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Interview with Hans A. (Al) Troemel and Sara R. (Bonnie) Troemel

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KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH HANS A. (AL) TROEMEL AND SARA R. (BONNIE) TROEMEL

CONDUCTED, EDITED, AND INDEXED BY THOMAS A. SCOTT

for the

SOUTHERN POLYTECHNIC STATE UNIVERSITY SERIES, NO. 9

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Kennesaw State University Oral History Project
Southern Polytechnic State University Series, No. 9
Interview with Hans A. (Al) Troemel and Sara R. (Bonnie) Troemel
Conducted, edited, and indexed by Thomas A. Scott
Monday, December 1, 2014
Location: Georgia Room, Switzer Public Library, Marietta, Georgia

- TS: Today's interview is with Al Troemel who received an associate's degree from Southern Technical Institute and began teaching at Southern Tech on the Chamblee campus in the 1950s before the institute moved to Marietta. Al's wife Bonnie is also participating in the interview. Al, why don't you begin by talking about your background, where you grew up? I know you started to college at Southern Tech, and why don't you just talk about that: where you grew up, and how you got to Southern Tech, and maybe how old you were when you got there.
- AT: Okay, as a matter of fact, I'd be glad to. Both my wife and I grew up in the Atlanta area, so we are native Atlantans. When I graduated from high school, my first year I attended Georgia Tech, and at the introduction at Georgia Tech . . .
- TS: And that would have been '57?
- AT: That would have been '56. I graduated [from high school in] '56, so it would have been the fall quarter of '56 that I went to Georgia Tech.
- TS: So you're one year older than my brother. He started college at Tennessee Tech in '57.
- AT: Okay. Well, during the introduction at Georgia Tech there was a short film. I believe that's what it was then or maybe it was a video of Southern Tech and it being . . .
- TS: They had a film about Southern Tech?
- AT: Correct. And about the approach that Southern Tech was using in engineering technology. It was very attractive to me. I went one year at Georgia Tech, and realized that I was either not ready for it or it was not my cup of tea.
- TS: Well, maybe there's a question I can ask in there, if I could just stop you for a second. A lot of people told me that Sputnik in '57 is the great divide where places like Georgia Tech go from being hands-on, lab oriented, practical engineering to very abstract.
- AT: That's correct; that is what I encountered.
- TS: But it almost sounds like your experience was a year before Sputnik, so maybe it was already happening?
- AT: Yes.
- TS: So it's already going on, and it's not just Sputnik that brings about the change? Maybe research dollars [were a factor]?
- AT: Right. I realized that I wanted to be in engineering. My mind has always been in that direction. It's just that the approach that they were using at Georgia Tech wasn't

appealing to me. I went out and I visited Southern Tech. I got their catalog and read the type of school that it was. Now what you have to realize is Southern Tech then was only ten years old [first classes in 1948], and it was a brand new type of approach to educating the people that industry wanted and needed. It was not a vocational school. Georgia had vocational schools, but Southern Tech was beyond that. Southern Tech had a good basis in the basic studies—English, mathematics, chemistry, and physics. Yet it was a two-year program back then. [The basic education classes were] mainly the first year with some specialty courses. The majority of specialty courses were in the second year. Specialty courses had hands-on labs involved with them. So you were not only taught the theories, in my particular case, civil engineering and surveying, but you performed laboratory experiments and used equipment that industry was using at that time, and you became proficient with the equipment.

It was my cup of tea. I thoroughly loved the approach that that school was using, and I was involved as a student assistant in the physics department, and I got introduced to trying to explain things to students. I found that rewarding. As a student my major was in the civil engineering technology. The department head then was, C. T. Holladay, and he saw the desire and love that I was getting for the teaching profession, and he offered me a job. It was for only one [quarter]. We were on quarters then. I graduated in the winter quarter of 1959. I started teaching in the spring quarter right after that.

AT: I graduated in the winter of '59. I had this one-quarter contract as a special lecturer, and I took that summer off. Professor Holladay approached me and said, "The students really enjoyed what you taught them. You'll make a good professor, I'm sure. Why don't we go ahead and put in for you to be teaching in the department?"

TS: So what exactly did you teach that quarter?

AT: The first quarter was something called Statics. At the school we had a course in graphic statics because we were approaching it graphically. I also taught the basic surveying course that first quarter. Before it was all over I . . .

TS: You taught a full load.

AT: Yes.

TS: And the accreditations standard for a two-year school is that you could teach with an associate degree?

AT: Well, yes, as long as you were progressing on to a bachelor's. Now, at that particular time, as I was beginning in the teaching profession, I didn't have time to pursue my bachelor's degree. But later I did concurrently teach and finished my bachelor's. During this time I got married, got my bachelor's degree, and also taught full time at Southern Tech. We had a lot of night courses at the school, and we had a good enrollment in those night courses. This let me take courses during the day and teach primary at night.

TS: You were going to Oglethorpe?

AT: Yes. And I got a bachelor's in physics.

TS: I see. So you took classes in the daytime and then taught at night?

AT: Both. I worked it out. The two schools aren't all that far apart, and I alternated.

TS: Because you were in Chamblee at that time.

AT: That's correct. That was the start of it. It was very, very busy for me. After I got the degree at Oglethorpe I also then became a professional land surveyor in the State of Georgia. Holding a professional license was one of the criteria for teaching at Southern Tech.

TS: I saw some initials after your name. I guess it was PLS.

AT: Yes, correct. That's Professional Land Surveyor.

TS: Okay, I didn't recognize that.

AT: Those credentials were enough to allow me to continue at the school, having the bachelor's degree and the professional license. Also I had my own little surveying business that I ran on the side mainly to see what industry was needing and wanting. It was a blast.

TS: Did you ever do any graduate work?

AT: Yes. I went back to Georgia Tech doing some night school work down there and finished all of the course needed for a minor in mathematics at Georgia Tech. It was just too much to do. I never went beyond that. My final rank at the school was only an assistant professor, but I did gain tenure.

TS: Because you didn't have the master's degree? Promotions didn't have anything to do with how competent you were in the classroom?

AT: That's correct.

BT: Not at all!

AT: And everything evolved. You have to understand. This is forty years of teaching, and everything changed.

BT: The requirements for the school too.

TS: I understand. My father went through something similar. He worked for the Tennessee Valley Authority, and he didn't have a college degree. He had about a year of college, and that was all he needed—along with a lot of practical experience—in the 1940s to be an engineer at TVA, but it certainly kept him from advancing.

