

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
INTERVIEW WITH MARK W. PATTERSON
CONDUCTED, EDITED, AND INDEXED BY THOMAS A. SCOTT
for the
KSU ORAL HISTORY SERIES, NO. 82
FRIDAY, 17 AUGUST 2007

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Friday, 17 August 2007
Location: CIE/CETL House, Kennesaw State University

TS: Mark, let's just start by asking you where you were born.

MP: I was born in Windsor, Ontario.

TS: I noticed you had some degrees from Canadian universities; I wondered how that came about. So you actually grew up in Canada then.

MP: I grew up in Canada and still am Canadian.

TS: Why don't you just talk a little bit about your background and where you went to school, and I want to ask you about your mentors along the way and that sort of thing and how you got interested in geography among other things.

MP: My interest in geography stemmed from my high school geography teacher, Mr. Munson.

TS: Do you remember what his first name was?

MP: Terry Munson. I was taking his class, and he encouraged me to look at majoring in geography when I went on to university. I went on to university, and I was actually a double major: I majored in geography, and I majored in computer science.

TS: Let's go back to Munson for just a second. Did you just get excited by that course or was it by the way he taught the course or did he have you go out and do things in the field? What happened in that class to make you interested in geography?

MP: I think it was a combination of my own interest in geography; I can remember as a kid just looking at a map for a couple of hours. And I think the other thing was his interest in me where he would actually have me teach classes. At first it was a little awkward teaching my peers, but I got into it, and it encouraged me to do better.

TS: Right. Why the computer science part when you went on to college?

MP: I taught myself how to program, actually, when I was in tenth grade, and this was before PCs were around, and I thought well, for job security this might be a good thing. I was a double major for two years and somebody introduced me to something called GIS, which blended computer science and geography. It was the first time I'd ever hear of it, and I thought, yeah, this is what I'm looking for. So I dropped the computer science major and kept the geography but focused on GIS.

TS: Okay. Maybe just for the sake of the record, explain what GIS is.

MP: GIS stands for Geographic Information Systems and it is automated mappings, using the computer to produce maps to help you solve problems.

TS: Right. So this is the real pioneering days of GIS, I guess, wasn't it, when you were coming along in college?

MP: Well, GIS has actually been around since 1968, but it was on mainframe computers and it was not very accessible. So with the advent of the personal computer in the late 1980s this was when you see the real explosion of GIS, and that was right around the time that I came on the scene.

TS: Right. I was trying to remember when we got personal computers here on campus. I guess it probably was late 1980s before individual faculty members had any. I think there may have been one or two on campus in the early to mid-1980s, but certainly not very many people had them at that time. I didn't realize that GIS went back that far, so it's got almost a forty years history now. Who turned you on to GIS? Did you take a class in GIS or was it just mentioned in a class that you took?

MP: The geography offered maybe two or three classes in GIS, and one of the professors who was assigned to me as my advisor, noticed that I had the double major, and he was explaining GIS to me.

TS: Do you remember who the professor was?

MP: It was Derrick Sewell.

TS: Let's see, this is at the University of Victoria.

MP: Correct. In British Columbia.

TS: So you got interested in GIS as an undergraduate, and then what happens next? It looks like there's a little bit of a gap between your bachelor's and your master's; did you go out and work awhile?

MP: I landed a job with the Ministry of Environment and Parks in Victoria, and it was doing programming, ironically, programming in SAS and programming for GIS.

TS: What is programming in SAS?

MP: Statistical Software Package. I can't remember what the acronym stands for.

TS: But at any rate is it the statistical software package that people are using with parks and recreation and things like that?

MP: Yes. So one of the things we had done was conduct a visitor survey to see how satisfied people were with parks, so someone found out I knew how to program, so I got assigned to write the code to analyze the surveys. Fortunately, I didn't have to enter the survey information.

TS: Did you have punch cards back at that point?

MP: I think we were past punch cards at that time, but I think we hired out a third party to enter in the data.

TS: I see. Maybe I should ask why parks and recreation? Did you have an interest in parks all along or how did that come about?

MP: I had actually done the co-op program in my undergraduate degree, and I had conducted two semesters of co-op experience with the Ministry of Environment and Parks, so they knew me, I knew them, it was a good fit. I do tell my students this, so I'll go on record and say this, about three weeks into the job I just said to myself, "I don't want a nine to five job," and I had missed the deadline to apply for graduate school, so I stuck it out for about a year and a half, and then I went on to graduate school.

TS: But you knew that wasn't for you.

MP: Yes, almost from the beginning.

TS: Okay, so you work for a little bit over a year and then let's see, you went on for a master's and you'll have to pronounce it for me, University of Guelph.

MP: It's just outside of Toronto. I got a scholarship from the Canadian International Development Agency which is akin to USAID. I wanted to do research in developing countries focusing on water supply, and they had a project in Indonesia and they were looking for a student to do research. It was more dumb luck than anything that I got the scholarship, and after I completed my course work I moved to Indonesia for a year. I did data collection, and I came back, wrote up my thesis, and finished.

TS: Wow. I was thinking from British Columbia to outside Toronto is a long distance. You had already been a long way away from home at that point, I guess.

MP: I guess, geographically, it is, but it was also the town my father grew up in, so my grandparents were there, and I did have some relatives there.

TS: Oh, okay. How long were you in Indonesia?

MP: I was there for almost eleven months.

TS: So I guess your master's thesis comes out of all of this?

MP: My master's thesis did, yes. The Indonesian government at the time had a program of transmigration where they would basically find a village on the island of Java and say, "You're moving to this island," to try and reduce the overcrowding. They would designate particular water sheds to move the villagers to, and they needed to be sure there was enough water to support not only the domestic uses, but also the agricultural uses. My thesis essentially is calculating a water budget for a particular watershed. That involved some GIS mapping, particularly of the aquifer to see how big it was, to see how much fresh water was there.

TS: Right. So you're basically telling the government that such and such a place has enough water to support 200,000 people or something like that.

MP: Correct.

TS: Sounds like pretty important work.

MP: It was important, and it was fun too. It was really my first taste of doing research in a developing country and getting incredibly frustrated because people didn't operate according to western or North American standards. You know, the meeting is at two on Thursday, it doesn't mean it's this Thursday at two; it could be any Thursday, and you just had to keep going back until you're able to see the individual you have to see.

TS: So a lot of cultural awakening or awareness coming out of all this?

MP: Certainly.

TS: Which for a geographer is a pretty important thing to have, I would think.

MP: Certainly. And that lesson has served me well over the years.

TS: So you come back, you get your master's degree, and then do you go straight on into your Ph.D. program at that point?

MP: I took six months off; I really didn't do anything other than get ready to move to Arizona. While I was working on my master's degree, I came across a name in the literature a lot about water resources, and I contacted him, and I explained to him my situation, and I said, I'm thinking about doing my Ph.D., and I would like to study under you. That was Marv [Marvin] Waterstone. So I moved to Tucson, Arizona.

TS: Going from a cold place to about the hottest place you could find, I guess.

MP: That was in November of 1993, and I started my Ph.D. in January of '94 in geography.

TS: So it took you let's see to '98 I guess, wasn't it, that you finished up?

MP: Yes, I would have finished sooner.

TS: That's still a pretty good speed.

MP: I met someone whom I eventually married, so I'm sure that set me back a semester or two.

TS: Well, let's put her name in the record.

MP: Lynn [M.] Patterson.

TS: And she was studying geography also?

MP: She was studying geography, working on her master's.

TS: Okay. And so she got a master's from Arizona?

MP: Yes. And her Ph.D. is from Georgia Tech.

TS: So she got her Ph.D. after you all moved here then, I guess.

MP: Yes, in fact, she just graduated this May.

TS: Is that right. Okay, you worked on your dissertation at University of Arizona, and what was your Ph.D. dissertation on?

MP: I should back up; at the time the dissertations on GIS were focusing on applications of GIS; so here's a water resource application; here's a forest reapplication. I didn't want to produce another dissertation like that. I was more interested in how GIS was affecting the way people were making decisions, so I focused on the natural environment, the resource management realm. So how were government agencies such as the EPA—or were the decision people of the EPA—making changes because they were using GIS?

