

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT B. WILLIAMS

CONDUCTED BY THOMAS A. SCOTT

EDITED AND INDEXED BY THOMAS A. SCOTT

for the

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Kennesaw State University Oral History Project  
KSU Oral History Series, No. 94  
Interview with Robert B. Williams  
Conducted, edited, and indexed by Thomas A. Scott  
Thursday, 2 December 2010  
Location: Bentley Rare Book Gallery, Sturgis Library, KSU

TS: Bob, we start all the interviews just by asking you to talk a little bit about your background of where you were born and maybe when you were born, if you don't mind, and where you went to school and a few things like that.

BW: My name is Robert Bruce Williams. Everybody says Bob but . . .

TS: Robert Bruce.

BW: Robert Bruce.

TS: Famous name.

BW: Yes. And we are of Scotch descent. I was named for my father. I was born in Pineville, Kentucky, on October 21, 1942. That makes me sixty-eight, Tom!

TS: One year more than I. About eleven months more.

BW: I went to school in Corbin, Kentucky, the high school, and graduated there. I graduated from Cumberland College, now the University of the Cumberlands, and received a B.A. in English and French. I did an M.A. in Library Science at Peabody College, now part of Vanderbilt. I did four years of post-graduate work at Vanderbilt toward a doctorate. I never finished my dissertation. I also did four and a half years of study at Cambridge University on the history of the book as a Mellon Scholar grant. I was a librarian for public services in Knoxville, Tennessee and I was a librarian at the University of Tennessee reference department, when they had a campus at Nashville. I was a librarian and the director at Cumberland College for seven years and I have been here since 1986.

TS: That covers a lot of ground in a hurry.

BW: Yes.

TS: Let's go back. Your undergraduate, you said you had a joint major?

BW: English and French.

TS: But by the time you got to Peabody was it Library Science?

BW: It was Library Science and that degree was then called Book History in Library Science.

TS: So that's the beginning of your interest in the book?

BW: No, not really.

TS: Maybe we ought to go back then and talk a little bit about it. How did you get interested in books and libraries and that sort of thing?

BW: There's no possible way for me to say anything else but that I grew up in a family of bookish people. My parents were university educated, my grandparents were university educated, and we had books. I say books—ten to fifteen thousand books in a two-story house. I never knew a world without books. That's not necessarily a reason to pursue an academic degree, but I liked them. I think the best explanation I can give you, Tom, it occurred somewhat serendipitously that I knew I was going to be in the book business. My father died when I was a teenager, and you have to realize if I use the hard luck story, I didn't have any money in 1960. Well, three years later in 1963 I was at Vanderbilt and Peabody and my aunt had given me \$35.00 for Christmas. That was a pretty good amount of money. It was hot in my hands, I wanted to spend it.

TS: And you spent it on books.

BW: I found a book, yes. I went downtown in Nashville on Broadway Street. It's funny that between the First Baptist Church and the porno shop there were a series of book dealers.

TS: The First Baptist Church and the porno shop are on the same block?

BW: The same street, yes! I know that sounds dreadful; but Nashville, shall we say, is diverse.

TS: But in-between is the bookstore.

BW: Yes, and I went in.

TS: And the bookstore had diverse books as well.

BW: It had diverse books. They were all really very fine. It was a rare book shop—a very fine book shop. The men and women who ran it were very helpful, and so we were looking, and I explained to them, I have "X" number of dollars, and I wanted to buy something that was worth a good gift to me, that might be something that might help me in my future life. He showed me an 1885 [*Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, a blue back.

TS: A blue back?

BW: Yes, a very, very nice-looking book. Of eleven points, as they say—the errors—this one had, I think, seven of them. He said, “This is a lot more expensive than what you’ve got money for. It’s \$45.00.” We looked at it. He talked to me, and he showed me the finer points to it. Then he said, “You really like the book, don’t you?” I said, “I’ve never seen anything I liked better.” And I liked Mark Twain anyway. So he said, “It goes against my grain to sell it to you for less than what I’ve got the price for. Do you have more than \$35.00?” I reached down in my jeans and pulled out—I think I had three extra dollars and some change, and I said, “I’ve got \$38.74. You can’t have the seventy-four cents. I have to take the bus back to campus.” So I bought it for \$38.00. That gave me an interest in books. Well before the internet, I went over to the JUL and looked up everything on books. I tried to learn about them, but the more I learned about the book . . .

TS: JUL?

BW: Joint University Library at Vanderbilt. It’s now no longer existent; now it’s the VUL. I was looking at it, and I learned more and more. I do think that every teacher I had, every student I knew, was bored with me for talking about my book. “This is this, and I found this out.” But the more I learned, the more I knew I wanted to be in this business. Interesting thing, Tom, is I wish everything I’d ever bought had stayed as valuable as that.

TS: Do you still have that book?

BW: No, I gave it to the library here. I had it appraised.

TS: Is it in the Rare Book Room?

BW: It’s our only blue back.

TS: What exactly does a blue back mean?

BW: The principle of it means that the very small binding was in green cloth with gold stamping, but, occasionally, Twain’s publisher, [Charles L.] Webster [& Company], would use alternate colors. There’s no way of knowing which comes first, but there are fewer of the blue backs than there are of the green backs. It doesn’t make one any more valuable. It’s just that if you’re collecting them, you want a green one and a blue one. We have here the green one, but we have not had the blue one. A few years ago, I bought a house. I wanted to move in to it, and I found out that I was saving too many things. I don’t want to some day die and have somebody not know what to do with these things, so I thought I’ll just give it, plus some other things, to the school. So I had it appraised; a friend of mine in Washington, D.C., appraised it.

TS: What's it worth now?

BW: Seventeen thousand dollars.

TS: That's quite an investment from \$38.00 fifty years ago.

BW: I tell students this sometimes that the collecting of books is not just something academic or altruistic, but it does have a cash value too. It never once occurred to me that the money part was important, and when I gave it away, it wasn't that important either.

TS: But you know, when you think about it, the book was only seventy-eight years old when you bought it, and now it's 125 years old.

BW: Yes. The fact is, it should be eleven points. Nobody has all eleven points in one issue in printing, because Twain was forever—every time he recognized there was a misspelling or something, he stopped the presses and corrected it, so you have variations of each one of them, but this one has seven of those points in it.

TS: Seven points meaning?

BW: Seven mistakes that had been corrected at one time and another time. That's the most.

TS: Oh, seven, if you found an earlier printing it would have the mistake?

BW: Yes, and every time you find the corrected one, it means you've got Twain's action again and again.

TS: Oh, the more mistakes actually the more the book's going to be worth because it's going to be more from the first printing.

BW: Yes, and some of the points are very interesting. It's a clipped "e"; a lower case "e" has a missing part of a lower staff on it. That's little, dumb things. If that's there, and it was only existing in say, two thousand copies, you have a book that's really quite, quite rare. It's just interesting, and that was my beginning. If I can go back to my observation, I got the disease then.

TS: You did. What did your father do for a living?

BW: My father was the vice president for what was then the Southeastern Greyhound Corporation in Lexington, Kentucky.

TS: Oh, really? I think Greyhound actually started in the South, didn't it?

BW: Yes, it did.

TS: In Memphis or somewhere.

BW: Yes. That was originally part of the Southeastern Greyhound, and then it became a national conglomerate over the years. My father died in '59, so that's the last I can really remember of it.

TS: Did your mother work outside the home?

BW: My mother was a school teacher.

TS: I had the feeling there had to be a school teacher in your background somewhere.

BW: Yes, my mother was a teacher. She was an artist. She was a musician. She had an M.A. in English and History.

TS: Where did she get her degree?

BW: Her degrees were Transylvania and University of Kentucky.

TS: How about that? Transylvania is about as old a university as you can find west of the Appalachians.

BW: Yes. Part of her going there was because parts of my family were members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

TS: Right, which also grew out of Kentucky in the Second Great Awakening.

BW: Oh, yes. Barton W. Stone [1772-1844] was my maternal grandmother's great, great, great somebody, so we're descended from Barton W. Stone.

TS: Oh you're kidding. He was one of the great preachers of the Second Great Awakening.

BW: Yes. He was an important figure in the western Protestant development.

TS: Are you still involved with Disciples of Christ?

BW: Yes. I've never been anything else but Disciples.

TS: Fantastic. At any rate, you grew up in a home that loved books, but, I guess, the idea of collecting rare books comes from this experience in Nashville.

BW: Yes, it did. Once you understand that little spark—that you see something that's more than just paper stuck between two boards . . . I liked Twain. I liked him as a person. I liked the story. And I liked that book seller who was honest enough to

- explain to me, “Look at this, and let me show you this. Nobody’s going to have this particular page.” And suddenly I realized that books are unique. Not just in the reading of them, but in the physical owning of them, so I got a bad case of it.
- TS: The couple of books that I’ve been responsible for writing have some mistakes in them, and I’ve thought from time to time, should I go back and change those mistakes, or should I just leave the mistakes as an historical record [of what I failed to catch at the time]? I never thought about changing maybe the value of the book.
- BW: Yes. If you correct them in the second printing or second edition, then you make the first one a different value than the second one.
- TS: Right. I think I’m just going to leave mine the way they are. But, at any rate, that’s interesting. So all the way through graduate school were you collecting other books?
- BW: Always, always collecting, and I realized two kinds of things. I realized one day that you have literature you study, and then there are things you read just for casual entertainment. I won’t lie to you. I like mystery stories. So reading them, I realized one day, I don’t want to have just the ones that I get at the drugstore. I want the first printings of every one I can find. I spent forty years hunting for editions which are American, English, even Indian or New Zealand, so you have the same book in different publications. I don’t think it makes me rich, but it makes me feel that I have a sense of continuity of the publication of a book. I love it because every nation has a change in title. Books never get the same title.
- TS: Really? You’re not talking about a translation. You’re talking about . . .
- BW: Anything that was published in English such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand.
- TS: So in Australia it would have a different title than one in America.
- BW: Yes. In fact, I’d say 80 percent of books published in the United Kingdom are published in this country with a different title. That came, I think, from a need to have a distinct copyright appearance with names. As for today, Americans don’t tend to react the same way that, say, English do, or Australians do, because we use words differently or with different approaches.
- TS: Right. Any mentors along the way from your schooling?
- BW: Oh, yes, indeed. I had a couple of teachers I think were marvelous. One of them as an undergraduate was Dr. Robert Palmer, a professor of English and Philosophy. He had done a doctorate at [the University of] Chicago in English and Philosophy, and I really didn’t know when I was a freshman exactly what I was going to do, but in Philosophy class it was he who said to me one day, “Mr.

