

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH MELONIE J. WALLACE

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Monday, 29 June 2009
Location: Board Room, Alumni House, Kennesaw State University

TS: Today I'm interviewing Melonie Wallace who was the president of the Alumni Association in the 1984-85 school year. Melonie why don't we just begin by talking about your background of where you were born, when you were born, all those kinds of things—where you went to school and so on.

MW: I'm one of the few people in Cobb County that was born and raised in Cobb County. There are fewer and fewer of us all along, but I was born at Kennestone Hospital, grew up in Kennesaw, and went to Kennesaw Elementary, of course, and then Awtrey Middle School and North Cobb High School and graduated in 1973. I came to Kennesaw Junior College for two years, and then I went to University of Alabama for a couple of years. I didn't graduate from there, came back, worked for a few years, and when Kennesaw went four-year I came back and I was a member of its first senior class.

TS: Is that right? So you graduated in 1980?

MW: Yes.

TS: That's fantastic.

MW: It completed the circle. It was the right way to go. I was glad to be a part of it. It was very challenging. Course selection wasn't tremendous as the first senior class. It was hard. We were told it would be. Then as we approached graduation we were told that if we don't get accredited in July, the diploma you get won't be worth anything, but we knew that wasn't an issue. We knew that we were going to be accredited, and we were proud to have those first Kennesaw State College diplomas.

TS: Right. Well, that accreditation process, every new four-year school goes through that. I guess you have to have a graduating class before . . .

MW: Somebody's got to do it. I thought we had an interesting class, a good class.

TS: How many were there that graduated, by the way? I mean, there were a lot of people still there getting associate degrees at that time.

MW: I don't remember.

TS: Was it a big class or a little class?

MW: It wasn't really large, no. It wasn't terribly big.

TS: Why don't we go back and talk—you were here '72-'73.

MW: In '73-'75. I graduated high school in '73.

TS: Okay, so you were here ten years from the time that the school was chartered, but we were still in the first decade of offering classes, and obviously we were just a junior college for a decade, so you were here at the end of the junior college period at Kennesaw.

MW: I was also here; my mother brought me out to see the groundbreaking. I was here literally when the first spade of dirt was turned.

TS: Well, talk about that.

MW: I was in the fourth grade in Georgia history, and my mother and a couple of other mothers in the class brought their kids down. We were right there. Governor [Carl] Sanders was here to break ground.

TS: Ah, you saw that. That was November of '64.

MW: We got autographs.

TS: Did you? From Governor Sanders?

MW: From Governor Sanders, but we were here when the first spade of dirt was turned. My mother was very proud of the fact that I was here and saw when the ground was broken, and then I was part of the first senior class.

TS: I guess so.

MW: It was quite something.

TS: You weren't that old in fourth grade, so you may not remember a whole lot, but where exactly did the groundbreaking take place?

MW: I have no idea. I don't remember; I just remember lots of people, lots of dignitaries, and it was very impressive. Even as a child I was impressed. I knew it was something. I've been to ground breakings at churches and things like that, but this wasn't anything like that. This was big; I knew it was big.

TS: My impression is that it was probably pretty much where the old Administration Building was, but that whole terrain may have changed when they started landscaping, or whatever, leveling for the campus.

MW: And of course, all through my middle and high school years if there was a county science fair, it was held here on campus—if there was any type of special activity.

TS: So you were on campus a number of times.

MW: We took our SAT's here, our PSAT's here, so I was on campus a lot.

TS: I'm sure that the whole terrain is different today than it was before they actually put up any buildings, but what did it look like? Did it look like farmland or pasture land or forest or what where the ground breaking was?

MW: I remember lots of trees; I remember a clearing with lots of trees.

TS: So you were in a clearing, and there were lots of trees around you?

MW: I don't remember specifics; that's just the impression as I think in my mind's eye and look back on it.

TS: So it didn't look like a farm; it looked like a forest.

MW: I would say more like a park. Level land and then trees in the background because there were homes around. It wasn't as built up as it is now certainly, but I just remember lots of people, and you knew it was a very big deal. When the governor came to Kennesaw it was a big deal.

TS: Well. I'm pushing for a lot when you were in the fourth grade to remember things. Of course, Pinetree [Country Club] was here, so there were developments on Frey Lake Road and so on—further down Frey Lake. But it may not have been that far from where the houses were. There had to be some houses on Frey Lake Road that you could probably see from where the campus would be.

MW: I don't remember that.

TS: Do you remember any dignitaries other than Sanders that day?

MW: I remember Governor Sanders, and I remember the state patrolmen that were with him. I'm sure commissioners were here and different ones but they were the ones . . .

TS: There's a picture of Herbert McCollum holding an umbrella over his head, so there must have been some rain that day.

MW: I don't remember that, but it was quite impressive for a little ten or eleven year old child.

TS: I guess so.

MW: It was very impressive.

TS: I think Sanders was late for it as I recall.

MW: I don't remember that. I don't remember the particulars. I remember the autograph; my mother saved that for all these years.

TS: I'm just pressing you for all this because there are no accounts really other than what was in the newspaper at the time of what took place.

MW: Oh, I wish mother was still alive because I'm sure she would remember it.

TS: But she got...you said something signed?

MW: We got an autograph. We had index cards. Mother brought index cards, and she gave them out to—there were four or five of us with our mothers—and she gave each of us an index card, and we went up and the governor signed it.

TS: You know, something like that would be wonderful in the KSU archives if you ever were willing to part with it.

MW: I'll see if I can find it.

TS: From the groundbreaking.

MW: I'll see what I can find.

TS: All right, that would be fantastic. Where on campus did you go to take your SAT's and things like that?

MW: I'm trying to remember the building. Of course, when I came in '73, buildings were in a square.

TS: The flagpole quadrangle.

MW: Yes, the flagpole on the quad.

TS: Well, you had the Administration and then the Student Services.

MW: Right, we had the Sciences and the Library, and which was the building to the right of the Library as you faced the Library?

TS: Well, to the right would be Science.