TS: How were their decisions changing because they were using GIS?

MP: Yes. So I looked at, for example, the Superfund site where they had monthly meetings in Tucson. I would go to these meetings, and it was actually the Air Force that was the potentially responsible party. They had been dumping a degreaser into the aquifer probably for thirty or forty years, and one particular neighborhood nearby was drawing their water from that aquifer. They had incidents, for example, of testicular cancer in eight year olds, far above the national average. So we would go to these meetings, and the Air Force and their contractors would show these wonderful maps of the aquifer and how the contamination plume was shrinking because they were cleaning it up. The discussion would focus on that, whereas the community wanted to talk about the cancer that was going on. What I found was that the debates over these maps would get so intense that discussion on the cancer and the restitution kind of fell to the wayside, and it was only when I sat down and interviewed the local community one on one were they

able to voice their concerns. I would say, “Why don’t you bring these up in the meetings? I go to these meetings with you every month and I haven’t heard you ask the questions.” Time and time again it would go back to the maps they were showing and how the maps would capture and almost dictate the direction of conversation.

TS: Well, I guess the maps are crucial because you’ve got to prove that the contaminants are actually getting to the ground water and the well supply where the people are coming down with cancer. And then I guess they get intimidated a little bit by the military brass coming in and their experts.

MP: Certainly.

TS: Well, after you had talked to them, did they become more vocal in the meetings?

MP: Honestly, I’d have to say no.

TS: So what happened in that case? Did the military ever admit any responsibility?

MP: Yes, it was clearly the military’s responsibility since they were the ones dumping the chemical on the ground.

TS: Would they admit it?

MP: I don’t know if they went so far as to say, “Yes, we did it, it’s our fault.”

TS: Probably on advice of their attorneys.

MP: Yes.

TS: Did they ever do anything about it is maybe a more important question.

MP: They provided funds to have a community medical center created, which on one hand was good because people in that community can go and get free primary care, but then on the other hand it really didn’t do anything for the ten year olds with cancer.

TS: If you’re the cause of the problem creating a clinic to take care of the victims doesn’t sound like very much. So welcome to the real world of politics, I guess.

MP: Exactly.

TS: Did anybody bat around the term applied research when you were involved in all of this as a graduate student?

MP: Not that I can recall.

TS: Because it sounds like everything GIS does is applied research.

MP: Yes, and I wonder if it were just taken for granted. One of the things I like about being involved with GIS is it gives you a good combination of being in your office, sitting at the computer, and also being out in the field. I don't think I could do a job a hundred percent of the time behind a desk or a hundred percent of the time in the field, so it's a nice blend.

TS: Yes. Well, you finished your dissertation in '98; what was the argument of your dissertation?

MP: Essentially I was arguing that everything is not GIS-able; in other words we can't take everything and cram it into a GIS. I'll give you an example: a sacred site to the Native Americans. Let's say it's a mountain. You can enter the location of the mountain into a GIS program and map it and draw a circle around it and say this area is sacred to this particular Native American tribe. But it completely debases the meaning of that mountain for that particular tribe. One of the things . . .

TS: You mean just marking it as a site on the GIS map debases it?

MP: I guess what I mean by debase is you don't appreciate the sacredness of this particular mountain, and you've taken it from something where the Indian tribe sees it as a place to conduct rituals to a dot on the map, and something gets lost in that translation. One of the things the next generation of GIS was trying to do, and you would be interested in this, is incorporate oral histories so you could click on the map and a text file would come up or an audio file or a video would come up to teach you more about this particular place and why it's important.

TS: So it sounds like you were doing a good bit of interviewing along the way anyway going out and talking to the people and so on. On NPR [National Public Radio] this morning there was a segment on global warming's effects on historic sites, and I guess people are just beginning to focus on how warmer climates in Europe, for instance, might affect corrosion on the Eiffel Tower or insect infestations in places where I guess the cold weather had kept down the insect supply in the past. That sounds to me like a GIS related thing too to start, maybe documenting some of these places that are changing because of climate change.

MP: Certainly.

TS: Not to mention potential rising water levels in the ocean with so many built up areas right along the coastline. You finished up in '98 and then came to a place that I guess you had never been before, so how did you get to Kennesaw State?

MP: I hadn't been to Georgia. When I was on the job market my girlfriend at the time, we were living together, we pulled out an atlas, and she drew a line across the atlas and she said, "Nothing north of this line."

TS: She's not from Canada I take it.

MP: She was actually born in Canada, but she grew up in Syracuse, New York.

TS: That's still about as cold as you can get.

MP: So she said, "Nothing north of this line," and Atlanta was at the northern most part of the map. Living in the desert tends to thin your blood.

TS: Probably so. All the retirees are going to that area, I guess. Talk about environmental problems though with the growth of population in the places like Phoenix; where's the water going to come from if they grow another ten million people?

MP: Exactly.

TS: So you just started applying to colleges within that geographical area that she's willing to go to?

MP: Pretty much. I think I hit the scene at the right time because there were probably three or four jobs for every applicant. This was when GIS was starting to explode.

TS: So you can pick and choose where you want to go.

MP: And what we saw at the time was GIS was not only in the tier-one research universities, but it was starting to trickle down to the state level and now to the community college level.

TS: You are actually mentioned in one of our interviews—I think the one with Helen Ridley where she was citing you as an example of somebody who could have gone to a Research One if you had wanted to do so.

MP: If I had wanted to do so.

TS: So I guess the question is why did you want to come to Kennesaw in '98?

MP: I really felt at home when I interviewed, and I owe a lot of that to my mentor Harry [Harold R.] Trendell. He met me at the airport, and he looked after me. I was here for three days—the interviews back then were I guess longer than they are today.

TS: They're still pretty long but not three days, I don't think.

MP: It was really personalized. One night we went to his place for dinner, another night we went to Garrett [C.] Smith's place for dinner. I left with a good feeling, and when I got back Dean Ridley called and offered me the job. I said, "Oh, I'm flattered but I have more interviews I want to go on."

TS: What did she say?

MP: She said, “Well, how much time do you need?” I said, “Well, I have two other interviews that I really want to go on, so I need about four weeks.”

TS: Four weeks is a long time to ask for.

MP: She gave it to me.

TS: So you went on those other interviews and then decided Kennesaw. Were the other interviews Research One places?

MP: One was at a Cal State school, Cal State San Marcos which is just north of San Diego, and surprisingly I was offered that job; and the other was at Florida International which is a research school. Whatever could have gone wrong on the interview went wrong from a technology point of view. I also had a terrible head cold. The plane landed in Miami, and I was deaf, so I couldn’t hear people when they were talking to me.

TS: It wasn’t meant to be.

MP: I had a fever, but at least I have the story to tell.

TS: I think Ted Shore who used to be on our faculty is out at San Marcos now. So at any rate, you could have been in a really warm climate in San Diego or a warm climate in Atlanta. So why Kennesaw? Because of Harry and Garrett and people like that?

MP: I think so. Other factors included we have friends in Marietta and the cost of living.

TS: Big difference.

MP: The salary was slightly higher in San Diego but the cost of living is astronomically greater out there.

TS: So you decide to come to Kennesaw. You called Harry your mentor as though he’s your number one mentor of all time, would you say, or number one mentor after you got here?

MP: I think after I got here—with all due respect to Harry.

TS: Well, I guess your major professor had to be a mentor didn’t he?

MP: He had an incredibly dry sense of humor, and you really had to prove yourself to him before he would take you under his wing, but he is the smartest guy I know by far—and by that I don’t mean he knows a lot of stuff, but his analytical capabilities just amazed me, and I used him as a role model. I think I’ve got a fairly sharp analytical mind, and I attribute that to my advisor.

TS: Any other mentors at Arizona that stand out?

MP: I think it was him.

TS: What made Harry a good mentor when you got here?

MP: I think Harry was a good mentor from a political perspective. Here's the people you don't want to make angry; he showed me the ropes of how to navigate.