Williams, you make a good point. I think you need to do some more thinking about that and see where you can go with it.” I never had been told that by someone whom I thought highly educated, highly qualified.

TS: That he thought you had a good point?

BW: Yes. So I came to a conclusion, Tom, and Dr. Palmer said that. If I were to die, I would never want to disappoint him. I would always try harder. So I think he was one of those role models. He was always interested in me when I graduated. He and his wife came to my graduation at graduate school. One night they came to visit me when I was in England. They were always interested in my development. When he died a few years ago, Mrs. Palmer sent me a book that he had had in his library. He had written in the cover, and he called me Robert, he said, “I think Robert some day would like this book.” And it was from Chaucer, and I did.

TS: A book about Chaucer?

BW: Yes. The first two good chapters he had written, but I thought, to me, now that’s one of my most valuable books. Then when I was in England, I had a woman at Cambridge. She was highly regarded as an authority on early English literature. That would have been Chaucer’s time too, and I like Chaucer. She was an extraordinarily interesting person to talk to. When she lectured, she just stood up in front of the class. She had a flamboyant way. She had that gown on, and she’d flip it over and put her hand on her right hip and talk for two and a half hours without pausing.

TS: You’re talking about an academic gown?

BW: Yes. I could listen to her every day, and then we had to go in and talk to her once a week.

TS: What was her name?

BW: Louisa Teresa Nelson Unthank. She was quite the scholar. She wrote books and articles, and everything in life she liked and loved, she pursued with infinite gusto. She would say to people sometimes, “I don’t know why you’re in this group. You don’t need to be here.” I thought, if she ever said that to me, I’d drop dead! But she was also a mentor. She would ask me when we were reading things what I thought. She’d say, “Yes, let’s you and me pursue that together.” So we’d work out arcane things on the history of language, and I think today still that she thought the points we were making together were valid because she never stopped writing. She’s well into her nineties now. I retired last year. I sent her an e-mail. She was very, very savvy. She’s still living at Cambridge, and evidently she still sometimes talks to groups.



TS: I think that's neat. I wish we had housing on campus for retired faculty.

BW: I think it's marvelous because people get to meet her and talk to her, and she's computer savvy. Here she is an old lady, and she knows more about computers than I ever will. So I told her I retired, and I've come back to be the part-time senior curator, and she said to me, "My dear Robert, when I first met you, I always asked my American students, what is it you most want to be in life? I remember you saying, 'my ultimate goal is to be a curator.'" She said, "Now you've sent me notes that you were a director or you were assistant-somebody-something. It may have taken you sixty years, but you finally got there." I appreciate that kind of remark. That's a role model, Tom. That's the kind of people who remember you, and you remember them.

TS: Right. You went straight from your undergraduate to Peabody, I gather. At Peabody, the history of the book part I guess is what interests me—everything you did interests me—but the history of the book, what kind of things, what was in the curriculum? Any mentors from that program?

BW: Yes, a couple of really great people in that faculty. I'm old enough now, Tom, to have been different than the modern, as you've seen it. Academic degree structures change, curriculum changes, degree requirements change. Well, this is the forty hours of graduate degree; there's a paper. And the history was, librarians, forty years ago, thirty-five years ago, still aspired to be the guardian of the book itself. Computers had not been a part of our modern culture. It came out to be that. I had Dr. Gleaves, Edwin Gleaves. When Peabody closed its library school, he became the state librarian and archivist at Tennessee for the next thirty years or so. He was quite a good scholar. He did a Ph.D. at Emory in English. I have forgotten now what his topic was, but he was one of those prolific writers too. He was a good guider. His notion was librarians should be more than cataloguers. We should be as intricately and deeply involved in the core of the physical book. So we had classes there on the history of the book, and we had classes on recognizing, evaluating, and identifying books from 900 to 1300. That's the reason I built the collection here. I tried to group it up and collect different things, and I still use those subdivisions over the years. It was he who had done international study in Iraq, when you could go to Iraq comfortably, about fifty years ago, on Mesopotamian clay tablets. Dr. [Tamara E.] Livingston showed you her two clay tablets here, one for showing and one for looking at, but we bought the most sophisticated copies of that because I remember looking and listening to him when I had that class on early forms of the book, what we should look for, what was important. One of the things that Ed used to say was, "The thing that will survive longer than any of us will be our business records. There will always be somebody who's kept taxes."

TS: Oh and that's what we've got is business records from those days.

BW: Alcohol. It's an accounting record. They thought that important to pay taxes and to meet the law requirements four thousand years ago. So Ed's teaching, I think, was instrumental to it. Then there's Dr. Marion Kimbrough, who was a marvelous professor.

TS: Were all the faculty members males at Peabody?

BW: No, no. Frances Neal Cheney—her husband was Bernard Cheney at the *Nashville Banner*. He was a major columnist and reporter there, but she was internationally known as a bibliographer on library collection development. She was also one of the enthusiastic supporters when we were moving toward something she thought worth pursuing. If it wasn't on her idea, it was, "Mr. Williams, I think you're wasting your time."

TS: I got you away from Marion Kimbrough.

BW: Marion Kimbrough. It was they who recommended me to as a Mellon Scholar.

TS: So you went straight from Peabody on your Mellon scholarship.

BW: Yes, and then went back to Vanderbilt after that. I will be honest. People often ask, why didn't you finish your dissertation? Good question. Sometimes a job gets in the way. This is awful. I had never really had a full-time, paying job, and so when I got it, I wanted to succeed at it, so other things go on the back burner.

TS: How long were you in England?

BW: Four and a half years.

TS: That's a long time.

BW: That's a long time, yes. Last year I spent almost five weeks for Christmas in England. The thing that I noticed from the mid-1960s, late 1960's, early 1970s is all the buildings there were black—today they're all golden yellow—because they were all covered with soot.

TS: Oh my goodness. They cleaned them up.

BW: Yes. In the last fifty years England went from a virtually bankrupt state after the Second World War with very little infrastructure upkeep. When I went back this time I was expecting to see some run-down buildings again, but I found them very, very modern and very, very nice. It's interesting, Tom, the people I used to remember—you realize that I'm sixty-eight, so we're talking about forty years ago—many of those people are still there and hanging on and doing things. They just don't drop them there. Each time [I wanted to find something], somebody I knew said, "I know the right person. I'll call your hotel. Go over at so-and-so."

Dr. So-and-so will be there.” That part of life is a delight to think that I haven’t lived too long to have all the people who were good models for me still there, and they’re still helping.

TS: I’m trying to get my years straight now. What year did you get your master’s degree?

BW: In 1965.

TS: And you started to college in 1960, I guess, so four years of undergraduate roughly and a year . . .

BW: Actually it’s three years for undergraduate.

TS: So you graduated in 1963.

BW: And the graduate degree was two years; it was thirty-eight hours.

TS: Then you went to England from ’65 to . . .

BW: Yes, it was almost ’70 before I got back. Then I went on to Nashville just about the time that Nashville was having some severe racial problems.

TS: I was thinking that the 1960s were when they started all those sit-ins in Nashville, about the time you were starting there.

BW: And they continued. Nashville took it slow for awhile, very slow.

TS: Of course, you were in England when American culture was changing big-time with the protesting of Vietnam and all that, the youth culture, especially.

BW: There, Tom, I show my age. In 1960 we still went to school wearing jackets and ties. The classes after me were going to school in jeans. The same is in England; they were just now beginning to loosen up. By the time I left England, they were looking like Americans, so they were wearing jeans.

TS: When you were telling your story about going into the used book store, you said you pulled money out of your jeans; and I was thinking, 1960, I’m surprised you were wearing jeans.

BW: Well, I had them, yes, but in downtown. That’s another thing we were told when we were in Nashville. Don’t go downtown looking like you’ve got anything or you can get robbed. I think you know how Nashville used to be, but Broadway, First Baptist Church, had yet to tear down its original church and they built that big, modern, huge church. As of today, they still have that great, big, old gothic bell tower on the corner with a big, modern sanctuary. But the town grew up . . .

TS: So you were dressing down.

BW: Safely, yes. But I used to take the buses there.

TS: Go ahead with your story.

BW: The observation again about Nashville, there's this great big Civic Center there on Broadway that's across from Ryman Auditorium. I didn't ever go in those places, but it used to be a porno district. I mean, take my word, that's what everybody said!

TS: You had heard about it.

BW: I've heard about it, yes.

TS: Okay. So you're in England and you're deep into Chaucer and early English history. Were you ignoring all the change taking place outside or not?

BW: Not really. One nice thing when you're young, you're a part of the world as it's changing. I was never, well, I'm not sure I should tell you this—there's a photograph of me somewhere with my hair down just over my ears and my bell bottom jeans. That's about as far as I ever went.

TS: We could all be black-mailed with some of those pictures, I think.

BW: Yes! That's as wild as I ever was.

TS: So you came back about 1970, and you plunge into the Ph.D. program at that time and spend a couple of years in that?