MW: To the left, I mean.

TS: To the left would be Social Science and across the walkway in '73 I guess it would still be Humanities at that time.

MW: That was it; that was the building. She came into the parking lot and the Library in the middle and the building to the left. PSAT's, SAT's, science fairs, anything we came out here for, it was a big deal to go to the Student Center.

TS: Let's see, the new student center, the Carmichael Student Center opened up sometime in '75. I was trying to remember where the offices used to be for counseling and so on—probably in the Student Services building if not the Administration.

MW: I think they were in Administration.

TS: Were they? Okay. Well, talk about what it was like the first time you were here when it was a junior college.

MW: The first day of class my impression was I had come from a high school where I was a medium sized fish in a medium sized pond, and here I was a small fish in a very large pond.

TS: That's the way you felt?

MW: That's the way I felt. But it was the great leveler because in my very first class was the football star from my high school, the biggest fish in our little pond, and he was just as small a fish as I was. He was so happy to see a familiar face, the guy that never gave me the time of day in high school, came and sat by me and was happy to talk to me because I was a familiar face. I thought this is the great equalizer. We're all at ground zero, we're all in the same boat, and he's no bigger fish than I am. It was exciting. That first class was really something; you didn't know what to expect. You knew it wasn't going to be high school, but you didn't quite know what to expect. I enjoyed those first two years. I enjoyed it very much.

TS: That's interesting that you thought of it as being so large because when we look back on it now, we talk about it being so small.

MW: Well, I was coming from, not a small high school, but a medium-sized high school. North Cobb wasn't the largest high school, and we didn't have the most resources of the county.

TS: That part of the county hadn't developed that much at that time, had it?

MW: It really hadn't. Most of the school district's resources were being cut for extracurricular and special classes in east Cobb. So we were excited to come and have a choice of languages. In high school there was Latin and Spanish, and you could take French, German, different things if you wanted to. We didn't have those options because we were a smaller school.

TS: How many students were at North Cobb at that time?

MW: There were 296 in my graduating class.

TS: So maybe a little bit over 1,000 students all together, four grades?

MW: Probably close to that, yes.

TS: And North Cobb was a relatively new school. I think it opened in '59.

MW: Yes, it wasn't that old.

TS: And Awtrey must have been new when you were there.

MW: I think I was there in its second year.

TS: Really? So you got to open up all the new schools.

MW: I know, I was lucky, wasn't I?

TS: I guess so.

MW: I was born at the right time and in the right place.

TS: Right. So in '73, do you remember anything about the instructors or the classes or anything that you took?

MW: One of my favorite instructors was Fred [S. Frederick] Roach. I had Fred in that first semester. I guess, I expected college professors to be elitist and to speak down to us, and he didn't. I enjoyed Virginia [C.] Hinton. She was challenging. I don't think I had you until I came back to graduate. I don't remember any teachers that I really didn't like. I wasn't particularly good in math and science, but the professors were very good, and they were interesting, and they challenged me to at least try. I remember feeling very comfortable that if I had a problem I could go to any of my professors and get help. That was the case. It was the next step, and I felt like I was making it with people that cared about me and wanted to see me succeed. They were here because they were passionate about the subjects they taught, and they wanted me to share that passion as best I could.

TS: What were you majoring in during those first two years?

MW: I was a Political Science major.

TS: Were you?

MW: Yes. I wanted to go to law school at that time. I wanted to be the female Clarence Darrow at that point because I love to argue. I love to play devil's advocate, and I

thought this is the place where I can argue and get paid for it; I can make a living. I soon realized that I wasn't quite cut out for that as I left Kennesaw Junior and went to Alabama. I realized that I didn't think I was quite that dedicated. But I loved history, so I became a history major at Alabama.

TS: Who did you have for Political Science at Kennesaw?

MW: Oh goodness.

TS: I don't think George Beggs was teaching that much by that time, was he? Ron [Ronald H.] TeBeest, maybe?

MW: I had Professor TeBeest; I had Dr. [George H.] Beggs; I had [K.] Gird Romer for history. I'm trying to think. I was thinking last night as I laid in bed thinking about what would happen this morning, you should have gone back. I should have been like Kathy [Scott]. I should have looked at some stuff. I don't remember.

TS: Any impressions?

MW: I was fascinated. In high school you get government when you're a senior, and what I took away from it essentially was what I knew going in. We have three branches of government; I knew that. I wanted to know what made things work. I wanted to know what made our system special and how did it work. I didn't really get that in high school. We learned the basics. Of course, I remember everybody in the class wasn't as interested as I was, but I wanted to know more, and that was the only chance in high school. So to get to a junior college environment where you have choices of classes, you can find out about lots of different areas, and there are people that understand and want to share, but want to challenge you to think for yourself. I felt that from all of my professors. They weren't trying to get me to regurgitate dates and information, but to think for myself. The dates were important, the information was important, but only as far as it prepared me and equipped me to think for myself and figure things out. I think they did a great job because I have opinions about everything now!

TS: Did you get involved in anything on campus other than going to class?

MW: I was on the yearbook staff my freshman year. I had been on yearbook staff in high school my senior year; I was senior class editor which is why I knew there were 296 people in my senior class. The editor and assistant editor of the yearbook also came to Kennesaw Junior, and for some reason we were asked to...

TS: You mean from North Cobb?

MW: From North Cobb. So we were asked to be the yearbook staff. I think we had a photographer that came on board, and it was the four of us. It was fun, it was interesting, it was certainly challenging. We worked a lot with Frank [F.] Wilson.

TS: Frank was the Coordinator of Student Activities?

MW: He was the Student Activities coordinator, and he was our yearbook sponsor. It was very interesting. I felt like I, while I wasn't involved in activities other than that aside from the classroom, it gave me a window on what was going on on the campus and what was there if I chose to take part. It gave me the opportunity to look in each of these windows and not feel awkward about it. I didn't have to commit to go to a club meeting with thoughts of joining the club. I could go to represent the yearbook and find out what was going on, and there was no pressure. It took the pressure off.