TS: How things worked at Kennesaw?

MP: Yes.

TS: Okay, so you come to Kennesaw in '98, and I guess you were brought in to actually create a GIS program, weren't you?

MP: The program I believe was a semester old when I arrived, so it was to assume the directorship or leadership of the program.

TS: So we were actually teaching a GIS course before you got here? Who was teaching the course?

MP: It was a part timer, Diana Estrada, and she hasn't taught for a couple of years, but we've used her over the years.

TS: So was she working in the field, is that why she was teaching the course?

MP: She works [as senior GIS specialist] at a firm called MACTEC [Engineering and Consulting], which is just across Chastain [3200 Town Point Drive, Kennesaw].

TS: So she taught, but we didn't really have a full-time faculty member qualified to teach GIS before you got here?

MP: Correct.

TS: So you came in, and did you get administrative support to develop the program or were you on your own to develop it or just what happened once you got here?

MP: We didn't have a GIS computer lab, so we were sharing a computer lab with the College of Science and Math, and at any given time you could walk into the lab and someone may have deleted the file to start the software that we needed, so it was a little bit frustrating to begin with. One of the first things I had to do was to find money to put together a lab. So I submitted a grant proposal to the National Science Foundation, which was funded, and we put together a GIS lab.

TS: Let's see, when you submitted the grant was Jackie [Jacqueline L.] Givens [former Director of Sponsored Programs] and her office helpful or not helpful or involved or not involved in all of this or did you write it on your own?

MP: I wrote it on my own. I gave it to Jackie's office to take a look at it before we submitted it. The grant was due on a Monday, and on Friday I heard back from Tina [H.] Straley [former Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of Graduate Studies], and she said, "What is this? Didn't you read the RFP? This is not what they're asking for." So Harry and I spent the weekend in here rewriting the grant proposal.

TS: You said she said, "Did you not read the RFP?"

MP: The Request for Proposals. Everything worked out though.

TS: But you all had to rewrite the grant, so Tina was actually helpful in that regard?

MP: Tina and Jackie, yes.

TS: Okay—so pretty quick turnaround, I guess, having to get it done over the weekend. But you got funded. How much was the grant for?

MP: The grant was for \$70,000, and we had to match that.

TS: How did you do that? Do you mean the institution matched it?

MP: We matched it a couple of ways. One was through course releases.

TS: Oh, in kind matching.

MP: In kind counted as well, and at the time the State of Georgia had a program called ETACT, which is an acronym, which stands for something, but essentially if you got money from a non-state agency or a donation from a non-state agency the State of Georgia would match it.

TS: So the National Science Foundation is a pretty good organization to get a grant from. I would imagine that getting a grant on the first try is fairly rare because those are pretty competitive grants, aren't they?

MP: I think so. Not only that, but I was also a co-PI on another NSF grant for the Chemistry department to development an Environmental Studies minor, and we also hit that grant.

TS: An Environmental Studies minor? And we're just now getting to an Environmental Studies major?

MP: Yes, eight or nine years later.

TS: So you got two grants in your first year here, and you were off and running, I guess.

MP: Off and running.

TS: Okay. Well, why don't you talk a little bit about the development of the GIS program on our campus; how many students do you have, and has that grown a lot in the last eight or nine years?

MP: When I first got here, we five or six students in the certificate program; we didn't have a degree program. It was a lot of pounding the pavement and going to classes and talking to students about what GIS is, and then gradually over time we built that up to I'd say thirty or forty students a year going through the program. We'd hired another full-time faculty, Tino [Agatino] LaRosa, and then we decided let's see if we can get a geography degree. This is where the politics entered, and we were basically told no, but if you want a GIS degree we would support it. So Lana [J.] Wachniak [former department chair; currently, Associate Dean of College of Humanities and Social Sciences] and myself wrote the proposal for the GIS degree, which was passed by the Board of Regents. In the proposal you have to say how many majors do you expect your first year or second year and so on and so forth. I knew this wouldn't be a very big degree simply because for the social science types there's too much computers and for the computer types there's too much social science, so it would take a unique individual to be interested in it. We basically said we will probably, once the program is up and running, graduate about fifteen students a year. Now we have about fifty-five majors, and we graduated about fifteen majors a year.

TS: So what you predicted.

MP: Yes.

TS: So you've got two full-time faculty members still, right now?

MP: I should say that Tino left to go home to Italy a couple of years ago, and we have since hired two tenure track faculty, Nancy Hoalst Pullen and Mario Giraldo.

TS: So you've got three in the program now that teach the courses. I guess the argument for GIS is that nobody else was offering that in this area whereas institutions that had a major in geography were plentiful. Is that the argument?

MP: Let's see, Georgia State had a major, UGA had a major, and West Georgia—they all had geography majors.

TS: Right. But what about GIS?

MP: I think we were the third school in the country to offer an undergraduate degree in GIS.

TS: So the case was that this was something unique that wouldn't duplicate what's being offered elsewhere?

MP: Yes. And since we got the degree Gainesville State College—one of the few [bachelor's] degrees they offer now is in GIS [Bachelor of Science in Applied Environmental Spatial Analysis with a core of GIS]; so they have a four-year program now.

TS: That's unusual. Is there a huge demand in Gainesville for GIS?

MP: I guess. We actually get some of their students transferring here.

TS: What kinds of students go into this program? You mentioned people that obviously like both computers and the social sciences, but are the typical students people that have already gotten a job in the field and they need this kind of training or are they traditional aged students that just kind of have a knack for this or what? Who are our students?

MP: Well, we still have the undergraduate certificate program and the degree program. What we see is in the certificate program we get a lot of people who work full time and either need to pick the skill up for their job or they are retooling, so they're going to make a career change. In the degree program, it's increasingly becoming more and more a traditional student where they're at school full time and hopefully will get out in three or four or five years. I can also classify the students into two types as well that come to me: one that says, "Oh, I hear that you can get a job," and the other that says, "I love geography." And invariably the one who says, "Oh, I hear that you can get a job," will not complete the program, and the one who says, "I love geography," he or she, not only will complete it but also will do very well.

TS: Interesting. What causes those that are job oriented not to complete the program, do you think?

MP: Well, frankly they fail out.

TS: They fail out because they just aren't interested.

MP: GIS is not rocket science, but it takes time to learn, so it's not like trying to pick up Microsoft Word; you can kind of figure it out. You need to spend hours at the computer, and you need to make mistakes.

TS: So it takes a certain passion.

MP: Yes, and if you're only doing it to get a job the passion is not there.

TS: There's been a lot of talk on our campus about being a learner center institution or a learning center I think Dan Papp calls it; it seems to me that GIS would be a good field to do learner-centered type education. I just wondered if you could talk about your teaching

techniques with students in this program. Do they do a lot of work on their own? Just talk a little bit about your teaching philosophy maybe with regard to GIS.

MP: Well, I suppose I start every semester by telling my students you don't learn GIS by listening to me talk about it; you learn it by rolling up your sleeves, sitting down in front of your computer, and playing with it. Having said that the students have tutorials they work through, and I kind of see my job with respect to GIS to help facilitate them as they navigate through the tutorials, explain terms that they don't understand, show them short cuts. I've identified areas where students have been tripped up in the past, so I can help them through this to try and bring them all to a basic level as the first step. The next step then is I really think I cease being a teacher in the traditional sense and I become a project manager where if I have twenty students in the class I'm managing twenty projects where my students have to go do a GIS project, where the data they have are not canned. When you're dealing with canned data everything works out perfectly, so this is the real world now where this data set may be in one format, you may have another data set in another format, how do you get the two to talk to each other—things like that. I'd also like to say, I'd be remiss if I didn't say, there's another side to me, and that's when I teach the non-GIS classes. In particular I've been teaching the social issues class a lot, and I really enjoy teaching that. I look at it as my role in that class is to teach students how to think critically, and I say geography is just the vehicle we're using, but by the end of this class you need to be able to think critically, so when someone throws out a statement you need to step back and identify the assumptions that person made when that statement was made. I'll admit, I lose some of the students, but those who stick with it invariably get a lot out of the class.

