

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH YVONNE B. WICHMAN

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KSU Oral History Series, No. 86  
Interview with Yvonne B. Wichman  
Conducted by Thomas A. Scott and Dede Yow  
Edited by Yvonne B. Wichman and Thomas A. Scott  
Indexed by Laurence J. Stacey  
Wednesday, 22 April 2009  
Location: Board Room, Alumni House, Kennesaw State University

TS: Today we are interviewing Yvonne Wichman for the KSU oral history series and the series with alumni presidents. Yvonne, let's just begin by asking you to talk about your background of where you were born, where you grew up, where you went to school, and things like that.

YW: Okay, gladly. I was born in Buford, Georgia, in 1949 at Buford General Hospital. My dad was employee number 33 at General Motors when the Doraville plant opened, so my parents relocated from Buford, which is where my dad was born and raised. My mom is from Brooklyn, New York; she's Italian. They moved to Chamblee, which is about a mile from the GM plant, and he worked there all of his life until he retired. I went to Sexton Woods Elementary School and attended Chamblee High School. When I got out of high school, I didn't go to college. Instead, I married my high school sweetheart and went straight to work. We felt it was more important for him to get a college education than for me to do so, so he started at Kennesaw in 1969. Actually, I was a couple of years older than he was so I got out of high school in '67.

TS: What is his name?

YW: Tom Wichman. I graduated from Chamblee in '67, and he graduated in '69 and started at Kennesaw in September of '69 when the school was just a little, fledgling junior college. We didn't have much money as newlyweds, and I had the desire to go to college, but back then it was the guy who needed the college education. However, I thought that I was really the more qualified between the two of us.

DY: Well, you could probably get the job too.

YW: Yes. So I would come out to Kennesaw with Tom, and while he would go to class at night (he worked at Big Star grocery stores during the day), I would go sit in the library and read. So I spent my evenings in the library while he was in class. Occasionally, he would have a teacher who would let me audit, just let me go in and sit and listen.

DY: Do you remember any classes you sat through?

YW: Fred Roach. He was just a dear. He's the only one I really remember. No, there was another fellow in the HPS department, Grady Palmer. So I would sit in whenever the teachers would let me audit, which was not very often. Most of the time, I would be in the library, and much of the time, I would be helping Tom do his homework or research.

That was interesting for me. Tom left Kennesaw after two years because it was just a junior college and went on to UGA. He ended up getting his BBA at Georgia. I continued to work until he got out of school.

DY: Did y'all move to Athens?

YW: No.

DY: He commuted.

YW: Yes, I had such a good job; I worked for a company called Insurance Consultants of Georgia. That's where I went to work right out of high school. The company was owned by a gentleman who handled all of the group benefits for the Georgia Business and Industry Association, GBIA, so I had a really great job and made really great money. Glenn Davis, my boss, took good care of us. He knew that we were struggling with Tom in college, so he would help to pay tuition and help me with expenses; he was great. As a matter of fact, I talked to Glenn just yesterday. He had gotten a copy of the latest KSU Magazine in the mail and found my picture and article in the back, so he sent me a note here on campus saying, "Please call me. I'm so proud of you." He didn't know I'd gone back to school and gotten my degree, so that was really interesting. I talked to him yesterday. He's retired and living on a farm up in Carnesville. So when Tom graduated from Georgia, we moved to Pensacola, Florida, with his first job. It was quite a change because I had lived in Atlanta all my life, born and raised here. We lived in Pensacola for two years. I became pregnant there, had our first and only child in Pensacola. When the baby, my son Ty, was a year old, I just couldn't take being away from family any longer. I was an Atlanta girl—I had to come back. My husband came back in town from a trip one week and found a For Sale sign in the front yard. I had put the house on the market and told him, "it's either you can come back to Atlanta with me or you can stay here by yourself but I'm going home." So we lived in Pensacola two years and then came back to Atlanta, and I have not left since. It would take a team of wild horses to get me out of here. As soon as we came back to Atlanta, we moved to Roswell, and I've been in Roswell ever since. I raised my son in Roswell; he went to Roswell High School.

TS: What's his name?

YW: Ty Wichman. He's also a Kennesaw alum; he graduated from here in 2000 with a bachelor's degree in communications and a minor in history. He was a big Howard Shealy fan; he loved Howard's classes. So you've got three of us, three generations of Kennesaw folks.

TS: Let me back up just a little bit. What are your father's and mother's names?

YW: My father's name was Herbert Beard, and my mother now is Maria Messer. My parents divorced when I was about twenty-one, and she has remarried. My father passed away eight years ago on Father's Day of Alzheimer's, but my mother is still alive and feistier than you-know-what. She's a Sicilian, what do you expect!

TS: How did they ever meet?

YW: He was in the Navy in World War II, and one of his trips back home from overseas was to New York. He and his buddies all went to the big city, and he met this little 15-year-old Italian girl, married her, and brought her back to Georgia.

TS: I bet that was a shock when he brought her down here.

YW: Real shock for her...really a huge shock for her. A young city girl coming to Buford, Georgia, you can imagine. She just wasn't used to outdoor toilets and everything else about farm life! It was a tremendous shock for her. Today, she's still very healthy, and she's a live wire!

TS: Okay, well, I interrupted your story.

YW: That's okay.

TS: You're back in Roswell.

YW: Okay, back in Roswell, we raised our son; he went to Roswell High School. Life was good, but my marriage started deteriorating after about 21 years. I saw signs that we had grown apart, and on my 40<sup>th</sup> birthday I was going through sort of a mid-life crisis. Well, you know how mid-life crises are...you're either going to buy a red sports car convertible or you're going to do something monumental in your life to change things around. I had always wanted to go to college, and Tom had gotten through college with B's and C's, but I had always helped him with his school work as much as I could, except for taking his tests for him. In his English classes he excelled because I wrote all of his papers. I knew that I was the one who should have gone to college.

DY: Or gotten the degree.

YW: Or gotten the degree. So when I turned 40, and it was actually on my 40 birthday, I made up my mind that I was going to go to school. Well, let me back up a little bit. When I turned 30, I made the decision that I needed to go to college. My son was in pre-K, so I went to DeKalb Junior College. It wasn't Georgia Perimeter yet.

TS: This was in '79?

YW: '79, yes, so I actually started my mid-life crisis early. I enrolled at DeKalb and took just one class per quarter and stayed for one year. In my three quarters I took two English classes, 101 and 102, and I took a speech communications course. However, my husband was really intimidated by the fact that I was going to school, making straight A's, making new friends that he didn't know, a lot of them young guys in college. Well, he didn't force me, but he asked me to quit school. When you're 30 and dependent on your husband's income with a small child at home . . . well, I quit school. So now, let's roll

forward to my 40<sup>th</sup> birthday. I decided I was a woman of my own, and I wasn't going to take no for an answer this time. I was going to go back to school, but rather than go back to DeKalb, Georgia Perimeter by this time, I wanted to come to Kennesaw. I wanted that four year degree, that four year experience. On my actual birthday I came for my entrance test and passed. I did great on the English portion and somehow passed the math by like one point, so I didn't have to take remedial courses, but trust me, it had to have been by a fraction of a point because I just was not good in math and remembered nothing from high school.

TS: It had been a few years.

YW: It had been a long time. This was, like I said, actually on my birthday that the tests were scheduled, so it was really a monumental day, a turning point in my life. I started to classes at Kennesaw in September that year, '89, and graduated in '93 with a Bachelor of Science in Communication and a formal minor in British Literature. I took Elliot Hill for World Literature my very first quarter here in September of '89 and fell in love with Shakespeare and medieval and renaissance literature.