BW: Almost three years.

TS: Did you get all your course work out of the way?

BW: All the course work defended. I got a proposal going. Then the problem is you have different faculty members coming and going, and a couple of them never got along with each other, so I kind of got stuck. Then, I was thinking, I've got to have a full-time job too. Maybe they'll all die, and I'll get lucky, but it didn't work that way.

TS: So you were ABD when you left.

BW: Yes. While I was there, my first job was at the University of Tennessee, Nashville, and then on to Knoxville.

TS: Then you went on to Knoxville?

BW: Yes, I worked there almost two years.

TS: So you were working at the University of Tennessee at Nashville in 1970?

BW: In 1971 and '72. I worked there part-time first in the reference department. Dr. Florene Fuller was the director. This was before you had as many equal opportunity laws about hiring. So she said one day, "I've been watching what you do." She had been, I think, a major or lieutenant colonel in the Phillipines in the Second World War, so she was older and firm. There was no meddling around with her; you either agree with her or—and she said to me, "I like what you're doing. I've been watching. We've got a vacancy. Do you want it?" I didn't even ask. I said, "Yes. Is it full-time?" And she said, "Yes, that's full-time." I thought, that's a good deal, so that's how I got my first job. Then, I think it was 1974 there was a vacancy at Knoxville in the main library.

TS: So you were there '71 to '74 in Nashville?

BW: Yes, I think that's right. Time passes quickly, Tom. But then she recommended me to a job at the library at Knoxville.

TS: You were in the main library?

BW: I was at the undergraduate library. Remember they used to have . . .?

TS: Yes, I do. So that was over at University Drive.

BW: Yes. I was there about a year, year and a half. Then I got the job at Cumberland, quite by accident. President [James] Boswell, who was a charming man . . .

TS: Yes, Betty Siegel has talked about him.

BW: I had his wife in French class, so I got along just fine there. I was going to work one morning at seven o'clock, got off the bus, and looked down the road. And I think, "That man coming down here looks like Dr. Boswell. Don't make a fool of yourself. Just let him get down this way, and if it is, I'll say hello, because it's embarrassing to say hello to somebody you don't know." So as he came down the road and he even said, "Robert." He said he was staying at some hotel and was going to some meeting. He said he thought he would walk to this meeting. He said, "I haven't had any breakfast; where can we get some?" So we went into one of these Krystal type places, those older kind of street places, and as we were talking, he said, "This is fortunate I see you." We had been talking about what I had been doing. He said, "I need a new library director. [Our director is] leaving now, and I need somebody—we've had some trouble." I didn't ask what kind because I figured he had a problem. So we talked and he said, "Can you come see

me next week?" I said, "Yes, of course I will." I had to borrow a car to drive up, and I wasn't quite certain what was up, but as it was, it took about another year, and then I went there. He asked questions, and he said, "If you made a mistake, you just simply did something you thought wasn't right, what's your answer to doing something to fix it?" I said, "Everybody makes mistakes, Dr. Boswell, and sooner or later you have to realize, I made a mistake, say so, learn from it, and make a change." He said, "Good. Can you come to work next month?"

TS: No mistake on that answer!

BW: I wasn't really thinking what he was asking. I just answered.

TS: Well, it sounds like the person before must have tried to cover it up.

BW: Evidently, yes. I was there for some while.

TS: This would have been 1975?

BW: In 1976. I remember being there when we had the centennial. Their churches [near] campus had all these church bells, and at two o'clock every place in the country I think started ringing their bells. I remember what a magical moment that was. But from then until the ten years I was there—it was '84 I think, I first met Betty [L.] Siegel. It was quite by serendipity. Betty was on the alumni board or something with Arliss [Lloyd] Roaden who used to be the Tennessee Tech president [1974-85] and went on to be the head of the Tennessee Higher Education Commission. He was a graduate of Cumberland. One morning about six or seven I got a call from President [James H.] Taylor, and he said, "I need you to come over to the alumni board meeting and talk." I said, "What time should I come in?" He said, "Oh, about forty minutes." I said, "What do you want me to talk about?" He said, "You'll talk about something." I said, "Jim, why are you giving me such short notice?" He said, "Because the man who was supposed to make the speech died, so I need someone who can fit in well quickly." So I drive up the hill and I talked about the library. Then we were just beginning some modern technological changes. I was talking, and Betty Siegel was at the end of this long table. About halfway through my talk she said, "Wait a minute. Are you a librarian?" "Yes." She said, "You don't sound like one. When we get finished here, we're all going over there to the library and see this place." I think she shanghaied the meeting because we went over, and she said to me, "I want you to come down and visit." I said, "What for?" She said, "Come and see it and talk to us." About two months later I think I did, and that's when I first got to meet Bob [Robert J.] Greene and Marty [Martha M.] Giles [Librarian and Associate Librarian, respectively, at Kennesaw College]. I was very impressed with what Bob was doing. Bob had taken a kind of technology from the original card catalogue and shifted it to a microfilm machine. But he had built up, Tom, a marvelous device. He had the database completely online. He was light years ahead of other people. I was talking to Betty about how nice that was,

and obviously he's very different from me. He's not as talkative. But we hit it off fine, and Betty and Ed [Edwin A.] Rugg [at the time the executive assistant to the president] asked me to write a report on what they were doing and what was good. I did, and I was very impressed. I turned the report into Betty, and she said, "Now, I want you to come in and do something here." It wasn't about the library. It was one of her administrative structures, to which I said, "No, I don't think I'd even vaguely like that." That's not something you tell Betty, no. She said, "I don't take no." I said, "My mother is in poor health, so I don't think so, Dr. Siegel." About a year later she called and said, "When you come and visit again, I want to talk to you. Come meet some people over at my house." So I came just simply for the weekend and met Fred [D.] Bentley, [Sr.], and some other people, and she didn't say anything other than, "I'm so glad you were able to come." I thought, well, that was great, wasn't that nice. Well, it wasn't much later . . .

TS: Oh, that visit you have no idea why you were coming?

BW: None whatsoever.

TS: Are you being interviewed?

BW: I didn't know. So then about a week later I get a call from Deborah [S.] Wallace who had been assistant to Dr. [James W.] Kolka [Vice President for Academic Affairs]. So she introduced herself and said, "I've been talking to Dr. Rugg, and Dr. Kolka remembered you very fondly from when you were here before, and Dr. Siegel and I want to tell you that Dr. Greene is retiring." I had no idea, Tom, why they would call me to tell me that someone was retiring, and I said, "Well, I'm glad for him." She said, "We want you to come up and be a consultant for two days." I didn't want to. I had other things. You can't always leave just when somebody wants you. So I said, "Well, I can't do that for perhaps another three months; we have a lot going on here." We arranged for it, and I came up. I remember looking through things.

TS: So they waited the three months for you to get there?

BW: Yes, and then I got here, and I was on the spot here when I was asked to apply for the job. So I had to get my typewriter out and type up some stuff as it was, and it came out that way. That's how I got to be here.

TS: So they did a national search?

BW: They did a national search. We had several hundred people apply. I really wasn't—I wouldn't have wept if I hadn't come. I just happened to like it here. One of the things that made me extremely interested in being here—it was nothing about the library—I was walking around, and the campus as you remember had very few buildings of any size. Science was in that building where

- [Mathematics & Statistics] is over here, and you went in one floor, but you couldn't go all the way up on the other side. I was wondering, and I'm looking at that, and I had a student come over to me and ask if he could help me. I said, "I was just looking at the building." They had some plant exhibits in some cases there. He said, "Well, in Dr. [P. Edward] Bostick's class here, this is what we've done, and some of mine are here." I was impressed with the student talking about what was in there and what they were doing.
- TS: A plant exhibit.
- BW: But I was impressed in that kind of interest in what they were learning, so that made me feel more in tune with wanting to come here. I have to be honest, it's almost like it's a day dream. I'm here, and I can't in some ways say anything except sometimes it feels like I'm supposed to be here. I don't know.
- TS: Well, it sounds like they thought you were supposed to be here.
- BW: I don't know what they saw in me. You remember Mary Lou Fish? I liked Mary Lou. She met me at the airport.
- TS: Was she secretary to Dr. Kolka at that time?
- BW: Yes. So she met me at the airport. It was before Town Center had been built and all this development. There were no road signs.
- TS: I think '86 is actually when Town Center opened.
- BW: Yes. So we came driving down and there were pine trees, Tom, and more pine trees and more pine trees. There weren't any billboards or anything. I said to Mary Lou, "How far are we going? Are we going to the Tennessee state line?" She said, "Oh no, no." We kept going further, and I said, "Where are we?" She said, "We'll be there soon." I said, "We must be close to Chattanooga by now." We pulled in here in parking lot B now [just south of the Student Center], and that was the generation that had no additions to it. So we pulled in, and she said, "We'll just walk right up back here to President Siegel's office." I said, "Where are we, at the branch campus?" Of course, what do you think Mary Lou said to the president when I got in? "Mr. Williams thinks this is the branch campus!"
- TS: Well, of course, you're talking about the president's office in the one-story building where the Police Department is nowadays. So your first impressions of the campus, well, actually you had seen the campus before.
- BW: I had seen the campus, yes. But when you're looking at it the second time or third time, you see it differently. I was impressed with this building [the Sturgis Library]. It was brand new then. Bob [Greene] took me through it. When I was here and first saw this building, the top floor was empty, and they were going to



- have a graduation ceremony up there. So I went upstairs, and I was in the audience when you all had a graduation up there. Then the third floor had tables galore up there. From the old building they had moved them over here because the collection had not grown much, so they had to move them over here.
- TS: So what you're describing is they didn't have enough books to fill the whole library, so the whole fourth floor was just a great, big meeting room.
- BW: Yes, they had grey carpet on the floor. I think down in the far corner was that room where Joe [Joseph R.] Kelly had his . . .
- TS: Yes, the media center. Joe was director of CETL [Center for Excellence in Teaching & Learning].
- BW: Yes. But he had rooms up in that far corner.
- TS: Right. Dr. [Horace W.] Sturgis had an office on the third floor too.
- BW: Exactly. And he invited me up there to talk to him. I was most impressed with Dr. Sturgis. I never worked for him, but I found him to have an almost regal disposition—he was very tall and dignified—and his first observations to me were, “I think you can sit in here. I see you like to wear a suit”—because he was very formal in that.
- TS: He was. He must have been six feet, eight inches, I guess.
- BW: Yes, very tall.
- TS: And of course, you're pretty tall too. You're what, six-four?
- BW: I was six-three, but I'm not nearly so tall any more because of getting surgery on my back. I found him to be a very impressive man. He said, “There's a man here who you would like to meet too”; he asked [Eugene R.] Gene Huck to come over.
- TS: Gene at that time would have been just back in the history department.
- BW: Yes. I think what Horace was doing was giving me a sense of the history of the school by meeting people, and then that same day I got to meet George too.
- TS: George [H.] Beggs.
- BW: That was an interesting experience. I liked George. George is sort of in charge, okay, but we got along fine.
- TS: I've always had the impression that Bob Greene to some degree was unhappy with the fact that so much of the library had been taken over for other things.