AT: The first department head and one of the fourteen original faculty members of the school was C. T. Holladay, and he also worked for the Tennessee Valley Authority before he came to Southern Tech.

TS: Did he really? I think I saw he had a Tennessee Tech degree if I remember correctly.

AT: That's correct. He was very involved in surveying . . .

BT: In World War II.

AT: Yes.

TS: In World War II he was surveying?

BT: Well, no, he was a weather person in World War II.

AT: But that happened, was it World War II [or the Korean War]?

BT: It was World War II, wasn't it?

TS: You know I said PLS, but in the catalog they had RLS.

AT: Registered Land Surveyor. That has been changed now, and most professional surveyors use PLS.

TS: But yours was RLS?

AT: It means exactly the same thing.

TS: And Holladay's was RLS.

AT: Yes, he was also an RLS. So I don't know, did I answer your question?

TS: Well, it was a good start. I know very little about the school when it was in Chamblee. I know it was at the old Naval Air Station, and I presume it was just a bunch of barracks that you all were in. Could you talk about going to school there—what it was like?

AT: All right, and also the early years of teaching there.

TS: Right.

AT: Southern Tech was in a corner of the old Naval Air Station that was surplus. L. V. Johnson was the first director of Southern Tech. I'm giving you the comments that I as a faculty member heard. L. V. saw the need for the school. He saw that industry needed someone that had a college education, but also had had good physical experiences with the job environment that they might be getting into. In other words [industry wanted Southern Tech to] produce a student who could hit the ground running for a particular company. That was his vision. He presented that to Georgia Tech. He was working with them at the time. They did approve it, but they said they didn't want that type of school on [the main] campus. They did not want Southern Tech to be there. That's when L. V. started looking for a place to house the school. This property was being surplus by the United States government. He got the rights to acquire it, so there we were.

This was in '48 when Southern Tech first started taking the old barracks. There was still a chain-link fence around the campus, a guard tower at the main entrance, and the best I can remember there were about three or four barracks buildings on either side of this paved road that ended at another very big barracks-type building that became our administration building. The faculty and students, all of them got involved in converting these barracks into classrooms, labs, faculty offices, and an administration building. They had hired on some contractors too, but the faculty was very involved with it.

TS: Converting the barracks was a good practical experience in itself I would think.

- AT: Exactly. We had another road that we left the barracks the way they were and used that for the dorms. It was ideal for dormitories.
- TS: Ideal if you want military barracks for a dorm.
- AT: Exactly, if you didn't mind having a community shower right in the middle of everything. But then that was the way it was. I actually was a dorm supervisor at one time. In any event, that is what we started with, and it built a family atmosphere. Now I don't know where Kathy Hall went with you on this. As you know she and I were very close friends throughout our teaching time. I really don't know when Kathy started.
- TS: In '73.
- AT: That's more recent than I thought it was, but in any event she probably pointed out too that the faculty was really like a family. We knew everybody. I'm going to where I started there [as a student] and started teaching there. We were still creating these laboratories and acquiring equipment every year as we could get the funds for different equipment. The curriculum had pretty well been structured by those original people that were there, but it was being refined continuously. We were adding more courses as we went, but we were still just a two-year school. But L. V. Johnson helped build this faculty and family relation. He would, for instance, have a picnic in his backyard every summer. It was required. Although there wasn't an official roll call, everybody looked around to see who was there and who wasn't. If you weren't there, it was not very favorable with the administration. Not only the faculty was invited, but also their wives and the children there invited. So we knew everybody by name. We knew their wives' names. We knew their children and how many children they had and what they were doing. So it actually created a family atmosphere, which was wonderful. At that time Southern Tech had an older population of students because the majority of them were veterans that had veterans' benefits.
- TS: But you went straight from high school?
- AT: I went straight from high school to one year at Georgia Tech. When I started as a student at Southern Tech I was much younger than the average students in my classes. But they weren't messing around. They wanted an education. They wanted to go out and be productive when they got through with their education, and they were. It was [because of] those graduates who went out into industry and what they did for industry that Southern Tech blossomed. The word got out of what kind of school we were, and our graduates were highly sought after. I don't know how [SPSU] has fared through the great recession. You know, I am no longer there, but the jobs were there. If you didn't have a job somewhere else, you could get one at the Department of Transportation of Georgia because they were wanting our graduates. Those graduates today are running the different departments of the Department of Transportation here in Georgia. Most are Southern Tech graduates.
- TS: So anyone who went there pretty much was guaranteed a job when they graduated?
- AT: No problem.
- TS: Maybe four or five job offers?

AT: Correct. And good salaries! That was the beginning of it.

TS: L. V. Johnson was a mentor to our first president Horace Sturgis at Kennesaw State.

AT: You better believe it.

TS: I've got an interview with Dr. Sturgis where he's just glowing in talking about L. V. Johnson and their relationship.

AT: That's correct. That even trickled down into our faculty. Kennesaw State was evolving; I don't know when it started . . .

TS: Well, it was chartered in '63, but classes started in the fall of '66. I guess you know it was on your campus.

AT: I know exactly, yes. That was because we now had our new buildings on campus. There was competition between those two schools, even between your president and L. V.

TS: Oh, really.

BT: For students.

TS: For students?

AT: For students, and they always watched to see how the numbers were growing.

TS: They were pretty even there for a while.

At: You better believe it! They were. But y'all just took off, and rightfully so. Kennesaw State was also offering the general education that was required, and you had the metropolitan area of Atlanta to draw from.

BT: It was a different type of school.

TS: It was a different type of school, that's right.

BT: This was basically engineering technology students that were here. Some students couldn't get into Georgia Tech, and they decided to come to Southern Tech.

AT: More so later.

BT: But they had high SAT scores.

TS: Oh, yes. Well, later on the relationship between Southern Tech and Georgia Tech soured, but what about at the beginning?

BT: It evolved.

AT: Yes. That was a problem; it really was.

TS: From the beginning?

AT: No, not from the beginning. Georgia Tech very much saw the need for this school as long as it was being done off their campus, and they saw that industry wanted this graduate too. So they were supportive. Of course, L. V. Johnson was still with Georgia Tech, if not working directly there as Engineering Extension Division director or

whatever. I don't really remember exactly all of that. The way that it soured was that we were always a part of Georgia Tech. We were a division of that school. As Georgia Tech would implement faculty requirements, and also implement different things that were needed to advance from one level to another in the faculty ranks, they were using their criteria. Georgia Tech was not seeing the type of criteria that we needed at Southern Tech.

