

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH MARY B. THOMPSON

CONDUCTED BY THOMAS A. SCOTT

EDITED AND INDEXED BY THOMAS A. SCOTT

for the

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Interview with Mary B. Thompson
Conducted, edited, and indexed by Thomas A. Scott
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Mary Thompson is the widow of Dr. William P. Thompson, a charter member of the faculty and the first chairperson of the Division of Business Administration

TS: Mary, why don't we just begin by talking a little bit about yourself, where you were born, where you grew up and just a little bit about your background, and then we'll talk about how you met Bill and things of that sort.

MT: I was born in Lake Placid, New York, and I went to Albany, New York to go to lab school for two years. Then I was hired by the New York State Health Department, Division of Laboratories. When I received my first appointment through the lab, they said, "Well, you're taking this man's place, and when he returns from the Army, you'll have to give up this job." I said to myself, "Well, I'm only twenty. I guess I can find another job."

TS: About what time would this be?

MT: That would have been 1946, I guess.

TS: So right after World War II.

MT: Well, the War was still going, so that would have been what, '4-?

TS: Well, the War ended in '45, but a lot of the people that were in service, it took them a long time to get home.

MT: Yes, because Bill was stationed—well at that time he was stationed at Edgewood Arsenal in Maryland. He was a bacteriologist at that time.

TS: Oh he was? A bacteriologist?

MT: Yes. He liked lab work, but anyway, I said, "Oh, okay, when this man returns from the service, I'll be glad to give him his job back." I had no idea if this man was married and had six children or what, you know, and then one day Bill came into the lab to visit. His father had been taken with cancer, and Bill decided he'd come and visit some of the people. So they said, "Oh you should meet this man whose job you're holding." We met and he said, "Do you like carnivals?" I said, "I don't know, I've never been to one," coming from a small town like I came from, and he said, "I'll pick you up at seven o'clock." So that was where our romance started.

TS: After being in the military he wasn't wasting any time, it sounds like.

MT: He was getting ready to go to the Philippines.

TS: So he's not out of the military at that point that you met him?

MT: Oh no, he still had, I think, probably about close to two and a half years before the War ended and the men got home.

TS: What year was Bill born?

MT: In 1917. When we married in 1946, I would have been twenty-four, and he was twenty-nine.

TS: If you got married in '46, was he out of service by that time?

MT: Yes.

TS: So when you say you were twenty years old, this would probably be like '42 then, when the War is really going on strong.

MT: Yes, I think '43.

TS: So he had been in Europe up to this time?

MT: No, he had been in the Philippines.

TS: But you said when you met him the first time he was about to go to the Philippines.

MT: Yes, but he was still stationed in the States.

TS: So the first overseas trip was to go to the Philippines.

MT: Yes.

TS: Was he an officer?

MT: Yes, he was a junior officer at that time.

TS: In the Army?

MT: Yes.

TS: So like a second lieutenant at this point?

MT: I think he was a first lieutenant when we met.

TS: So he's going to really help liberate the Philippines?

MT: Well, he was in the lab. And then the War ended, so they didn't have to invade. They were really getting ready to invade Japan, and then everything with [General Douglas] MacArthur slowed it down.

TS: How did Bill become a bacteriologist?

MT: He worked, when he got out of school when he was sixteen—he was very, very bright. I don't think he did as many things as he should have, but anyway—

TS: Where was Bill from, by the way?

MT: He was from outside of Albany, Cohoes, New York, and his father owned a grocery store and meat market.

TS: So he graduates from high school when he's sixteen.

MT: I think in those days you could go to school when you were four years old. I don't think they had an age limit. But, anyway, he couldn't find a job. See, that was during the Depression; he couldn't find a job.

TS: That would have been early in the Depression.

MT: Yes. His sister was secretary at the New York State Health Department, and she helped him get a job. He just went to the different classes that they had and just loved bacteriology; and they said he was a bacteriologist. He really didn't have a degree in that or anything.

TS: So he hadn't been to college yet at this time?

MT: Yes, he had. When he first got out of high school, the state was offering two scholarships: one, you could be a Methodist minister or an engineer at General Motors in Schenectady, which was real close. He said, "Well, I don't want to be a minister, but I think I'd enjoy being an engineer." So he took that course and got his degree. I think it was just a two year course, if I'm not mistaken, but, anyway, in the meantime he had found this job working for the New York State Health Department and liked it so much that he never became an engineer. That was probably good. That's the way he ended up at the New York State Health Department.

TS: So he works there until he gets

MT: Until he gets drafted.

TS: So he gets drafted. Did he go to Officer Candidate School after boot camp; is that the way it worked?

MT: I'm not quite sure. Seems like he went directly from the lab . . .

TS: To Officer Candidate School?

MT: Well, as a bacteriologist. Like he says, if you worked in the lab you were either a chemist or a bacteriologist in those days. Then he was sent to the Philippines. He was in Hawaii and the Philippines for two years, and then everything sort of shut down, the War, thank heavens, and we were married shortly after that.

TS: And you had taken his job.

MT: And he always told people, he had to marry me to get his job back, which was not true, because in the meantime I had moved on. [laughter]

TS: You all get married in '46 and how long did he work for the health department?

MT: Let's see, he had worked for them before. I don't know if it's like this in every state, but in New York State the only way you can get promoted is to take an exam. So he took this exam and was the first person on the list, and he was offered a job out in Auburn, New York. Do you know where that is?

TS: Auburn? No.

MT: It's between Syracuse and Rochester. So we went out for the interview, and, of course, they accepted him. He said, "Well, how about my wife? She's a med tech too." I think in those days they called us lab techs. They offered me a job too, so that was fine because we had no children. We bought a house out in Auburn, New York, a New England, two-story home, had hardly any furniture, but that was easy keeping house, you know. We were there for probably three years; it's a terrible snow belt.