BW: Very much so. Actually, I never doubted his reasons for being unhappy or even upset because once you take something, you never get it back. But I realized too that this campus has grown always faster than its resources, and this was the only big building when I came here. You had departments broken up and scattered around campus.

TS: Well, this was certainly the only five-story building on campus at that time.

BW: Yes. And it's the same way about this room [Bentley Rare Book Gallery], Tom. I remember how very proud Marty Giles was. She showed me this room, and she said, "I want you to see it. This has a faculty lounge smoking facility."

TS: That's what she said?

BW: Yes. So we'd come in here. It had the rather ugly looking carpet in it, and it had some tables in here, and there was a sink in the back, I guess, where people could make coffee.

TS: This was not the Bentley Rare Book Room?

BW: Not at all.

TS: I don't even remember when that was the case. I don't guess they ever let me in here.

BW: Well, I looked at it, and it was not prepossessive for a brand new building.

TS: One of the main purposes for this interview is to talk about this room. So let me ask you a few things. Was Marty still here when you got the job?

BW: Yes, she stayed with me for just under a year.

TS: And then Bob went on to Emory's science library, didn't he?

BW: Yes.

TS: So the staff at that time was Laurelle [H.] Hampton?

BW: Laurelle was still here.

TS: So you had Marty, Laurelle, Valerie [B.] Yarbrough . .

BW: Valerie was here.

TS: And then you mentioned Pat Johnston?

BW: Pat [Patricia Ann] Johnston was in government documents. And Barbara [A.] Hardin was here.

TS: Was John Kelso still here?

BW: No, he had already left, yes.

TS: So small staff.

BW: Very small staff, yes, yes. But a very agreeable staff, a very happy staff, I think.

TS: Why did you take the job?

BW: Good question. I think deep down, straight forward, because it was a move up.

TS: Because we were larger?

BW: And I also recognized something, something that I think Betty told me and Horace told me. We were a school on the make; we were a school on the grow.

TS: It's on the make; that's what they said?

BW: That's what Betty said. Dr. Sturgis would not talk like that. Dr. Sturgis said, "We never created this school to be a two-year school. It's set up to be a four-year school and upwards." Betty said that we are going to be the most ambitious program going. She said, "I want to see this school have doctoral programs, athletic programs." It never once occurred to me to doubt anybody's dream.

TS: Well, it's kind of hard to doubt when you're listening to Betty Siegel.

BW: Yes, or even Horace. When Horace would talk about his goals, he said, "You have to start as a two-year school. We started humbly, but we're going to be and we have made that move." I think he was very proud of the fact that by the time he retired they had made the transition to the baccalaureate program. I listened to him talk and he said, "In ten years, twenty years, what we will be is something we cannot imagine." That, I think, is really what sold me, Tom, is to dream. I wanted to be a part of something that had a future. I still think it's true about the school. You're still young enough that we have to say what we do now will set the direction for the school for the next fifty years—our programs and our ambitions. We're not even vaguely where we can say that we're in a finished state, a typical school. We have just begun. I'm sorry to say, I don't have the health or the age to see the true next generation, but I can imagine it.

TS: The campus itself didn't impress you, but you had this building that was pretty impressive.

BW: I had the building, and it's hard to recognize now after twenty-five years how much has gone around it, but the building was almost new and shining. It had space, and everything I thought was exciting about it, and I liked the people. The people were exciting too. I never met anybody here, student or faculty, in those early days who was not absolutely convinced that we had a great future. They kept telling me that.

TS: Let's talk about the story of the Rare Book Room then. When you got here it's, what did Marty call it?

BW: The faculty lounge smoker.

TS: The faculty lounge smoker, but they didn't allow any faculty in here that I know of. At least I never was in here.

BW: I don't know, and I don't smoke either, but it was meant to be some kind of lounge. You could tell that. It had old tables in here from the old library building and things like that.

TS: Oh, okay, those that the students had used?

BW: Yes. It was not prepossessing, but, in those days, remember, we didn't even have conference rooms. The only conference room was the one down here [on the ground floor] for a long time, so it was a big deal to have this room, but whether they used it or not, Tom, I don't know. As it happened, the time I went to Betty Siegel's house, Fred Bentley and his late first wife, Sara [Moss], were there, and we were talking. Fred's a talker, and I know you don't know this, but I'm a talker, and we got to talking about books. He asked me, "What's your interest in the library?" I said, "Well, actually we haven't done it, but rare books are what we need to have. That's a mark; if nothing else, that would be the mark of a great institution for saving the culture of the past to give to the future." Of course, that's the right thing to say to Fred.

TS: Because he is a big collector.

BW: Big collector. So he arranged for me to go with him to his house to see what he had, and I went over to his office, and we were talking. Then he tells his famous story about Richard Leakey, the anthropologist, making a speech [in the old gymnasium]. He found no place to get his notes ready, and so Fred had to finally find him sitting in a stall in the bathroom trying to put some notes together. He said, "We can never do that again. We've got to do something." Yes, my background lends me to that in a big way. The next day Betty introduced me to Roger [E.] Hopkins [Vice President for Business and Finance], and Roger said, "Well, we've had some plans drawn; would you like to see them?" The plans were scaled down versions of what's here, so we got to talking.

TS: Roger had the plans?

BW: Yes, he had had them drawn.

TS: Why had he had them drawn?

BW: Because evidently he was trying to keep Fred happy.

TS: I was just wondering did Roger do this on his own initiative? It sounds like Betty told him Fred Bentley is really interested in this.

BW: Yes. But Roger wasn't quite certain what anybody was talking about.

TS: But Fred Bentley, would you say he's the driving force?

BW: He was one of those driving forces, yes.

TS: Was it your interest in rare books that appealed to Betty or was that even an issue when you came here?

BW: Yes, I think that was her primary force because I had done that at Cumberland too. Nothing like this, but we were talking about how to place the book and where things should go. I think it's because Fred and I hit it off and seemed to see the same things that she saw. We decided one day, yes, we needed to build a rare book collection. We involved Roger because if you're going to do it, you are going to have to have money. I liked Roger. Roger was one of those people that thought it was all his money, but if you made your case, he was with you.

TS: Was it state money that built the rare book room?

BW: No.

TS: Okay, it's going to be Foundation money. But the Foundation was very small.

BW: It was going to be Foundation money, but it was very small. We had initially \$24,000 from Fred, and then we had a number of other smaller gifts that we put together. Then we set out to find a number of people to help us furnish it, I guess.

TS: You'd be thinking a million bucks nowadays, wouldn't you, to get something like this started?

BW: Oh, yes, indeed.

TS: But back then you're thinking \$50,000.

BW: Yes. We had to learn to do it step by step. So an observation—and I'm going to shift gears, so I can make my point—Fred hadn't actually given us any books yet. He'd just given us other things, and that was the talking to do.

TS: But he'd given the money.

BW: Yes, for the initial start.

TS: At least a pledge of \$24,000.

BW: And then Roger had other places here, but he must have had gifts which he could cobble together.

TS: Back then, the Foundation in '86 was probably raising less than \$100,000 a year.

BW: Oh yes, very small, but we were able to get some things. Every time we decided to do something, it cost more than we had envisioned. I learned very quickly how to do the most with the least amount of money and to make cuts where they needed to be. Originally, with the blue prints there was a fireplace in the plans. I said, "Well, let's cut that out." They said, "Let's draw a front there because we can see in."

TS: Yes, with a fireplace you might burn the books up or dry them out.

BW: Yes, so I better have as much as I could and have something rather than nothing. This sounds like a joke, but it is not. I got a lot of books. I talked to more groups in the first ten years here, in north Georgia and the city of Atlanta. That's the reason we got a great deal of first class collections simply for telling people we had a need in what we were doing.

TS: People were giving you old books?

BW: Yes, very nice ones. But it came down to, Betty always said, "Bob, we've got to have something that tells people we've got it now, and we need to add to it. Nobody's going to do it if they think we don't have anything at all." So I know this sounds silly, but in my former office there was a small storage room adjacent to the office. When I came here, it locked, and it had a bunch of stuff in there. They used it as a store room. There was on the corner, oh, about eight or ten big cardboard boxes marked rare books. Well, the young woman who I had as a secretary then—this was well before Dianne [Bridges]—told me that somebody's friend on the faculty had a relative who knew somebody who gave us eight boxes of rare books. I said, "Oh, I'm going to open them." She said, "No, no, no, it says right there, do not open." So we went around and around for about a year.