TS: What kind of social issues do you look at in that class?

MP: Geo-political issues such as, how has the location of petroleum resources get played out from a geo-political point of view? Why is Kazakhstan so important now where ten years ago it was just another former [Soviet] republic? Looking at globalization and the impact it has say on us as consumers or other places where things are produced. So as the course name implies social issues from a geographic perspective.

TS: Right. What's happening at the North Pole right now is very interesting in that regard I think with everybody trying to claim those oil resources up there.

MP: Particularly, with Russia planting a flag and Canada beefing up a military installation up there and Denmark looking to do some geological mapping to prove that it's just an extension of Greenland.

TS: Right. Okay, let's maybe talk just a little bit about research that you're doing nowadays that relates to GIS. What are some of the projects you've been working over the last eight or ten years at Kennesaw, you being in your tenth year now.

MP: Is that what it is? Wow.

TS: Starting in 1998.

MP: Where did the time go? It is two very different areas. One is geographic education. I'm sure it is not surprising when we hear how geographically illiterate American students are. One of the things I've been working with is, "Can we use GIS to turn students on to geography so they actually learn geography while playing with computers?" Learning geography is more than simply memorizing place names and their locations, but also basic geographic principles like absolute location, relative location, understanding, "Why does the location of feature A versus feature B have significance?" I've been looking at two different areas: one is at the high school level while I've been working with high school geography teachers. I got a couple of grants; they used to be called Eisenhower grants; I think they're called Improving Teaching Quality now through the State of Georgia where we had a summer camp for geography teachers.

TS: Did we have it on our campus?

MP: We had it on campus. They would come in for a week, and we would show them very basic things to do in GIS like how to open a file, how to overlay something on top of another thing, and give them lesson plans. These lesson plans were tied to the state curricula. All the way from grade nine through grade twelve each grade level had a different theme or topic they had to cover in the curriculum. We would give them lesson plans. So when you're dealing with relative location which would be at the grade nine level, "Here's a lesson plan that you can use." We provided them with the software and the support. When I say we, I'm talking about Tino LaRosa and myself—

TS: You gave them a CD to take back with them?

MP: Yes. Pre-and post-testing. Some of the more gung-ho teachers would actually bring their classes to Kennesaw, and we'd have them work on an exercise. The AP classes would come in and work on an exercise.

TS: AP geography?

MP: AP geography. The exercise was basically to help them learn and understand geographic principles—introduce them to GPS, the Global Positioning System satellite units—and I had them go out and collect data with these units. We gave them a test at the end of all this based on geographic principles. We also gave the test to five Geography 1101 classes because the AP students were getting credit for the Geography 1101, and they scored about 17 percent higher on average than the KSU students in basic geography. So we have a couple of publications out of that and conference proceedings as well.

TS: Why do you think they scored higher, the high school students?

MP: I think students these days are more technologically savvy and that we're giving them a toy to play with and they enjoy playing with it, but they don't realize that they're actually learning something at the same time.

- TS: So you're giving them toys to play with that the regular Geography 1101 students don't have.
- MP: Exactly.
- TS: So maybe your department ought to be applying some of these principals in all the classes.
- MP: It would be nice, but I think we're strapped from a resource point of view so time, energy and equipment.
- TS: And the number of students you've got to teach.
- MP: Yes. What we're doing now with another colleague, James Beeks, we are giving a test to the students at the beginning of the semester, and this is in Geography 1101 and the Geography of Terrorism class that he teaches. After the test we actually give them the software that they can take home and install and play with the maps, and they have exercises to do with the maps, and then at the end of the semester we give them the same test to see how they have done. I just got the results back from last semester's groups, so we're going through the data now analyzing it. So far it looks promising that they actually improved significantly from the beginning of the semester. But this is something that a professor needs to take the initiative on his or herself.
- TS: It definitely fits the Boyer definition of scholarship of teaching.
- MP: So we're hoping to get a publication out of that one. Sometimes, I don't know if it's a good thing that we're so research driven; why can't we just be doing this for the sake of helping our students instead of having another motive where we get a publication out of it? You know, there's a cartoon out of the *New Yorker* where two professors were at a funeral and they were talking, you know, "He published and published, and he still perished."
- TS: So you're saying as long as you're doing this research and it's improving your classes, who cares whether you get a publication or not.
- MP: Well, I wouldn't say who cares. Obviously, it's a nice thing, but it's also nice to do things just for the sake of helping students. I think having some basis of geographic knowledge is critical for becoming a global citizen.
- TS: Do you think anybody reads those articles when they get published?
- MP: I don't.
- TS: Potentially, what you've found could influence teachers in other places, assuming they read the articles.

- MP: I have to admit that I have had a couple of people come up to me and say, “Hey, I saw your article in the *Journal of Geography*, and I think it was really great. So I know some people have read the article.
- TS: But sometimes I think we do our writings for four or five people out in the rest of the world. Well, you were mentioning there were two areas and one was geography education; what was the other one?
- MP: The other one has to do with studying deforestation. That’s using satellite imagery, so we can go back in time to see . . .
- TS: How far back can you go?
- MP: We can go back to the mid-1970s.
- TS: So that’s thirty years of data.
- MP: In addition to that we have agricultural censuses that governments collect, and we can actually use the images that line up with the census to see if what’s being reported mimics what’s actually happening on the ground. This research I’m conducting is happening in Central Chile, just six hours south of Santiago.
- TS: So what’s happening causing deforestation there?
- MP: Well, I’m working with a colleague, Doug [R.] Oetter, and he is from Georgia College and State University in Milledgeville. We had a Fulbright-Hayes trip to Chile. We met some geographers down there, and they were telling us about a project they wanted to get going. So we said, “Well, we’ll see if we can help.” I guess we were able to help because last summer we had a field season down there collecting data. We went into the project just assuming that the landscape was going to be horribly degraded, and we were going to see erosion everywhere, you know, acres and acres of tree stumps.
- TS: And it didn’t happen?
- MP: Before we went down we started looking at the satellite images to try and get a feel for what we thought we would see. We were looking at the images and, say, from 1986 to 2006, a twenty-year period, there was almost no change. You could see patches where trees were taken down and patches where trees had been planted, and we thought, well, we must be interpreting the images wrong. So when we went down there two summers ago our interpretations were correct.
- TS: So nothing was changing overall.
- MP: Nothing from the satellite image was changing, but when you got on the ground . . .

TS: Oh, I see what you were saying, what you thought to begin with was correct.

MP: Yes, we were partially correct that there was very little difference in the total area of forest. But when we got on the ground we saw two big things that were changing. One was the species of tree. They were harvesting trees but they were also replanting with non-native species. It's actually a species of tree native to the west coast of California.

TS: So they're trying to find a tree that will grow faster and they can get another harvest quicker?

MP: Exactly.

TS: Same thing happened in South Georgia with the Longleaf pines.

MP: Right. Garrett [Smith], Harry [Trendell] and I wrote an article on that, "The Silent Demise of the Longleaf Pine" [*Southeastern Geographer* 40 (May 2000): 75-92].

TS: I did not know that.

MP: I'll send you a copy of that.

TS: Great. We used Janese Ray's *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood* in Georgia History, Georgia Literature several years ago. I would love to read your article.

MP: All right. You would probably be the fourth person to read it.

TS: Right. [laughter] So some trees are gone and others planted in their place and this totally changes the ecology of the area.

MP: We suspect it's changing the ecology of the area, so from a biophysical point of view that's where future research is going. But there's also the human dimension. Just talking to farmers there, where they used to own the land and now they're working on the land as an employee. We're seeing family farms now belong to large forestry corporations. We're also seeing rural to urban migration increase significantly where people are leaving the countryside.

TS: Being uprooted?

MP: Yes, primarily for economic reasons. So that's the other area that needs to be investigated. I was fortunate enough to get the CETL grant for restarting faculty research. I haven't actually touched that area in probably about . . .

TS: But you haven't stopped research to need to get restarted had you?

MP: In this particular area the Chile research I haven't touched that; it's probably been a year and a half to two years.