TS: What was your impression of student life activities on campus at that time? Minimal or a lot of things going on?

MW: I thought there were a lot of things. There were different clubs; there were different groups, even social groups, hiking clubs and different things. I thought that there was a lot going on. There were a lot of things that, had I chosen to participate, really, I would have enjoyed. I didn't get very involved because you don't want to flunk out of junior college in your first semester, so I had to do the yearbook and cover the books, but there was a lot there. I wasn't quite as self-assured as I am today, so I wasn't a big joiner, but I liked to know what was going on. I liked to know what was out there. I think there was a lot. I remember there being a lot of activity during the day on the quad. People would just come out to the quad and sit and have their lunch, study, throw Frisbees in the spring. That's where the streakers ran—we had streakers. In fact, there'd be an announcement that there was going to be one, and the quad would be packed. I think there was a lot of activity. It was a fun place to be.

TS: What's your impression of the students at Kennesaw at that time?

MW: I think for the most part they were very serious students. They weren't just killing time. They were serious, they had ideas, they were passionate about their ideas, and I think that it was a good student body. They were very dedicated to what they were doing. We didn't have a poetry club at North Cobb High School, and to think that there was a poetry publication was really interesting to me. I had never been exposed to that before. I think the students were diverse, but interested in each other and passionate about their subject areas.

TS: I'm sure you did very well in high school and all that. Was there a reason you came to Kennesaw rather than, say, go straight to University of Alabama out of high school?

MW: Mainly because I could stay home. I wasn't ready to leave. I didn't have the self-confidence when I graduated from high school to even go to Georgia State, much less to Georgia or Georgia Southern, any of the other schools. We had Kennesaw Junior here, and it had such a great reputation; it had a fantastic reputation.

TS: So already at that time?

MW: Oh, yes, already at that time. It had a tremendous reputation. I remember the end of my sophomore year when I took my rising junior exam that the results of that exam— Kennesaw Junior College students ranked higher than Georgia or Georgia Tech students. And that was the reputation coming in. It's a very good school. It's not just Community Ed in big buildings; this is a serious school; and we're equipping students to leave here and go anywhere they want to and do anything they want to do. But I lived just on Cherokee Street in Kennesaw at the end of Ben King Road, so you could almost throw a rock from my house and hit the college.

TS: Oh, you were on Cherokee Street at that time.

MW: Yes. It was just the place to go. You could stay at home; you could save all that money; and it was just great.

TS: So when did you move out toward Mars Hill Road?

MW: Oh, my parents moved while I was at Alabama. They moved off of Stilesboro Road and then, I guess, around '81 or '82 they moved to Mars Hill. My dad has just recently moved back to Kennesaw, virtually next door to the house that I grew up in.

TS: Is that right? So you were on Cherokee Street all the way growing up, and then you say they moved to Stilesboro Road?

MW: Off of Stilesboro Road.

TS: Off of Stilesboro and from there to Mars Hill.

MW: To Mars Hill in Acworth.

TS: I know your father's name is Emmitt. What did he do for a living?

MW: Daddy worked at Lockheed. I'm not sure exactly what he did there, but he worked at Lockheed, as so many people in Cobb County did. There are a lot of Alabama residents in Cobb County, transplants I'll say, from Alabama to Cobb County because they came to work at the Bell Bomber plant before it was Lockheed.

TS: Were your parents natives of Cobb County?

MW: No, they came from Alabama, south Alabama in Monroe County. My mother's from Monroeville which was the home of Harper Lee who wrote *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and she was a classmate of my mother's and my uncle's.

TS: Is that right? How about that?

MW: We enjoyed the article in the Atlanta paper a couple of weeks ago about the weekend trip that you can make to Monroeville and do the *To Kill a Mockingbird* thing. But they're from South Alabama. Daddy was a veteran, went to Auburn University, and from Auburn came to work at the Bell Bomber plant.

TS: Well, he probably wasn't too happy with you going to Alabama then.

MW: No, I think he would have preferred Auburn, but to be honest with you, my perception of Auburn was if you want to raise cows or you want to teach school that's where you want to go, and I wanted to do neither. So I went to the liberal arts school. I went to the school that had liberal arts and Bear Bryant.

TS: Okay. Did your father have an engineering degree from Auburn?

MW: No he did not. He did not graduate.

TS: Okay. Was he majoring in engineering?

MW: I really don't know. We've never discussed that. But I remember one of my earliest memories is the stuffed tiger that they brought back from homecoming one year when I was just a little kid.

TS: So he went straight from Auburn to work at Lockheed?

MW: Yes.

TS: Do you remember what year he started working at Lockheed? Lockheed opened up here in '51.

MW: He was here in the early 1950s. He was here several years before I was born, and I was born in '55. They came with my brother.

TS: The early days at any rate.

MW: Yes.

TS: You have an older brother?

MW: I have one brother, Tommy, who's almost ten years older than me.

TS: So you had three parents growing up.

MW: Essentially, yes, two parents and an abuser. [laughs] No, he didn't abuse me. He did his best to ignore me. I was the kid sister that bugged everybody, but that's our family, just the four of us. Of course, my brother is married now and has a family of his own, kids and grandkids.

TS: Where does he live?

MW: He lives in Talking Rock which is north of Jasper. He worked for the telephone company for many, many years, retired and fulfilled his lifelong dream of raising horses. He owns horses, and he shows horses, and he has a stable that boards horses in Talking Rock.

TS: Good. Good for him.

MW: Yes, he loves it.

TS: Okay, so you graduated with an associate degree from Kennesaw and then went straight to Alabama. When you got to Alabama did you feel that you were prepared for junior/senior level work with your background at Kennesaw?

MW: I was prepared academically. I was not prepared socially or culturally because it was massive. For the first time I was living in a dormitory with strangers. A girl who'd never shared a bedroom with anybody unless a girlfriend spent the night and here you're living with a stranger. Outside the door are other strangers, and you're sharing the bathroom with them. It was just complete culture shock for me. The first semester I struggled. I think that's when I learned to live on my own and take care of myself. Mom and dad weren't there. Granted you're in Alabama; you've got family close by if you need something; but still you're there on your own.