TS: Oh, yes. My wife is originally from Buffalo.

MT: Oh, so she knows. You got up in the morning, and you shoveled your way out. Then when we'd come back from the lab in the afternoon, the snow plows had been through and put the snow back up again, and it had melted a little bit . . . but we were there at least three years. Bill got a letter from the army saying they were looking for people to come back in the service. They were looking for something to help people with polio, shots. So we went, and we were stationed at the Presidio of San Francisco for four and half years. After two years Dr. [Jonas E.] Salk discovered this

TS: Wasn't that '55 that the polio vaccine came in?

MT: Probably earlier than that.

TS: Earlier than 1955?

MT: Bill came home and said, "Well, we can get out of the service, I put my two years in." That's what they told him it would take. I said, "I love San Francisco." I was working in the lab. In the meantime we had had a daughter. I said, "Can we stay?" He said, "Sure." So we stayed another two and a half years, and then we were sent to Fort Lewis, Washington for the summer. Bill was on an inspection team for labs, and we knew we were going to be there just a short time, and then we went to Germany for three years.

TS: With the Army?

MT: Oh, yes. Bill was always with a general hospital because he was administrative.

TS: Would you have been there about the time that the Berlin Wall went up or was it before that?

MT: What year was that?

TS: Sixty-one was when the Wall went up.

MT: Well, then it wasn't because we were there from '52 to '55. When we came back to the States Bill was headquartered at Fort McPherson.

TS: So that's how you got to Georgia then.

MT: That's how we got to Georgia and stayed. With the officers they say, "Put down three places you'd like to be stationed, and then the Army will send you where they want you." He always put down he didn't care where we were stationed as long as he could continue his education. So when we got here, Bill had his bachelor's. Then he went to Georgia State and got his master's. Then when they decided to have their first class for Ph.D.'s, that's when Bill was . . .

TS: He was in the first class?

MT: Yes. He was the first one to get his doctorate at Georgia State. Gosh, that's been years ago.

TS: How did he get from bacteriology to accounting?

MT: He met the head of the business department at Georgia State. I don't know how they met. I really can't tell you, or at least I've forgotten, but, anyway, he said, "I can get you in the master's program on a scholarship, but it would have to be under

the business school.” He just decided that he liked business. Isn’t that funny how you change? And he loved teaching.

TS: But a scholarship is what got him there.

MT: Yes. And then when he was going to get another scholarship, this man said, “I’ve run out of scholarships, so when you go to sign up for a scholarship, tell them you’re from the English department and I’ll pay them back.”

TS: This was the dean of the business college?

MT: I don’t think he was a dean; I think he was just a chairman of the business department.

TS: Could it have been the chairman of the accounting department?

MT: Yes, whatever, at Georgia State. Of course, that school has come up too.

TS: So Bill starts going through graduate school. I think when he came to Kennesaw he didn’t quite have the Ph.D. yet.

MT: He hadn’t even thought about it.

TS: Really?

MT: No. I think George Beggs [chair of Kennesaw’s Social Science Division] was one of the few that had their doctorate. Bill had his master’s, and he sort of had a temporary head of the department. Maybe it’s because he was older or something, I don’t know. I remember he came home one day and said, “I’ve got to go back to school. I’m going to go to Georgia State for my doctorate.” I said, “When is this going to take place?” I think he had to go in August, and I said, “Bill, our daughter’s going off to college in September, and I’m going to be the only one working!” But we made it through. You just do; you make the sacrifice.

TS: You were saying that he liked to teach.

MT: He loved to teach.

TS: Did he teach some at Georgia State?

MT: Yes, he did at Georgia State. The way he found out that he liked to teach was that after we were at Fort McPherson five or six years, he got orders to go to Korea. So he spent a year in Korea. What year would that have been? Melissa [their daughter] was born in ’49 at the Presidio.

TS: So she would have been going off to college about 1967 maybe?

MT: Probably, wouldn't that be about right?

TS: Yes, fall of '66 were the first classes at Kennesaw Junior College. So in terms of going back for his Ph.D., he would have come here with a master's, and then took a leave of absence to go back.

MT: He got his doctorate in two years. I'd hear about people taking six years and everything, you know . . .

TS: How did you all hear about Kennesaw Junior College?

MT: Oh, he decided to get out of the Army.

TS: Yes, we left that out, didn't we?

MT: He had twenty years in.

TS: And had the year in Korea sometime.

TS: So twenty years in the military would probably have been '62.

MT: Yes.

TS: He would have gone in in '42.

MT: Yes, that would have been just about right. When did Betty Siegel come?

TS: Betty didn't come until '81. That was a long time after . . .

MT: He was on the committee to help get her.

TS: The search committee?

MT: Yes, the search committee, and he was here I think like two years after Betty came.

TS: He stayed another two years so to '83. That sounds about right.

TS: What was his rank when he got out of the military?

MT: He was a major. He knew somebody or somebody knew him that had retired. They were looking for somebody to teach in a high school at College Park. They called him and said the head of the department was going on maternity leave, and would he consider coming. Bill was very conservative being English and from the North and everything. He said, "Oh, good, we won't starve to death." When he decided to retire from the Army, I remember we had a family meeting, the three of

us, and he said, “No unnecessary spending; now I mean it. Now, Melissa, remember that.”

TS: Melissa is your only child, right?

MT: Yes, she’s our only child. Anyway, we had no unnecessary spending.

TS: So she hadn’t gone to college yet.

MT: No, she was still in school.

TS: You were in Auburn, New York for about three years, so maybe it’s mid-‘60’s that he’s getting out of the military?

MT: I think so.

TS: So no unnecessary spending.