TS: Okay. So you're getting ready to kick that back into gear again?

MP: I want to kick that back into gear because I kind of found a new hook, and that's really where my passion is.

TS: On the hook on the people side of it?

MP: Both on the people side and the biophysical side, and the hook is globalization. It's the local impact of globalization. When we hear about globalization, it's the GEP of country "X" is so many billion, and we hear all these big, aggregated figures. The impact of globalization happens on the ground; we rarely but increasingly read about what's happening in this particular village, how are they being impacted by globalization. So whether it's the family declaring bankruptcy and now being the employees on their former farm or having to move to a city or because we're changing the tree, it's changing the soil chemistry, which changes the water chemistry, which affects the fisherman at the mouth of the river.

TS: I know one thing Janese Ray talks about is the lack of diversity when the old longleaf forest disappeared; I forget what the name of the woodpecker that was greatly reduced in that area.

MP: The Red Cockaded Woodpecker.

TS: Okay. And a lot of other species as well that had kind of depended on that kind of ecosystem and it no longer existed when you plant the same species of trees, I guess, properly spaced apart so it's easy to get in and harvest them next time. So I guess there's plenty of that that would be taking place down there. Another question on the people, are they making more money or less money as employees. Is their standard of living higher even though maybe their status is lower or is their standard of living down too?

MP: Well, I don't know for sure, but I suspect it is, and I say that because initially you have people who are subsistence farmers, so they're growing what they need with little if any surplus to sell. A forestry company comes in and says, "Hey you have some good land, how about you grow trees instead of crops, and then we'll pay you "X" amount." So they stop growing corn or whatever it is they're growing and start growing trees, and the rotation cycles is about ten years. How do they survive in those ten years?

TS: No income for ten years.

MP: Yes.

TS: And so I guess they don't survive, and that's why they become workers instead of owners.

MP: Exactly. That's what I suspect.

TS: And I guess you're going to put this in a world perspective then because I guess you could probably find the same thing happening historically in South Georgia and a lot of other places in the world.

MP: For example, the government of Chile really wanted Chile to become a leader in forestry exports. Chile exports more wood products than Brazil.

TS: It's a much smaller country.

MP: If you've got a mental map of South America, you know that Chile is long and thin and Brazil is huge. So the government has actually pumped a lot of money into programs to promote the forestry industry as well as promote foreign investment in the forestry industry. That ties into globalization, of course.

TS: Would you call it a colonial economy in the sense that they're exporting raw materials?

MP: Certainly. And that is probably going to be a future direction, so why are you exporting timber or lumber instead of furniture?

TS: Right. Sounds like a good project to hold you for a few years.

MP: Hopefully. No offense to the Georgians, but I cannot stand the summers here, so when I'm down there it's winter and I'm at home.

TS: That Canadian climate. Are you at a high elevation where you are down there?

MP: Not too high, I'd say probably we don't go above 3,000 meters which is 10,000 or 11,000 feet.

TS: That's still pretty high. Maybe not by their standards.

MP: It's in the foothills of the Andes.

TS: It could be higher but 10,000 or 11,000 feet is high. What are we here, 1,000 feet?

MP: We're 1100 feet here.

TS: So ten times higher than we are. Okay. So that's where your research has gone. Let's talk a little bit about service now because you won the Preston Award this year, and that's a community service type award. I know you've been involved with Lake Allatoona, I believe, so if you could talk a little bit about that . . .

MP: First let me say that I'm embarrassed and humbled by the award. I think there are other projects that are more deserving than mine but nevertheless I'm grateful. The Lake Allatoona Preservation Authority Scientific Advisory Committee or LAPASAC for short, was created by the Lake Allatoona Preservation Authority or LAPA, which was created by Governor [Roy E.] Barnes I think my first or second year I was here.

TS: He became governor in January of 1999.

MP: Okay, so that would be my first year here then. The Scientific Advisory Committee provides scientific information to the Preservation Authority on how to manage the lake, so from that point of view it's strictly scientific advice, and then the Authority has to deal with the Army Corps of Engineers, and that's where the politics enters. The Scientific Advisory Committee would like to wash their hands of the politics, but fortunately or unfortunately science and politics are linked.

TS: So it's been kind of a common thread since your graduate school, it looks like.

MP: Yes. I try to avoid the politics. On the committee we have members from KSU, members from UGA, and so we had ecologists, forestry people, water people, fish people, vegetation people.

TS: Who else from KSU is on the committee?

MP: Joe [Joseph M.] Dirnberger [Professor of Biology].

TS: Oh, yes, I know Joe.

MP: Heather [D.] Sutton, Don [Donald J.] McGarey. These are all biology folks, and I'm the lone geographer. Then we do have someone from UGA from the Institute of Ecology [Odum School of Ecology], Liz [Elizabeth] Kramer, who does satellite imagery analysis. One of the first big things that they asked us to look at was after Labor Day they basically pulled the plug and drained the lake, so that it's empty and ready to receive the rains that come in the winter.

TS: That we hope will come.

MP: Yes. From a biological point of view that's a shock to the system. We were arguing let's drain the lake slowly because there is a significant amount of time from Labor Day to November when the rains come.

TS: They're thinking let's wait till after Labor Day because we have all those boaters out there in the summer time, right?

MP: That's it exactly. That has a stronger weight than the ecological argument. Hey, the weather is nice, and we still have another month where people can use the lake for recreation, so gradually lower it. And as a geographer or the GIS guy, I guess I make

maps. The latest issue came out earlier this year was Alabama threatening to sue the Army Corps of Engineers to force them to release more water from Lake Allatoona—just part of the Tri-State Water War.

TS: Right. Did you all have a voice in that?

MP: Again, from the same biological point of view.

TS: Don't let it out too fast.

MP: Yes.

TS: Do you think anybody listens to those arguments, like Sonny Perdue?

MP: You know, I guess in an ideal world people would, but with politics involved it's really a crapshoot.

TS: Not their only consideration.

MP: Exactly. So you wonder about the reasoning behind decisions.

TS: Right. But you've been on this advisory committee now for . . .

MP: The committee died I want to say five years ago and was resurrected perhaps a year ago.

TS: Who's responsible for the resurrection?

MP: I'd say two people: one is the general manager of the Lake Allatoona Preservation Authority, Ron Papaleoni, and Joe Dirnberger is the chair of the Advisory Committee.

TS: So it's back in business again?

MP: For the time being.

TS: Is this something that you can get students involved in or is this something that you do on your own?

MP: It is. In fact, my colleague Nancy Hoalst Pullen is actually having her students do a project with the Preservation Authority this semester. I want to say that my heart for community service really lies elsewhere, and that's why I haven't poured my energy into this particular community service function.

TS: Right, but one of those that you've been engaged in at any rate. With regard to community service and the kinds of things that are behind you receiving the Preston Award this year, I wanted to see if we could talk a little bit about your concept of global citizenship and how that ties in with your service.

- MP: That's interesting. There's a lot of discussion or debate in academic circles about defining global citizenry, and my wife and I have often talked, say, over dinner, well, if you had a student who was a global citizen, what were his or her characteristics, what would they be, rather than getting bogged down in the definition. For us, I suppose the two main things would be an awareness of other cultures and perhaps more importantly the notion of social responsibility. You can't teach social responsibility, but you can show people how to be socially responsible, and I think as teachers our actions speak louder than our words. One of the things I've learned from the various community projects I've been involved with is it's a lot easier to change the world when you've got many people doing it with you rather than you trying to do it yourself.
- TS: Right. That fits in very well with this focus, doesn't it, that the institution is taking with, I can't remember the phrase but global something for an engaged citizenry.
- MP: Global learning for engaged citizenship.
- TS: Global learning for engaged citizenship. Something like that is supposed to be the focus that we're heading toward with the SACS accreditation or something?
- MP: The QEP [Quality Enhancement Plan].
- TS: Yes. So it sounds like what you're doing and thinking about is right in line with the institutional mission at this point.
- MP: Yes. And I'd like to say that I came up with it before Kennesaw decided to adopt it.
- TS: You're not doing it because Kennesaw said to do it; Kennesaw has gotten on board with where you were heading anyway.
- MP: Exactly.
- TS: Right. Sure. Let's talk a little bit about modeling global citizenship and some of the things you've been doing with Africa and South America and so on.
- MP: I'm really fortunate in my position here at KSU to do a fair bit of international travel. I guess I'll start with Africa. My wife and I went to Malawi which is in east Africa two or three years ago, I can't remember, and we noticed that there were a lot of bicycles, something that we weren't prepared for.
- TS: Where exactly is Malawi in east Africa?
- MP: Malawi is on the western shore of Lake Malawi, and it's bordered by Tanzania to the north and Mozambique to the east and the south and Zambia on the west.
- TS: Okay, so it's on a lake but it's inland.