TS: So for promotion and tenure you had to meet the research requirements of Georgia Tech?

AT: That was occasionally talked about, but, no, it never got to that point.

TS: But that was the fear?

AT: That was the fear of the faculty; that's correct. The other thing that soured the relationship is as the budgets every year were being divided, the [Board of] Regents would give Georgia Tech its appropriate amount. Then Georgia Tech was at liberty to give Southern Tech what it thought it needed. Actually, we didn't get our fair share some years, and that was felt by our school. Those were the sorts of things that made Southern Tech faculty, as we had our faculty meetings, wonder about our relationship with Tech. We had the Tech president at many of our faculty meetings, and he talked about changes that he saw for Georgia Tech. It just wasn't quite what we had envisioned that we needed to do to produce our graduates. The school definitely sought out to become its own entity with the Board of Regents and it did [in 1980]. They gave us our freedom. We [had already] advanced to having a four-year degree offer.

TS: Which was '70.

AT: Right. That changed a lot of things when we got that four-year degree. It allowed our student, and I'm talking primarily about civil, to get a much deeper, broader base of the subjects that they needed. They could advance further in mathematics. They could advance further in physics, and it gave them a much deeper knowledge that they could use in their engineering profession. What happened was once we became a four-year school many of our graduates started wanting to become a professional engineer. To become a professional engineer, originally, the requirements were that you had a bachelor's degree from a school like Georgia Tech. You could not really get a professional engineering license with a Southern Tech degree.

TS: So an engineering degree as opposed to an engineering technology degree?

AT: Right. What happened was that as our students went out and were actually starting now to perform engineering tasks for companies. The companies realized that they were very good, sometimes much better than some other graduates they got from [Georgia] Tech and other schools. Therefore, the companies started pushing the state board downtown to give an avenue for graduates from Southern Tech to be able to get professional license. That went on for several years, but in any event there was a compromise made. If you had a degree from Southern Tech, you then needed to be an apprentice or work in the field for seven years. Then you could stand for your exam to become a professional engineer. You didn't have to have that if you graduated from Georgia Tech. At Georgia Tech after you were an apprentice for the company for four years, you could then sit for your professional license. Once we got the four-year degree that changed things.

BT: But it made things more competitive.

AT: Much more competitive, right.

BT: [But the bachelor's degree still] was an engineering technology degree, not an engineering degree.

AT: We didn't [have engineering degrees] until just recently.

BT: Dr. [Stephen R.] Cheshier began the engineering degrees didn't he?

AT: Well, those were still engineering technology degrees.

TS: The Board of Regents approved B.S. degrees in electrical, mechanical, and civil engineering on August 12, 2009, but for some other fields like software engineering a long time before that [M.S. in Software Engineering approved in 1997], and there were some others areas before that; what is it, mechatronics? [B.S. in Mechatronics Engineering approved October 11, 2006]

AT: Yes. I'm glad you've done your research into this. But what happened there was that Georgia Tech did not want Southern Tech's graduates to have the same requirements to become a professional engineer.

TS: It looks like if you could pass the test that should be enough. From what I gather that test goes on forever.

AT: That's correct.

TS: It's a long test.

AT: Yes. And that was the argument that was made at many of the state board meetings. In any event it was Georgia Tech that did not want the competition. It did not want civil engineering, mechanical engineering, all of these engineering degrees that you just mentioned, because they had the programs, and they wanted to be the sole provider of those programs. That's just me talking, but that was the feeling that we got as a faculty. We have an engineering program now, and the dean is [Thomas R.] Tom Currin, who used to be one of our professors in civil department when I was at Southern Tech. Also Sam Beadles [professor and chair of the Department of Civil and Construction Engineering] was originally one of the civil engineering technology professors. They have gone on and gotten their master's degrees and PhDs now. So those are the requirements of being hired now just like they are at your school.

TS: Let's go back and talk about how Southern Tech got to Marietta. I've heard stories about DeKalb County not really wanting to upgrade the facilities, and so the Board of Regents invited people in Cobb County to make an offer, which they did. They got money from the governor [Marvin Griffin]. Maybe I should ask, were the facilities that bad? Were they not upgrading facilities?

AT: Not really.

BT: If you could go somewhere else, you wouldn't want to stay in the naval barracks.

AT: There were a lot of challenges in the naval barracks. For instance, when I first started teaching there, I shared the office with my department head. That was Hap Holladay. I've mentioned him before. The office immediately adjoining our office was the Building Construction department head's office.

TS: I had Charles T.

AT: That's correct. Charles T. (Hap) Holladay. We saw Hap in Florida a couple of winters ago, and he was celebrating his ninetieth birthday. I hope he's still doing well.

TS: Oh my goodness. I ought to track him down.

AT: If you could it would be an absolute . . .

TS: If you can find out how to get a hold of him, I'll call.

AT: I think you could still get an awful lot of information from him. He is one of the original fourteen faculty members.

TS: Okay, you're showing me a picture.

BT: We'll give it to you.

AT: Right. I'm giving that to you.

TS: Thank you. Where did this come from?

AT: Out of the 1958 yearbook.

TS: This is written by L. V. Johnson. ["Director L. V. Johnson Reviews Southern Tech's Past and Future."]

AT: He was talking about how he started this school. I think you'll find that fascinating. I did. Hap Holladay is this individual right here.

TS: On the back row?

AT: Yes, on the back row. That's C. T. Holladay. Those were the original fourteen that created that campus, created the program and the laboratories.

BT: L. V. Johnson was a very dynamic, obviously a very persuasive, very determined human being to be able to get all of this started.

AT: I'll say! To finish that story of trying to be in the barracks, Hap and I shared [an office]. The office that was immediately adjacent [with a] wall between us was the Building Construction Department head, which was Chester [R.] Orvold. We had a hole in the wall between the two offices, and in that hole in the wall there was a telephone. That was our joint telephone that we used. That's how things were on the old campus.

TS: I doubt if it was sound proofed either.

AT: Oh, it wasn't sound proofed. Actually, the switchboard was the old pulling the cords. I'm sure you've seen that. That was our switchboard, and our switchboard operator knew

everybody's business. That was the type of environment that was there. We tolerated it, but it certainly wasn't what we wound up with on the Marietta campus.