MT: I remember in those days when the teenagers had to have this certain record, and she said, “Oh, Mom, I really want that record.” I said, “Melissa, how much is it?” She said, “Ninety-nine cents.” I said, “Okay, if you promise never to tell your father I gave you a dollar.” So she had this record. She was in a private school; it was not an easy time financially for our family.

TS: I guess not.

MT: Then he taught down at Lakeshore, that was it.

TS: The high school?

MT: He loved it, just loved it. When he went off to school the first day, I said, “Now, play nice!” He came home and said, “Guess what; I got a pay raise today.” I said, “Gosh, you must be good.” He said, “No, they just discovered I had my master’s instead of the bachelor’s.” They thought he just had his bachelors! I think that three military men that retired that same day that he retired—they were all hired at Lakeshore. One was in the science department, and Bill was in the business. I can’t remember what the other fellow was.

TS: Where were you working at this time?

MT: At Fort McPherson in the lab. I had started my career with them when we were in San Francisco.

TS: So you had a little income coming in, and Bill had a little retirement income, I guess, wouldn’t he?

MT: Yes. You know, in those days it wasn't much.

TS: The pay wasn't that great.

MT: No, it wasn't. The college gave him fifty dollars a month, so he could still have insurance, but that was all we got from the college.

TS: How long did he teach at Lakeshore High School?

MT: From January until June. One day he called me at the lab, and he said, "I got this letter saying they'd like me to come for an interview; they're starting a new college in Kennesaw, Georgia." That's when he said, "Where is it?" I said, "I have no idea." He said, "Well, they want me to come up to Marietta"—we knew where Marietta was—"to talk to Dr. Roberts."

TS: Derrell C. Roberts [the academic dean].

MT: Derrell Roberts and Dr. Sturgis on Saturday.

TS: So he didn't apply; they sent him a letter to come for an interview.

MT: No. Somebody, I think it was the same person from Georgia State that recommended him.

TS: Oh, I see. Recommended him and then Dr. Roberts or somebody sent him a letter saying, "Why you don't come for an interview."

MT: He came for an interview.

TS: The interview was in Marietta?

MT: Yes.

TS: I bet I know where it was. I bet it was at Banberry Elementary School.

MT: No.

TS: Was it at Southern Tech?

MT: Where is that donut place there on 41? You turned down this street, if you wanted to go from 41 down to, like if you were going down to Harry's [Powers Ferry Road], it was this little side road.

TS: Where Roswell Street is.

MT: Yes. They evidentially rented an office there or something, and that was where they did the interviews. I remember that afternoon, which was a Saturday, Bill said, "I'm going to run down to the drug store for something," and Dr. Roberts called.

TS: While he was away?

MT: While he was away. He said, "I'd like to speak to William." I said, "He's just gone to the drug store." He said, "Would you tell him that Dr. Roberts called." When he got home I said, "You have to call Dr. Roberts." When he got off the phone, he said, "Oh, I got the job!" But he knew then to teach in a college, even if it's a junior college, you're going to have to go on for more education. Well, this is the funny part, and I don't know if you should tell this, but, anyway, we had some military friends that were so impressed that Bill was going to be a professor at a college that every time we'd see them they'd say, "Have you been to see the new college?" Bill said, "No, not yet." We knew it was just being built, so there wasn't going to be very much. So, anyway, this one Sunday afternoon Bill said, "Let's take a ride and see if we can find this place." We got there, and I was trying to think if it was two buildings or three buildings. I remember it was that main little building where you go to enroll and I can't remember, would it have been the library?

TS: The library wasn't finished when classes first started.

MT: Well, then that wasn't it. There was another building.

TS: I think the earlier ones were the Humanities building that later on became the Business building and nowadays it's called Willingham Hall. That was one of the first ones. Social science took a little longer to be completed. The Administration building would be the one story I think you're talking about maybe.

MT: Yes. And then there were huge mounds of red clay. We ran into Dr. and Mrs. Sturgis. They had some friends, showing them the college. Of course, I couldn't help but rib Bill after we got in the car, "Now, which mound is yours?" Of course, they were real good about keeping in touch with people that were coming on board and said, "The school is not ready." So that's when they started at Southern Tech. That wasn't you.

TS: No I wasn't here at that time. I didn't come until '68. We're talking about fall of '66 at Southern Tech.

MT: With us living in East Point it took Bill so long to get up here because none of the highways were built. You had to come through all these little towns and everything.

TS: But East Point would have made sense in terms of Fort McPherson.

MT: Oh, yes. I don't know how many years he did that, six or seven years—

TS: But you were still working, so it would have been very inconvenient for you if you all had moved up here, I guess.

MT: Well, I remember Bill coming home and saying, "We've got to move or else I'll just have to look for another job." And I really knew that he liked it. In the meantime, and I don't remember what year Bill's dad passed away, but he was at the college, and he inherited some money, so that's where we bought our land on St. Catherine's. We looked several weekends in Sandy Springs, and the things that we really liked we couldn't afford. Anyway, somebody at the college, and I think it was Virginia Hinton—Bill and Virginia were good friends—and she said, "Why don't you get Don McAfee to build you a house?" He does build a good house. Well, he did; he's retired. Bill said, "What do you think about us building a house on the land that we already own?" So that's why we're where we are.

TS: Where is that?

MT: Right at the bottom of the [Kennesaw] mountain.

TS: Very pretty location.

MT: Isn't that a beautiful location? I had the worst time finding that place. Bill would say, "Meet me there," to see how the house is coming, and I said, "Oh, I'm going to get lost!" Again, I didn't know anything about Marietta but Barbara, Bill's secretary, was originally from Marietta and she'd get on the phone and say, "Okay, you know where the Big Chicken is. Let's start from there." That's the only way I found my way around Marietta. Of course, Marietta wasn't very much at that time. There were no restaurants.

TS: Right. I think that quarter at Southern Tech nobody had an office, did they?