DY: Elliot knows so much.

YW: Oh, he does. He's just phenomenal. I still pick his brain. As couples, we go to the Shakespeare Tavern together, and I enjoy the whole Shakespearean experience with him because he knows so much about it. I took World Lit with Elliot and decided then that I had to either major in English or at least have a minor in literature, so that's what I did. I majored in Communications so that I wouldn't have to take a foreign language and then got the formal minor. I graduated from here in '93 and worked for a couple of years until Kennesaw started their MAPW program. I was in the very first class for the MAPW program in 1995. It should have been a two year experience for me, but my marriage totally deteriorated during that time, so I took a break. I attended for about a year of graduate work before pulling out. I didn't come back while I was going through the divorce because it was too hard.

DY: That's an intense program so you had to be able to put all of your energy in that.

YW: I did, and I could not because of what was going on in my life. I came back in '97 but could only take one class a semester because I was working full time. I graduated with my MAPW in '99.

TS: Where were you working?

YW: Well, okay, let's talk about my whole career thing. After I dropped out of DeKalb, I decided that I wanted to work. My husband had his own business; he was a manufacturer's rep selling to Home Depot. That was his only customer, and we all know the success story of Home Depot. They started in '79 in Georgia, so he really got his foot in the door with them on the ground floor. I went to work for Tom because he needed help. At the time Home Depot was opening stores like crazy. He needed to be going to

New Orleans and Florida where they were opening new stores but also needed somebody to call on the Atlanta stores, take inventory, do customer service, that kind of thing. I started working with him and calling on the four Atlanta stores, getting to know the buyers, and Bernie, Arthur, and Pat Farrah, the founders of Home Depot. And there was another fellow by the name of Rick Mayo. The four of them really started the company. Bernie and Arthur are great guys. Their big charity was the City of Hope in California, and every year Home Depot would hold huge fund-raising campaigns for the City of Hope. I really worked hard with them on their fund raising for about ten years. So I called on the Atlanta stores and serviced them and got to know the factories. By that time Tom had about 50 different companies he represented; our biggest line was Halo Lighting. If you know anything about lighting, Halo—it's now owned by Cooper—probably was the largest, most well-known in the United States. Tom had no interest really in learning about lighting, but I did. I wanted to learn about anything I could, so I ended up being the one to go to the factory for training, the one to take the IES courses, and the one to get my certification through the American Lighting Association.

DY: You were always getting education.

YW: Yes, I guess so. Then around the time I was turning 40, Tom asked me to leave the business. He felt it conflicted with our marriage for us to work together and to live together. So I said, fine, I've always wanted to go to college, great opportunity for me, and that's when I decided to come to Kennesaw. During those four years at Kennesaw though, our situation really got a lot worse, and we separated in '96 and divorced in '97. Then I came back to school, got my masters, but I stayed in the lighting business because that's where I could make the most money. After I got out of Kennesaw with my bachelor's degree, I went to work for Lithonia Lighting. I worked for Lithonia for a couple of years, and then Juno Lighting contacted me, and I went to work for Juno.

DY: Juno, our Roman guy?

YW: Yes. And actually I had this argument with the people at Juno because they didn't believe me when I tried to tell them that the company was named after the Roman goddess.

DY: What else would you think?

YW: Exactly. So the founder of Juno came to visit one day, and I had a chance to talk to him, and certainly the company was named after Juno, the Roman goddess. He was thrilled that I knew that, so I had to write an article for the Juno newsletter about the name of the company. There's also a sister company called Hera Lighting.

TS: Harrah?

YW: No, Hera.

TS: Oh, another goddess.

YW: Yes.

DY: This is wide, very powerful. Now that seems more appropriate as a lighting company, doesn't it? I mean, Hera was the goddess of the hearth and the fireplace in the family.

YW: Yes. So he was just really interested in the whole goddess thing.

DY: That must have been interesting mythology!

YW: Yes. I stayed with Juno for eight years. Then they sold the company and went through a major re-organization, and I chose to leave rather than relocate. By then, I had grandchildren, and there was no way they were going to get me out of Atlanta.

DY: I was going to say, we know you're not leaving Atlanta.

YW: No, I'm not leaving. While I was working for Juno, I began teaching here part-time. Laura Dabundo was on my thesis committee, and she was also the chair of the English department. At my thesis defense meeting, she and I talked about my teaching a class. I was interested even though I was working full time for Juno. I started off teaching English 101 on Saturday mornings at 8:00. This was before we had many English labs; there were very few labs in fact. We were using Norton Textra still at the time. It was before Word, before Microsoft Office. My classes would meet in the business building every Saturday, and then once a month we were allowed to come over to use a lab in the English building. That was my first taste of teaching, and once I got it under my skin, I couldn't get rid of it. There was just no way around it. I taught one class a quarter for a few years, and then I went to see Mike Tierce to ask for two Saturday classes. Then before I knew it, I was teaching three classes, a Friday morning and two Saturday mornings. That's about when Juno decided that they were selling the company, so I retired early and just worked part-time at Kennesaw.

DY: I have a question. When you started teaching, did you have a mentor, someone to sort of walk you through what you do in the classroom?

YW: Elliott Hill and his wife, Gail Walker. They have been just dear, dear friends.

DY: There are so many little things that you have to have someone help you with. I mean, from grading papers to creating a syllabus, to . . .

YW: Yes. Laura also helped me; Laura was a great role model for me.

DY: Laura Dabundo.

YW: Laura Dabundo—great role model, very helpful. Of course, she was chair at the time so she really couldn't hold my hand. But Elliot and Gayle held my hand because Elliot had been my mentor all through undergraduate school. In fact, when I did my thesis as a

masters student, I actually dedicated it to Elliott, Barbara Swindell, an art teacher who had a profound influence on me as an undergraduate, and John Gentile. Those were my three mentors through undergraduate school.

DY: So you worked with John in communications.

YW: Oh, I love John Gentile. I'm probably his biggest fan!

DY: I'm right there with you.

YW: Yes, I love him.

DY: He's brilliant, wonderfully funny.

YW: Oh incredible, just incredible.

TS: Do you stay in contact with Barbara?

YW: I have not. I went to see an art show that she was putting on or involved in soon after she retired, but I have lost touch, and I don't know how to find her again.

DY: She kind of slipped away any way.

YW: Yes.

DY: Some people do that; you just think oh, maybe that's what they want.

TS: She's the one person who has received the Distinguished Teaching Award that hasn't been willing to be interviewed.

YW: She's not willing to be interviewed?

TS: I asked her once and I didn't press it.

YW: She wanted to slip away.

DY: Yes, she did. Whatever rows your boat.

YW: I just don't know how to get in touch with her. I would love to see her again. I was a smoker back then, so she and I would go out and smoke together. She was great.

DY: So you evolved into teaching how many classes?

YW: I was teaching three classes, and I was doing that while I was still working a full time job, eight to five, five days a week, and sneaking away on Friday mornings to teach, but my boss was really pretty flexible.

TS: So you graded papers all weekend.

YW: That's all I did, nights and weekends, was grade papers. In 2005 I was offered a temp full-time contract for 2005-2006 and then again for 2006-2007. I taught five classes a semester on the temp full-time deal. But, you know, the Board of Regents policies state that you can only do that for two years, and after 2007, I rolled back to being just part-time and teaching three classes.

TS: How did you get involved with the alumni association?