BT: My first visit to that campus . . .

AT: This was prior to our marriage.

BT: Prior to the time we married. We had been swimming, and we were coming back from [Lake] Lanier. Al needed to make a telephone call. He took me in the office, and he went to the bathroom. When he came back, I was on top of the table because of the roaches.

AT: Those roaches were humongous. They actually went toward you rather than away from you. So she was standing on top . . .

BT: I'm not one of these people that is a scaredy-cat, but there was enough going on down there that I figured I was safer if I was on top of the table.

TS: But you got married anyway.

AT: Oh, yes. We have celebrated fifty-one years.

TS: So you married in '63?

AT: That's correct. Yes. She's been through . . .

BT: Those are just two incidents that he's gotten me into.

TS: So it took you a few years to get married then it sounds like.

BT: Yes.

AT: Let me tell you. The campus wasn't being upgraded as we needed. When the properties became available in Cobb County, I don't know the politics that was involved there, you probably know more.

TS: I've got a pretty good idea.

AT: You know more about this than I. I was just trying to keep my head above the ground learning the latest [information]. Civil is a broad technology, civil engineering especially. Then I wound up really getting more involved with the surveying area, and I loved it. I'm going to give you these pictures.

BT: That's the end.

AT: Yes, this is the end of my career. When I retired the students that I had had through the years established a horizontal and vertical controlled monument. They blue-booked monument, and that means that it is in the National Records never to be destroyed. It is controlled by NOAA [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration]; that's the governmental agency that controls it. The monument . . .

TS: It looks like this picture is July 23, 1997.

AT: That's correct. This is the plaque that was put beside that monument. The monument is named Troemel. There were only two monuments in the State of Georgia with a living person's name, and I was one of them at that time.

TS: I interviewed Kathy [Hall] over in the Engineering Technology Center. Isn't that a beautiful building?

AT: Beautiful! It sure is.

TS: It's a long way from the barracks.

AT: That's correct. We'll get to that.

TS: So at any rate . . .

AT: That gives you an idea where it all ended for me. I have a great amount of pride in that.

TS: I guess so and for good reason.

AT: Now, let's talk about the move, if you will, for us to get to the new campus.

TS: Oh, I am. That's the next topic. I understand you helped with the move.

AT: Correct, that's exactly right.

TS: Of course, the Board of Regents approved the move on 11 June 1958, but it's actually 2 October 1961 that you opened for classes. So I gather that fall of '61 you all were really busy moving the campus.

AT: Oh, yes. We were actually very busy even prior to that because the architects that were working on the new campus buildings wanted our input into how to lay them out.

TS: Fantastic.

AT: Exactly, right. My wife really didn't know this until last night. We had a great amount of input into what labs we needed, how big they needed to be, what physical features they needed to have, how many faculty offices we would be requiring. We were even trying to project out into the future as to what facilities would be needed. During that time there were a lot of drawing labs and so forth that took large areas. So, we as a faculty on the old campus did an awful lot of the original sketch work for the layout of those buildings. The first architectural rendering of the campus was done by Chester Orvold, who was the department head for the Building Construction Department.

BT: He had an architectural degree, and he was an artist.

AT: We were extremely proud of these buildings that we were creating. Hoyt [L.] McClure now became the director.

TS: I wanted to ask you about Hoyt McClure. On 1 July 1959 L. V. Johnson became the director of Georgia Tech's Engineering Extension Division, and so he became the person to whom Hoyt McClure would report. But Hoyt McClure takes his place at that time as acting director of Southern Tech. Is that right?

AT: Correct. We were still a division of Georgia Tech. I wanted you to see the original campus that we had in Marietta. We brought quite a few annuals [yearbooks]. Each one of the annuals contains pictures of the buildings. The buildings were so important to us. It was great to move up to Marietta. As we actually moved, a lot of the faculty took the seats out of their vehicles. We would put the more sensitive equipment that we had in our personal cars, and we would carry them up to the new campus. There was a moving company that was hired to do the bulk of the moving at the end, but the faculty did an awful lot of the physical moving of the equipment to the new buildings in Marietta. Of course, the campus wasn't all operational at the very beginning. We had to share the buildings that were operational until we could get into the others. But it was just a wonderful experience. At that time Hoyt McClure was our director, and, as you say, he reported to L. V. Johnson downtown. Again, we were under the umbrella of Georgia Tech still at that time.

TS: My impression about Hoyt McClure is that he lived [in a historic Marietta neighborhood] on Kennesaw Avenue, and he was probably more a part of the community than maybe anybody before Lisa Rossbacher.

AT: Exactly, he was. We just came down the road. We were still a family group. We were small enough to have Christmas parties at various faculty members' houses. Hoyt McClure had an open house.

BT: Oh, yes. That's where you went at Christmas, really.

AT: And the house that he had here . . .

BT: I think they purchased that house once he became director.

AT: That's correct. He purchased it once he knew the direction the school was going and that the school was going to Marietta.

BT: Hoyt McClure became the [permanent] director in 1961. Min Mavity had been the [administrative] assistant to L. V. Johnson, so she become the assistant for Hoyt McClure.

TS: Mrs. M. N. Mavity.

BT: She was called Min Mavity. I don't guess Min is alive any more is she?

AT: No she isn't.

BT: A lot of these people aren't.

AT: I definitely want to get in touch with Hap Holladay. I will call him [for you].

BT: Hap is an extremely determined person. He's on a walker. He made so much noise with the [outdoor] walker that they got him an indoor walker too. But these are the characters that built this school.

AT: Yes, and they were strong, strong individual characters. We still, those of us who are still alive, know each other and appreciate each other still today. But Hap would be able to tell you an awful lot of the beginning times of the school too.

TS: I know he became a department chair in 1951. Was he an original faculty member?

AT: Yes, he was. He was an original faculty member. I think he was called back to the service for the Korean War. After World War II, Hap Holladay stayed in the Reserves. He was called back for a period of time. I think it was for a year or two. He had to take a leave of absence from the school. It was during that period of time that he had a second stint as a weatherman. He was actually a weatherman in Venice, Florida. That was why he didn't become a department head until 1951.

TS: I've got that he stayed department head until 1982.

BT: A long time, so that's what, thirty years?