TS: Not that close by though if they're in south Alabama.

MW: Well, I had relatives in Birmingham, and I had relatives in Montgomery. They were fairly close. If push came to shove they could have gotten to me quickly.

TS: Okay. So you're in Tuscaloosa rooting for the Crimson Tide.

MW: That's right. Absolutely, absolutely. That first football game I was a convert. Auburn, what's Auburn? Alabama is the only thing, the only place to be.

TS: You've still got a red-striped shirt on.

MW: I do, I do. And a red purse.

TS: You look like you're ready for the football season.

MW: I am indeed.

TS: How long did you stay at Alabama?

MW: I was at Alabama for four semesters.

TS: Okay, so you did make an adjustment then.

MW: I did. I lost some of my credits when I transferred. I did four semesters there. Of course, when I came back and Kennesaw State was four year, I lost some credits when I transferred, but it was a wonderful experience. Besides the lifelong friendships you make in college, I just really came into my own. I became an individual. I didn't have mother and daddy there to talk to.

TS: You had to go out and talk to people.

MW: I really did. I had to learn how to take care of myself, and I did that.

TS: Did you go to Alabama in pre-law?

MW: My first semester I was pre-law, and then I changed to become a history major.

TS: Back to history.

MW: Back to history.

TS: Do you remember any of the history professors there?

MW: I don't. I don't think I ever had one more than once. I don't think I repeated them, but it was different. Of course, everything, the selection of courses in the history department alone was more courses than Kennesaw Junior had offered. It was just amazing. It was hard to choose. The first semester I took logic, and while I consider myself to be a very logical person, I was not a very good student in logic! It was a little deep for me. But it was just a wonderful place to be. The campus itself was entrenched in history. At the time of the Civil War, the site that is now the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa was a boys' military school. As northern troops [invaded]—I believe it was Sherman, but I'm not positive—the boys marched out to defend their school, and the general was so impressed by the dedication for the school that he spared it. Those buildings still stand today and are used. So there's a tremendous history there. Of course, if you grow up in Kennesaw, at the foot of Kennesaw Mountain and with the Civil War locomotive, the General, you grow up, and you may not have a love for it, but you have some knowledge of the Civil War. I loved it. To be there and have that history there, it was almost like being in Kennesaw, that same feeling. And Tuscaloosa was a great university town. So many things were tailored for students and directed at students. I loved it.

TS: That's the nice thing about a campus in a small town that it is the focus of the town.

MW: Yes, I loved it.

TS: Well, you were there '75 through '77, I guess it was.

MW: I came home at the end of the winter of the '76 semester. I went four semesters straight.

TS: Okay, so you went a summer semester.

MW: I went a summer semester.

TS: I was thinking it's a decade after all the integration crisis at the University of Alabama, so all of that's behind them, I guess, by that time.

MW: Oh, yes. It was interesting, I remember a friend showing me around campus, a new friend that I had made at orientation. She was showing me around. Her parents had graduated from Alabama, and she grew up on the campus practically, and she said, "This is the building where George Wallace stood in the door." I thought, "Here are students of all races, all ethnic backgrounds, going through the door right now to class." I thought, "Wow, we really have come a long way." Of course, Wallace was governor again then.

TS: He'd changed by that time.

MW: He had changed by that time too.

TS: Okay, so you stay there awhile, but you decide to come back to Kennesaw. Why was that?

MW: I was not in a good roommate situation at that point. I had moved out of the dorm into an apartment, and I wasn't happy. I had not had a good semester. I was not happy with my courses. I didn't do that well that semester, and the president of the college whose name was [F. David Mathews] had been a history professor there at one point in his career, and he had announced that he was going to come back into the classroom and teach one course each semester. It was for juniors and seniors, and I thought, "I'm going to sign up for that course and if I get it—it was a lottery because there were so many people that wanted in—if I get in his class I'll come back after the holidays, and if I don't I'm just going to stay home. I didn't get in the class, so I stayed home. I remember not knowing what to do, and a friend said, "Have you ever thought of substitute teaching?" So that's what I did the last half of that school year; I substitute taught in Cobb County. I loved Alabama. I thought when I began to look for a job, if I can't find a job in so many months, I'm going to just go back to Tuscaloosa. I have friends I can stay with. I can get a job there. I liked it there. It really felt like home. But life took a different turn.

TS: Yes. Did you get involved in any activities at Alabama?

MW: I was very active in the Baptist Student Union—Baptist Campus Ministries it's called now, but Baptist Student Union. I was very active there, and that's where my close friendships developed. That's where I learned to play cards.

TS: Uh-oh!

MW: I know, I know. So that's a life changing event right there. But that was my main [activity]. I wasn't involved in dorm activities or sororities or anything like that. But BSU, very active there, and I never missed a home football or basketball game! I went to a couple of gymnastics meetings, a few swim meets, a couple of baseball games, but I never missed a basketball or football game.

TS: But you did feel like you were prepared academically when you went there?

MW: I did.

TS: Did your grade point average go up, go down, or stay the same?

MW: It went down a little bit. That first semester it went down, and then it came back up, but it wasn't quite as high as it was here. But it was respectable.

TS: Was that because of the social adjustment do you think or were the courses harder there?

MW: The courses were harder; they were more specific; they were very detailed. A lot of it was the social and cultural adjustments, especially that first year, but I think I really hit my stride in the summer. An important thing that happened for me at Alabama is that I had an opportunity to be a congressional intern for a period of time in Washington.

TS: Wow. For whom?

MW: Andrew Young.

TS: Is that right?