TS: It said do not open?

BW: Yes, they were rare. So I kept thinking, okay, that sounds great. We've got them anyway. So I told Fred and I told Betty, and so we went around talking, and we got these rare books . . .

TS: But you hadn't seen what they were?

BW: Not a one of them. I'm trying to make this as reasonable as it is, because it sounds terrible. So I talked to Rotary clubs in Atlanta and in Cobb County and Cherokee County. I went anywhere and everywhere, and everybody said, "Oh, that is great." "I've got something." "Somebody gave you something." "Would you like to see it?" Well, for every ten books you got you got one or two that were really worth having. So I was in hog heaven. That sounds terrible, but I was having a good time. Well, the young woman who was here, her husband moved to Auburn, Alabama. So they left, and I thought, "She's not here to skin me. I'm going to look at the books." So I did. I took them in my office, opened it, and they were wrapped up in paper and plastic and such like they were really valuable. Well, they were *Reader's Digest* condensed books. That's all they were. Sometimes, the idea of what you have is better than the idea of nothing. So I can finally say, we've got two thousand or three thousand rare books, and I quit talking about the boxes. But that happens. Is that realistic? Every library rare book collection in the world can tell you the same kind of story. We started something on the promise of something. Actually I considered those books, for the longest time, magical because they got something started. Then I had to get Roger and John Frey. John Frey and [his father] Steve did the room. They designed part of it, and then they constructed a good deal of it, but we had a couple of people who had done preservation in Boston visiting here, Roger knew some people, and so we got involved with them on historic preservation methods.

TS: And who was it? There was a company in Boston?

BW: It was two people doing some work here on that staircase, which used to be at the old [Georgia Department of Archives & History] building. Remember that big staircase in that room?

TS: Yes, sure. It came from Rhodes Hall.

BW: Yes. So they came up, and we got good ideas, and they advised talking about their varnish and things like that.

TS: So you all got them out here, and they told you all about varnish and how to do it.

BW: Yes, what to do, and what we had to be looking for, and how to construct it, and one thing and another. The woodwork has a varnish that's made from a recipe book of 1772, a cookery book, where it calls for boiled ox hide that boils collagen out of it, and it's quite slow to dry. I had to ask John Frey, "Now, they've told us what we can do, and I've found the recipe. What do we do with it?" He said,

“Let’s just try and make it.” So we made it in this room with a propane burner and a big pot here. It stunk!

TS: In this room?

BW: Yes. It stunk the building up, and we had to vacate it for several days.

TS: Right where we’re sitting, I guess.

BW: Yes. But what we did was we got the varnish, and it has sand in it because the varnish being collagen is slow to dry. It would slide down the wall. So you put sand in it to give it tackiness. My point is, we made as many of those resources as authentic to the eighteenth century as we could because I wanted students to see the world differently than they would have seen it in these hardware type settings where you go buy everything. The same was with Fred. He and I set out, and we bought that desk and that lowboy.

TS: That desk over here is 1800s?

BW: That’s 1735, and that’s [the lowboy] about 1740. And then Nina Wakefield, who was a big antiques dealer here in Cobb County, very fine antiques dealer. She lived to be quite old. She had Alzheimer’s and died nine or ten years ago, maybe longer than that. But she was one of those certified, educated, rare antique dealers, not second-hand furniture but high ends. This table came from her. We were talking to her, Fred and I were, and I think she was getting ready to wind down her business because she was ill. We talked to her about what I wanted, something about 1800, 1820, because the room was designed between 1770 to 1820. She said, “I’ve got something here you want to see. It’s a solid mahogany drawing room table for a library, own casters, original painting on this.”

TS: Original paint on it?

BW: See, there’s a pattern of flowers on this side, and it’s original. The top of course, has been re-polished, as they say, but it’s a beautiful piece. There’s a Regency runner under it. It’s a beautiful table and very, very fine. We would not have been able to buy anything like this for less than \$15,000 or \$20,000, and so she gave it to us.

TS: Gave it?

BW: Gave it to us, yes. That’s the kinds of things we wound up doing.

TS: What about the desk? Did we buy that?

BW: We didn’t buy it, but Fred and Roger came up with an agreement. If Fred got it, we would pay Fred for it. It’s a very, very nice piece. It’s walnut. The veneer is



- very, very nice. The glasses had been replaced, the lights, but the rest of it is original to it. I had some restoration done to it. It had a rat hole through the drawers. I had those repaired. Those are quite typical. But the point is we got it at auction; I think it came from New York. It might have come from a Philadelphia auction, but a desk that would be worth today \$35,000 or \$40,000. I think we got it for \$2,000.
- TS: Two thousand? Pretty good deal!
- BW: Good deal. That's the thing about auctions. I teach a little class and seminars here on buying at auction, and people don't realize, if you're just patient, you can find the best stuff in the world. But that's one of the things, the lowboy. I think Sara chose it.
- TS: Sara Bentley?
- BW: Yes. The paintings in the room, we chose them for a reason. These two portraits [on the west wall] face each other. The man here appears larger than life. He's a very small man, probably five-six or eight. It's an eighteenth century neoclassic idea of a man sitting high up in the portrait dominating the world. Here you have 1790-1800. The other man is a judge from New York.
- TS: That's a Gilbert Stuart?
- BW: The face is a Gilbert Stuart. The rest of it is by his workshop.
- TS: Apprentice?
- BW: Yes, which is typical. Here you'll see clouds, sky. You see classical columns. You see a curtain. He appears lower in the picture, but he is not holding a book like the other man. There are books in that picture, but they're over on the side. You see he's holding a letter. It's his own personal romantic idea of the world, man dominates the universe and nature. I had to tell this to Fred: "I want two portraits of two different periods facing each other." We are the product of two different cultures and two different centuries and points of view, and so we're not romantic or classical, but our world has come from that conflict. So that's the kind of thing, Tom, that we went to a lot of time and trouble to get this.
- TS: What about the paneling in here?
- BW: The paneling is walnut. The trees were cut for—I believe I'm going to say this correctly—they are local walnut trees. I do know that the boards lay on this floor up here for a year, so they would dry out, and they wouldn't break. I took the floor up here. It was concrete. We went down another eight or ten feet so that we would be down on solid limestone. You notice every day or so, you get this slight vibration because of that bevel flooring—blast every day because they're sitting

on the same limestone quarry. The reason for that is that at ground level you want that limestone, so that would help. Then we took the elevators up, and we dropped the pits lower, so if we ever had water and a fire, we could pool it there and pump it out. The shelves are not antique varnish. They are acrylic because you don't want antique varnish leaching up to the paper. I'll show you something that I'm very proud of. See how thick these doors are [on the cabinets below the book shelves]? The inside is birch. I had them laid.

TS: Is the inside an inch and a half or two?

BW: Yes. That's very, very thick. Originally John wanted to put three holes in the doors, and then the people who came here from Boston said put a hole in here with a glass grill on it. The holes look like an outhouse to me.

TS: Why would you want holes in there?

BW: Breathing. These doors will swell up, and you can't open and close them. So we went round and round and round, and I came up with my own method. Notice the gap between the hinges. If you look at it, you say, I don't like that, but it allows air to circulate, and these doors have never buckled. Under this, look at the back of that; that's for air circulation. So my point to you is I spent more time designing this room than most people would. We went to great efforts to make it as authentic and also as environmentally sound as we could. Things like this archway, Tom; it's off center. The reason for that is it's as if it had been added to the room in say, 1800, as if it were an afterthought, as if it were romantic, where the idea would be make it balance in neo-classicism. I tried as much as I could to make this room as accurate as I could and still use it as a teaching laboratory.

TS: What about the floor? You were talking about going under the concrete, but what kind of flooring do we have in here?

BW: Visually, this is where we had to make some cuts. I wanted pine boards. Pine isn't terribly expensive, but try to lay it as a flooring, and it's expensive. I was horrified to realize what it would take to have pine flooring. So, visually we decided we'll go with the parquet floor, and if we had used solid blocks, solid panels, it would not have been quite as appropriate to the period, but they won't season on this floor because it's concrete under it. We'd have to raise it up about an inch and a half. So we had these things made, and they have done very, very well. Roger used to laugh at me on this one—I wanted things, I said, that wear well. He said, "What does that mean?" I said, "When people walk on it, I want the dents to show. I don't want it to look like a gym floor." You know, a twenty-first century building. So you can see that it has lots of little dents and gouges in it as if it had been here for two hundred years. It's been a great place. One thing that I will say to you is, visually, I had plans for something and we were never able to do it. I think that Dr. Livingston understands it and will do it if she can have a new [KSU Archives] facility and have a new Rare Books library.

Originally I wanted that part where we have books stored now to be a Victorian room, and the room where my office was then would have been twentieth century. I think Dr. Livingston is convinced that that would be the goal of having collections. You'd have the eighteenth century collection, twentieth century, things like that. Because we've got pieces of furniture, nice things to use, in each of these resources. But it just takes money.

TS: So if we get a new archives building the Rare Book Room is going there.

BW: Yes. Tammy [Livingston] has the intention of taking as much as she can do so.

TS: Wow, that's going to be a lot of work.

BW: It is. But it's a goal well worth pursuing. This is not adequate for what we want to do.

TS: It's too small now, isn't it?

BW: Yes, and considering what she's adding to this collection in the Rare Books, she's put in marvelous contributions in the last year here.

TS: If I remember correctly Nina [Chinault] Frey has said that their house was going to be right here, wasn't it, where the Rare Book Room is?

BW: Yes.

TS: That's part of why John Frey was working on the project.