TS: Yes, thirty-one years, and then Robert Myatt . . .

AT: Robert Myatt took his place as the civil department head at that time. Then he was also the department head of architecture, both of them together. Bob Myatt.

TS: Oh that's right, for a short while it was the Civil and Architectural Engineering Department [1982-1984].

AT: That did not work out at all. It did not. It was our administrators trying something new, and they soon found out that it didn't work. We went back to the individual departments. I believe that's at the time that Dave Hornbeck became our department head [1984-1989].

TS: He had a PhD.

AT: He had a PhD. As you have seen probably in your time with Kennesaw State, the requirements increased for faculty through the years.

TS: Right. Practically nobody but the administrators had doctorates when I started at Kennesaw.

AT: How about that.

BT: Dave Hornbeck's background is geology.

AT: And he got his PhD while he was teaching at Southern Tech. He had a master's when he began, and he did his PhD work at night at Georgia Tech.

TS: Before he became department chair?

AT: I really don't know.

BT: He was teaching there before becoming department chair.

TS: I was going to say if he could be a department chair and get a doctorate at the same time, he must be really exceptional.

AT: Well, yes and he is. The administrators that we had at the beginning, I do believe, none of them had PhDs. They had masters and bachelors. Those were the original people that were the department chairs. When I first started there, we had eight different technologies. Of course, we got more through the years.

BT: The way the leadership of the school went was L. V. Johnson, then Hoyt McClure, then Dean [Walter O.] Carlson,. They all were from Georgia Tech. After that [1980] Southern Tech became its own school, and [Dr. Stephen R.] Steve Cheshier was the first president.

TS: I did an interview with him last May.

BT: He did an awful lot for the school, and an awful lot of buildings were built during his tenure.

AT: Steve Cheshier was very dynamic. He was our first president, as Bonnie was saying.

BT: He's a very neat person as far as I was concerned.

AT: I was on the selection committee when we got him.

TS: Were you really?

AT: Yes. When we finally got the right to have our own name and the campus was no longer under Georgia Tech, we formed the selection committee and interviewed a lot of different individuals. Steven Cheshier just stood out. And it wasn't only Steve Cheshier. It was his wife.

TS: Really? He mentioned in the interview that it was unusual that they were interviewing his wife also.

AT: They should be [interviewed].

TS: You can't do it anymore, you know.

AT: Really? Is that the case?

TS: Absolutely.

AT: No, she was part of it.

BT: She took a great deal of care with what was going on at the school at the social level.

AT: Yes. I don't know how long he was our president; I'm going to make a guess, ten years plus.

TS: It was seventeen years [1980-1997]. He said in the [2014] interview that he was president for seventeen years and that it had been seventeen years since he had been president. He's been the director of the Cobb Education Consortium for practically seventeen years now.

AT: Really, wow. Well, he is a dynamic individual and was a good president and did a lot for the school. His last couple of years were not very pleasant for him, and I don't know all of the turmoil that was happening.

TS: Your department chair Boyce Tate—was he one of those in the protest that got fired? I notice he left in '96.

AT: You know an awful lot about that school! Yes, there was a protest. Some of the faculty members did sign, I guess. What would you call it when you would want to ask the president to be removed?

TS: A petition?

AT: I don't know.

TS: Oh, the petition against the president?

AT: Yes. It went around.

TS: Did Boyce Tate sign the petition to remove Dr. Cheshier?

AT: I really don't know.

BT: I don't know about that, but Boyce Tate had a heart attack before he left.

TS: I see; so that's why he left?

BT: It was a pretty major heart attack.

AT: I'm not too sure [if that was why he left].

TS: Well, I guess, the department heads that got removed as chairs had expressed their lack of confidence in the leadership of the vice president for academic affairs. So Tate wasn't one of those?

AT: I don't think so. I think it was a health problem with Boyce. I can't really speak to why he was removed. But, yes, there was turmoil. That's when [Dr. Daniel S.] Dan Papp came in as our interim president. He kept the school rolling and doing well during those [thirteen months [1 July 1997 to 31 July 1998]. Of course, then we created our next search committee, which I was not part of, and Lisa [A.] Rossbacher was hired. She was our second [permanent] president of the school. She did a wonderful job too.

TS: I thought it was remarkable how different the searches were for Cheshier and Rossbacher. His was very open, with lots of interviews and everybody involved. He was on campus three days, he said, for interviews.

AT: I believe that was right.

TS: In her case the faculty didn't even meet her until she had the job.

AT: How about that. I did not know that.

TS: That would have been the year you were retiring?

AT: That's correct. I retired during the time Dan Papp was there, so what happened [with the presidential search for] Lisa Rossbacher I do not know.

BT: But you were still there when she first came in, weren't you? Weren't you still there when Lisa started?

AT: Do you have the dates?

TS: She started working on August 1, 1998.

AT: Okay, so that was after I retired in September of '97. So it really was after me. But Lisa Rossbacher was a very dynamic person. I would get Christmas cards from her every year, with notes when we would have medical problems or something [special]. We would get cards with a personal comment on the bottom. She was just wonderful; she really was.

BT: And she always had meetings throughout the year with the retirees.

AT: Right, right, and she would sponsor the food for those particular meetings. It kept us in touch with what was happening at the school and kept us as a unit. We had our last meeting. I guess it will be our last one [ever]. Bonnie, when was that meeting?

BT: November [2014].

AT: In November she told us about the college that she was going to.

TS: Humboldt State [in California].

AT: They will have marijuana research there, and she said that will be before Dan Papp gets it!

TS: One of our main faculty researchers from back in the 1990s, [Patricia H.] Patti Reggio, did her research on marijuana, but it was entirely on computer. She wasn't actually working with the plant; no lab work involved. She's a chemist.

BT: You have to tell him about the computer at Georgia Tech.

AT: Oh, yes, I will.

BT: When they first started here in Marietta.

TS: Right. You didn't have a computer here?

BT: They had no personal computers back then.

TS: Oh, yes, right.

AT: That really was one of the things that I got involved with too. We did not have a computer course at Southern Tech in Marietta.

TS: Okay, when you first opened here you did not have a computer course?