YW: Let me step me back to my undergraduate days. I was probably the most active, non-traditional undergrad that they had ever seen. This was when Allison Breeze-Meade was the director of Student Life, and Paul Benson was the, gosh, whatever his title was, but he had Nancy King's old job.

TS: Dean of Student Affairs?

YW: I think that's what it was back then. And Connie Bostick was Paul's secretary, or administrative assistant, and also advisor to the Ambassadors. Right at the end of my freshman year I got an invitation to attend a workshop about becoming an Ambassador. I threw it in the trash. No, not interested. I just want to be a PCP, parking lot, to classroom, to parking lot student; I was not interested in getting involved. But my mom made me go for it. So I came over here at 8:00 on a Saturday morning to attend the Ambassador workshop, was hooked immediately, became an Ambassador, and met Connie because she headed that up. Well, that was a fabulous experience because the Ambassadors had so much to do on campus. We led campus tours, we met dignitaries, we worked events—you guys know what the ambassadors do.

DY: Yes, you had so much access.

YW: We did. Don Forrester was very involved with that, so I got to know Don really well. Then as a side note to that, I got to know Nancy Sullivan, and then I got to know Betty Siegel. When Betty would send in her request for ambassadors to work the Twelfth Night party at her house every year, I was the first one to sign up. You don't work the president's home for events year after year without getting to know Drs. Betty and Joel, so that was a fabulous experience. I became really entrenched in the hierarchy at Kennesaw from the Ambassadors really. Then from the Ambassadors, I was tapped for Golden Key and joined and Blue Key and joined and on and on. So I got really involved and ended up every year on the KSU Day committee. I was chair of Chautauqua—that was another great experience for me. Harold Wingfield was our advisor; I have a great deal of respect for Dr. Wingfield. We did incredible things as Chautauqua. You guys may remember that Chautauqua was responsible for bringing Jesse Jackson to Kennesaw, Helen Cauldicut, Dennis Berry, Maya Anjelou, you know, really big names—also the woman who wrote *Fried Green Tomatoes*, Fannie Flagg. Remember when she came to campus?

DY: Yes, I remember very well.

YW: That was Chautauqua; we were responsible for bringing all of those incredible speakers to campus. Of course, Jesse Jackson was probably the highlight of my whole Chautauqua career as was Maya Angelou.

DY: She came in maybe 1981 or '82 also, or '83.

YW: Well, she came back.

DY: She came back to the campus?

YW: She came back in '94 and I had already graduated, but it was arranged while I was president; I had done all the planning with her company, the speaker's bureau.

DY: And Dennis who?

YW: Dennis Berrie. He was the curator of the Cincinnati Art Gallery who was arrested for showing the Maplethorpe exhibit. I'll never forget, George Beggs about had a heart attack over that whole deal.

DY: I'm sure he did.

YW: He was terrified that it was going to create a scandal here on campus having Dennis Berrie. We made Berrie promise not to show slides from the Maplethorpe exhibit, but of course he did.

DY: Well yeah!

YW: Many people in the audience got up and left because he showed the really controversial stuff even though he promised not to. Just what Beggs was afraid he was going to do. Of course, I got to know Dr. Beggs really well. I mean all these things I did on campus allowed me to really get to know some key people. So chair of Chautauqua; president of Ambassadors; president of Blue Key; I mean, I did it all. In my senior year, '93, I was selected Student of the Year. Kennesaw was in my blood from the time my ex-husband was a student here, all the way through my career, and then my son's career. In '93 I got to know Phil Barco through Connie, so Connie was really the one who pulled me in, lured me in to the alumni association when I graduated in '93.

TS: She was president from '94 to '96.

YW: Yes. She got me on board in '93, and I started my stint as a board member then, stayed on for a number of years, and then was elected as an officer. I don't know if you know the hierarchy, but in the alumni association you start as the secretary, then you have to become treasurer, then second VP, first VP, and then president, so it's like an eight year

process working your way up the chain. I was elected as secretary and made it through a couple of the levels and was getting ready to become second VP, but by then I was having some real problems from my divorce. That was just more than I could deal with, so I resigned my position on the board about the time I dropped out of grad school. I just needed to take a break from everything and get my life back together. A few years later Phil contacted me and asked if I was ready to come back. I was, so I was nominated and re-elected to the board, and immediately slotted back in the officer line up.

TS: So you had to go through secretary and treasurer and all that again?

YW: Actually I was elected in as second VP. I got to bypass.

DY: Good. You got your place back in line.

YW: I did. I really regretted that I had bailed out because I would have been the president on Betty's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, which would have been so great for me. But as it turned out, the time and place that the institution is right now, where the university is, this is really the better time and place for me to be president. As much as I would have loved to have hosted Betty with all of her events upon retirement, I have tremendous respect for Dan Papp and where the university is headed, so I am thrilled to be president now. I think that it's just a good time. Things have a way of working out for the best regardless of what we think. That's my story in a nutshell. Now I'm a proud grandma, I teach part-time, and I care for my elderly parents, my step-dad and my mom.

DY: Where do they live?

YW: They live in Austell. I have my son who is 34 and married, and I have two grandchildren, a fourteen year old grandson and an almost four year old grandson. I help out with them as much as I can. That's pretty much it. My life stays pretty busy. I've also remarried, which is a milestone.

DY: Congratulations.

YW: Thank you. I remarried in 2000; gosh, I can't believe that it's been that long. I married a guy I met when I was at Juno Lighting and he was an engineer for Tower Place in Buckhead. They were remodeling their elevators and had gotten my name from a local architect, Smallwood Reynolds, so I went in to survey the old elevator design and try to figure out what we wanted to do with the lighting. He was the engineer that I was supposed to work with. It was love at first sight, and we've been together ever since.

TS: What's his name?

YW: Bryant Baker. He's a graduate of Ohio State. He got his bachelor's degree in art at OSU and got his graduate degree from the University of Georgia. He has a Master of Fine Art.

TS: You said he was an engineer?

YW: Yes. He's that too, but he's a sculptor; art is his first love. He is certified in engineering, but his degree is not an engineering degree. Still he has all of his training in engineering, especially the whole green technology. However, you can't earn a living as a sculptor unless you are dead and somebody else is making the money from your work. Instead, he makes his art, and he fills up our yard and our gallery in the basement, but he doesn't sell his work; he won't part with it. He left Tower Place after 15 years with them and started his own business. He does HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning).

TS: Fantastic. Well, you've been involved with the Alumni Association for about 16 years, off and on.

YW: A long time, yes.

TS: Why don't we talk a little bit about what has happened to the Alumni Association in that period. Where was the Alumni Association in '93 when you got started and how has it grown since then?

YW: Oh, wow, that's a tremendous story because in '93 we were an Alumni Association, but we weren't very effective as an Alumni Association. It was more that we were a token association. There was a fellow by the name of Jack, and excuse me because I don't remember his last name, he died of melanoma.

TS: Jack Gibson.

YW: Gibson. Jack Gibson and Tom Hughes, that spurred my memory right there. They were in charge of the Foundation back then and thus in charge of the alumni association. But this was when Jack's office and Tom's office were located over in the Pilcher building, and the alumni association really didn't have a home. We didn't have the alumni house. Phil and Myra had little offices on the fourth floor of the library. We would meet once a quarter just to hold a meeting, but we weren't really doing anything. We were there in name only.

TS: You say Phil was already here at that time?

YW: Yes, Phil was already here then. He was here in '93 when I started. They had their little digs over in the library, and then eventually they were given an office down on the main floor of the Pilcher building. I don't know if you remember when Alumni Affairs were down there.