MT: I don't think so. I mean, I think that was very nice that they loaned a place for the school to start teaching.

TS: Well, it was. They had four dedicated classrooms that they'd actually been using all along for the old off campus site of University of Georgia in Marietta. They used those same rooms to teach their classes, and then they phased out the off-campus center in the summer of '66, and the junior college started the fall of '66.

MT: Every time I come out here I'm just amazed, and I keep on thinking, I wonder if Bill's looking down because he was always so fond of the people that teach here; you just get a feeling of like family.

TS: He came here to teach accounting, and I think the other original accounting instructors were Joseph [B.] Fennell and [A.] Earl Calhoun.

MT: There was a woman [Mildred W. Landrum] who had her doctorate. When Bill decided to retire I guess he must have been liked because we had so many calls of what can we give Bill. When you're retired you don't need anything. I would just tell the people, give a book to the library, and I think there are several books in there for him. Mildred called me maybe two or three days before he retired and said, "We're giving a surprise going away party for Bill, and if your daughter could come . . ." I said, "Oh, she'll have to bring my grandchild." Chris must have been four. She said, "Don't park your cars near the school." I thought, I'm not going to go in my white uniform to this farewell party; how am I going to get a dress . . . so I remember getting up and putting this dress on that had a zipper in the back, and Bill said, "Where are you going?" I said, "Didn't I tell you; I've got to go downtown to a meeting"—which I had to do once in a while. I said, "I thought I told you." He said, "Well, just be careful driving downtown." And of course, we were there for it. Mildred had gone and gotten even a lot of his students that had taken courses from Bill and everything. You should have seen the kids that we had. So, anyway, she comes by his office, and she says, "I am so mad!" He said, "What's the matter, Mildred?" She said, "You should see what they did to our library. You know we just loved it. Come up with me." He said, "I can't; I'm just too busy." She said, "Oh, you can take time; we'll just be gone for fifteen minutes or so." So that's the way she got him over there to [the library]; that's where they had his farewell party. He had all these students, and he said, "I'd forgotten their names." You know how you run into somebody. . . We were at Harry's one time and this man came up and said, "Dr. Thompson"—now this was years after Bill has retired; he said, "Do you remember me?" I don't remember the fellow's name, but Bill said, "Oh yes." He said, "Well, I'm now the vice president of some bank downtown." Wasn't that wonderful? He said, "Don't move; I want my wife and children to meet you." He ran off and got his family, and they came back, and he said, "This man really helped me and encouraged me to go on and get my degree." I thought, wasn't that wonderful that you remember a teacher?

TS: It is.

MT: I'm sure you find the same thing. Of course, Marietta has—do you live in Marietta?

TS: Yes.

MT: It's gotten so big.

TS: Much bigger than it used to be, for sure.

MT: Oh yes, it's just lovely. I love Marietta now.

TS: Why don't we talk a little bit about when Bill came in '66? Was this before George Beggs became the division chair? It sounds like it was Derrell Roberts and Dr. Sturgis that were doing the hiring.

MT: Yes. Dr. George hadn't graduated. He came after Bill came.

TS: Oh that's right. He had to go back to the University of Arizona before classes started to finish his Ph.D.

MT: Is that where it was? Yes.

TS: Why don't we just talk a little bit about Bill's first impressions of Derrell Roberts and Dr. Sturgis and Kennesaw Junior College?

MT: I think Bill was very pleased with Dr. Sturgis, and then Dr. Roberts was such a kind person. How long did Dr. Roberts stay here?

TS: Not long.

MT: Then he went up to Dalton.

TS: He went to Dalton as president, and that would have been 1970 that he went up there. He was hired in '65, so he was at Kennesaw for five years.

MT: Of course, time went by so fast, and they were so busy. I went on a trip, I think about four years ago, with a group from Dalton, Georgia, and this woman came up and spoke to me. I thought, I don't think I know who you are, and she was Dr. Roberts' wife.

TS: How about that.

MT: I didn't realize that Dr. Roberts had passed on.

TS: Yes.

MT: I said, "I'm surprised that you stayed in Dalton." She said, "Oh, I just love it here." Of course the daughters are married and they're moving on.

TS: It was an interesting time I guess in the sense that Derrell Roberts was an historian, George Beggs was in political science, but we had such a small business program at that time that Business would have been part of the Social Science division—and Education was as well.

MT: Probably. I know that after Bill got his doctorate and came back to teach—now that would have been Dean [Eugene R.] Huck who called Bill and said, "Would you accept the chairmanship of the business school?"

TS: Right.

MT: Shortly after that they started hiring different people.

TS: If I remember correctly, the creation of the Division of Business Administration was about the time that we went four years, which would have been around 1976. How did Bill get along with George Beggs?

MT: Oh, they were really two different people, but they got along very well, and I think they thought a lot of each other. George gave a talk at Bill's memorial and said so many nice things about him. George was called back on active duty, do you remember that?

TS: Yes.

MT: Because he was in the reserves.

TS: Yes, he'd be called off occasionally to do something.

MT: Anyway, somebody had to take his department.

TS: Oh, and Bill ran the department when he was gone.

MT: Yes, and George was the one that suggested that Bill take it. Well, Bill said the first day that he [Bill] had this class, he noticed that there were so many students out in the hallway, and he asked, "Why aren't they coming in [to the classroom]?" He said, "Go and tell the students to go on in." They said, "Oh, no, we were late, and Dr. Beggs always locks the door." Did you know that?

TS: Yes, I did.

MT: Bill said, "Well, that is Dr. Beggs; I'm Dr. Thompson." He said that at Bill's memorial, and I thought, wasn't that the truth. I mean, we had a lot of good things that happened in this school.

TS: I think Dr. Beggs certainly would appreciate somebody with a military background.