MW: Yes. They were having this program for spring semester, or the mini-mester in-between spring and summer, and I was able to get into that program. Of course, once you got accepted to the class there were requirements, you were going to have to write papers; you were going to have to do things; but you had to find some place, someone to accept you as an intern. They recommended that you work in the office of your Congressman. The congressman at the time for this district was Larry McDonald. Besides the fact that he was out of the country at the time, I couldn't really find out much from his office. They didn't want to make a commitment, but one of the campus ministers at the BSU said, "You know, I was at this prayer breakfast in January, and I heard Andrew Young speak. Why don't you give him a call?" They said, "Yeah, that would be great."

So when I got there I went to his office. I met the secretaries at the desk, and I was introduced to his administrative assistant. Then they took me into a room to introduce me to the rest of the staff. There was this guy sitting on a table with his foot in a chair, and he's talking, and he said, "Hi, I'm Andy." I thought, "Well, bless Pat." I was taken aback. But I noticed half the staff was black, half was white. Half the staff was male, half was female. There was another intern, a black male intern and a white female intern. It was balanced, and they worked together tremendously. I wasn't opening letters and

sorting mail. One of the young men in our group thought he had scored because he landed an appointment in Ted Kennedy's office. All he did for six weeks was open mail. I accompanied the congressman to hearings, and I met with constituents and gave them little tours, and I answered phone calls and took information.

One of the things I'm proudest of was a call I took from a constituent, an elderly man who had a CD, and it had matured, and he had forgotten about it. When he remembered it had already rolled over at a lower interest rate. He called to say, "Isn't there a law that they have to tell me when it's about to mature?" At that time there wasn't. So I took that to the legislative aide who took it to the congressman who said, "Let's research this." So I sat down and called every bank in Washington, D.C. None of them notified their customers when their CD's were about to mature. One of them said, "We don't do it because we're not required to." While I was there Congressman Young proposed legislation that would make that a requirement, and it passed. I thought, I answered a phone call from a little old man in Georgia, and it changed things. Every time I get a notice like that—well, I used to get notices like that—I thought, "I had a little part to play in this. And this is what it's all about." It changed my idea of what government was from three branches that work to actual hands on, I saw how it affected me. And I'm so glad that I had that opportunity. It may have looked better on a resume to say that I had worked for a Senator . . .

TS: I wouldn't think so.

MW: But the hands on opportunities I had in that office with Congressman Young were something I will never, ever forget.

TS: How long were you up there?

MW: I was up there for six weeks.

TS: That's great.

MW: That was at the beginning of the Jimmy Carter presidential campaign.

TS: I was going to say, it's timely because he wasn't going to be a Congressman much longer after Carter became president, and he became Ambassador to the United Nations.

MW: While I was there they had the Maryland primaries. Of course, Congressman Young was a big supporter of Governor Carter. Some people in the office took me to the Peanut Brigade as they watched the returns in that primary, and that was interesting. Coming back, back at Alabama, we heard that Jimmy Carter was going to officially launch his campaign for the White House over Labor Day. So a friend and I packed up our cars and off we went and were able to be right there, front and center, to see Jimmy Carter stand on the steps of the Little White House and officially launch his campaign. Those were the good old days when campaigns didn't last for two years. They were intense, but they

were short. I had wonderful opportunities, many wonderful opportunities that came about.

TS: It sounds like it. Okay, so when did you come back to Kennesaw State or whatever we were then?

MW: Kennesaw State College.

TS: We weren't even State then, we were just Kennesaw College.

MW: Kennesaw College, that's right, and then State College and then University. I've had the opportunity to get a replacement degree each time the name has changed. If I had done that my wall would be covered and people would be so impressed. I would be impressed. I don't remember exactly when. I had come back, I did substitute teaching through the end of the school year in '77.

TS: We didn't offer upper level classes until the fall of '78, so that's probably when you came back then.

MW: That was when I came back.

TS: Okay, so you were in the first upper level classes at Kennesaw.

MW: Yes. I was working. I had gotten a temporary job with the county, Parks and Recreation, working to promote a bond referendum that gave Cobb County many of its wonderful parks. While I was there I put in an application in the library system and was able to get a position there. I was working at the library when Kennesaw went four year. I applied and was accepted and transferred to the Acworth branch library from downtown just off the Square because I could take classes during the day. Courses weren't offered at various times. You know, sometimes you had one shot to get a course in a semester, and if you didn't get it, you'd have to wait until the next year to have it. By working in Acworth at the library, besides the fact that it was a very small library and not a lot of traffic, I was able to take classes in the middle of the day and get back and complete my work. They allowed me to work full time while I went to school. I couldn't have done it otherwise. But that's when I went back. When they went four year I went with them.

TS: Okay. So you came back as a history major.

MW: Yes.

TS: What was your impression of the four-year program at Kennesaw? I have vivid memories myself of trying to get prepared for those upper level classes.

MW: Oh, I'm sure. I found them to be every bit as challenging as the courses I had taken at University of Alabama. I thought right away there was equality as far as the quality of teaching was there. I think it was very challenging, and students realized it was

challenging for the professors. You all shared that with us. We felt like we were in it together. We both had a job to do if Kenensaw College was going to be accredited. We both had a role to play. You had to start preparing yourself and preparing the coursework. We had to be willing to do the work too. It was very challenging, but it was very worth it, very worthwhile. One of the interesting things for me was I wanted to get credit for that internship that I had done. I had gotten credit at Alabama, but there was no equivalent and it wasn't going to be accepted when it was transferred. Dr. Beggs was head of the Social Sciences Division at that time, and I went and talked with him. He said, "Bring me all your documentation. Bring me you schedule and such."

TS: I'm sure he would be impressed with that.

MW: He said, "Yes, we'll give you credit for this." I was very pleased. But there was nothing equivalent to that.

TS: So we didn't have an internship course at that time?

MW: Not at that time. I'm glad we were able to do that or else I wouldn't have made that first graduation class, that first senior class.

TS: Right.

MW: I would have been around for the second one.

TS: So you describe it as being like a pioneer to come in those years.

MW: That's the way it felt, but there was a feeling that we were all in it together; we all had a role to play; and we all had to work together to get it done, not just for us but as a foundation for what was to come next. Of course, with Dr. [Betty L.] Siegel, there was no doubt that big things were coming, good things were coming.