AT: We did not have a computer course anywhere on that campus. I had started to get interested in computers. This was at the beginning of the personal IBM computers. These massive things had very little memory. I started to get involved. Bob Myatt, who was in our department at that time, was also very involved. We had bought some early type of computers. One was called a Wang machine, and it was a personal computer as such. It used a cassette tape to actually write the code of the program, and Bob Myatt was using that to check students' work when they were doing very detailed design work. Maybe that was for a bridge or something where there were calculations that really went a long way through the project. It was not easy to check that work, so he developed a program. I developed programs for surveying on this same Wang machine. We didn't really have

the personal computers and I was using the programs from the Wang machine to introduce the aid of computer programs to my class. I asked my department head, Hap Holladay, if we could have a computer course in the civil department. He said we could. I created one, and that was the first computer programming course at the Southern Tech. We did not have at the beginning even punch machines on the campus.

TS: I know all about punch cards. I did my dissertation with punch cards.

AT: You did! Okay. What we would do is to give students forms on which to write their programs for various projects. We were using a language called Fortran back then.

TS: Yes, it's still around, isn't it?

AT: It still is, but it is not as known as other languages. Anyway Fortran was what we were teaching. So we would have these forms that we would give to the students for a task to do, and they would write the program. I would then take those sheets down to Georgia Tech to their building that housed their computer. That is the Rich [Computer] Center. Back then that computer was vacuum tubed, and it was housed in a huge room with fans to cool the machine. There was a secretarial staff that operated punch card machines. They would take the programs that I would bring down to them, punch them into the punch cards, and send them over to the computer room to run. Then the print out would come back. I would go down the next week, pick up one load of programs, and take another one down at the same time. That's the way it all started.

My wife was part of all of this too. She made some of the trips back and forth with me. That was the beginning. Then we started to get punch card machines at the Marietta campus. We used them not only for computer programming courses but also during registration. We sorted the names of students for class rolls and so forth. I got involved with that on my own to help the registrar get started with computer processing. It was fascinating, and soon other departments saw the need. After that we did get our own computer on the campus. It was housed in a trailer.

TS: I was wondering when you got a punch card reader on your campus. When you got the computer, I guess.

AT: No, it was actually a little bit before then, but I couldn't tell you when. It took a while for all the computer usage to be integrated into our courses. The electrical department eventually did wind up having the computer engineering technology as a part of that department.

TS: Electrical?

AT: Yes, to start with. Then the math department took over. I think Kathy Hall was also part of that, but I'm not sure. But in any event, we did get our own computers on the campus. Of course, it evolved as the machines evolved and became more efficient and easier to move around.

TS: How great for the students to be learning computer programming at that early date!

AT: They did. There were some surveying programs that I wrote for Hewlett-Packard that were actually being sold by them as a surveying pack for a few years. Now all of those programs are old and outdated and no longer used.

TS: I have several different questions. Why don't you talk about the integration of the campus, when that took place? I know that Willie Hope was the first black student in about 1964. Do you remember that change taking place?

AT: Race has never been part of my makeup. No, to answer your question directly, I don't remember the first African-American person on the campus, and if it caused any problems or not.

BT: Do you remember the first female—because it was originally all male?

TS: That was my next question.

AT: I do remember when we had very, very few females there as they became more . . .

TS: The first female was actually in the first class [in 1948].

AT: Really?

TS: Yes. Barbara Hudson who later on was Barbara Hudson Purdy.

AT: How about that.

TS: I think there were 116 students, 115 males and one female.

AT: How about that. Okay. L. V.'s [article in the 1958 yearbook] points out how many were the original number of students, and of the original number of students how many were veterans [106] and how many of them were not [10]. I knew there were a lot of veterans.

TS: When you were there were there any women in the classes when you were a student?

AT: No.

TS: And obviously no female faculty.

AT: No. That evolved.

TS: So no women in the classroom. So she was there that first year [and received an A.S. in 1950], and then no follow up to Barbara Purdy I guess.

AT: No, no. What program was she in, do you know?

TS: [The Building Construction program]. There actually was an article about her in the alumni magazine ["Celebrating Six Decades of Women at SPSU," *SPSU: The Magazine*, Fall 2009]. You can access it online.

AT: The integration on the campus that occurred, as far as I know there were no problems.

TS: So it wasn't a big deal.

AT: Not in my eyes.

TS: It didn't cause any protests or anything.

AT: Not that I know of.

TS: So when you were there, there weren't any female students.

AT: There probably were no female students at that time. I don't remember any.

BT: If there were, they weren't where you were; that's what it amounts to.

AT: But building construction [Barbara Hudson's field] and civil were very close together. Chet Orvold would have been the head of that department.

TS: When did women start showing up in significant numbers to be noticeable on campus?

AT: It was a gradual event.

BT: Were the girls in the civil department that were beginning to go into, surveying associated with someone who had a surveying company?

AT: Correct. You [Bonnie] have met a lot of them, and some of them were actually wives of surveyors.

TS: That went to school at Southern Tech?

AT: Yes, both of them, husbands and wives wound up at the school. Now it was still predominately male, at least when I was there.

TS: Oh yes, 80 percent.

AT: Yes, but there were female students, and there were female faculty members. Of course, in administration there are now a lot of female individuals, but it was a slow process for them starting to come in. I can't really tell you when it became a significant number.

TS: But you have to notice it when you're teaching a class if one female comes into the room, and you haven't seen one in your whole teaching career.

AT: Yes. And that is exactly the way it happened. Then there were more and more females.

BT: Or he might have even known them as wives of surveyors. Then all of a sudden they are in his class, so he already knows them. That's a possibility.

AT: Yes.

BT: Or daughters.

AT: Kathy Hall would have been much better [at answering that question].

TS: Well, we've got some of this on tape. She was the first woman in the Math Department [in 1973].

AT: That's exactly right.

TS: And I think she said twenty years later she was still the only woman in the Math Department.

AT: That probably is correct.

TS: I guess to me it was amazing because we had women teaching math at Kennesaw Junior College from the very beginning.

AT: I know. As a matter of fact, we knew one of them, Harriet [S.] Gustafson.

TS: Oh yes, I knew Harriet very well. [She joined the KJC faculty in 1967 for the second year of classes].

AT: Unfortunately she has passed away.

BT: Her son and our younger son were in the dormitory at Georgia Tech together.

AT: Right, and both boys are civil engineers. Our son is now in Australia, and hers is in North Carolina. Anyway, Harriet Gustafson had to stay up with the current requirements of the faculty as they were evolving at Kennesaw State.