BW: Yes, because it was their farm. John was in very poor health when he did this. We had to bring him in a lawn chair to sit in here because he just didn't have the strength to do it, but he could certainly supervise well. He was quite a talker too. I like Nina too, Nina is one of those people who also gives good, sound support in doing things too.

TS: How long did it take to build this room?

BW: Let's see, we opened in '87. It took about a year. I made the varnish and ran everybody out of the building, and by the time we had the wood seasoned, that was the longest part. Everything could be done quickly as soon as the wood, because if we didn't season it, it would just crack and dry out. Obviously, they did a good job because you don't see many dents or cracks in this wood.

TS: I guess this is about your first big project when you got here then?

BW: Yes, it was. And it's perhaps because of that, Tom, I consider this room my child. I nursed this one! I know more about this than anybody else around here. There's so much than you could talk about.

TS: Oh, yes. Well, we haven't even talked about the books yet, and the carpet in here. The carpet is two hundred years old, isn't it?

BW: Yes, it is, thereabouts. It really is a very handsome carpet.

TS: And you let people walk on it.

BW: Yes. We turned it over not long ago to walk on the backside to shake the dust out of it because you can't very well wash the carpet, and you don't want to use a vacuum cleaner on it.

TS: Oh, you don't?

BW: No, the pilf will come right out of it.

TS: How do you clean it?

BW: You sweep it. We have a very low suction Hepa filter in here, one of those vacuum cleaners that you use at homes sometimes for treating very fine curtains and things. You have to do that. But we just turned it over this past year. They put in this room this summer a very sophisticated air control system. The other ones we had worn out, and then last year we had that terrible rain storm.

TS: Oh yes, we closed the campus down.

BW: Yes, and for the first time in twenty-odd years we had too high humidity in here, and that's a serious issue.

TS: I was wondering why you all didn't put in archival humidity and temperature controls from the beginning here.

BW: Well, even then, that would have been a \$40,000 or \$50,000 venture.

TS: As much as y'all paid.

BW: Yes, what we did was we leached off the existing system. You see, in the twenty-odd years I was here, twice we had to replace the chillers and furnaces in the library. So each time we did that we botched or altered the original air control system because we use chilled water here. Each time they had to change it, they changed it differently, so our original system was basically a hanger-on. It's a little bit like the air conditioning in this whole building. Some rooms are hot, some are cold because we've added on to too many things.

- TS: How much did it cost all together after you finished, even before you put the books in, just to build the room? How much did it cost altogether?
- BW: I think Roger gave me that, and I think it was just under \$100,000.
- TS: Okay, that's a bargain price. If you're doing it today what would it cost?
- BW: We think probably, to do it again, a couple of million or more. Sometimes you say to yourself, you don't know what the obstacles are, so you go ahead and do it. If you knew what they were you might not do it.
- TS: Right. Did the Foundation raise money specifically for this room?
- BW: Yes, from time to time, we had to get money out of Jim [James A.] Fleming [former executive director of the KSU Foundation], but they didn't have a lot. So if I asked for \$20,000, I could get \$4,000 or \$5,000. We just had to learn to do it piece by piece. The things that I wanted to build, we did not do. What Dr. Livingston wants to do now is put in the new facility a large conservation laboratory where we can do a lot of stuff and do it internally. I tried that, but those have always been expensive, and conservation people are also fairly expensive to hire, so we just have never been able to do that.
- TS: You built a room, and then you had to fill it with books. How did that come about?
- BW: Well, the first part, in this room, and part of the small room we got from Fred Bentley. Now, the collection in here is arranged the way Fred put it on the shelf, and I find that perfectly acceptable in collections. If you have gifts or you buy [collections], you have to put them into blocks. You don't mix new and old because there's a part of historical comparison between them. So the collection itself, once we saw what it was, and Fred and Sara were very interested in it, then we were able to talk about what we wanted to do. Mark Twain first editions here are extraordinary; they are very fine. Our Charles Dickens editions are extraordinary. Fred and I agreed we should have some Faulkner and Hemmingway, and I talked him into Nathaniel Hawthorne because I happened to like Hawthorne. I thought if you're going to do this, you have to put what you like on the shelf too. The Kipling is here. In the small room there you have Robert Louis Stevenson and Sir Walter Scott and Alfred Lord Tennyson. That was the core of Fred's collection.
- TS: So basically nineteenth century with twentieth century additions.
- BW: Yes, and what we had to sit down to do thereafter was set a goal and a mission, I set it this way. It would be from about the year 900 to wherever we are today because 900 will be regarded in the world of manuscripts as about the Golden

Age when they began to flair in great proclivity and also very fine hands. The Guild of Scribes would have begun to flourish.

TS: So getting out of the monasteries.

BW: Yes, the scribes were still in churches and monasteries. But they were also farming it out. They were training the secular world. So we chose one piece. I would love to have had things like the Book of Kells, and I can hope, but that's not going to happen. But I decided, we'll buy the best example we can acquire of each period. I started around 900 with the manuscript page of really great quality.

TS: Manuscript of what?

BW: Of a prayer book from around 900—parchment, really good, strong black gall ink, mineral stone colorations and some gold.

TS: What country did it come from?

BW: That is Italian. The Golden Age. The very best place for it.

TS: Obviously, in Latin.

BW: It is in Latin, yes. It's a prayer, I think, of "Lord, protect us from the terrors of the night"—something that a woman would have learned to pray for in her chapel. It's only one page, but it's an essential one page. We've acquired manuscript pages from each of the areas; that was the tenth century, eleventh century . . .

TS: And when you say we acquired?

BW: The collection. Occasionally, I've had to ask for money, Foundation money, because we wanted the school to have more. But other times I simply would talk to people who had been collecting and say, "Can you part with this?"

TS: That's what I really was fishing for was where do you find these things?

BW: Yes. I hate to say they're ubiquitous, but the ones that people want to give you are not always the ones you want, so you have to go along with them for awhile and take some of the lesser stuff until they realize what they've taken off their taxes. Then you can say to them, "Now, I know you've got . . .", and "Will you help me this or that way?" So we started off with that very first one. The thing about this, Tom, is, in twenty-odd years, what would be a very high sum of money to me then, \$1,000 or \$2,000, would have bought something grand that today I couldn't buy for \$50,000. Even in recessionary times. So we started off with these manuscript pages, and sometimes I've known people. In Austin, Texas, I was just able to talk to some people I had known over the years, "I'd like to have a couple of early thirteenth-century manuscript pages," [and so on]. We

wound up getting them. I had to agree to frame them. I had to do things, and I wanted it that way, so that we could show them it would be safe to use, so we began to do that. The other thing, I wanted the best examples of the printed books through the centuries in every period that we could lay our hands on. So I started off one day saying, I'd like to have an early Chaucer book. Everybody would like to have the Huntington's. Those are in manuscript. But it's not coming along, but I found a book in New York once. The man wanted \$2,000 for it, and I had gift funds for I think \$1,200, so I bought the book.

TS: For \$1,200?

BW: Yes. A good deal. The point was, the book plate on it is worth more than we ever paid for the book because it comes in Ellesmere manuscript, the Ellesmere family, the Duke of Bridgewater and the Earl of the Bridgewater estate. That's the people who owned most of the early manuscripts. That's at The Huntington Library, and it is perhaps the only thing from Chaucer's lifetime believed to have been written around 1400, laminated. It's a marvelous piece. Huntington is one of those places who can afford to buy the world's treasures and still have money left over. They bought it from the Bridgewater estate. But we have the document from the same probate record that has a book that sat on the same shelf with it. That's important. When I saw that, I tried to tell the man, look at this, but he had no idea. So I bought the book, because he could have sold the book for three times what he did if it had that provenance to the Bridgewater estate.

TS: But he didn't know that.

BW: I don't think so. I tried to tell him, Tom, but it was of no concern to him, and sometimes cash is the best friend you're going to have. So we bought one of those, and then we got another, and then we got another one, until of the seven first editions we have five, early printed editions. My point is, we tried that. We had the fourth folio of Shakespeare. We have parts of the second folios. We've been trying to acquire significant pieces of every major period, and then, as we can get better, we'll buy smaller, lesser known people. That's fun. That's something I've never known any other person to have that experience to say, "We can build a collection from scratch and set it to the future." So we have done a great deal of that. We have large collections here. We have a large collection of *Incunabula*, very early printed books from 1450s to 1501. The term is from the Greek "up from the cradle"; it means the earliest printed books—books that have no title pages, no paging. Those things had to be invented. They had to develop over a fifty or sixty year period. Then you've got books like our famous Aldine, 1502, the second book printed by Aldus Manutius in Venice who was the modern developer of modern book time. It's the first printed book ever to have had an italic type face. He devised it. I like the idea of italics. Venetians did not think Italians were Italian, only Venetians were. When they named the title of the new type in Venice, they named it for themselves, italics, not for people of Rome or Verona. I think that's funny, it's interesting, it's personal, and it makes book

collecting exciting. It also has the famous book plate in it—the most famous book plate you’ll ever want. There is none on Gutenberg, none. The famous book plate on the Aldines are every year he changes it. It’s an anchor with a dolphin wrapped around it. Every great book collector always had a brass plate or a key chain or something on the desk, but the dolphin wrapped around the anchor says, “I am a committed, truly dedicated book collector.” So we have that. Those are the kinds of things we have been building. We have another thing here. I found it quite by accident. I made a talk. I am loathe sometimes to use people’s names when I collect books. They have asked us in the past, don’t tell people because if anybody knows that they’ve got stuff, they might be in danger. Rich people have stuff.

TS: Right, break into their houses?