TS: On the first floor?

YW: On the main floor, you'd come in the library and instead of going left to the library, you'd turn right in the Pilcher building. Their office was the first one on the right. From there they were moved into the new addition of the Student Center in a small little office.

TS: Yes, I remember.

YW: You remember when they were there. Myra had always been here, and Phil had always been here ever since I got started in '93. But the Alumni Association really didn't have a presence, and as much as Phil and Myra wanted it to, we never really had it for some reason. I think maybe because the institution was still such a commuter college that it wasn't like UGA or a Georgia Tech or an Emory's alumni association. There just wasn't that commitment on the part of the alums it seems.

TS: Phil reported to Jack Gibson, is that what you were saying?

YW: And Tom Hughes, yes he did. Not that he liked it. We don't want to get into too much politics.

DY: Sure we do.

YW: He really preferred to report to Betty, and ultimately everybody reported to Betty.

DY: So you really weren't doing any fund-raising.

YW: No fund-raising. I take that back. Jack Gibson and Tom Hughes ran the phone-a-thon. We received a portion of those funds, and occasionally our board members would volunteer to man the phones, but as far as what we're doing now, like getting out and knocking on doors and asking for major donations, we weren't doing any of that.

TS: And you didn't control the phone-a-thon either, it sounds like.

YW: No, we had no control over any of that. We just received a portion of the money on that. Politically, Phil was really unhappy with the whole Gibson-Hughes thing, and we ended up separating from them and reporting directly to Betty for some period of time after that.

DY: She must have been supportive of that then.

YW: Yes, she was. Phil single-handedly ran the Alumni Association. He and Myra planned everything, executed everything; the board members were really just there in name only. We were like tokens on a chessboard; we were really not working board members. We would vote on major issues, for instance, the Alumni Association scholarships. I'm proud to say that we give three scholarships now, so whenever we would vote to endow a scholarship, it would take a full board vote. Or when we would vote to do a trip, it would take a full board vote.

TS: Did you raise enough money on the phone-a-thon to pay Phil and Myra's salaries?

YW: No, that was paid by the university.

TS: I was just wondering because they were really paying for their way or not at that stage.

YW: I don't really know about that. I have no way of knowing what their salaries were.

TS: And you don't know how much you were raising?

YW: No. It was just a fraction of what was taken in though. It's like for every \$25 taken in, we would get \$10.

TS: The alumni.

YS: So we weren't really getting the whole pie.

TS: But the phone-a-thons are to alumni or community in general?

YW: Our portion was to the alums, but it might have been to the community in general. I don't know what Tom and Jack were doing. Are you going to interview Tom Hughes?

TS: It's possible.

YW: He might be able to give you a better perspective too on that.

TS: It's really interesting in interviewing Foundation members who came on around '93 or '94, they talk about how the Foundation was still pretty much the old marchers, the old-timers or what-have-you and they were sitting around a horseshoe table and there would be little cards and they'd take somebody's name and they'd call them up and try to get a twenty-five dollar contribution and thought it was a really big deal if they got a hundred and how those that came on like Larry Stevens and Tommy Holder and Michael Coles and so on were bound and determined to take the Foundation to the next stage. Both Foundation and alumni were really in a very low-key scale as late as fifteen years ago.

YW: I remember at the Twelfth Night parties at Betty's house, those attending would be the Foundation members, past Foundation and current Foundation, but it was really more of a status thing. Those on board were really old-timers and personal friends of the Siegels.

TS: The alumni and the Foundation have really kind of grown together in playing a much more prominent role, it seems like at Kennesaw.

YW: Yes, that's very much the case. As the Foundation changed the Alumni Association changed, there's no doubt about it. I have to give a lot of the credit to Betty, but I think that Wes Wicker had a big hand in shaping things too. I'm going to talk about Wes for a minute because I have tremendous respect for him. I know the first time I ever met him he wasn't employed by the University yet. He was in attendance at one of Betty's parties at her house and I met Wes that evening.

TS: He ran, whatever, the United Way.

DY: That's right.

YW: United Way. What a great fellow, and once he was hired on as interim VP, things started to change. All of a sudden we saw the Foundation going from being the old guard of the University to being business leaders in the community. Now, of course, with Michael Coles and Tommy Holder and all the guys and women, Connie, all the people who are on the Foundation now are quite influential in the business community.

TS: Connie?

YW: Oh gosh, I wish I could remember her last name.

TS: Is she on the Foundation?

YW: She's on the Foundation.

TS: Yes, I've got it.

YW: She's in property management, and I actually knew a little about her when I was in the lighting industry. I would have occasion to call on Childress-Klein; she's with Childress-Klein. I had occasion to run into her, but she was way up the chain of command, and I was just doing lighting design for them. She is an incredible woman, and she's done a lot for the Alumni Association too. The new Foundation is just great, and Wes has been such an instrumental part of that. As they evolved, we started evolving because you can't have the Foundation changing without the Alumni Association changing too. We became more of a team of business leaders in the community. When time came to elect new board members, we gave serious consideration to what people could bring to the table. Can they tap resources, who do they know in the community, will they benefit the association, that sort of thing.

TS: It is Connie Engle, by the way.

YW: Right, Connie Engle. So it really started changing around the time Wes started with us. That was a pivotal time when things started to evolve.

TS: Well, let me think. He was here when we did the fortieth anniversary, which would have been 2003, maybe we even started it before 2003, the planning for it, but he didn't have the dual role. Kathleen Neitzel had part of the job [as Associate Vice President for Development] and of course Jim Fleming was still here.

YW: Yes, Jim Fleming, I forgot about Jim.

TS: His position grew in those years around or it wasn't long after 2003.

YW: I was thinking around 2005. When did Steve Prather serve as president?

TS: He was president 2004 through 2006.

YW: That's what I was thinking. Steve was the first president who really wanted to put more of a focus on selecting candidates for the alumni board of directors who were able to bring something to the party, and so Steve was very influential in that. Prior to Steve it was more just a social organization. I think if you will read my recent article in the KSU Magazine, I even reference that, we've evolved from being a strictly social group to now being a really big player of the University with a presence in the community. I think that Steve had a lot to do with that, then everyone since Steve, J.D. Frazier, then me. Now our focus is all about outreach to the campus and the community and fund-raising for the Association. Ultimately, bringing money into the Association brings money into the University because we have really increased our outreach. We strongly support President Papp's QEP programs. For instance, when Greg Mortenson was here last year and David Batstone the year before, these are very prominent people on the international front who are helping people around the world. For David Batstone, it's the invisible children in Africa, and for Greg Mortenson, it's the schools in Pakistan. So our Association, our outreach has been tremendous because of all of the QEP programs we've supported. We've hosted dinners for these guests; we've hosted student receptions for these guests. In the days when I started with the Alumni Association, we had no outreach at all. We raised money for our social agenda, but now we raise money so that we can give back to the University, the community, and the students.

DY: And you have support or infusion, or, what's the term here? In terms of curriculum, because the first year students read these books and so you have an informed group of freshman.

