaching, given it's not the laboratory where you can control everything, mentoring, just like Charles did with me, mentoring new reviewers. It was very interesting, and it didn't occur to me until we were sitting in the room in New Orleans talking about the two finalists for the position—both of them had not ever reviewed for Charles. Both of them had started reviewing with me—the same thing—had gone through the reviewing process, had become consulting editors, and here they were applying. I'm thinking, "Oh my gosh,"—this sounds bizarre—"these two are like my products." They never reviewed with Charles, it's only been me and one of them is going to be the next editor.

TS: So it's kind of an interesting trajectory, I guess, of teaching and mentoring undergraduate students and now teaching and mentoring younger colleagues in the field, as they come along, and also doing it as an administrator with new faculty in the department.

- RS: You asked about the side I'm going to miss. The side I won't miss is the—it's like working on a dissertation for twelve years.
- TS: It's very time consuming I would guess.
- RS: It really is. And even a book, you finish a book and it's on the shelf and you say okay; you put out an issue of the journal, well, there's another one coming right around the corner, so it's just like it never ends.
- TS: Now, is the book in 2002 your first book? *The Challenging Your Preconceptions* [*Challenging Your Preconceptions: Thinking Critically about Psychology* (2nd ed., paperback, Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing, 2002)]?
- RS: Yes, I think that's the second edition of it.
- TS: Okay.
- RS: There's a first edition, but that was the first book. It's a very small paperback.
- TS: *Thinking Critically About Psychology*, does this fit under the scholarship of teaching, or what's the book about?
- RS: One of the people I met at the Indiana conference is an introductory textbook author. He actually trotted out his ideas at one of those conferences and got feedback from people at the conference that turned into one of the top, it's tough to know, but top two or three books. I've worked on his instructor's manual from the beginning of his book. I imagine introductory history survey courses are extremely competitive when it comes to textbooks.
- TS: Right. There are a lot of them out there.
- RS: There's a deluge to choose from and the really good ones have all this ancillary stuff that goes with it. So once he got his book going well, he had to create this bigger and bigger package. So he wanted a little ancillary critical thinking book to go along with this book. So that's where it came from. It's so small you couldn't really use it for a stand-alone class unless you had just a really one hour critical thinking class. For a while, I think when Bill was chair I think they used it in Psych 2105 here in Social Issues that gears around critical thinking.
- TS: Right, a two-hour course.
- RS: Exactly. So what my view was, having worked with hundreds and hundreds of undergraduates for many years—critical thinking is a nebulous concept to them and really to a lot of people. There are some really first-rate critical thinking books out there, but I think a lot of them to undergraduates wouldn't really resonate. So I think the way to do critical thinking would be to do it in a concrete manner. So what I've done is to take

some controversial issues in psychology, and then I summarize some of the research evidence that people have generated. So that makes it a little more concrete than trying to think in vague, esoteric terms. I hope that at least gets their feet wet with thinking about things. And the idea of pulling in research in critical thinking typically involves finding some evidence. It's not just, "Oh my opinion is . . ." like students love to share in classes, and they don't have anything to back it up. So I try to get them in the idea of thinking of looking for evidence to back up what they want to say. I hope it works.

TS: The one that you did with Steve Davis I guess is just ready to come out, *Psychologist as Detective* [*The Psychologist as Detective: An Introduction to Conducting Research in Psychology* (4th ed., hardcover, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2007)].

RS: That is in its fourth edition. The dates are always the most current ones.

TS: I see.

RS: I'd have to look to see when the first one came out. It's a book to teach experimental psychology or research methods in psychology, which in my opinion is one of the most critical courses in the discipline. Again, it's one that the students don't want to take. It's the one that I taught for so many years. But if you look at a person who does research in psychology, it's like the most exciting thing that is there. It is the scholarship of discovery, it's finding out. It's like when you're a little kid and you got that chemistry set for Christmas and you want to mix stuff together and see what happens. For whatever reason, I think our educational system takes a lot of that excitement away from students because it all becomes about grades and they're all focused on grades, and so they lose—but you remember, when you first went to school, and you remember, kids when they first go to school, they're like sponges, they're so curious. They're just "Why, why, why?" And if we could keep that going. So our idea is to try to generate some of that excitement in students about research. You pick up most experimental psych books and you flip open to any random page and there's nothing but two pages of text. There's a graph every now and then.