MT: Oh, yes. But we did things with him and Rosemary, and then after Bill passed away and things would be happening out here, retirement groups or something, they would come by and pick me up because we all lived in the same neighborhood. They would drive up, and Rosie—he called her Rosie—was in the backseat, and he would say, "Mrs. Thompson"—he never called me Mary—he said, "Mrs. Thompson, you sit in the back with Rosie, and you can talk." So we always had a driver, a chauffeur!

TS: He should have had a chauffeur's hat.

MT: Bill came home from school and talked about George Beggs and said how much he liked him, and he said, "He's very military." I don't think Bill was very military; he was always, you know, sort of laid back.

TS: No, he didn't impress me as being military in the same way that George Beggs did.

MT: Our daughter was old enough to get a job at Six Flags in the summertime. I think it was the first year that Six Flags was opened, and here comes Rosemary and George and Philip and Leigh. Leigh was just an infant because she was in some kind of stroller. Bill said, "Oh, here come the Beggses; oh, I want you to meet Dr. Beggs and Mrs. Beggs." We were very formal in those days because we had come out of the Army, and people weren't really that formal.

TS: I never got to the place where I called him George.

MT: Oh, no, I never did either.

TS: He was always very formal himself.

MT: With you?

TS: Right. With everybody.

MT: When I think about the baby and then Phillip was just a little tot, and I hadn't seen Phillip in years, years. Then I met him at the President's dinner last year. Rosemary and Phillip were here. I haven't seen the daughter in years, but somebody sent me some information saying, do you know who this person is, and I didn't know and then I found out that it was the Beggs' daughter.

TS: Yes, she's the principal of Marietta High School [Leigh Beggs Colburn].

MT: Marietta High. Can you believe? I think it's wonderful.

TS: She is very much like her father

MT: I think so.

TS: She's doing a great job at Marietta High school.

MT: I understand that she is. It's like every place, some like you and some don't. Every so often I hear things about Betty Siegel, and I say, "How can you say that? We liked her so much."

TS: Bill got along with Dr. Beggs. I always got along beautifully with Dr. Beggs. I don't think I could have had a better division chair when I was coming along with George Beggs in the early part of my career. You mentioned Gene Huck. Actually, he was our third academic dean—Derrell Roberts and then Bob [Robert H.] Akerman for two or three years.

MT: Oh, Bob Akerman, I'd forgotten about him. I knew his wife quite well.

TS: Gene Huck came in 1973. Akerman would have been here from '70 to '73, and then Gene Huck until somewhere in the 1980's was the academic dean, then he came back to the history department full time after that.

MT: After Bill retired, they called and asked him would he teach some. I think there were like some advanced accounting classes to business people, but it would be at 7:30 in the morning. Of course, Bill was an early riser anyway, so that was no problem, and he did that for several quarters.

TS: Did he?

MT: Yes. Finally he got involved in wood working and made furniture, and he said, "I just can't have two jobs any more." He finally retired from the college.

TS: Why don't you talk a little bit about, he was teaching the accounting classes and would fill in when Dr. Beggs was on active duty for a little while. How did it come about that he became the first division chair for the business school? How did that happen? Did Gene Huck pick him out or did he have to apply?

MT: No, all I know is that they were getting ready to find a chairperson—isn't that what they call them, chairperson?

TS: I think so.

MT: Anyway, Bill called me and said, "Dean Huck called Barbara and said that he needed to see me."

TS: It wasn't Barbara Blackwell was it?

MT: Yes.

TS: That was his secretary?

MT: You've got a better memory than I do. Well, yes, you're a lot younger than I am. Barbara Blackwell. She came to see Bill with her little boy when Bill was quite ill, and I haven't heard anything about her. I think she lives down in south Georgia some place. Bill said, "I was just so surprised that Dean Huck said, 'Well, I've got some good news and some bad news.'" Bill thought, "Don't tell me I got

promoted, and now they're going to fire me." He said, "Dr. Sturgis and I and [somebody else] have decided that you're the person for the chair of the business school," or whatever they call it, division, I guess.

TS: By that time, if we were going to grow, we really needed to expand our business offerings because we didn't have much at all in the junior college days.

MT: Oh, yes. One of our neighbors was Carol [L.] Martin.

TS: Yes, he was the Dean of Student Affairs.

MT: He was the Dean of Student Affairs, yes. I'll always remember how, I don't think Dr. Sturgis told people what to wear, but why did they all wear dark suits and white shirts and conservative ties? I don't know, but, anyway, Carol came to work with a red blazer, I think, and they said that Dr. Sturgis had him in his office. Carol tried to explain to Dr. Sturgis, "This is the way I get to associate with my students. It makes me look younger." Things like that.

TS: Yes. And Dr. Sturgis wasn't convinced, I don't think.

MT: I don't think so. Shortly after that they could wear different colored blazers, which was nice. It made the school look younger.

TS: I suppose so.

MT: Where did you come from?

TS: I got my degrees at the University of Tennessee, and I taught one year in North Carolina before I came here to Kennesaw. I grew up in Knoxville, Tennessee. My parents were from Tennessee, but they had gone north to find work in the 1920s and stayed there for twenty years, so I was actually born in Chicago, but they moved back south when I was one year old.

MT: Then you said your wife lived in Buffalo?

TS: She was born in Buffalo and lived there until she was ten years old. Her family moved down here in 1955.

MT: They were smart to get away.

TS: They wanted to get away from that cold weather.

MT: When Bill and I lived in Auburn, we both worked in the lab. Bill was the chief tech, and I was just one of the techs, and he would yell out, "Get up; it's snowed again last night!" In those days they built the houses close to the roads, but then the garages were built for horses—that's how old those houses were—so it meant that

we had to shovel snow. Then I'd have to come in and change my clothes again for my uniform. When I ended my career at the hospital, we could wear slacks and lab coats, but in those days we wore starched uniforms, and getting out in the cold weather and everything . . . so we were sort of glad when Bill was called back in the service, and we went to San Francisco!