MP: Correct.

TS: So they've got a lot of bicycles there.

MP: And we have this one photograph of this guy carrying what looked like half a cord of wood on his bicycle.

TS: Wow—a lot of wood.

MP: A lot of wood. And we saw other people walking, carrying wood, but no where near the amount, and we thought, wow, what a difference a bicycle makes because imagine how many trips the guy walking has to make. My wife said, yeah, if you want to change the world we should send our bikes to Africa, so that became our saying, "If you want to change the world send a bike to Africa." And for probably the next year or so it was just a saying, and then my wife used it in one of her classes, and one of her students said, "All right, how do we do it?" My wife says, "Why don't you find out?" So the Geography Student Club took it upon themselves, and there was this student, Nancy Bauer, she took the bull by the horns and started a bicycle drive; she collected fifty-some-odd bicycles, or I should say the geography club did; they identified a community in Uganda that could use the bicycles, and we are working with airlines now to get them shipped over there. We're trying to get them shipped for free, but we may have to end up having to pay to get them shipped. We're also raising money to help cover any costs.

TS: So the bicycles have not gone yet?

MP: No, I think the bicycles are in the garage in House 51 [on Campus Loop Road].

TS: Okay, the International House. But at any rate you're working with airlines that fly into Africa, I guess.

MP: For me, I suppose in that particular example, the most important outcome is not necessarily having the bicycles shipped to Africa, but we're empowering students to show them that, "Hey, we can make a difference." And then they become examples, and then maybe they will show other people that they can make the world a better place, so part of the social responsibility. We also help this one village on the shores of Lake Malawi. They took used paper, and they made recycled paper out of it, and they had some artisans who would then draw art on the paper, and they would sell it to tourists, but they needed—and they call it a guillotine—and I asked, "What's a guillotine?" And by the hand motion, it was a paper cutter, so just by arranging to get them a paper cutter we made a difference to them. Our next project—and, again, this is primarily Lynn [Patterson] I should say, and I believe Nancy Bauer will be involved and maybe another student, Alicia O'Keefe—is the mango tree. We want to buy some solar ovens, take them to Malawi, and show the women how to dry mangoes. When it's mango season there in Malawi there are millions of mangoes, and a lot of them simply fall to the ground and rot, so while they're ripe Vitamin C is plentiful, and that's another food source for

that three-week period. We would like to show women in villages how to collect the mangoes and how to dry them using the solar ovens, and that way they've got food throughout the year, Vitamin C, a potential source of income if they want to sell it. One of the things I think as my wife and I have thought about community service more and more is, "Well, what are some principles that guide us?" The two overriding ones are sustainability and the empowerment of women. I think that particular project meets those criteria.

TS: How far along are you with that project now?

MP: Well, right now we have the name Mango Tree, and we had identified a place where we can purchase ovens relatively inexpensively, and Lynn is actually planning on going to Malawi in the spring to start doing the groundwork on that.

TS: Good. Do you have sponsors that you're lining up for that?

MP: Yes, it's our own personal bank account! I don't know if you've ever read the book *Dark Star Safari: [Overland from Cairo to Capetown (Houghton Mifflin, 2002)]* by Paul Theroux. He's a travel writer, and he used to work in the Peace Corps back in the late 1960s. He was going through a mid-life crisis, so he decided to go from Cairo to Capetown, and the only rule was he couldn't fly. So it was just the experiences he went through, and he was telling the story about everywhere he went there were these beautiful white land cruisers belong to this NGO or that NGO, and how of the millions of dollars these organizations raise, 1 percent of it actually makes it to the people that need it.

TS: One percent?

MP: He said that the projects that have the greatest impact are those that don't involve money or involve very little money because you need to be careful with how you spend that money that you're not going to go out and buy a \$50,000 Land Cruiser or Land Rover.

TS: Right.

MP: So our projects are small, and we don't want to rely, necessarily, on securing outside funding because that would take us away from what we enjoy doing. Having said that, if you want to give us a check . . . [laughs]

TS: You'll take it! Now, solar ovens? That means you don't have to plug them in anywhere?

MP: Exactly. They use the sun to dry the fruit.

TS: Those sound like great projects that you're doing. Anything else with Africa?

MP: I think that's it for now. I think for me, anyway, the more exciting ones are the ones that we have going on in Argentina. We've got two big projects going on. One is with an organization called SER which is the Spanish verb for "to be," and it's an organization

for children with cerebral palsy, and it is run by the parents of these children. Essentially, it's to teach them very simple skills like painting or baking so that when the parents die and there's no one left to look after their kids, they will have some sort of skill to try and make some sort of livelihood.

TS: How did you get involved with that?

MP: I'm working with the Catholic University of Salta which is in northwest Argentina, and one of the professors there introduced me to this organization. I went there a couple of years ago, and I met the parents and I met the kids, and these are kids anywhere from five to eighteen years old. They said, "You know, we don't receive any support from the government; everything we have here is from the parents; but one thing we could really use and can't afford are wheelchairs." Some of the kids would have an office chair with the little wheels on, and they would use that as a wheelchair. So I said, "I'll see what I can do." I came back to campus, and I contacted [M.] Louise Bill from Health and Human Services [Professor of Social Work Administration], and she was able to find an organization in town that actually collects used wheelchairs and refurbishes them. I got some measurements of children—basically their height and their weight—and this organization fitted chairs for children like that. We got a total of nine wheelchairs and twelve walkers and had to figure out how are we going to get them down there. I took a group of faculty down to Argentina in May, and I thought we can get some of them to pretend they are in wheelchairs and some to pretend they're on walkers, and that way the airplanes would have to deal with it. But in the end, the *Aerolineas Argentinas*, which is the national airline of Argentina, said that if you can get them to Miami we'll get them to Salta for free.

TS: How about that?

MP: That was great. So I thought all right, I'll just rent a U-haul, drive down to Miami, and drop them off, and that'll take care of it. But before I do that I thought, "Well, let me check with someone from American Airlines since Miami is one of their hubs. I contacted them, and they were more than glad to fly the wheelchairs and walkers there. They said the only condition was there had to be cargo space on the plane.

TS: If we've got spare room we'll take them.

MP: Yes. So I think the hardest part of this whole endeavor was actually the logistics of getting the people in Miami from *Aerolineas* warned that, "Hey, the wheelchairs are coming, and you've got to go over to American Airlines to pick them up." So we took them down to the airport here at Hartsfield, the folks at American had three or four people ready, so we, basically, just pulled up to the curb, and they took them from us. In fact I got an e-mail this morning, and it said the chairs have arrived in Salta. I'm looking forward to going back to Salta and seeing the kids with the chairs. Something like that, there's nothing academic about it but when I had faculty there and when my wife and I took students there this past summer, they could see that something needed to be done, and they were willing to step up to the plate and say how can we help. Which brings me

to the other project which is also in Salta, and it's with an indigenous group of people who weave rugs to try to earn a livelihood. They also feed 200 kids a day, and there's a—I'll call it a community center, but essentially it's like four walls, some corrugated sheet metal for the roof, and a dirt floor. They use firewood to heat the food. I was there last year.

TS: When you say they who is they?