YW: Yes. And it's wonderful because when Mortenson was here last year, not only did we host the dinner for the deans and the Foundation, but we also hosted an afternoon tea for a select group of students chosen by their professors to attend and have a one-on-one meeting with Mortenson, and then we helped pay for the lunch event for all the students. This year we've increased our presence because not only have we done all of these QEP initiatives, but there is a 4.0 freshman luncheon next Monday that the president hosts where the freshman students who maintained a 4.0 their entire first year of college are allowed to invite a mentor and the president hosts a luncheon and so forth. Well, I asked our board to approve monies to give a gift to each of those freshmen because I think that it's important that they know they're Alumni Association as freshmen so they'll be devoted alums when they graduate from Kennesaw. I think that these things are important for our outreach. We still want to do our social agenda, but we're doing other things too. Now, let's talk a little bit about Lisa Duke because when Wes came on board things changed significantly. Wes took us over, but it was a very short run because then we were transferred over to Nancy King, so we reported to Nancy for a period of time. Nancy was very influential and instrumental in helping us in our evolution. What a wonderful woman! I mean, I could have a Nancy King fan club all on my own.

TS: But you had gone from Development to Student Success.

YW: Yes, we went from Development to Student Success. Now, I'm wondering, Wes may not have even been on board full time. It might have been Phil's problem with Tom Hughes and Jack that moved us to Nancy so my dates are a little fuzzy.

TS: So back further.

YW: A little bit further before Wes came is when we might have gone to Nancy, and I think that Betty did that because of the political issues. Phil and Nancy got along great, so I'm thinking that predated Wes actually accepting the vice-presidential position as a full-time job that we were moved to Nancy. So we reported to Nancy for a period of time, and that was great because she knew how to manage Phil—we all know how Nancy is. She's just a wonderful diplomat, so she helped us get back on track and redirect our thoughts and activities and our focus to get over any fighting or political issues that we were having. Nancy was great for us. Then came the reorganization of what Nancy's office was responsible for, due I think to her impending retirement, because we all knew for a long time before she left that she was retiring, so we were moved back over to Wes in Development. Really Development is where we belong. It's not really that we did not belong in Student Success, but I do think that move was due to internal political issues.

DY: Makes sense.

YW: Nancy was such a diplomat that she could iron over, smooth everything out. Now we're back to Wes.

TS: Lisa reports to Wes.

YW: Yes. We conducted the search to replace Phil, which was a long, tedious process, and we brought in so many candidates. But you know, trying to find the right candidate—and I was on the search committee, and I'm telling you, we had some great candidates from outside the University. But outsiders do not understand Kennesaw's culture; it's hard. So we chose one lady from Miami, and we were going to offer her the position, but then at the last minute we just didn't feel that it was right, so we ditched that search and started again, started a brand new search with a brand new search committee. That's when Lisa Duke applied. Lisa had been Tim Mescon's development officer for the College of Business before coming to us. She had not applied on the first round because she didn't want Tim to feel that she was abandoning her position over in the College of Business. She's a very loyal person. She did apply the second time around, but first she went and talked to Dr. Mescon about it and made sure he was okay with her applying. She obviously got the job because she's our director now. Lisa is incredible. She is dynamic, she's got great ideas, she comes from a non-profit background, she worked for the Boys Club and all these different organizations, plus she knows the culture of Kennesaw. We all know Tim is, he's a go-getter, so she knew what she was up against coming to the Alumni Association from the Coles College of Business. Lisa has been with us now, gosh, four years. It seems like forever, but it seems like no time at all. For the whole new image of the Alumni Association, I have to give Lisa at least 50% of the credit if not more because she has the focus of the outreach to the community, the

outreach to the students, the fund-raising, the make-up of our board as business leaders. She has helped us solicit people like Billy Hayes, who is the CEO of Northside Hospital Cherokee, and Ross Berry, who is the CEO of the largest cardiology group in the state of Georgia. Now we have big name people on our board of directors who can bring their name, bring their talents, and bring their money to the Alumni Association. We have a great board, we have great officers, we have Lisa, and we have a wonderful staff here now. We have Jennie Kay Coleman who's our events coordinator. We have James Costen who runs all of our IT, our web, our online presence. We have Caryn who is our annual campaign person so that we have our own in-house person raising money for us.

DY: What is Caryn's last name?

TS: Caryn Young.

YW: And then Shannon Kennedy; Shannon's on maternity leave right now. She has a new baby boy at home; she's our PR person. So I mean, we have a full staff where we've never had that kind of staff before. That's due to Wes Wicker. Wes saw the need; he petitioned for the budget, the money for us to have a good staff. You can't run this office and be effective with just one or two people like Myra and Phil did. How they did it all those years by themselves I'll never know.

DY: Well, and the institution, I've been thinking all along as we've been talking, the institution has just been growing all along so it makes sense that these internal organizations are somehow going to have to keep up with that phenomenal external growth in terms of students.

YW: But we didn't for so long. See the Alumni Association didn't keep up when Kennesaw was going through that. When I was here the first time, there were less than 10,000 students, and then suddenly we make it to 20,000, but we had really not evolved as an Association for 20,000 students.

DY: Right. Well, it was true with faculty too. We didn't have enough faculty to teach. We didn't have enough classroom space, so that's the story of Kennesaw on one level.

YW: So the Alumni Association has really evolved, and I think that we owe a lot to Wes for having the vision that we needed, and now our outreach is incredible. Dr. Papp trusted us with a million dollar challenge for his capital campaign.

TS: To raise a million?

YW: Yes. So I think that out of \$75 million total campaign, he asked the Alumni Association to take on \$1 million, and we're about 60 percent of the way there, so we're thrilled about that. I've hedged on phone calls to people like Bernie or Arthur to ask for donations because it's not a good time right now with the stock market the way it is.

TS: Well, now, Bernie just gave ten million to Grady Hospital. I said ten million, something like that.

YW: And I haven't tapped Arthur because development has been working with him to give to our early childhood education center. Arlinda Eaton and I have had several conversations about that, and you really can't go and ask people for money for everything. Arthur and his wife, Stephanie, have their own outreach for Early Childhood, so if he were to give to KSU, it really makes sense that his money would go to the College of Education.

TS: Do you do phone-a-thons any more?

YW: Yes, we are doing those again, and that's being run out of the Foundation, and we do get a percentage of the money, but the board's not really involved in that.

DY: Do you all have current students do that, the phone-a-thon?

YW: You know, I don't know who they have doing that.

DY: I think that's very effective. I know current students, I've gotten calls from Agnes Scott, my alma mater, and its current students and that will really touch your heart. They say, "Oh, I'm here now and I know you remember . . ."

YW: I think Wes's office, the Foundation and/or Development office runs that. Trying to keep the Foundation straight from Development is hard.

TS: You said knocked on doors; how have you raised your \$600,000?

YW: It's been word of mouth and relationships.

TS: Did you get some really big donors?

YW: Some big donors, a lot of small donors, just a lot of efforts. We get out there, we meet people, we host monthly networking receptions, and the draw has been incredible. But you know, we're getting a lot of CEO's, CFO's, people who went to Kennesaw who feel that they want to give back, they like the new concept, the new look of the Alumni Association, they want to support us so they give to us. Caryn is directing our annual campaign here so I know she's sending out letters, making phone calls. We urge our board to be involved—one of the things that I asked the board to do is come up with a list of five people that they feel comfortable calling and ask them to support the University. And we tell people if you feel that you can give, send it to the Foundation/Development office and earmark it for the Alumni Association so that we get credit for it. We're just doing it one donation at a time basically, and we're doing great. President Papp gave us five years starting the year before I took over, so it actually started in the last year of J.D.'s term. We're already over half way. I jokingly told Dan that I will not allow my vice president, John Fuchko, to take any credit for it, so I'm going to have that million

dollars raised before the end of my term next year. That's my goal—to have it done by June 30, 2010.