TS: But you had graduated by the time Dr. Siegel had arrived, hadn't you?

MW: Yes. One of my favorites, of course, you endured me for three courses. I loved your courses, and you were very helpful to me. But Dean [Eugene R.] Huck, Gene Huck came back in the classroom, and I had his course. Of course, he was an Alabama grad, so we had that in common, but I was very fond of him, and he was . . .

TS: Was that probably a Latin American class?

MW: Actually it was world history which to me had always been as dry as sawdust, but he made it interesting. So I took two of them, two courses from him. I just really enjoyed and appreciated the opportunity to sit under you and Dr. Roach and Dr. Huck, and Gird Romer. I mean, there were just wonderful professors. I was so grateful to be able to take Georgia History under you because I had to take two semesters of Alabama history, and it wasn't that exciting. It just wasn't that thrilling. I took the first semester and then found

out I had to take a second, and I thought, oh no, because there was so much that happened in Georgia with the Indians and the Civil War, there was just so much that had happened.

TS: Those things happened in Alabama too.

MW: Well, the writers didn't express it in such interesting ways. [laughter]

TS: Did you get involved in any student activities this second time around?

MW: I didn't.

TS: You're working full time; you didn't have time for it, did you?

MW: Right, I didn't have time. But the classes were small. I did take some night courses, and you really were all in the same boat then, people that were working and taking classes. You did get to know each other and get to bond with each other. There were a lot of study sessions in the library and coffee sessions at the Student Center, or at the Cracker Barrel.

TS: You were still pretty much a traditional age student at that time.

MW: Pretty much.

TS: But we had lots of non-traditional students.

MW: Yes, there were, and it amazed me that some of these people especially the women, had jobs, were raising families, and coming to school, and had 4.0 averages. It was just amazing to me. It was a wonderful experience. I enjoyed all of my time here.

TS: Okay, so you graduated in the spring of 1980, and then what did you do after you graduated?

MW: I went back to the library, and I worked there for several more months, and another opportunity presented itself in private business, so I went to work for an insurance claim adjuster. That didn't work out very well. I worked there for three or four months and wasn't happy and left and spent several months unemployed. I saw an ad in the Sunday paper advertising a position in the technical library at the Coca-Cola Company downtown. I waited all week, and I thought, "There is no point. There are going to be so many people applying for this job." But my parents convinced me to at least go down and apply. So on Friday I did, and I was the first applicant for the job, and I got the job. I spent eight and a half years with Coca-Cola.

TS: I remember when you were working at Coca-Cola.

MW: Yes. I loved it. It was a wonderful place to work.

TS: So what all did you do in the technical library?

MW: Well, the technical library is in the Research and Development department. This was the area that developed new products, new sweeteners, and many different things. My primary responsibility was to produce a book, for lack of a better term, a catalog of articles that had been written pertaining to the soft drink industry. The director of our library would read these many periodicals and would indicate the articles he wanted and would summarize them. Some of them had their own summary, and I would type those things. It took a quarter to produce. It took about ten weeks to get it all typed and proofed and edited. Then it had to be reproduced, and then it had to be assembled, and these things were sent out to coke plants, R&D plants, all over the world. Then those people would see articles that they would want, and they would send in the name or the number of the article, and I would get that copy of the article and send it too them. The last thing I thought I would ever do was type. I didn't take business courses in high school because I did not want to be a secretary. I became a secretary, and that's what I did for a year. At that time PC's weren't that big.

TS: It was pretty early.

MW: It was very early. Word processing was a new thing too, and it was decided that with all the technical work that we did, the working on formulas and what-have-you, we really needed a word processing center. They determined that there would be two people in it, and all of the secretaries were invited to apply for the position. We did, and I was selected for that. That was another wonderful opportunity. It was interesting. I worked on so many projects with so many wonderful, brilliant people. I just really, really enjoyed that. It was the best of all worlds. I had English skills. My typing skills were still developing, but I had English skills. I could edit. I knew how to punctuate. I was typing for Ph.D.'s who didn't know, who had no idea that you actually put a period at the end of a thought. To be able to work with these people and work for them, with them, but on my own at the same time, was the best of both worlds to me. They gained my respect, and I think I gained theirs, and we had a very good working relationship in the areas that I worked in.

TS: That would have been while you were at Coca-Cola that you were involved with the Alumni Association and became the president.

MW: Yes. It was the first place that I'd had a job that paid enough to allow me the luxury of making a donation other than to church.

TS: You didn't make that much at that library?

MW: No, no. You have job security with the county; you don't make a lot of money. I was going to make this donation and found out that Coca-Cola would match it two for one at the time, so I gave my donation and the matching gift.

TS: It became a pretty big gift that way.

MW: It became a much larger gift. I was contacted about being an officer with the Alumni Association, I was way down the pecking order, and I thought, yes, I can do that, that would be interesting, a way to get back with the college, I love the college so. So that's what I did, and I think Kathy [Scott] was the president the year that I went on the board. Then she rotated off, and different people resigned, and I was next in line to be president.

TS: You followed Kathy.

MW: She called and was picking me up at work that day. I don't remember why, but for whatever reason she was picking me up from work that day, and she told me, and I was flabbergasted. I could not believe that I was going to be the president of this organization. It wasn't large by any scope, but I saw it as an important group and one that definitely needed to grow. I didn't know if I was equipped to do that. I said earlier that I gained self-confidence at Alabama, but I hadn't gotten that much, and I was intimidated. Kathy was very encouraging and very supportive, and I was fortunate to be able to work with Shirley Bromley. I'm not sure what her title was—executive director of the association—and she was wonderful. I was able to work with her and considered that a great gift.

TS: Do you remember who contacted you the first time to be on the board?

MW: No, I don't. It may have been Kathy, but I don't remember who it was. I was stunned, and I thought, "Boy, that must have been one big donation they got." But I was terribly honored, and I thought, I could do this, but I had no concept of moving up the chain. I just thought I'll be there, and I'll do what I can do, and I'll help.