BW: Yes. So I went down to West Paces [Ferry Road], and this very prominent doctor and his wife had downsized from a 15,000 square foot home to a 5,500 square foot home. They were disposing of things, and I had taken a bunch of stuff in the past from them simply because they wanted to get rid of it. They could get their appraiser to do something, but it wasn’t worth [much]. But then she said one day, “We’ve got a number of things; are you interested in looking at them? It’s the 1812 and 1813 [Luigi] Schiavonetti engraving of William Blake’s [illustrations] on Robert Blair’s [poem], *The Grave*. It’s a marvelous set of engravings, and in 1996 when the High Museum had the great treasures of the Pierpont Morgan there. Pierpont Morgan had loaned out their copy already of that, and they had to borrow this one for that exhibition. The point is that tells you the quality of it—superb pieces! Things you would never, never expect a person to have or ever to see in your life. We have tried the same thing to collect books from sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth century with huge collections of wood cuts, copper engravings, even steel engravings. Some of them we have here are as fine as fine can be. Then I have one collection here. It just came to us quite by serendipity. Sometimes you just wait to find things. Fred had a marvelous collection of newspapers and early magazines on the adoption of the American Constitution—very fine. He used that for exhibitions. We’ve added to it because when you stop collecting and you find new things you add to it. But I’ve always wondered if we shouldn’t have a representative example of printed newspapers, not just microform runs, but original examples all through the Republic, early 1700s to modern times. That’s easier said than done because earlier newspapers can be quite expensive, especially if you want to have a collection of all of them.

TS: Nobody gets a newspaper just to keep; they toss them away.

BW: No, they do not. Fifteen years ago, a friend of mine who used to be chief of eighteenth century, early nineteenth century manuscript in printed materials, auctioneer at Sotheby’s, called me and said, “We have a mistake that needs to be sold off, and the courts are demanding some things be sold.” A man had collected over a fifty year period a huge collection of early newspapers, and he had a list of



them. He entailed them in a will and gave them to Georgetown University. It was a collection that would be worth millions of dollars. When I say he entailed it, he listed the beginning to the end of them in that document which means he continued to buy after that. They're not a part of that original gift. So they have to be appraised, and they have to be sold because he had no family. I got a call. He said, "We have these collections. We have about 5,500 newspapers from 1720 (I think it was, to 1960 or 70). They covered all the major points: Civil War material, early founding of the Republic, the War of 1812, all these interesting things. They're not complete runs, just good examples of surviving papers in really good shape. We don't know what to estimate them with, but I've been told today by the attorneys that the judge's order is they be sold on the courthouse steps." That's fairly common just to clear up a mistake. I said, "What do you think they're worth?" He said, "Well, you know about as much as I do on this. They might bring \$50,000 or \$100,000 if you were to go through it." I said, "How much do you think they'll go for?" He said, "I don't know. How much do you think you could afford?" I said, "I don't want to go over \$900." He said, "Okay." I said, "I don't know; it depends on what a rainy day in New York will do." I said, "When are y'all going to do it?" He said, "About one o'clock." This is like eleven thirty.

TS: You're talking about the courthouse steps in New York.

BW: Yes. New York City.

TS: And you're here.

BW: Yes. So he's going to act as the agent there to buy. He said, "Do I have your authority to bid up to \$900 on it?" Now, I don't really have that kind of authority either to do it, but I thought I can pay.

TS: We can come up with it.

BW: So I said, "Yes." He said, "I'm recording this, you said, 'yes'." I said, "Okay. Try not to spend that kind of money." And I laughed jokingly, Tom. I was not serious at all about getting anything.

TS: You thought somebody else would come up.

BW: Of course they would. But he called me about one thirty, and he said, "Well, I got it for you for \$500." It cost me \$75 to have it shipped. Now, that is a marvelous addition. We've got a collection, and we've used it. You've seen it. We've had several exhibitions in the Student Center on a great many of these things here because nothing enlightens a student more than seeing the original things that they can actually look at and see. They know that people read; people are interested in. We talked about when Rosa Bobia was having an exhibition on slavery in America. We used lots of these things here. Rita [Impey-Imes] went through

them and found hundreds of different thing about slavery, original sources. It's different to see it than it is to see it on microfilm or to see it online on the computer. It's different to sense it, to feel it, even sometimes, as a young lady said to me not long ago, it's to touch it and smell it; it has a sense of history. She got the disease then too. So the point is sometimes you get things. If you're just patient in your waiting, they come along. The same thing with the fourth Shakespeare folio. Now that's a fairly expensive venture. It was advertised twenty years ago at 58,000 pounds. All told with fees it was worth some \$90,000. I didn't have \$90,000. It advertised as an arcade auction which means that things had been going around a couple of times, not sold, not because they're worthless—nobody had the money to pay for it. It didn't have a suggested minimum bid, and that usually starts off at half of the low bid—58,000 pounds. So we buy a lot of things from auction companies, and the more you buy the more likely you are to get a 10 percent discount on a \$50 capital. I do have this [quality] in me. I want my 10 percent discount like every other senior citizen. I want my discount. As it was, I bid \$2,500, not to expect to get the book, just to get a discount on the catalogue. That's before catalogues were online. They're a big deal to have, and I wanted to see the catalogue. So I got a call about three days later, did I perchance leave my zed off my bid, or zero or z off my bid.

TS: You bid how much?

BW: Twenty-five hundred dollars.

TS: So they're asking for \$25,000?

BW: They're asking me did I bid \$25,000.

TS: Did you really mean \$25,000?

BW: I said, no, no, no, I just had that much. I was a southerner. I told him what he wanted to know. So he said, "Well, thank you very much." I said, "Before you hang up, how many people have bid on it? That must be a very desirable item." I just wanted to know. He said, "Actually, we only have three people besides you, and they bid on the money." That means 58,000 pounds. "But they can't pay it by the end . . ." because the court wanted it in ten days. These people would have to borrow from the auction company at high interest rates or these people had to convert things to cash. They needed six or eight weeks. Evidently, their chancery court or probate court wanted it sold then and there because they'd been hanging around. The longer an estate takes, the longer it gets eaten up in taxes. So I said, "Why did you call me? Even if I had bid \$25,000 that doesn't equate to nearly \$90,000." He said, "No sir, it doesn't. But we have the sheriff at the door." That's the polite way of saying that the people who own it are bankrupt, and they have to have the money. So I said, "Why are you calling me?" He said, "How soon could you get \$2,500 American to us?" I said, "When do you want it?" He said, "I want it by four o'clock today." Now this is early in the morning. I ran

over to Roger's office. Roger was talking to somebody, and I said, "Roger, I have to have your attention now. Can we actually do this?" He said, "How much did you say: \$2,500? How much did you say it was worth: \$90,000?" He said, "Yes." We were using Barnett's bank then, so they wired the money to London that day, and they sent it to us. Now I had it rebound because it didn't have much of a binding on it, and I paid more on the binding than I did for the book. But the point about this is, and this is my point to everybody, students, teachers, any collector, if you want to find a good deal today, you probably won't, but if you are patient, if you're willing to wait until the right time, and you know what you're looking for, you can acquire great treasures.

TS: It sounds too like if you've got a reputation as somebody that buys things . . .

BW: Yes, and we get calls from these companies all the time saying, "We've got this; it hasn't sold; would you like to make an offer on it?" Our collection is so strong that we get major inquiries because it is a significant collection and one that is so new, which I think is the other great point too.

TS: Right. Now the money, like the \$2,500 we're talking about, is this a line item in your budget for the library that comes from the taxpayers of the State of Georgia?

BW: It's part of it. I have some endowments here too.

TS: That's what I was wondering. Is this part of Foundation money?

BW: Yes, if you want to call it Foundation. I call it endowments.

TS: Okay, endowments are where people have given money specifically for rare books.

BW: I asked them for that very thing, Tom.

TS: Are these anonymous gifts or can you tell who puts money into those accounts?

BW: Many of them are still living, so I can't tell you that easily.

TS: So they're anonymous.

BW: Private, yes. If they die, somebody like Dr. Sturgis left us \$50,000 toward it.

TS: Fifty thousand specifically for rare books?

BW: Yes. We've got a number of those things, and then we've had some really good collections given to us too. I don't know if this doctor is still alive or not, but a very well known physician in Marietta, fifteen or twenty years ago, gave us quite a large collection because he needed to clear out part of his house because his

mother-in-law was ill, and they needed to remodel the house. So he gave us, I think, 4,800 volumes.

TS: Who was that?

BW: Cecil Toole. He was a very prominent physician. I think Cecil is still alive [died 24 April 2011]. But all that collection, he gave no strings, none; there was absolutely nothing. He appraised it, and that was it, but there were no strings.

TS: Do people have to do their own appraisals?

BW: They have to do their own appraisals, yes. Oh, nickel and dime things, if I say it's \$100 to \$1,000 we can give them advice on how to look it up and figure it out. But if you're going to have a \$100,000 gift, they have to [appraise it themselves], and he did. But Cecil gave us no strings, which meant that I could go through that collection, take the rare ones out and put them on the shelf, and put the other ones on the general shelf. That was rare. That was a nice collection. Fred [A.] Quadfasel was a German psychiatrist. His second wife, Mary, gave us that same collection without any strings whatsoever and a lot of really nice papers and other things too. I know those I can tell you about, but others, I don't know if people want me to tell their names. Sometimes, Tom, if people are graduates of another school, the other school does not like to have that name. It's the same thing as Ferrol Sams' papers. Ferrol Sams gave his manuscripts for his novels to Emory because that's where he went to school, but he gave us his manuscripts of his short stories. They were written on Big Star notebooks, and it has a little price sticker on them, and it has his sister's notes because she was his typist, and she would make corrections on spelling and other things. A really significant manuscript archive, and simply because we were willing to talk to him, show him what we were doing, and make our case. Now, I know that Ferrol won't mind that because he's very proud of that fact that he gave us those.