TS: Well, you've talked about outreach and you've talked about fund-raising as an aspect of outreach. To what degree does the alumni association serve as an advocate for the alumni point of view?

YW: How so, how do you mean that?

TS: Well, is it standard operating procedure if a new committee is formed to think about putting somebody from the alumni association on it or are do you stay out of campus politics is a way to ask it.

YW: Yes, we try to stay out of campus politics. We partner with a lot of different groups on campus like COTA for instance.

DY: What's COTA?

YW: College of the Arts. They have their own little group. What we do is that every year we send out a letter notifying advisors, deans, chairs, and student organizations that we have money to give, and people send their requests to us. If you have an activity planned for next year and you want the alumni association to partner with you, we need to know so that we can budget. Obviously we leave money in reserve for those last minute requests because a lot of people don't know a year in advance what they're going to be doing. But we try to partner that way. We don't really get involved—the association as an association doesn't get involved in committees across campus. However, members of our board are involved across campus.

DY: Okay. Like you're on several committees for example.

YW: I am on many committees, right. I've just been elected Phi Kappa Phi president for the next year, so I'm involved in lots of different things going on around campus that have nothing to do with my role as president of the Alumni Association, but I'm still involved and so is my board. Bob Wise, a former board member, is past member of the Black Alumni Society and is now the development officer for the College of Science and Mathematics. Another example, I got a call from Steve Braden in University College needing KSU 1101 instructors. I put the word out to my board and the alumni community at large and was able to gather several people who want to teach the KSU 1101 course for him. I was able to get people like Billy Hayes, remember, CEO of Northside Hospital, to teach an orientation class. To be able to have somebody who's a CEO of a major company teaching a freshman orientation is just incredible. Those kids will eat that up. I really try to promote the idea board members need to be involved elsewhere on campus. Don't just come to campus once a quarter for a board meeting. Get out there and do other things for Kennesaw. Get the Alumni Association name out there. Give back to the University in other ways.

DY: You mentioned the black alumni association. Is that a separate association from yours?

YW: It's called a society; we're the parent organization. The education group has an education club—each of the colleges has a group that's a sub-group of our association so we charter them under us.

DY: Okay, so the colleges and then black alumni?

YW: Yes, that's a separate group.

DY: Do you have any others like that?

YW: I think that's the only one that's not college.

DY: I just wondered if the LGBT group had any kind of representation.

YW: Not yet.

TS: What is the LGBT?

DY: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender.

TS: Oh.

YW: They should because you know how I was so involved with my student, Dennis. He still keeps in touch with me.

DY: Yes, and they're very dynamic and people who go out and do a lot in the world it would be nice to have that coming back.

YW: It sure would.

DY: Okay, so each college had a little . . .

YW: Has a little group. It used to be that each discipline had their own, and it was getting to be too much to handle, so when Lisa came on board, we decided that we really needed to make the sub-groups college specific so that all of the smaller groups under each college could be pooled together. Like in HSS, we had separate organizations for the communication alumni, Dr. Shealy's history group, and Christine Ziegler's psychology group. Now all of those are under the HSS umbrella. We support all of these groups. We put on events with them; we partner with them, let them use the alumni house for functions, that kind of thing.

TS: I believe it was around 2002 when the Foundation bought all these houses over here. When did the alumni association actually move into this house?

YW: Oh, wow...

TS: It was while Phil was here.

YW: Yes. Definitely while Phil was here.

TS: I guess the year is less important, I mean, we know it's been since 2002. Were you involved with that at all?

YW: Oh, yes, definitely.

TS: Could you talk about it, was it, did you have to go out and campaign to get the house or persuade somebody or how did that come about?

YW: No, actually, Betty was pretty prominent in that whole process because at the time we were housed in the new wing of the Student Center. It was a very tiny office, and we never had a place to hold our board meetings . . . we were so strapped in that room. That little cubbyhole was no place to put us.

TS: Well, it was very narrow and Myra was out front and Phil was in the back and that was about all there was.

YW: That's it, that's all we had. We had to beg and borrow to get a place to hold our quarterly meetings. It just was not working out. I tell you though, maybe even more than Betty, the fellow who came after Roger Hopkins helped us get the house.

TS: Earle Holley?

YW: Earle. Yes, Earle was the one who really went to bat for us to get this house. I didn't really get to know Earle very well. Roger Hopkins though; oh, my gosh, I loved that man. It was so sad when he and his wife passed away. But Earle went to bat for us. I think he's the one who made this happen. Now whether or not Phil, because of his relationship with Earle, helped this come to fruition, I don't really know. Phil obviously had to have been involved. It wouldn't have happened otherwise because he was out there beating the doors to get us a decent place. I'm sure that Phil had something to do with it too. Before you got here Dede, I had mentioned to Tom that I really want you guys to interview Phil. He was here through so much of the growth period. I gave Tom his phone number in Florida for you to try to call him. And even if you only did a phone interview with him, if nothing else, it would be beneficial. But yes, I think Earle Holley was the one who made this happen. We had the dedication ceremony here out on the patio one Saturday, and it was a beautiful dedication ceremony. We honored Dr. Siegel and Dr. King. Dr. King was important in making it happen too. Are you going to be interviewing her?

TS: We've already got one with her but I can't remember us talking about the alumni association.

DY: We didn't talk very much. We may do a sort of brief . . .

YW: If you could do a second with her just about the Alumni Association because she was so important during that transition when we bounced from Development to her and back. But she was one of the ones who made this house happen too. So between Nancy, Earl, Dr. Siegel, and Phil, we inherited the house. The thing that we didn't inherit was the money to furnish it. The University owns the house so they did all of the structural work that had to be done, but we had to come up with the money to decorate. Luckily, we had enough money in the savings account that we were able to do it. Dr. Siegel had a vision of how she wanted it done. If you knew the house in the beginning, there used to be a bedroom with a private bath where Lisa's office is now.

TS: I remember that bedroom. That's not there any more.

YW: That's Lisa's office.

DY: It's like some bizarre, Victorian thing.

YW: It was beautiful.

TS: It was pretty fancy.

YW: That was Dr. Siegel's bedroom.

DY: Exactly.

YW: If she ever had an emergency where she had to stay on campus, that was her room.

TS: Oh, she stayed there. I see.

YW: I don't know if she ever did. Then when Eino, the artist, was on campus, he stayed at the house in that bedroom.

TS: He's back to make a speech, maybe today.

YW: Tomorrow. When his work here was finished we dismantled the room. We needed the office space for our growing staff. He's an interesting fellow. Now you know that the sculpture is worth twice as much as when it started. It was worth \$1 million then; now it's worth \$2 million, and you know why, because he got such international acclaim from it falling down that he's world-renowned. But good for the University, they have a \$2 million sculpture.

DY: Exactly.

TS: What are you proudest of of your involvement with alumni?

YW: My first year?

TS: Your first year?

YW: My first year as president or my whole involvement?

TS: Well, whichever way you want to go.

YW: Well, you know, I'm proud of being a member of the Alumni Association but not because of the association, because it is part of the Kennesaw family. I think that there's little doubt about my dedication here. My ex-husband went here, I went here, my son went here, my grandson plans to come here, my step-daughter is a junior here right now in the pre-med program. My entire family is entrenched in Kennesaw State. It's our family's institution, it's not just a community school, it's my family school. I was the first member of my family on either side to ever go to college. Of course, my mom is incredibly proud. She maintains a scrapbook that she started when I started here back in '89, and she still maintains the scrapbook. Any time I do anything, write a speech, give a speech, and publish in anything, I have to supply her with copies to send to all of the family and to put in the scrapbook. I've been written up in her church newsletter because she is just so proud that she has a daughter who is a college teacher. So I'm proud of my association with the Alumni Association by relationship but more so by virtue of how I feel about the institution. I think the Alumni Association is a great group. I'm really thrilled with what we've been able to do, but I'm more thrilled with what it's allowed me to do for Kennesaw by being part of association. As opposed to being proud that the association has accomplished this, it's more that I'm proud of what's been done for the University. The Alumni Association is a vehicle for accomplishing these things for KSU.