TS: So you spent one year on the board and then became president.

MW: Yes.

TS: Well, talk a little bit about what the Alumni Association was doing at that time.

MW: I think at that time we were just basically trying to keep in touch with our members and trying to enroll new members. We had a lot of kids come through here, a lot of people come through here from the junior college days on, and we didn't have a large membership. So we were trying to reach out and contact folks and say, "We're here, you can join this group, you can be a part of this organization, and you can help your alma mater; you can do something to help." I remember, I think it may have been during Kathy's administration that we had our first telephone drive where we tried to contact people, and we certainly continued that. I tried as best I could. Kathy left very large shoes to fill and my feet weren't nearly that big, so I did my best to follow her example and to keep doing things that she did. I wasn't as gifted as she was. I did the best I could do. I don't know that it was good enough, but I did the best I could do, and I certainly have new respect for anyone who heads an organization like that. I could not have done what I did that year without the officers and Shirley Bromley; she was wonderful.

TS: So you did the phone-a-thon. Was that in the fall of the year?

MW: I believe it was in the fall.

TS: Was the phone-a-thon primarily a fund-raiser or just establishing contacts?

MW: It was establishing contacts and membership; it was a membership drive, as best I recall.

TS: And membership meant they had to pay dues to the Alumni Association?

MW: They had to pay dues. And, of course, we were making them aware that your donation can be matched, may be matched, check with your employer because that makes your gift even greater. So we were achieving contact or maintaining contact, updating information, there were a lot of things. Updating information was a biggie. There were so many people that we didn't have current addresses on, so we had to take names from the criss-cross directory from the library, a huge directory where you can look up people by their name or address or phone number, whatever you've got. We used that information, and there were a number of people who spent many, many hours just looking up phone numbers and addresses, so we could contact former members because we really hadn't been able to do that. But it was membership drive, updating information, maintaining contact, and I think it was very important.

TS: Where was Shirley's office at that time?

MW: Let me think. I think it was in the Administration Building, I think there was an alumni office over there.

TS: Okay. Where did you have you board meetings?

MW: We had them in the Student Center in one of the meeting rooms over there. I also became well acquainted with Robert's Rules of Order.

TS: I guess so.

MW: I had heard of them. I learned them well that year. There was someone on the board at the time, a board member that I just considered a pest. He just raised issue with everything I said and the way I said it. At some point someone else called him down and put him in his place, but it made me aware that you may not know a lot about other things, but you can educate yourself on how to run a business meeting, and that has turned out to be very useful in the rest of my life. [chuckle] I have to thank my year as Alumni Association president for my belief and devotion to Robert's Rules of Order.

TS: Right. How often did the board meet?

MW: We met monthly.

TS: In addition to the membership list, did you get involved in any other activities for the alumni or with the alumni?

MW: I represented them, as other board members did when I wasn't available, speaking to student groups and letting them know that we're here to support you and help you. I thought that was important. I know Kathy did that too. I'm sure everybody did, but I had not had that when I came through the first time. There may not have been an Alumni Association of any sort when I came through as a junior college.

TS: Well, there wasn't. It started in '77; the first president was in '77

MW: There was nothing there, and I wanted them to know that we're here, and we want to help you and when you graduate we want you to come back and help us help the ones that come behind you. I had the opportunity several times to speak and was always terrified, but always enjoyed it and felt that the students appreciated the knowledge that this was a way that they could maintain their link with the university after they left.

TS: You mentioned Shirley Bromley. Of course, President Siegel was here by that time. Was she supportive or pretty much out of it as far as the Alumni Association was concerned?

MW: Oh, she was very supportive. She was very supportive. She hosted a couple of events at her home for the Alumni Association board just to get to know each other and was always very supportive and very interested. That's why I really came to know her. Of course, it was during my term as president that James [A.] Fleming came to the university. As president of the association I was on the search committee that found him. Not that I can take any credit for it, but they did want representation from the Alumni Association. I attended meetings, and I attended interviews, and they did ask for my input, and I just said, "Please, Lord, don't let me say something stupid and totally embarrass myself and the association." But I thought that we had a winner in James Fleming. I was very pleased that he was given the position because I thought he was tremendous. He was great.

TS: So I was going to ask next about the relationship with the Development Office on campus. Of course, they weren't raising that much money back then either.

MW: They really weren't. I think the biggest source as far as we were concerned was letting alumni know, "Check with your employers; see if you have those matching gifts because you may want to give a hundred bucks, but you've only got thirty-three. Coke matched two for one and that made a hundred. Now, I was responsible for it. I didn't give it, but I was responsible for it. You don't have to give all the money if your employer will match it. That's a benefit that you're wasting if you don't use it. So take advantage of those. That's a perk that you have. Use it, use it, use it." I think we were somewhat successful in that.

TS: Well, you were president at a time when we really didn't have that many alumni. Most of them were junior college alumni. Was there a difference? Were the people who had four-year degrees more loyal to Kennesaw than those with the two-year degrees or did it make any difference?

MW: I think that the ones with the two-year degrees were so far removed that it made it hard to get them involved again. There were some that were right on board, but I think it was much easier with those that had four year degrees because . . .

TS: Because it's more recent that they've graduated?

MW: It's more recent, and also they have the memories of graduation and all those wonderful memories that you have from another school. They went to Georgia or Tech or wherever, and they had those relationships.

TS: So if they were junior college graduates their loyalty may be to the place where they got their bachelor's degree.

MW: To the senior college if they got a degree. But the four years students, especially once they were established, were more willing to join and to share.

TS: When you were president we only had four years of four-year degrees at that time, so very few of them had had a chance to become senior management or whatever and make huge contributions to Kennesaw. So you're really talking about small gifts at that point.

MW: Absolutely. But small gift put together make a big difference.

TS: Sure.