So we patterned ours a little bit more like—and some people think it's a low-level book because of that—but I don't know about "intro" history books, but "intro" psych books have all sorts of pedagogy in them. There's lots of color and pictures and cartoons and stuff like that. That's what we wanted to do with our book because the book is going to help decide whether students are interested or not. So we put a lot of pedagogy in it. The title is about a psychological detective. These little boxes in the book have a little magnifying glass in it that says, "Psychological Detective Box," and it has them stop in the middle of their reading and think about something that we just talked about, or asks them a question or whatever. You can't guarantee that students are going to stop and do them, but the next paragraph is then, "Here's what you should have come up with; here's why," and that sort of thing. So we wanted a book to try to get students interested. Instead of putting in famous studies by Skinner or people like that we put in examples of student research. In psychology there are about three or four journals with nothing but undergraduate student research. So when we're talking about, here's this kind of

experimental design where you put together this many independent variables and this and this and this, instead of giving some complex experiment, we talk about a student example. We cite the students' names and their college and their faculty advisor, because I think one of the problems, again, you probably see it, is that students don't feel like they can do research; this is what the big historians do, this is what the big psychologists do. Who am I? And you can do it, so I think those are the kinds of things we thought about when we put this book together. I think it's had an impact because you can now look at some other texts in this area, and they look a little bit like ours [laughter]. The people that use it really like it.

TS: Great. And then you've also got a statistics book, *Introduction to Statistics [An Introduction to Statistics and Research Methods: Becoming a Psychological Detective* (hardback, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, 2005)].

RS: That's actually a sort of a combination of statistics and the experimental book. It's kind of like the way we do it here at Kennesaw. For twenty-six years where I thought there was stat and then experimental and then research, the way we do it at Kennesaw is there's a semester called Research Methods and then a semester called Experimental Psych and they are four-hour courses, so they have a lab component and the lab component is statistics in there, so this is a trend. I don't think it will ever become the majority, but some schools are approaching it this way. Instead of keeping experimental and stat separate, let's blend them together, which I think is a really good idea. I thought about it several times at Ouachita, about how could I put those two courses together. We could just never figure out a schedule that would work. But that's what we do here, where they're getting more descriptive techniques and the statistics that go along with them. In the second course they get into experimental techniques and the statistics that go along with them. So this is a book that would fit that kind of market. It's not a pure Stat book; it's got Stat in with the other.

TS: Any other books in the works?

RS: Steve wants to do a learning textbook [laughter]. Remember, that's what I did in graduate school. When I taught learning that was always the hardest course for me to pick a text that I liked. It's probably that way with you, your biggest specialty, you never really like the textbook because there's this little problem, or that little problem. I finally found one book I liked and for whatever reason it never made a second edition. So I changed learning books almost every year that I taught it, which gets tiring and frustrating. So I've always, in the back of my mind, before I even thought I could do a textbook, I always thought, "Wow, it would be great to do a learning textbook." But it was just too intimidating to me at that time. Learning would be a little bit tougher to do a textbook in because you do have to be pretty current in the research, whereas with experimental methodology you're teaching them how to do research, you're not really showing them a bunch of research results. So that is possibly in the works. We'll see if that one comes to fruition or not.

TS: Did you move into administration at Ouachita at all?