TS: Let me ask you as maybe my last question about alumni, now that you're getting big name people on the board, do you see a day where the Foundation board of trustees is going to become irrelevant? That the alumni board will replace them in what they're doing?

YW: Oh no, not at all. We're a volunteer board and so are they, but their board is dedicated to major fund-raising. For instance, where we have a \$1 million goal over five years, they've got mega-millions that they want to raise.

TS: And you don't see the day when . . .

YW: No.

TS: Do you see a day when there's going to be more alumni on the Foundation board?

YW: I do see that. Steve Prather, one of our past presidents, really has aspirations to be on the Foundation board. He also wants to run for political office, so that's a great thing. We have a lot of board members who see the alumni board as their path to becoming

Foundation board members. We're sort of a feeder group where these people can get their feet wet here, and if they like what they're doing, they can feed into the Foundation board. As far as replacing it, we'll never replace it because those folks, while we travel in this little circle of money, a million and less, they're traveling in millions, ten, twenty, fifty, seventy-five, I mean, they're way out of our league. But they're chairmen of corporations; whereas, we have schoolteachers and nurses and some CEO's, but we're still made up of the people who were students here. We're still students at heart; whereas some of those guys never went to school here though they might have sent all their kids to school here. I don't think we'll ever replace them.

TS: So we'll always have the two separate boards.

YW: I think so. They're in a league of their own.

TS: Okay. Is Wes Wicker receptive to the idea of people stepping up from alumni board to Foundation?

YW: Definitely. As a matter of fact, any time we solicit board nominations, we always ask Wes for input because he has people he would like to see get acquainted with Kennesaw down here at our level in order to move up. We really are still sort of a social vehicle. You don't really see the Foundation doing social events that are open to the campus at large. They do a lot of social events, but it's restricted to the Foundation and to the big donors of the University, to the president's cabinet at the Jolly Lodge, those kinds of events. We may hold events at the Georgia Club because we have an annual membership there, but ours will be open to the campus at large, the community, alumni, so our functions are more outreaching. I think the Foundation board runs in a tighter circle; whereas ours reaches out to everybody.

DY: It's a different function.

YW: It's a different function.

DY: Certainly at this point.

YW: Yes, it is.

DY: And they seem to be very complimentary.

YW: They are. And we love working with Norman Radow. What a great guy he is. He's very dynamic. They're very inclusive of us, you know, and when he does functions a lot of times he'll invite me as president, he'll invite Lisa so it's really great that they include us. I'm a non-voting member of the Foundation board during my term as president, which is nice.

TS: So you go to all the Foundation meetings?

- YW: I can. I haven't been. When I do, I will just sit quietly, observe, not say a word, but that's okay. At least they invite me; that's what's important.
- TS: I had one other maybe type of question to ask you that grows out of the fact that you've been an adjunct off and on for a decade and also have been, what do we call it, temporary full time, and that is how you see the transformation of the teaching culture on our campus from where when you got here as a student, you didn't take your composition classes here but if you had you probably would have been taught by full time senior faculty and nowadays, I was just thinking about when you were talking about the 4.0 freshmen program, I used to get invited to that when I actually taught freshmen.
- DY: I did too, but I don't teach them any more.
- TS: But we don't teach them any more and I guess I think we've got some fabulous people that are adjuncts and I also think we've got some graduate students who are really struggling to get their dissertations done who are adjuncts that may still be fabulous teachers but are torn in a lot of different ways. I was wondering how you saw it and what do you think the impact has been on how students perceive Kennesaw?
- YW: That's pretty political.
- TS: Well, yes, it is, but I'm also wondering if a student comes to Kennesaw as a freshman in 2009, do they get the same experience that you got when you came here years earlier?
- YW: No, they don't. When I came and took World Lit with Elliott Hill, it was an epiphany. It profoundly changed my life. Granted, I took my two basic rep courses, comp and rhetoric at DeKalb probably with adjuncts; whereas, taking World Lit with Elliot Hill was a profound experience. That same semester I had American Government with Helen Ridley; all of my courses were with professors like them, Gird Romer, and others, experts in their fields. I had profound teachers during my undergraduate years at Kennesaw.
- TS: So you were taking the introductory World Civ the first time. That's what Gird would have been teaching.
- YW: Yes. And Fred Roach for American History. It was just an incredible experience with these professors who had such a grasp of their subject matter and the world and education. Unfortunately, our kids aren't getting that any more. When my son came here in '93, he and his best friend came here together right out of high school, and then his best friend was killed in a motorcycle accident during that first year, and my son just couldn't come back for awhile. Finally, he did come back, and he graduated with honors too. But his freshman and sophomore experience here was not even close to mine. He didn't get to take those same teachers until he was an upper classman. He started out, with the exception of his science course with Army Lester, taking his freshman entry-level courses with unseasoned teachers. He was still getting some great instructors from time-to-time. Steve McKelvey, good example, my son had him. So even though Steve wasn't a Ph.D. at the time, he was still an excellent teacher. Kids today, unfortunately,

and I can only speak for the English department because I can't really speak for other departments . . .

DY: Well, we have more adjuncts than any other department so it's a pretty good place to speak from.

YW: We really do. Very few, and I think that we're trying to change this culture, but very few of our teachers like yourself, Dede, teach those freshmen comp classes. They don't want to teach them. I know teachers who have retired because they did not want to teach freshmen comp again.

DY: Well, people want to teach World Lit, they don't want to teach writing.

YW: That's right.

DY: Well, that's really unfortunate. And as Beth Daniell says, and I agree with her, you know, that's where you cut your teeth, that's where you learn to teach, and people come in with their specialties and they teach only 3000 or 4000 level classes and you also get to know your students there and you recruit.

YW: That's right. And let me tell you, even though, I have seniority now as far as the adjuncts in English go and have priority in the classes I'm assigned, I still request Comp I. It amazes many of my peers in the department.

TS: You amazed them that you wanted to teach 1101.

YW: Yes, but I love teaching the 1101's because I get the kids coming right in to school. You know what, you can make or break a kid in 1101, and you can make the difference as to whether or not they stay in college. I'm not saying that one class is everything, but English 1101 can be an all or nothing class for these kids. Our high schools are doing a disservice to kids as far as their composition skills these days. Schools, because of no Child Left Behind, are being forced to teach to the test. They have to teach to the CRCT, so kids are not getting the grammar basics. I had students tell me just this past Monday that they had not had a lick of grammar since middle school.

TS: No grammar?

YW: No grammar. By the time they get to high school, they're only taking lit, and the teachers don't teach grammar because they're teaching to the test.

TS: And the tests don't have any grammar on them?

YW: Very little. I don't really know what the CRCT encompasses. Now, I know my grandson, who is in middle school, his CRCT is a lot about writing, about composition. But as far as grammar basics, you know, nobody teaches diagramming any more. That's

how I learned my grammar. That's why I'm such a good grammar teacher is because I learned to diagram. Nobody teaches the basics any more.

DY: Well, Yvonne, a lot of them don't know it.