TS: I understand. I was very lucky at Kennesaw that I was able to evolve with the school. I didn't have a doctorate when I started there, but I got it right before we started offering upper level classes in 1978. I started my little research projects like oral histories and what-have-you as soon as I got through my doctorate. The administration was very supportive. So I was able to grow as the school did. It was great. I don't know what your experience was, but it was great for us when we went four years because [in the junior college era] nobody had hired anybody to teach a specialty. We were hired to teach history—American or World—but not any discipline in particular. So when we went four years and we devised the curriculum, we just had a department meeting and said, “Who wants to teach Modern Middle East? Who wants to teach Georgia history?” We pretty much could create our own specialties at that time.

AT: Yes, the same with us. When Southern Tech went four years it gave us the ability to offer so much more.

TS: So you experienced that too? You could develop your own specialty?

AT: Oh, yes, exactly. As a matter of fact that's when our graduates became so competitive with the engineering graduates from Georgia Tech. Southern Tech graduates had a big broad base of basic courses in which they could perform as well as the Georgia Tech graduates on professional exams. That is what is crucial. I have two sons, and one of them is an electrical engineer. He could care less about having a professional license because electrical companies are the umbrellas that they work under, and the company would take the responsibility of its employees. But that isn't true of civil engineers, and it's not true of surveyors. Surveyors are responsible for delineating property lines. If you do that incorrectly, you can be held liable in court for whatever damages. For example, a surveyor could be liable for a building that has been built in the wrong location. Civil engineers are the same way. They are liable for the humanity. You drive across a bridge. You don't even think about it collapsing, because it has been designed by a civil engineer. If it did collapse, they're liable. It isn't the company; it's the individual.

TS: Wow.

BT: Well, they do have to be professionally licensed, but our son who is a civil engineer, did not the company that he worked for assume responsibility?

AT: No.

BT: Didn't they?

AT: No. They had an umbrella policy, but my son was . . .

BT: He still had to be licensed.

AT: He had to be licensed. If he was part of a suit . . .

TS: So you better have a good insurance policy.

AT: That's correct. You carry liability insurance, and that is part of it. But back to your comment about becoming a four-year school and what liberties that gave you at Kennesaw State, we felt that same way at Southern Tech. It gave us so many more courses for the students to take to build their education and their futures. For several that opened up the avenue of licensing. Now there was no problem except it took longer to get it; that's all.

TS: Right. Bonnie, let me ask you a question. I understand there was a pretty significant women's guild for the wives of the faculty. Could you talk about that a little bit? Were you involved with that?

BT: A little bit until we had our first son. I would go to the meetings whenever they had meetings. I've forgotten whether it was once a month, but they did meet. These were the wives of the faculty, and being connected in the school.

TS: Did you do anything for the school, any projects?

BT: I wasn't involved in anything. What I was involved in was social gatherings. Did you find anything else?

TS: No, I really don't know much about their activities. That's why I was interested.

AT: I am sure if you dig deep enough that the wives were responsible for some of the things on the campus. But I couldn't tell you what it was either.

TS: By the way, did most people move to Marietta when the campus moved out here?

AT: Exactly.

BT: We did.

AT: Almost everybody did. There were very few people that stayed behind in Atlanta or around Chamblee or wherever. A lot of our faculty bought land. At that time Cobb County wasn't what it is today. Dean George Crawford was one of the original deans. He bought a forty-acre tract of land in East Cobb County off of Roswell Road, and he built a house on it. That land originally had a cabin on it with a lake or a pond. Another faculty member took a portion of that land and built his house on it. We started our married life in that cabin. We rented it from Chief Crawford. His name is George Crawford, but we called him Chief Crawford. He was one of the deans of the school.

BT: But that's not where we started. We did move to the cabin, but when we first married they did not have dormitories on the campus for those students. They used [Marietta

Place where the U.S. government built housing during World War II for] the Bell Bomber plant.

AT: Right. When we came up here we had those original buildings that you saw, but we had no dorms.

BT: We had no room for the students to stay on campus.

TS: So they were living in the World War II housing for the Bell workers?

AT: That's correct.

BT: We stayed there for three months before we went to the cabin.

TS: Oh you lived in it?

BT: Oh, yes.

TS: Was it one of those little concrete buildings?

BT: No, were they concrete?

AT: Well, they sort of were. They were hard to explain, but in any event they were the Bell Bomber facilities that housed their workers and their wives.

BT: More like the barracks in Chamblee.

TS: Now, there were some later houses that somebody called cardboard houses.

BT: That's them.

AT: That's it.

TS: That's what you lived in?

AT: That would be the name.

BT: They're not cardboard, but they're not brick.

AT: But they looked like cardboard. That was very challenging. Of course, we [had lots of commuter students], as you did at Kennesaw State. You had an awful lot of students that were just coming in for the day, right? I mean from the metro area.

TS: Sure, coming for class and leaving as soon as the class was over.

AT: Correct. Your dormitory space and everything evolved.

TS: Well, we didn't have any. It was 2002 before we had any.

AT: You've got to be kidding!

TS: No, I'm not.

BT: You had two dormitories [at SPSU], didn't you? Were they part of the original campus? They must not have been.

AT: No, they weren't because we . . .

BT: Well, it must not have been too long after that. [Editor's note: According to Richard A. Bennett, *Southern Polytechnic State University: The History* (SPSU Foundation, 1998), 63, construction began on the first dormitory in 1964, and both were completed during the 1965-66 academic year].

AT: After we got those six buildings I believe the two dorms were the next thing to be built. Prior to that is when we were using the cardboard housing that you're talking about. Then as soon as the dorms did get created and opened, we then moved out of there. [According to Bennett, pp. 62-63, the Marietta Housing Authority closed the Marietta Place units that Southern Tech had been using in 1965 after determining that they had major structural problems that made some of them uninhabitable]. That was an experience. It was very hard to manage the students that were there, and it was also not in the most desirable area of people. That wasn't a good introduction for our young men.

TS: For the students?

AT: To be in that environment. I will just never forget. I think we were on the edge of what Southern Tech had, my wife and I, but just across the street was still public housing. This woman was mad at her husband one day, so she takes this huge cinder block and throws it through the windshield of the car. Most of these young people had not been exposed to [that environment], and here we were having that.

BT: I guess it's why they built those dorms pretty fast.