TS: Of course, he's spoken on this campus a number of times. Fred Bentley told me when I was doing my Cobb County book to save all the reader comments and different drafts so that you have the history of how the book was actually produced. It's in our KSU archives. I doubt if anybody will ever look at mine.

BW: See, those are important. Yes, they will, Tom. Those are important parts in the learning and the development of an idea of a project or book. Each of those things is a significant piece for scholarship. We've been adding to this collection in a big way, and the only way you can build a collection like this is simply to have guts. You have to be able to talk to people. You have to be able to show people what you can do. One of the best things that I've ever seen here is Rita [Impey-Imes] gives so many talks to so many classes from our beginning classes upwards. Each time I think somebody is interested in talking or giving us something or we're trying to work on this, I bring them down to see Rita talking to the students in this room. I open that door and say, "Ms. Impey-Imes, can I

interrupt you? I'd like you to meet Mr. So-and-so." And the students are there, and each time they've gone by, the people say, "I didn't know that people with collections could do that." We've gotten good stuff out of that.

TS: You've done a great many of those talks yourself.

BW: Yes, but I've gotten older.

TS: So Rita's doing them now.

BW: Rita does a wonderful job.

TS: Yes, she does.

BW: I held off on retiring until she got her graduate degree. I would never, ever hire a curator for this collection. I would have been pure hell for them because I would come in and talk, this is my baby, but Rita has paid great attention to it, and then Tammy [Livingston] did. My recommendation to Randy [C. Hinds] one day before I retired was that we create two separate things: a library which is reading modern technologically and the historical one if we tie rare books to archives. They bought that idea very well because then they moved it over to museums too, which I think is a great idea.

TS: To make museums and archives together?

BW: And rare books because I think they are all a part of the same thing, so I've been very blessed. Once I realized we were going to do some of these things, I decided to just listen to what my doctor said and quit. I don't have the health any more, Tom. But this has been the best job I've ever had; the one I have now.

TS: You work two or three days a week?

BW: I'm here five days a week, and I get to do all the fun stuff. I don't have any more of the administrative headaches. You will enjoy this part too. You get to do the things you like to do, that you want to do, and you're no longer tied down to everything.

TS: Sure. No administrative tasks.

BW: None whatsoever. And I don't have to read any of their e-mails?

TS: You're working full time five days a week?

BW: No I just work five days in the afternoon. Three is on the list, you work for three days.

TS: But you just come in part of the day, whenever you want to come in?

BW: Yes, I'm here. I like the people on the campus. I like to see faculty members and students. I like Tammy and Rita and her staff, and I like helping them. Rita and Tammy have taken the collection development side of this and run with it. I am so proud of what they're doing. It's nothing to have to do with me. I have to say it again, let me phrase this to you very clearly, nothing in this collection, nothing in this room has anything to do with me. It has to do with everybody else's dedication to the dream, and that's honest.

TS: Well, it's not exactly true but it's honest.

BW: I think it is.

TS: This wouldn't be here without you.

BW: I'm glad that I'm part of it. I'll put it like that.

TS: I've heard you say this before I think, but how does this collection rank with other collections in the state of Georgia?

BW: There are only three museum collections in the state. One is at the University of Georgia. Theirs is archives and rare books too. Their collection is much different from this one. Their historical development is not very large. They have a nice number of early maps and a great many prints and paintings. Their main collection is on Georgiana and the history of the south and the Confederacy. The other collection is at Emory. Their collection of historical books is not great either. Theirs is more specialized in archival papers, Methodist material, a wide variety of major authors, some on rustic papers. They have concentrated on specialized research collections, but not the history of Georgia.

TS: Right. They've got Alice Walker and a lot of writers.

BW: Yes. So they have concentrated on that kind of thing. Athens concentrates on Georgiana and southern history. All of us have bits and pieces on historical books, but this collection now between papers and books is probably in the 20,000 range. Considering I started off with 2,500 and I thought that would be enough forever. Then the collection goes back for 1,100 years. Actually, that's wrong. We go back 4,400 years or so.

TS: Well, with the Mesopotamians.

BW: Yes. We're on the right move. Tammy and Rita went over to Emory for something. I like the people over there, and they've always been good friends to us. When they have questions, they always consult us about collections and we ask them. So Tammy was over there, and they were showing her their oldest

piece. They have one Mesopotamian tablet. Tammy came back and said "Is it possible for us to get two?" I like that! That's a collector's competitiveness.

TS: So we're competing with Emory.

BW: Yes.

TS: All right. I'm sure if I ask you what you're proudest of this would probably be it, wouldn't it?

BW: Actually, yes. I'm not a very proud person. I like great enthusiasm with what I do. A few things I would have to say that I am proud of, I am proud of the rare book collection. I am proud of people like Betty and Fred who assumed that dream too. And it's too bad Roger's dead. I should have said to Roger [Hopkins] many years ago that I'm very proud of his commitment to it too. Roger wasn't the typical academic. He was a businessman, but I think he understood this more than anybody could ever imagine.

TS: What about Dan Papp? Has he been supportive?

BW: Dan has been very supportive of this, yes. In fact, that's one of the first things when I ever met Dan when he was a professor at Georgia Tech. He brought his sons over here on weekends, and we would talk, and he brought them here while he was doing some work, and they studied. Dan is very much committed to the collection of rare books and resources. I think part of our modern changes lately have been because of his commitment. I think it's because of Dan and Randy Hines. The commitment is we need a facility for this collection.

TS: Maybe one last set of questions if you can go a little bit longer is about the library in general and how it's changed in the 24 years since you came here.

BW: It has vastly changed. When I came here many schools were still committed to card catalogues, and we were not. Bob Greene deserves as many stars in his crown as he can for having built 100 percent database collections. He was doing them when other people thought it might not be wise. He saw that. But the world twenty-four years ago, twenty-five years ago, Tom, was a world of reader's guides. I mean, I'm a lover of paper books, and I mean it, but we were all parochial in our collections. Every library had its own, and you borrowed if you could through the mail, but the past twenty years or so technology has changed everything. Most of us went into it thinking we knew where we were going, and it went some place else. But the modern book is electronic, and they're getting easier and easier to use. I'm almost ready to break down and buy an I-pad.

TS: I heard from Dave Evans that we now have more books checked out electronically.

BW: Electronically is our largest collection. It's true for every library going. You are able to have the possibilities of checking out books and checking them back in automatically. You have periodical collections—twenty-four years ago we had 4,400 periodicals if we crossed our fingers. Now we have perhaps 100,000 titles available. The world libraries are in our own shops. The parochial library is gone. All libraries are universal now. We bought what's called the early English books—120,000 from the 1450s to early 1700s. No library in the world has all those books full text. We're one of those libraries that does.

TS: Because we've got them electronically?

BW: We've got them electronically. We own them and they're backed up—now we're moving into a new world, we really are, and it's not just us or libraries, it is the book industry itself is changing. I think more and more, the Kindle is a very nice device, but I wouldn't buy it. It's black and white, and it's awful. But the new I-pad, color, everything is on the screen. You just turn the pages, you turn to the index, there's no typing anywhere. It's just a book. Magazines and newspapers, I like electronic newspapers, I find them useful. I think the world has changed drastically. It puts us in a particular bind. The electronic world is a world of the present and the future, and it will change drastically as we go, but there is a danger in it that people think that they should throw the past out, the book, the place in history. I don't know, Tom, this is the only negative of the modern world because the past has been given to us in tangible form, and we can hand it to the future. Paper book, clay tablets, they can go to the future; they can be studied and understand our past and they have a history. People have touched them, made notes in them, read them. How that relates to the electronics of the future I do not know. What do you give to your children or grandchildren in a world where all you can say is, "My grandpa owned that particular plastic piece that's no longer reusable." Those documents give the personal touch. It has to be answered somewhere. I won't live long enough to see how it's done, but I think, we have made great changes. You can go to any school now in the world and have resources available that once you could only find in the largest universities in the world. Today you have access to virtually all of it. That is marvelous, but what do we give to the future? It's something they cannot hold.

TS: I taught our methodology class last summer with sixteen students and I gave them a choice. There's a book I'd used for years called *After the Fact*. If you buy a hard copy new it's supposed to be \$70, but if you buy it electronically it's \$29.99. So I gave them a choice. You can spend your money on the paperback book or get it electronically. Well, only three out of the sixteen students did it electronically. Some of them figured out ways to get used copies for \$43 or whatever, so they didn't really pay the full price. But only three used the electronic edition. The rest said, "I want a real book."

BW: And they want to keep them. I have all the books I ever had in college. I never have sold my books.



- TS: So the collection of hardback books hasn't grown that much in the last twenty-four years, but the electronic books have grown phenomenally?
- BW: The collection [of paper books and journals] was quite large, but they had begun to store a huge amount of it. Then they may begin to weed that out too. The largest activity of the collection—and this is because most of our students are in the sciences, social sciences or health sciences. . . .
- TS: Or business.
- BW: Business people [want current information]. They don't want historical data. In health science, education, none of them are going to use [dated] material. [Publications that support those majors are], I think, 75 or 80 percent of our circulation here because that's the largest parts of our enrollment. I'm with historians. I'm with the English department. I'm with the Art department. You can have all the electronics you want to, and you can use it to go back as far as material can take you, but you still want to see the original source sometimes. You want to see the notes made about things, and that part here is not the large part of our circulation. It bothers me a little bit, but I think it's probably true everywhere.
- TS: Well, so you're in semi-retirement now.
- BW: Yes. That's the best of all possible worlds.
- TS: What have we left out that we should have talked about?
- BW: I think I've talked too much.
- TS: No, no, this has been wonderful.
- BW: I don't know. I thank you very much for asking me to do this. You made it much more relaxing for me than I thought it was going to be. I talk about books and things, but I don't like to talk about what I've done in the world. But thank you very much.
- TS: Thank you.

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