TS: I guess so. What was your impression of Kennesaw Junior College and then Kennesaw College in those years when Bill was working here?

MT: I think I enjoyed it. We had lots of parties because we had quite a few faculty in those days. I remember the Beggses having all of us in, and John [C.] Greider [Chairperson of the Humanities Division and later chair of the English Department]—the Greiders would have us. We always had the faculty in for a Christmas party maybe the Saturday before Christmas or something like that. They could bring their girlfriends or boyfriends, and so it was sort of family. But it was certainly different from military. I think military are very relaxed compared to the college.

TS: Really?

MT: I think so.

TS: So you're saying that everything was very formal?

MT: I think so. As I said, Dr. Sturgis never called me anything but Mrs. Thompson, and Dr. Beggs, and I wouldn't have ever thought of calling them by their first name. Now their wives, I could call them by their first names. Sue [Sturgis]. And they bought a place in the Commons which is right around the corner from where we live.

TS: They would be near you.

MT: Every time we'd see Sue or Dr. Sturgis they'd say, "Come and visit us." And we never did. Well, he got sick and then Sue did too.

TS: Bill would have been division chair until '83, but you said he was on the search committee earlier for Betty Siegel. Could you talk about that a little bit?

MT: Yes. I thought this was very interesting because, as I said, I was getting used to being around the college. [S. Frederick Roach, Jr.] was in the history department, and he was the chairman of the search committee. When these [candidates] came in, we would take them to Ray's on the River for dinner, and they would give Bill a certain amount of money to spend.

TS: So every candidate that came in you took to dinner?

MT: I think there were ten of them.

TS: Yes, there were a lot.

MT: We had a lot of applications, I mean . . .

TS: So you had ten trips to Ray's on the River.

MT: Ray's on the River. And I hate to tell you this, but I was so bored because you had to be so careful what [you said]. You couldn't say anything about their religion or politics.

TS: Right. You can't ask them those questions.

MT: You couldn't ask that.

TS: What else is there to talk about?

MT: I remember [I missed one of the dinners and suggested that Bill take his secretary Barbara instead]. After the dinner, they were just raving about this person. Bill said, "Oh, we've go to hire her." Barbara said, "Oh, yes. She is so dynamic, and the husband was so nice and the boys." Bill said, "Oh, Mary, I'm sorry that you missed her." Well, it was Betty [Siegel] naturally, and they did hire her. So then they were planning all these parties for her and everything, which was lovely, and my daughter said to me, "Mother, what are you going to wear?" I said, "Oh, I'll just pull out something from the closet." She said, "No, you don't. Daddy's the head of the department over there; let's spend some money." So, anyway, we're at Sach's, and I'm trying on clothes, and this woman said, "What's the occasion?" I said, "Oh, we have a new president at our college." She said, "Dr. Siegel?" I said, "Do you know her?" She said, "She's across the hall trying on clothes." So, anyway, she comes over, and you know how charming she was. She said, "Are we buying something pretty?" My daughter was real nice. Her husband was a Delta captain, and they did make a little bit of money, so she says, "Mother, I'll take you and Dr. Siegel out to lunch." So she did, and Betty never forgot that. She said, "Your daughter was so charming."

TS: What's Melissa's married name?

MT: Sibold. Good German name. Her husband retired, oh gosh, how many years ago? When he was sixty, you know, pilots have to retire, and then he died when he was sixty-two of cancer.

TS: Oh, that's too bad.

MT: Isn't that sad?

TS: Yes, it sure is.

MT: He also was a Navy captain. He went to the Citadel. So she's a widow, but has two grown children. Christopher is about twenty-eight, and he was a captain in the Air Force and decided to get out. He's getting his master's in business, and he's not married. Katie is thirty-two, and she's married and has two little girls.

TS: Katie?

MT: Well, her name is Mary Katherine Perkins. They both graduated from Georgia. That was the only school to go to when you're young! They have license plates and everything from Georgia.

TS: So your first impression of Betty Siegel was very positive, I guess.

MT: Yes. And the parties that they had—were you here?

TS: I remember one of the parties, I think.

MT: Which one did you go to?

TS: I don't remember.

MT: What were the people that had that beautiful house out some place; it seemed like had a huge parking lot.

TS: It wasn't Nina Frey was it?

MT: Yes, I think it was.

TS: Okay, John and Nina Frey.

MT: Did you go to that party?

TS: I went to one out there, yes, just after Betty Siegel had become president.

MT: It was for Betty. I was trying to think how many parties we went to.

TS: We were parking everywhere on the grass for that one but that's all I remember.

MT: When they had graduations or anything, I always got dressed up and went. I enjoyed it. Then when Bill and I were walking across the campus and he had his hoods on—you know, he had three different colored hoods—a couple was walking behind us, and the woman said to her husband, "Why does that professor have so many colors?" He said, "Well, he probably got A's in that." [laughter] I don't know who these people were, but they were at the graduation.

TS: Did Bill work well with Betty Siegel?

MT: Oh, yes. He helped her get the calendar ready. I didn't realize the calendar was so big. I thought it was a calendar that you just put down your things, but it's for the whole year. Yes, he worked with that.

TS: I don't think we got on tape the story about the white Cadillac. Would you mind telling that story?

MT: Okay. Bill and Betty were going to dinner a couple of nights a week.

TS: He was taking her to club dinners and so on.

MT: Yes, different, like Knights of Columbus, Rotary, whatever.

TS: I guess the service clubs were all men back then, weren't they?