MP: The community. I was talking to them and they were saying, "We've got problems with kids dropping out of school, teenage pregnancy, drugs, and alcohol. When the kids come home from the school there's nothing for them to do." I said, "Why don't they play football, soccer?" "Well, we don't have any soccer balls." So I came home and called a friend who works with the Atlanta Soccer organization. I explained my situation, and he said, "Let me make some calls." He called me back a half hour later, and he said, "All right I have 500 balls." I said, "Well, I don't know how I'm going to get 500 soccer balls down there. Why don't you come by and I'll see how many I can take." So I ended up taking thirty down there. I gave the community leaders the balls to hand out. They were grateful, and I went back the next day, and the kids had formed a league. Here was Team A, and they had written down all the kids on that team, and Team B and so on and so forth. They're still using them today. A couple of times I've been down there I've helped them prepare the lunch and serve the lunch. To show how ignorant I was the first time down there, I asked one of the people, "Oh, is this the only hot meal of the day?" She said, "No, this is their only meal of the day." We're talking extreme poverty, and I said, "What can the center use?" She said, "Well, a big issue is the floor. It's dirt. So when we weave things get dirty, when we cook things get dirty." I said, "All right, we'll pour a concrete floor." When we were down in June on a Study Abroad with fourteen students, we took two days off and poured about 1,200 feet of floor.

TS: Where did you get your concrete?

MP: I have a friend who lives in the town. I went to an ATM, I pulled the money out of my account, and I said, "Here's the money; you're in charge of making sure the concrete shows up when we need it." He took care of it, and because he was a local, he was able to get us a better price, so the whole floor cost about \$600.00, and it's beautiful.

TS: Out of your pocket.

MP: Yeah. It was worth it. You know, the students worked really hard and worked side by side with the people in the community. At the end of the day the community people were saying—you know, they were in tears—"I don't understand why you want to help us. I always thought that you were up here and we were down here, but today I see that we are equal." That really struck a chord in me because I realized for the first time that global citizenship is not strictly teaching our students about other cultures, but it's helping other cultures learn something about our culture. So to have the community leaders say, "Today I see that we're equal, that you're not above us, but that we are equal," I think

that they learned something about us. Helping to remove the stereotype or demystify an American student in the minds of other people . . .

TS: So they're, well, who knows how many biases they have about American students, but probably none of them are very pleasant.

MP: Hopefully they're better now.

TS: Right. Well, that's an important step, I guess, in terms of global awareness and bringing the world together to see the better side of our students.

MP: And we had a really good group of students that went with us.

TS: What were the students doing down there in general? How long were they there for—you said two days on this project, but how long did you have the students down there?

MP: It was a hybrid study abroad where we spent the first two weeks here at Kennesaw, and the two classes that were offered were Geography of Latin American and Cultural Geography. Most of them took both classes, so they got the academic portion done before they left, and then we took them to Argentina—again, when I say we, it's Lynn and myself—where they could see what they had learned in the textbooks in action.

TS: Is this like a four-week course in the summer or a Maymester or what?

MP: This was in June. The first two weeks in June were here, and the last two weeks were . . .

TS: So a four-week summer course?

MP: Correct. Next year the program has expanded; we're going to do four weeks down there because the students said they wanted longer. The major component of the cost is the flight, so once you're there it's relatively inexpensive.

TS: Right. So another two weeks is not going to cost much more. Are you going to do it starting it with the Maymester and go through the first session or do an eight week summer class?

MP: No, I think all classes, everything will be done down there in four weeks.

TS: In four weeks, I see.

MP: So it'll be a little more intensive.

TS: So just spend a little more time down there.

- MP: And we've also invited a colleague from Armstrong Atlantic State University, Rachel Green [Professor of Art], who teaches weaving, so she was really interested in the looms that the community uses and the dyes that they use for the wool.
- TS: That will be a big improvement, I guess.
- MP: She will expose students to traditional weaving of that particular area.
- TS: So this is far beyond the GIS then, this geography in general.
- MP: GIS pays the bills.
- TS: Oh, okay.
- MP: I don't know that it's a good thing or not, but I get far more out of the non-academic community service on a personal level than I do from the academic.
- TS: But you're combining together both research and teaching Studies Abroad, and wherever you go to on your Studies Abroad or your research project, it sounds like you find some community service to do while you're there.
- MP: I suppose that's right, yeah. I don't think I consciously go out looking for things to do, but things find me.
- TS: I guess if you go to places that are very, very poor, it's not hard to find them, if you're at least open to them.
- MP: Definitely.
- TS: Why don't you talk a little bit about motivation? People have been going down there for years, but they haven't been pouring concrete floors for people; what do you think maybe philosophically or religiously or whatever motivates you to see these opportunities?
- MP: My wife and I have an expression at home, if one of us is complaining about, "The traffic is terrible, and I got a flat tire," and the other one will say, "And somewhere in Africa a child is starving to death." Then it really helps us put things in perspective that our problems here are so insignificant compared to 95 percent of the rest of the world, and that we are so incredibly fortunate to live in this country, to have the opportunities that we have. With our resources and our wealth also comes a responsibility, and it is living up to that end of the bargain where we're lucky, other's aren't. It's up to us to try and help others. That's not a guilt thing; it's not a religious thing. It's just something that both my wife and I believe in. My wife is an incredibly charismatic teacher, much more so than I am. Students flock to her, whereas I think I'm more into the logistics of setting things up, so I think we work very well together.
- TS: It sounds like they should have given you this award together.

MP: They should have.

TS: How does this tie in with your general concept of service as part of the job description in the academic world? The Preston Award distinguishes between professional service, which we all do, that's directly related to our job description, and community service that goes beyond and above what our professional obligations are. In other words, we talk about professional service; do you think maybe we should be rewarding something beyond professional service when we talk about service on campus or do you prefer keeping those two things distinctly separated?

MP: I think the two can go hand in hand. At least, I've used my service opportunities to help me engage in non-professional service opportunities. At the Office of International Education for the Board of Regents, I'm a cabinet member. The world is divided into four regions, and I'm the chair of the Americas council. One of my responsibilities then is to facilitate student and faculty research and studying opportunities in the Americas. One of the things I did in May was I took fourteen faculty to Argentina to work with faculty at the Catholic University in Salta. If I didn't have that reason to go there I wouldn't have met all these wonderful people, and I would never know about them, and life would go on for them. So I'm fortunate in the sense that my professional service has opened the door for me in terms of being able to . . .

TS: For humanitarian service.

MP: Yes, non-professional service.

TS: Are there some other service areas that we haven't talked about that we should, do you think?

MP: I don't know.

TS: Anything else you're doing that we haven't talked about that's important to you?

MP: Those can be pretty time consuming.

TS: Absolutely. I was astounded when you were talking about all this where you find the time to do it.

MP: Well, I suppose when you don't have children, and your work schedule is flexible enough to allow you to take off for a week or however long, we're both lucky. I don't know, maybe the next project is just around the corner waiting to be discovered.

TS: Right. I've got a feeling that you'll find it.

MP: Or it'll find me.

- TS: One of the things we've asked everybody in the interviews is about the intellectual climate on our campus at Kennesaw. Could you talk about that both regarding students and faculty, research as well as teaching and so on, how you perceived the intellectual climate maybe when you got here nine years ago and where you think we're heading—where the intellectual climate is now on our campus?
- MP: The intellectual climate on campus generally is certainly increasing where we start to see new hires from top universities starting to come to Kennesaw. I think that the whole parking issue is a good illustration where I was talking to someone from Plant Operations who knew the parking thing was coming down the pike before anybody else did, and his reply was, "I wasn't too worried about it because I knew once the faculty caught wind of it, they're much more articulate and could argue a lot better and that the issue would be resolved." So I think even the staff can appreciate that.
- TS: For anybody a hundred years from now reading this interview, we've had a crisis, I guess, on our campus in that we lost a huge parking lot while they're building a new parking deck that's going to provide 2,600 spaces, but in the meantime they had to get 800 faculty members and staff off campus this next year, and also have talked about a huge increase in the fees that the faculty will have to pay for parking. So when they first announced that it may be 1 percent of our salaries up to \$600, there was a firestorm of criticism, I guess you could say. So that's the context of what we're talking about here.
- MP: So I think from a faculty perspective the intellect and perhaps the camaraderie as well has increased, at least I've seen that.
- TS: Camaraderie has increased?
- MP: Yes. I'm not saying as a whole, but you do see groups of faculty going out and doing things socially. I'm not talking simply going out for lunch, but getting together for a barbeque or something like that.
- TS: Faculty within the same department?
- MP: Across lines. I hate to say this, but I think one of the outcomes of our tremendous amount of growth, at least from my experience, is that the quality of students we are getting is not the same as it used to be when I first arrived on campus, and I don't know if that's an outcome of, I call it the "No Child Get Ahead Act," but. . .
- TS: You think the act [the No Child Left Behind Act passed by Congress during the George W. Bush administration] is holding children back from getting ahead?
- MP: I think so. If we're not allowed to leave anybody behind, we're really doing a disservice to those in the middle and particularly to those at the top of the class. I tell my students, "Look, our society, as great as it is, will not function if everyone gets ahead. We need people to be left behind."