YW: They don't know it.

DY: They don't know grammar and punctuation, mechanics of spelling, that kind of thing.

YW: They do not.

DY: We've got faculty in the English department who don't.

YW: I agree. I see it. You know, I know that e-mails are not formal composition, but if you don't present yourself in an e-mail as being well spoken, there's something to be said about that. You can use a phrase instead of a clause, you can use contractions, which I do not allow my students to use on papers, but you can use them in e-mails. But if you can't spell and can't do a spellcheck on an e-mail, shame on you. You know, I just feel that e-mails represent you. You may like to think that it's not representative, but you'll notice when you get e-mails from me, I've spellchecked my e-mails.

TS: Me too.

YW: I'm pretty well spoken even on an e-mail. Right now Dr. Papp has me working on a special project. Since Virginia Tech, emergency preparedness has become really significant. Last May at commencement, Greg Simone, CEO of Wellstar Hospital, was our guest speaker at one of the services. I had the honor of sitting with him and Dr. Papp at lunch. Dr. Simone mentioned the need for teaching crisis management to students. In that lunch conversation, Dr. Papp turned and said to me, "Yvonne, you're a teacher, what do you think?" I explained that finding a place to house a crisis management course for students could be hard but was possible under University College and the First Year Programs. I could see the feasibility of doing a learning community on crisis management. So Dr. Papp assigned it to me, and I started working on it that day; this was last May of 2008. I'm proud to say that on August 15 when classes start back we have three sections of one learning community starting. It's the first time we've ever done three sections of one community. It's called "Emergency! Are you prepared?" And it's all about crisis management. We're offering three sections because Michael Sansavaro wants people who live on campus to take it, the nursing people want their students to take it, education majors want it; It has turned into a really huge project. I have been totally absorbed with it over the last six to nine months. I got an e-mail from Dr. Papp Sunday night asking how I felt about inviting General Russel Honoré to visit campus. He is the army general who took over when FEMA did so poorly with Katrina.

DY: Yes! Oh, I know him from Spike Lee's *When the Levies Broke*. He's fabulous!

YW: He's coming to campus, I'm proud to say, so Papp sent an e-mail to Honoré Sunday night at six and copied me, and immediately the General was online with me, and we were going back and forth until midnight making plans. The General is all about this, and he said in one of his e-mails that he'd like to see us start a Red Cross club, which we are doing. Papp's idea was to be the first institution in the state of Georgia to have such a program, and it's come to fruition. We're offering it in August. We're very excited. We're going to do Red Cross certification for all the 78 students. In English 1101 I'm going to focus on the historical perspective of past crises, how it's been handled, what the response has been, and what's come out of that. My students will also journal about their fears and parents' fears about safety on campus and the potential for emergencies.

DY: So is this focused on education or are you going to look at natural disasters?

YW: Everything. I'm going to focus on historical, natural disasters, man-made disasters . . .

DY: And responses?

YW: Right, and fears of students. Date rape. I've even arranged for an OB-GYN to come in, he's going to talk to the students about date rape. That's a crisis situation.

DY: It sure is.

YW: Kathy Lynn in First Year Programs is going to do the KSU 1101. In her class we're going to do the Red Cross certification, crisis management certification; these kids are going to be card-carrying and certified to respond to emergency situations. Then Joanne Brock is going to do the science class, and she is going to explore the natural phenomena that create disasters. So we really think that we're covering it from all angles. So now General Honoré is coming to campus as a guest speaker in September. He's going to talk not only to the learning communities, we're having a reception later in the afternoon for the campus at large, faculty and staff and so forth. We've got this crisis management team on campus who will want to meet him. I think over 200 faculty and staff who are trained crisis managers work for Bob Lang, who's our director of strategic security. We would like to be able to respond if there's a crisis in South Georgia, middle Georgia, wherever, we would be able to put our students along with our adult crisis managers on a bus and send them out to these places because they will be certified to respond. General Honoré also wants to get Kennesaw approved and certified as a FEMA site so that if we were to have a crisis, Kennesaw could take in disaster victims like Katrina. We would get federal funds to support Kennesaw in their effort to aid these people. It has turned into something bigger than me.

TS: Well, we own a motel now so I guess that's good.

YW: Exactly. And I told my husband, jokingly, "Maybe I'll get a full-time job out of this finally, who knows?" Because it's really turned into such a big deal, it's really pretty exciting. I don't know where this was going in relation to what your question was.

- TS: No, I think it's a wonderful answer because it shows that even though our culture has changed big time, there's still opportunity to relate to incoming freshman.
- YW: And as an adjunct, the fact that I'm taking on all this responsibility, and yet I'm still considered a part-timer with no benefits.
- TS: That's another . . .
- YW: If you don't mind me talking about this, it's sort of a sore spot.
- TS: I think the adjuncts are the most exploited group in higher education nowadays.
- DY: That's exactly right.
- YW: Well, I was a lighting designer for 25 years and made a lot of money, six figures, working for some of Atlanta's most famous architects. I've had a hand in designing the lighting for some very important buildings around the globe. Last year, I made only \$19,000.00 working part-time at Kennesaw, and I worked year round teaching summers.
- TS: And you're teaching more than the full-time faculty are teaching.
- YW: A lot of them, yes. I think that that's a sad statement about education in America, particularly Georgia, that somebody with my credentials (and mind you, I don't have a Ph.D. and I know the culture is all driven towards Ph.D.'s), my dedication, my drive, intelligence, and professional experience can't get past being a part-timer. I'm very successful with my students, my evaluations are tremendous, I do a great job, I take on much more responsibility than a lot of our full-timers, and yet I make less than \$20,000.00 a year, have no health insurance, no retirement, no benefits. It just not a fair system, but I don't know that there's any chance of changing things. We're hiring more and more adjuncts and fewer and fewer full-time people.
- TS: Yes. With the budget crunch it's the way you cover those sections.
- YW: And you almost have to have a Ph.D. after your name to even get an interview these days. You know, Dede, because you were on a search committee in the English department. It's really unfortunate because there are a lot of us at the master's level, who are very qualified to teach those freshman classes, and we should have full-time jobs with benefits, but we do not. It's just sad.
- TS: There was a time when we assumed that anybody that had taken 1101 and 1102 at Kennesaw knew how to write.
- DY: Maybe we need to do a complete paradigm shift in the way we teach writing, the way we run writing, maybe all that needs greatly to be changed but people have real investments in keeping things the way they were. Teaching composition hasn't changed. I started

teaching in 1972 and something's wrong there, because the world has. People don't want to teach it, students don't want to take it. What's wrong?

TS: I'm just wondering if it would make sense if University College were running these programs instead of the English department and the history department and so on.

YW: The first year programs?

TS: The first year programs.

YW: You know, that might be a consideration.

TS: And basically function as a junior college inside the University although I know they do senior experience too.

YW: Yes, they do under University Studies. It's like two different colleges under Ralph because he's got the First Year Programs and then he's got the university programs. General Honoré wants a fully accredited course in emergency management aside from the learning communities. He wants a course dedicated to nursing students, education students, CJ students, HPS students who would have to take the course as part of their curriculum. So now the question, aside from getting it accredited through the Board of Regents, is going to be where to house it.

DY: Well, of course. The students don't want to take any more hours than they have to take.

YW: And they're already overloaded.

TS: I think that we've probably gone to the point where we can conclude the interview and continue this discussion. Anything else we should have asked that you can think of? Anything else you want to say?

YW: No.

DY: That covered it for me. Thank you.

YW: Thank you.

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