- RS: Yes [laughter]. The chair who was there when I went there was not the world's best teacher or mentor or anything.
- TS: Is this chair of the division?
- RS: No, of the
- TS: Of the three psychologists.
- RS: Yes, and we actually had trouble for awhile getting majors because he had engineered the curriculum so that not the first course because he taught some of that but not all of it, but the second and third course, all the students had to go through him, and it was a problem. So over some period of time the second guy and I worked on the curriculum to try to get it in a little bit better shape, and then when the chair retired they asked me to be chair, which I think was about after six years. That was a little bit odd for me because the second guy was, fifty-five or something, he'd been there forever, but the vice president wanted me to do it. So I've been chair practically forever. But being chair of a three-person department is a lot different than being chair
- TS: So it never grew above three at Ouachita?
- RS: We had three and a half for awhile [laughter]. Actually it was really a fortuitous circumstance. We had a woman who was married to a guy in physics and she had a Ph.D. in Clinical Psych from UCLA, but she had three little kids. She wanted to teach a little bit, so that was really good for us.
- TS: I guess I was wondering how service fits into all of this, too. As a department chair there's obviously service, but also professional service in the disciplines seems to be something that was growing with you, particularly as you became editor of *Teaching of Psychology*, and what-have-you.
- RS: Yes. There's the American Psychological Association
- TS: Although you could call that scholarship.
- RS: Yes, I think it's a mix. The American Psychological Association has a bunch of special interest divisions. People can join as many divisions as they want. Way back when it was first formed, Division One is General Psychology, so it was just as broad as it could be. Division Two was Teaching of Psychology—so way back when APA went to divisions, that was pretty prominent.
- TS: That's remarkable too.
- RS: Yes. That's where I have ended up doing most of my service. Now, I started in that Southwestern Psychological Association I mentioned. I was program chair and

membership chair and then actually ended up being elected president, which was kind of odd for someone from a teaching institution. But I've done a lot in Division Two of APA. I've been membership chair and program chair and fellows chair and then I went into the editorship, which is affiliated out of that division. That's our official journal for the division.

TS: I think you're way ahead of the history field. The American Historical Association hasn't ever had anything like that, I don't think, and the OAH [Organization of American Historians] is actually giving high school teachers scholarships to come to their meetings nowadays, but that's like in the last three or four years that that's come about. So I think you all are way ahead in psychology. At any rate, so you're doing that kind of service. So still teaching, I guess you've got a little bit lesser load as department chair.

RS: Oh, much less.

TS: You started to talk a little bit earlier about the things that attracted you to Kennesaw, but after twenty-six years I guess it was a big decision to make to change institutions.

RS: It was.

TS: Why don't you talk a little bit about why you came to Kennesaw?

RS: I've known people from Kennesaw for a good while because—Bill Hill, I mentioned, going to the conference in Indiana, and in fact I have some pictures from the conference in New York.

TS: Where?

RS: Ithaca, New York. Ithaca College. I went up there from Ouachita and people went up there from Kennesaw, and we stayed over an extra day and they rented a car. We toured some of the wineries up there on the Finger Lakes. But it's a picture of Bill Hill, Linda [M.] Noble, Michael [B.] Reiner. I don't know if Ruth [Hepler] was there. Anyway, we all went. So I've known Kennesaw people a long time. Bill had actually talked to me—I don't know the year—a good while ago, about possibly coming out here. I can't remember if it was when Linda Noble became chair or Val [Valerie Whittlesey] became chair. I think it was maybe Linda, and he didn't think that she would be interested, and so he was talking to me a little bit. Then she was interested, so ten years later, or however long it was, at one of these APA meetings Bill cornered me and said, "Let's talk." He said, "The chair job's going to come open." I'd been to his teaching conference several times, so I knew a lot of the faculty by then. I knew Bill and Val and Patrick [J.] Devine, Chris [Christine B.] Ziegler, Mike [Michael J.] Firment, I knew Ruth, although [she had retired]—and I knew Mike [Reiner] although he had left. So I knew a lot of them, and I knew a lot about Kennesaw. I knew how focused Kennesaw was on teaching and teaching excellence. That obviously resonated with me a great deal. I was interested in trying out a bigger place. Again, I think it fits with my idea of affecting a lot of students indirectly through what I do, as opposed to necessarily directly in my classes.

As I talked more to Bill, I knew that the department was about to take a big jump forward in terms of faculty. I didn't expect that we would have doubled in my three years here, but I knew that was going to be an opportunity to have a big part in that. I didn't realize how big a part because I don't think I knew at that time how young the department was, save Patrick, Chris and Mike, who had been here for fifteen to twenty-five years.