MW: There's no gift too small. That's what we would say in the phone drives. Even if it's just ten, fifteen, twenty dollars, your ten dollars, your twenty with somebody else's twenty and somebody else's can make a big difference.

TS: Do you have any sense of how many alumni were contributing financially to Kennesaw?

MW: Oh gosh, I don't have a clue. I have no idea. I feel confident in saying that it increased, but as far as the numbers of donations I don't know. The amounts increased. I feel confident in saying the number of donations increased, but I have no idea.

TS: Who all else was involved with the Alumni Association while you were president?

MW: I knew you were going to ask that question, and I was trying to remember names and the only one I can remember is the fellow that gave me such a hard time about Robert's Rules of Order.

TS: Well, we don't have to give his name. I know Elaine Hubbard followed you as president.

MW: I didn't even remember that.

TS: After then after that was John Delves, and then June Krise and then Don Sams.

Mw: I remember June.

TS: Let's see, before Kathy was Steve Knighton; was he still involved at that time?

MW: I don't think so. I don't remember his name at all. I didn't know any of the board going in. I knew Kathy, but I didn't know anyone else. She was very gracious after her term. She was still a member of the board. It would have been very easy, especially as I went in at the beginning treading water, to step in and take over. She didn't do that, and I appreciate that. She was very supportive. But I didn't know anybody else. Like I say, the name I remember is the guy that gave me the hard time, and I don't want to mention his name. He had his purpose too; he served a purpose. He got me on my toes.

TS: Did Shirley have a secretary? Was there a secretary for the Alumni Association?

MW: There was. In fact, I think there were several. At one point it was Sylvia Wills; I remember Sylvia and someone named Connie, I think.

TS: Connie Bostick?

MW: Yes.

TS: So she'd be a later president. Was it Connie Bostick at that time or Connie Esposito?

MW: Esposito, I think.

TS: Yes, she hadn't married Ed yet at that time. I was thinking that she was secretary, because we did an interview with her about a month ago, but this is before Myra Morgan was secretary for the Alumni Association.

MW: Right.

TS: After your term was over did you continue to be on the board?

MW: No, I didn't. I did my term, and I went on to other things. I didn't really have a lot of time, and I didn't have a lot of resources, and I had a work related injury that forced me out of the work place onto worker's compensation for almost four years, so I curtailed all of my activities pretty much at that point.

TS: I guess so.

MW: But I'd get the phone calls from time to time with the phone-a-thons, and I enjoyed the alumni magazine that comes.

TS: But that was really the end of your active involvement with the Alumni Association?

MW: That was the end of my active involvement. In fact, I don't believe I have even been back on campus until today. I was trying to remember, and I came early so I could ride around and look at it because it has changed so much.

TS: It's changed a little bit hasn't it?

MW: It has changed so much. But no, that was pretty much the end of it. We went out on a bang. We had a great annual meeting and had a dinner with entertainment. Do you remember Leroy Powell from Channel 5, the cameraman that gave the entertaining little news observations? He was our speaker, and our musical entertainment was the university opera program. He wrote a thank you note to Shirley on behalf of the association saying how proud he was that we thought he was dignified enough to put him on the same program as opera. We had a great annual meeting and a good time and I think probably had a larger turnout for that than we had for other things, but we left with a smile with Leroy and some culture with the opera.

TS: Okay. So what have you been doing since then?

MW: Well, I worked at Coca-Cola, went on worker's comp for some time, and was not able to go back to work at Coke. So I left there in the spring of '84 and worked for about a year as a church secretary at a local Baptist church and then got a position at the then Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention; it's now known as the North American Mission Board. I worked there for thirteen and a half years until I was laid off two years ago. I enjoyed my time there. It was a different type of work, but I felt every day that I used my history degree, and I used the research skills that I developed. People said, "What are you going to do with a history degree? You're not going to teach, so what are you going to do?" I used it every day, and it enabled me to help not just the people in the building and my boss, but the Southern Baptist Convention is made up of thousands and thousands of churches, many of them very small that don't have computers, don't have full time staff. To be able to help them with a few minutes on a computer or knowing where to look for something and how to find it was very fulfilling. I enjoyed that very much. I've been very fortunate. All the jobs I had, I enjoyed my time at the county very much, but it was time to move on. I had done all I could do. I loved Coca-Cola. It was a great place to work. I was there during their centennial celebration and had some wonderful opportunities, but had to leave there. And I enjoyed my work at the mission board. I've been very fortunate that I've had jobs that I liked, worked with people that I liked and respected, and did something that was worthwhile and helped other people.

TS: Right. So what's your impression of Kennesaw nowadays?

MW: Oh, gosh, I'm amazed and extremely proud. I'm just amazed at the way it's changed and the way it's growing. I'm just absolutely amazed, but so very proud—proud to have been a part of it, not once but twice.

TS: Right.

MW: Words can't express it. I read about them in the papers, something that's being done, some new program that's being introduced or a new building. It's just miraculous to me. When I was a little girl in the fourth grade seeing people turn a spade of dirt, never dreaming it would be this big—never dreamed that it would grow to be anything more than just a little community college, and it is much more than that.

TS: Well, you've got a unique perspective from the ground breaking on.

MW: From the ground up, I really do. I'm glad that my mother saw the importance of bringing me as a child to see that. It was exciting as a child. I didn't understand who the governor was. I'm sure I knew what a governor did, but I realized he was an important man in our state, and to get to see him....

TS: Why do you think your mother saw that as an important thing to go to?

MW: I don't know. I don't know if it's because she didn't have a chance to go to college perhaps or if she just wanted to make me aware even on that level that things are possible. You don't have to go far away from home to better your situation, to better yourself. I don't know why she did. Maybe she was just excited about it.

TS: We probably ought to get her name for the transcript.

MW: Her name was Evelyn Wallace.

TS: Okay, well, I think I'm just about out of questions.

MW: Thank you so much. This has been fun to go back and think about all these things. I haven't thought about some of this stuff for many, many years.

TS: It's good to see you again.

MW: It's good to see you.

TS: Thank you.

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