MT: Yes, they were all men. He would introduce Betty, and, of course, she would be the speaker. In the meantime, Bill had promised me years before that he was going to buy me a Cadillac. I don't know why. But, anyway, Betty drove to our house to pick Bill up, and she said, "Whose Cadillac?" He said, "Oh, that's Mary's." "Do you think she'd loan it to us?" Bill said, "Do you mind if Betty and I drive to these dinners in your white Cadillac?" I said, "No." She always remembers that. She said at Bill's memorial, she said, "Well, we certainly traveled in style." I thought that was, you know.

TS: They put a lot of mileage on your Cadillac.

MT: On my Cadillac, that's right.

TS: So he was the designated driver to take her and introduce her to all these places.

MT: Oh, yes, to introduce Betty. That was nice.

TS: I was just doing my math. I guess he was sixty-five or sixty-six by the time he decided to retire.

MT: Yes.

TS: So by '83 he would have been about sixty-five or sixty-six.

MT: Yes, I think it was shortly after sixty-five that he decided to retire. In the meantime, for years we had houseboats up on Lake Lanier and ski boats, and he liked to spend a lot of time up there, and his work was interfering with his boating!

TS: Right, so it was time to retire, I guess.

MT: Yes. When he retired I was still working at the hospital, and when I would leave in the morning, he'd say, "Now, when are you going to be home?" "In eight hours, Bill!" I decided, I guess I'll retire too, but I didn't have enough time at the hospital. I only worked there eight and half years to retire.

TS: For full retirement?

MT: Yes.

TS: By that time, I guess Bill's title was still division chair when he retired, wasn't it? Then I guess when he retired that was about the time that our reorganization was coming in and we created deans. Then I think [S.] Alan Schlact was acting dean until Harry [J.] Lasher came in as the first full time dean. But you said that Bill continued to teach some advanced accounting classes for awhile until that interfered with other things.

MT: Yes. After each quarter, he'd say, "I'm not going to do this any more. I'm retired, and they can get somebody else." I'd say, "Bill don't tell me; tell them!" Then they'd call and say, "Oh, please, just one more quarter." He'd say, "All right, I'll do it one more quarter, and then that's it; look for somebody else." This went on for a couple of years. One time he was down in the basement, and she called, and I said, "Bill, your friend is calling!" He said, "No, you tell her I'm not going to teach any more!" I said, "No, you tell her!" I think it was that he didn't want to hurt her feelings, but he really enjoyed teaching these [students]. He even had doctors in these classes, which is wonderful, and bank people that wanted to take these courses.

TS: Right. So these would be courses in the MBA program, I guess.

MT: Yes, because he stayed until he got the master's going.

TS: That would have been '85 that the master's program got going.

MT: Yes. I think he was probably here a couple of years after the master's program started; I'm not quite sure.

TS: So late 1980s.

MT: Isn't that something though? Do they have their doctorate in anything out here?

TS: Well, we had the first doctoral student graduate in the summer commencement just this year, and it was in Education, but there is a class that's working its way through for a Doctor of Business Administration degree. We've got four doctorates on campus now. The Ed.D., which is Education, and then the Doctor of Business

Administration and then there's a Doctor of Nursing Science that there's a class working its way through now, and then we just started our first Ph.D. program in International Conflict Management this semester—first group of students started working their way through. So those are the four doctorates.

MT: Who was the head of the nursing program?

TS: Well, Charlotte [S.] Sachs, originally, and then Julia L. (Judy) Perkins.

MT: Judy Perkins would come by the lab and say, "Come on, and we'll have lunch," because she was there with some of the students.

TS: They've just opened up the new health sciences building [Prillaman Hall]. I walked through it the other day, and there's a great, big picture of Judy Perkins on the first floor of the building.

MT: That's wonderful.

TS: A big portrait of her that's in there. It's a beautiful, beautiful building.

MT: That's what I understand. Isn't that something though? That's why I've been so interested in this scholarship in Bill's name. It's for people who are getting their master's or their Ph.D. I think that's just wonderful.

TS: That's great. So this is a scholarship that's been in place for some time or is this a new scholarship that's just being formed?

MT: This is a new scholarship. This might be the second year that I've been involved with it.

TS: But it has to be a graduate student. Good. That's great that they've got a scholarship named for him.

MT: Yes. I'm so very lucky to have as many retirements as I have that I'm able to give the school money.

TS: How would you describe Bill's feelings toward Kennesaw as it developed, in retirement as he looked back on it?

MT: Oh, I think he was very proud of what Kennesaw had come from a two year college. You know, people used to say, "Oh, if he or she can't get into another college, well, they can always go to Kennesaw."

TS: Yes, I've heard those things before.

MT: That would just, that's not true.

TS: Absolutely.

MT: I heard something the other day about the business school was one of the best . . . what, ten in the country or something; it really has a good reputation. Like Bill said, he had a lot of bright students, but this girl was exceptionally bright, and she got her bachelor's and got a job outside, maybe in Washington. But, anyway, she came home on vacation, and she came out to see Bill. He said, "Well, evidently you're making enough money to live in Washington." Come to find out, she was making more money than Bill was making! He said, "I think I'm in the wrong field!" In those days, when you think, it was a junior college, they couldn't offer very much. Then of course, we're almost at that stage now with the economy, but I think things are going to get better.

TS: They will. Both of you have many reasons to be proud of your accomplishments. For Bill to start the business college, we couldn't have picked a better person to have been the one to come in on the ground floor than Bill.

MT: I don't think so either. In fact, he said, "If you don't have a good foundation you don't build from that." And Bill was laid back, as you know. He was a very quiet person.

TS: I always looked up to Bill. He was more than twenty years older than I was when I came in, and he was definitely a leader in our division.

MT: Oh, that's good.

TS: So I always looked up to him and thought he always had good advice on things.