TS: So it wasn't that young of a department in terms of the ones you knew.

RS: But everybody beyond that, when I got here, no one else was tenured, besides those three. My first year here there were nine, counting me, so two-thirds were untenured and then we added

TS: Of course, three of the people that you knew were in administration.

RS: Exactly. That was the downside of coming here as chair, the three previous chairs were all there to look over my shoulder [laughter].

TS: Well, I hope they're not looking over your shoulder too much!

RS: No. That's what I kid Bill about. Yes, it was a time when I felt like, within a small number of years window I would need to decide, do I want to do something else or do I want to stay here for my entire career? Interestingly enough, of all my spread around the country teaching buddies, about four or five of them had made comparable kinds of moves, and they were pretty close age-wise and career-wise to me, so really it was kind of that dawning back in 1984 that, "Oh my gosh, I can do some scholarly work related to teaching." Seeing all these people move, it was, "Oh my gosh, even though I am, what was I, fifty or fifty-two, I could still possibly do something different." So I talked to some of them about their changes. Even more interestingly, two of those people, the changes didn't really work out. One guy just decided he'd made a bad move and he wanted to go back where he was.

TS: It is a risk after you've been at a place for over two decades and you're comfortable there and you're tenured.

RS: Yes. But I thought in my case, it was not as much of an unknown, as it would be for

TS: Because you knew everybody.

RS: I know some people here. Obviously, you wouldn't move without doing homework on an institution, but I already knew a decent amount about Kennesaw.

TS: Obviously, the fact that they hired you indicated they wanted somebody with your talents to come here.

RS: I hope so [Laughter]!

- TS: You would hope that that's the case at any rate; otherwise you do have a bad fit [laughter]!
- RS: It's been a good fit. I've enjoyed it.
- TS: You said a little bit about your perception of what it was like here before you came; how has your perception of the intellectual life of the campus changed, or maybe it hasn't changed since you arrived?
- RS: I think the biggest addition to what I've said is that Kennesaw is clearly not solely focused on teaching excellence any more. The graduate departments I think have done a lot of that. I think clearly Dr. [Daniel S.] Papp is talking about ramping up the scholarship. So I think inevitably with a school growing the way Kennesaw has, there's a lot of evolution over time. I think, historically, teaching and service have probably been the bigger two with scholarship in there, but I think scholarship is pushing more now. I think a lot of faculty are concerned [about] how is this going to change Kennesaw? Is it going to change its basic nature too much, or so far away from what we knew? I think the people who have been here ten years and more probably see a lot more changes going on than I see.
- TS: What do you think? Is it possible to maintain a focus on teaching excellence while we're running as fast as we can toward scholarship?
- RS: Yes, I think it's possible. I think it is a challenge. It's not going to happen automatically. I think Dr. Papp and the deans and, I guess, chairs are going to need to continue to honor teaching, and I think clearly that's in place here, right now. I expect now some faculty are being attracted here for different reasons than previously was the case. Some people are probably coming now because they want to teach in graduate programs. Not that that's anything bad—not that that says teaching excellence still isn't important—but I think, in general, people who want to do graduate teaching are probably going to be more scholarship oriented.
- TS: Well, the institution's going to make them more scholarship oriented.
- RS: Exactly. I think clearly if people followed the Coles College model, that would be the case. The thing that I think too that I see here that maybe makes it a little easier to stay focused that way is that a lot of the graduate programs are unusual. They're not just the standard, oh, yes, you could go do that exact same graduate program at fourteen other schools in the state. The fact that they are interdisciplinary more, the fact that I think a lot of them have a pretty healthy service component in it, applied focus, I think that helps. But I think there's going to inevitably be tension about it. How long will it be before someone at Kennesaw is not happy to have the kind of doctoral programs that have been approved for us, and say, "We really want a real Ph.D. program here," with all the scholarship trappings that go with that.
- TS: It's going to happen.