TS: That there are not enough jobs for everybody that got ahead?

MP: Sure. And it's like there's nothing wrong with say, for example, working at McDonald's, but if everyone's got a college degree, who is going to work at McDonald's?

TS: The college students maybe? [chuckle]

MP: Maybe. I think I may have that part deleted out of the transcript.

TS: No, I understand what you're saying. There's as much dignity in plowing a field as writing a poem, as Booker T. Washington once said.

MP: Exactly. It may also be a factor too that the composition of the student population is changing. The average age is certainly a lot younger these days, and it seems that every semester the students keep getting younger and younger from my perspective.

TS: It may have something to do with us getting older and older.

MP: It could be. And questions that they ask that I wouldn't even dream of asking when I was a student: "Are you going to give us a study guide?" Well, that's what your notes are for. "Tell us about the extra credit opportunity," when I never brought that up in class.

TS: Dan Papp was quoted in the paper this morning as saying that SAT scores are higher than last year for entering freshmen and grade point averages from high school are up from the year before, but you're talking about something different; the students may have better scores, but they're expecting more spoon fed education from faculty, it sounds like what you're saying.

MP: Perhaps. Maybe students aren't as prepared for college these days. My advisor from Arizona had two sayings: one of them was if we're going to treat education as a business, then education is the only business in which the customer is almost always never right.

TS: Oh, the way we're running it?

MP: And education is the only business in which the customer always demands less than what they pay for. Canceling classes, hooray; to them that's a good thing whereas I feel guilty if I have to cancel a class because I know they're paying.

TS: Yes, there's some scholarship out there about students wanting certification instead of education, and so if they can get certified with classes cancelled every day, they don't care whether they learn anything.

MP: And I've been wondering when did our mission become training people for jobs? I thought our mission was to train people for life. Particularly, in the GIS field where you

are learning a skill set which ultimately leads to employment, I also want to make sure you're equipped for life particularly with the critical thinking abilities.

TS: So what you're describing—I don't want to put words in your mouth, but it sounds like you're saying that it's becoming more and more common for students to be less mature and in some ways more demanding, like a child that wants to be taken care of. Am I putting words in your mouth? Is that what you're trying to say? Or are you saying they're less capable?

MP: Not at all. They're becoming more demanding in terms of we need a study guide, we need extra credit because perhaps that's been introduced to them at an earlier age.

TS: Do you find this in your majors as well as the general education classes?

MP: Perhaps more so in the general education classes; however, there are always one or two outstanding students in every class, and for me that reinforced the idea of why I got into this line of work.

TS: Yes.

MP: I don't know if people will like what I had to say there, but that's how I see things.

TS: No, that's good. And I'm just trying to make sense out of all of this; I'm just wondering that if all of our students were like the fourteen that went to South America with you and went through those kinds of experiences, it has to be life altering for those fourteen students, I would think.

MP: One of the students is preparing to move there with her husband and her two kids, so for her definitely. And I suspect for these students who I'm grouping into not prepared for college that having them become global citizens whether it's through Study Abroad or exposure to other cultures, it'll help them grow up quickly and appreciate what they have here.

TS: Yes. I think part of our challenge is we're over 20,000 students, and with our ratio of 27 to 1 [students to faculty] on our campus it really makes it difficult to reach all of those incoming students that maybe need a lot more person to person attention than we can give them and maybe are demanding more and more personal attention. What about the faculty? You mentioned we're getting more and more people in that have Research I agendas, and yet you talked about growing collegiality at the same time, is what you're seeing on our faculty.

MP: I think so, and I should probably qualify that statement by saying that as the faculty become larger, the percent that you know becomes lower and lower, so that those that you do know, I think, the collegiality tends to be tighter among that group.

- TS: You've been here almost ten years now; hopefully, you'll stay for a long time; so maybe as a kind of wrap up question, let me ask you what's kept you here? In your field you certainly could have gone to Research I institutions if you'd wanted to from day one, and I imagine you could pretty much go anywhere you wanted to now.
- MP: It's about balance, balancing my work life with my personal life. I talk to my friends who went to research universities, and all they do is work. They're very good at what they do, but occasionally I'd like to come home and spend time with my wife and not get back to the next paper that needs to be published.
- TS: You've got the Preston Award, and that's a way of honoring what you've done, so maybe this isn't the best time to ask this question, but do you feel like the kinds of things you're interested in doing have been appreciated at Kennesaw?
- MP: I suppose I have two things to say: one, with the Preston Award, clearly it has been recognized, but the non-academic community service stuff that I do is done not to seek publicity or attention, it's because it's something I believe in, and whether the whole world knows about it or no one knows about it, I'm fine with that. I probably prefer that no one knew about it!
- TS: Well, beyond the community service then do you find the kinds of interests that you've had at Kennesaw, research interests and so on, have been rewarded and appreciated here?
- MP: I think so. I think what I do is known across campus. I do a lot of work at the Burruss Institute, for example, and in the past I have worked with colleagues in chemistry and biology, team teaching classes. I suppose that what I do has been recognized and been rewarded through the tenure and promotion process, but I think the tenure and promotion process is such a narrow way of defining recognition. Albeit it's, I suppose, somewhat important.
- TS: Somewhat. What do you see as the future for Kennesaw for the GIS program? Oh, one thing we didn't talk about is you're advisor to the GIS student organization, aren't you?
- MP: No, the organization died, and I thought about getting it going again. And I thought, you know, this has got to be student driven, and it can't be a top down thing. What I see happening in the future is maybe the GIS program at the graduate level . . .
- TS: Oh, yes, we haven't even talked about graduate level have we? Do you think we're going to have a graduate program?
- MP: Well, in the college's strategic plan there is a plan to have a master's in geography, and rather than have a parallel master's in GIS, GIS would be a track or concentration under the geography master's.
- TS: That would be great.

- MP: But as we make that transition, I think, it's incumbent upon faculty who are leading that to make sure that the upper administration realizes that as we start to offer graduate courses, and expectations for research increase, something's got to give. You can't have the same expectations of faculty at KSU as you would at Georgia Tech and pay us \$20,000 less than what they're making at Georgia Tech.
- TS: Not to mention having us teach more classes than they do at Georgia Tech.
- MP: Otherwise you're going to lose talented faculty.
- TS: Right. So at any rate, it's certainly a problem in the foreseeable future or maybe it's a problem right now, do you think, the pressures?
- MP: I think we're going through growing pains. We've been going through growing pains for the last three or four years with the explosion of students, but now the growing pains are with expectation on faculty. I think faculty will adjust, and those who aren't prepared to work in this type of environment will seek employment elsewhere.
- TS: And you see the pressures on faculty are more research.
- MP: Certainly. And if they're smart they will go about it by not being, here's the service me, the research me, the teaching me, but those areas have to overlap, they have to collaborate with other faculty. As Lana Wachniak keeps telling me, "Work smarter, not harder."
- TS: Well, I've enjoyed the interview today, and I appreciate you're coming by and talking with me.
- MP: My pleasure.
- TS: Thank you very much.

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