MT: Yes, I think he did. He always took his time of thinking about [things]. Our telephone used to ring all the time because he was one of the few people that gave out his telephone number. He said, "If you are having problems, don't hesitate to call me." I said, "Bill, you gave out our telephone number?" He said, "Yes, I think there were two or three people in the business school that gave out their telephone numbers." [Our neighbors] that lived across the street from us—their two daughters were down at Georgia Tech. One of them was having a hard time with math. I don't know which one it was. The father called and said, "Could you help her out? Could you straighten her out or something?" Bill said, "I don't know if I can or not, from Georgia Tech!" She came a couple of times, and [Bill] got her on the right road. Sometimes that's just what it takes.

TS: That's nice. I'm about out of questions. Can you think of anything you'd like to add to the interview that we haven't talked about?

MT: No. I hope you enjoy your retirement when it comes.

TS: I'm planning on it.

MT: You're not planning on moving any place.

TS: Not moving anywhere, no.

MT: I think this is a lovely area, don't you?

TS: It is indeed.

MT: Except for the hot summers.

TS: It was a hot summer this year.

MT: It was, I tell you. But we'll enjoy the winter, and I love the fall and the springs, don't you?

TS: Yes, I do too. It's a good place to be.

MT: Our families never understood why we didn't "come home," as they used to say, but in the meantime we had bought a house and we had made friends. And, as I said, we had houseboats on the lake, and we enjoyed that. I remember the day that Bill retired from the Army, Bill's dad called and said, "When are you coming home?" Bill said, "I'm home; I'm standing right in the middle of my kitchen!" His father just couldn't understand. But then when he would come and spend winters with us, then he did understand. Then he understood, yes. As I said, his father owned a grocery store and a meat market and kept it until he was seventy years old. Then we kept on saying, "Go ahead and sell it, go to Florida." Well, he and Bill's uncle, who was a bachelor, would go to Florida before Thanksgiving, I guess. As soon as it started getting cool up there, they'd go south and spend the whole winter, and, oh, they loved it. There wasn't any snow to shovel or anything like that.

TS: Well, I'm going to turn off the tape, but thank you very much for the interview.

MT: I enjoyed it.

INDEX

Akerman, Robert H., 16

Albany, New York, 1, 3

Auburn, New York, 4, 8, 18

Beggs, George H., 6, 13-15, 18

Beggs, G. Phillip, 15

Beggs, Rosemary, 15

Blackwell, Barbara, 11, 16-17, 19

Calhoun, A. Earl, 12
Cohoes, New York, 3
Colburn, Leigh Beggs, 15-16

Dalton, Georgia, 13

East Point, Georgia, 11
Edgewood Arsenal, Maryland, 1

Fennell, Joseph B., 12
Fort Lewis, Washington, 5
Fort McPherson, Atlanta, 5-6, 9, 11
Frey, Nina and John, 20

Georgia State University, 5-6, 9
Greider, John C., 18

Hinton, Virginia C., 11
Huck, Eugene R., 14, 16-17

Kennesaw State University
 Charter faculty and administrators, 6, 9, 12-13, 18
 Recruitment of faculty and first year of classes, 7, 10-11
 Division of Business Administration, 14, 16-17, 22, 24
 Presidential search committee (1981), 19-21
 Coles College of Business, 22-24

Lake Placid, New York, 1
Lakeshore High School, Fulton County, Georgia, 8-9
Landrum, Mildred W. 12
Lasher, Harry J., 22

Marietta, Georgia, 9, 11-13
Marietta (Georgia) High School, 15-16
Martin, Carol L., 17
McAfee, Don, 11

New York State Health Department, Division of Laboratories, 1, 3

Perkins, Julia L. (Judy), 23
Perkins, Mary Katherine (Katie) Sibold, 20
Presidio, the, San Francisco, 4-6

Ray's on the River, Atlanta, 19
Roach, S. Frederick, Jr., 19
Roberts, Derrell C., 9-10, 13

Salk, Jonas, 4
Schlact, S. Alan, 22
Sibold, Christopher, 12, 20
Sibold, Melissa Thompson, 5-8, 12, 15, 19-20
Siegel, Betty L., 7, 16, 19-21
Southern Tech (Southern Polytechnic State University), 10-12
Sturgis, Horace W., 9-10, 13, 17-18
Sturgis, Sue C., 10, 18

Thompson, Mary B.

Replacement for Bill at health department during World War II, 1, 4
First meeting with Bill, 1
Marriage, 2, 4
Work as lab tech (med tech) in Auburn and San Francisco, 4-5, 18
Daughter, 5-8, 12, 15, 19-20
Work in lab at Fort McPherson, 8-9, 11
Move to Marietta, 11
Grandchildren, 12, 20
Impressions of KJC, KC, and KSU, 18, 24
Memories of presidential search and Betty Siegel, 19-21
Memories of graduations, 21
Retirement from hospital, 22
Scholarship in Bill's name, 23

Thompson, William P.

World War II military experience, 1-4
Father, 1, 3, 11, 25
Sister, 3
Training and employment as bacteriologist, 3
Undergraduate experience, 3
Promotion to position in Auburn, NY, 4, 8, 18
Return to the army, 4-8
Transfer to Fort McPherson, 5-6
Graduate school at Georgia State, 5-6
Love of teaching, 6, 24-25
Year in Korea, 6-7
Start of career at KJC, 6-7, 9
Retirement from army as a major, 7-9, 25
Service on presidential search committee, 7, 18-19
Retirement from Kennesaw, 7, 12, 22
Teaching at Lakeshore High School, 8-9
Job interview for KJC, 9-10
First view of the campus, 10
Impressions of the faculty in the early years, 12
Chosen to head the Business Division, 14, 16-17
Memorial service, 14, 21

Teaching in retirement, 16, 22
Working relationship with President Siegel, 21
Pride in the university, 24