- RS: It will happen; that's right. I don't know now whether it will happen that Kennesaw gets the permission to do that, I don't know. But, yes, someone will start talking that, and that then, I think, creates a little bit more tension about keeping teaching squarely in focus.
- TS: There's a kind of tendency I think throughout the academic world to want to be something other than what you are. To be what you perceive as the next step up.
- RS: Exactly. That's right. There's no question about that.
- TS: So the culture of the campus is changing?
- RS: Yes. I don't have a good sense—and I think part of that is the short time I've been here—I don't have as good a sense across campus as I did say at Ouachita, which was much smaller. The interesting thing that I've noticed coming here as a chair, I think it makes me in some ways more insular to the department and even our college, but not that much outside the college other than, say, getting together with other chairs. I think in Humanities and Social Sciences, we are the college that has been most in line with the old mission.
- TS: Teaching and service.
- RS: Yes. But, I think with a lot of good scholarship in the college too. With the new dean, who is clearly talking more about scholarship, I think we'll end up with that tension, too.
- TS: Right. Are you planning any graduate programs in psychology?
- RS: I have felt internal pressure almost since I've gotten here, because it has seemed to me that there has been this giant push to add graduate programs, so I've sort of felt pressured that way. When we were doing the planning retreat under Helen
- TS: Helen [S.] Ridley?
- RS: Helen Ridley, who was interim dean, I did put down a graduate program in psychology. However, what our students would like to see in a graduate department is clinical or counseling, and my understanding of the way the Board of Regents works is they're not likely to approve something like that
- TS: Because everybody else has one?
- RS: Exactly, everybody already has one. So, then, the question is, "What can you come up with that would be a legitimate graduate program that would also attract students?" I don't think we have an answer to that. Yes, there's one listed if you look at the long-term goals, but there's nothing specific in mind. In fact, right now, we're not even really that close to keeping up with our undergraduates. Last I could find a reliable number, we had

over 800 majors in psychology, which puts us about third or fourth largest major in the entire university.

TS: With how many faculty?

RS: Eighteen this semester.

TS: That's a tremendous growth over what it was.

RS: Yes, it is. But since I've been here, we've grown from about 500 majors to over 800, and the faculty have grown from nine to eighteen, so it sounds like it's keeping track, but it's .

...

TS: But you were behind to begin with.

RS: We were and we're working on the spring schedule right now. I just can't see a way to get enough sections in there to meet all the demands. I guess if we offer fewer sections of general psych we'll have fewer majors because there just won't be as many people coming through.

TS: How do you think it's going to change our culture in Humanities and Social Sciences with [Dean] Richard Vengroff talking about elected department chairs and terms for—I guess the ones that came in this year have a fixed term, I don't know what it is, I think he mentioned something about that. How do you think that's going to change things?

RS: That's a tough question. I think the question that strikes me as an interesting one is not just our college, but the university as a whole, because as far as I know we're the only college that's made any change along those lines, and I think that's an interesting dynamic where you have, what do we have, six or seven colleges.

TS: Seven.

RS: And they don't all run the same administratively, and I think that's going to be interesting to see what plays out. Particularly, say, when faculty in other colleges start saying, "Well, they're electing chairs or they have fixed terms, what about us?" I think that's going to be an interesting dynamic to play out. Within our college, it may not be as large a change as someone might think. I came in three years ago this past July along with Bill [William C.] Griffin in Foreign Language, and now when we sit around our chairs table, the only chairs in the college have been there in chairs longer are [E.] Howard Shealy [Jr.] and Chien-Pin Li. So it appears naturally, chairs seem to turn over.

TS: At least they're turning over now. I'd have to think of different departments. I guess in Psychology there's always been a pretty rapid turnover because they've been moving up in administration. But we had the same chair for fourteen, seventeen years, something like that, before Howard.

- RS: Yes. Well, Rich came to our faculty meeting a week ago today, and he feels very, very strongly that no one should be a chair for more than ten years, so his idea is a five-year term with a possibility of one following it.
- TS: So are we going to be moving more toward the model where it rotates in the department, do you think?
- RS: I don't know, because I think something else that he has said makes for an interesting, possible dilemma. He would like the chairs to be chosen with a good healthy majority vote, not just 50 percent plus one. That could be interesting in some departments. Can any one person get a sizeable majority?
- TS: I don't think the English department would.
- RS: I was going to say . . . you know, if you've got a department that has factions—I hate to say factions because that's very disagreeable—but even leanings or groups, if there are two or three of them, and when it comes to chair, they say, “Well, we want this person.” I think that's going to be interesting. What do you do to resolve that question? I don't know.
- TS: Let me wind up the interview by just asking you, 2006 has been a good year for you to win awards.
- RS: Yes it has [laughter].
- TS: American Psychology Association, I guess, American Psychological Foundation [Washington, D.C.] with the Charles [L.] Brewer Distinguished Teaching of Psychology Award; why don't you talk about that a little bit, and you got to make a speech for that one.
- RS: Yes. Ever since I've been here Bill has been pushing me to get in one of these award things. So we went through the trauma of putting together a package. Bill was a great help in this, and he won this same award I think in 2004, so he knew how to put one of those together. It's a very meaningful award for a variety of reasons. I think it sort of validates some of those realizations I had back in 1984 that you can make a career that's based on teaching. You can do scholarly things in teaching. When I look at the list of people who have won this award before, a lot of them are people I have known for a long time and have great respect for, a lot of them are friends, and then to win something named after Charles Brewer, who has been such a guiding force for me since 1984, is very meaningful. It was a very nice convention in August in New Orleans. Both my sons and my wife came, my parents and my sister came, and so it was a family event. The convention was not at all a normal one for me because I'm usually there by myself and I'm “pal-ing” around with all my friends from around the country. So I lost out on that, but having everyone there at the presentation I made and then at the awards ceremony, and then my sister had a celebratory dinner for us afterwards. It was a really neat event.

- TS: And then just recently they announced that you got the award from the Board of Regents for Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. Why don't you talk about that?
- RS: Well, that, you know, I've known that the Charles Brewer Award existed forever because it's always been up there, and I don't know how old these awards are and I didn't even know they existed. I knew that we had had some people in competition for them. I knew that our—is it called Outstanding—the teaching award?
- TS: Distinguished Teaching Award.
- RS: The Distinguished Teaching Award person is always nominated for the Regents Teaching, but I didn't even know there was a Regents Award for Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. Apparently, at a dean's meeting last January or February, Helen Ridley called me and said, "You've been nominated for this thing. We were talking about these awards on the dean's council and who we should put up. I put your name forward, and everybody said, oh, yes, yes." It was fortunate this was limited to a twenty page portfolio.
- TS: That's good.
- RS: It's good and it's bad. It's kind of like having a page limit on writing a paper. You have to think about it a little bit more and organize it as opposed to no page limit. But I had a week or two at most to put that together. Again, I called on Bill for some help and put it together; and lo and behold, I got the call from Dorothy Zinsmeister. Actually I was pulling out of the CETL parking lot and my cell phone rang.
- TS: So what are the implications of that award; are you supposed to do something for it?
- RS: Well, the implication weighing heavily on me right now is there's an awards dinner on March 3. That's a long time from now, but if you go on the Board of Regents website and find the right page, which is hard to do, they have pictures from last year. Someone had told me this, it may have been Linda Noble, but someone had told me this, and I said, "No, no, no." But someone had told me it's a black tie event and sure enough it's a black tie event, so that's . . . [laughter]. I don't know, I don't think there are any specific responsibilities. I think it's kind of like the Brewer Award; it's recognition for a career. I feel—I'm not sure what I feel—I feel humbled to have been in the state for a short period of time, and clearly the award is based on more than the time I've been in the state, and I find that probably a bit unusual that they would recognize you for having been here a short time, but having done, I guess, a decently long career of these things. So that was pretty gratifying to be recognized in that way, too.
- TS: Well, I'm about out of questions. I've thoroughly enjoyed the interview, and I've enjoyed talking to you today. I'm glad you decided to come to Kennesaw.
- RS: Okay. Well, it's been a good ride so far.

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