AT: Well, we needed them, and got them. I think the original buildings wound up being eight buildings if you counted the three that were together. We had the Administration Building, which is here [looking at a photo]. This was the Basic Studies, then Math; that's where Kathy's office was. The covered walkway went over to the Electrical Engineering Building. This was civil, architectural, and this was mechanical, textile, and gas fuel technology. You probably have in your research gone through all the different technologies that we had.

TS: I know a little bit about it, but not a lot.

AT: We actually even had a fire science technology course for a while. That didn't last. All of these technologies were being housed in these different buildings, but this wound up [together] in the mechanical complex down here and had the machine labs.

BT: Behind [south of] the Administration Building was where they put the two dorms.

AT: The Library went in [near the Administration Building to the west and south].

BT: Eventually, yes [groundbreaking on April 12, 1966].

TS: Okay, so those dorms are long gone then, right.

BT: No, they're still there.

AT: You can hardly find them.

BT: That's exactly right. There's so much that has been built.

TS: Right. Is Norton [Hall] one of the [original dormitories]?

AT: That's one of the two dorms. There's another dorm, Howell Hall, but those were the two originally dorms.

TS: I've been through Norton. They've renovated it, but it's still pretty depressing to me to walk through.

AT: Yes, but still . . .

BT: This was the 1960s [when dormitories everywhere had small rooms for two or more roommates with shared bathrooms for the residents of a particular floor].

TS: Right, but people are still living in them.

BT: You used what you had.

TS: Absolutely.

AT: At least it wasn't the cardboard places that we started with. Even the dorms over at Chamblee were naval barracks, and they had your common shower in the middle of everybody, and then you had your bedrooms off of that.

TS: So you two lived in the cardboard housing?

BT: Three months.

TS: Three months and then to the cabin?

AT: And then to the cabin. Then we built our own home on six and a half acres of land.

TS: Wow. Why did you move down to Peachtree City?

BT: We have a son there and three little grandchildren.

TS: Oh, but six and a half acres in Cobb County . . .

AT: There's more to that.

TS: It's palatial nowadays.

AT: The developers wanted it more than we did.

TS: I see, okay.

AT: It was the housing boom

BT: The housing boom plus the traffic in Cobb County that had become so unbearable.

AT: My wife's mother was being taken care of by my wife's sister, and she was south of Atlanta and . . .

BT: Our younger son at that time was in Florida.

TS: So it put you closer to Florida?

BT: Yes, just puts us the other side of Atlanta.

AT: We went down there not realizing that the area that we were in now was not just south, but way west, so we have about an hour commute to get to I-75 to go south to go to Florida. But it is a nice area, and it is evolving, nothing like Cobb County, but we don't want that any more.

BT: We don't want that distraction.

TS: You've had enough of that.

BT: It's beginning to have its share of traffic, but it's nowhere near as big as Cobb County.

TS: I just have a few more questions, if we can go just a few more minutes. First of all, you were talking about how much of a family it was in the early days. Did it stay that way?

AT: Yes.

TS: It stayed that way until you retired?

AT: Yes, it did.

TS: Bonnie is skeptical about that.

AT: Well, I would say so. We were just at a function of retirees.

BT: Yes, the retirees our age.

AT: Aren't we close together?

BT: Oh, yes.

AT: Okay, that's what he asked.

BT: No, he's talking about the entire faculty.

AT: Oh, if you're talking about the entire faculty as it grew, no.

BT: It wasn't possible.

AT: Right. It became each individual department as its own entity. I can't really speak for this. I don't even know that all departments kept that family relationship. But I guarantee you those of us that started the school and were there as that school was an experiment to see if it would fly or not—at the beginning we had people that would call the Mechanical Department and say, "My lawn mower has broken down; where do I bring it?" The concept was not known. We weren't a vocational school. We were something different.

TS: Maybe I shouldn't cut you off while you're on that topic but you're saying that at least the old timers—the "long marchers" as Betty Siegel calls us—stayed close.

AT: Very much so.

TS: But as new people come in something happens to the campus culture that it becomes departmentalized?

AT: Only from the standpoint of quantity of people—the number of people that we had. As the students grew in size, the faculty members were increased in size. You just weren't able to keep up with the social climate that we had before.

TS: We've gone through the same thing at Kennesaw.

AT: I would think you had.

TS: The old timers are nostalgic for the time when they knew people across campus. Now it's much less so for a variety of reasons, one obviously being the large numbers. Other than that, I guess, the demands for research pull you into a tiny little corner, and so you have less contact.

AT: Let me ask you, and maybe it's not fair to ask in an interview, did you enjoy the older times more so than the more current ones when you retired?

TS: I've enjoyed it in all stages, but there was something that we lost from those early days.

AT: Okay.

TS: I think we felt much closer to the students in lots of ways in the early days.

AT: You're saying exactly what I'm trying to say.

TS: At Kennesaw nowadays, in the Department of History & Philosophy, the full-time faculty members hardly teach any of the general education courses. They're still very close to the junior and senior level students, the history majors, but not to the student body as a whole.

AT: Right, it changed.

TS: Yes, it changed. It has to with the numbers. Let me ask you, I've heard different explanations, and I think I've got the concept, but probably could understand it better. The concept of engineering technology, as I understand it, evolved to where two years were enough maybe in the 1960s, but by the 1970s you had to have a four-year degree.

AT: Yes, that's correct.

TS: Can you explain why?

AT: Well, just to have the depth. Just to have enough time to go through the course material that was required in engineering technology. It evolved. You needed more and more.

TS: Is it because the field evolves or because industry requires more?

AT: Both, I would think. You couldn't produce the type of graduate necessary to satisfy what industry was expecting from our graduates with the two-year degree at all. You had to have the four-year degree and the diversity of course and material that was available. I wouldn't have thought that Southern Tech was lagging behind [in developing four-year degree programs in engineering technology]. You seem to think we were slow in doing that.

TS: Well, that's what some people have told me, but what do I know?

AT: Southern Tech was the number one technical institute in the nation there for many, many years, and it was a leader. The accreditation boards used us as an example of what you should do. I think that held true in the two-year program as well as when we went into the four. No, I thought we evolved into the four-year program in time. I wasn't aware that [Southern Tech was behind its peer institutions in other parts of the country]. But people in the administration would be the ones that can fill you in on that.

TS: Okay. I think that's where I probably got it. [Editor's note: According to Bennett, footnote 31, p. 82, "Between 1962 and 1970, all nationally accredited technical institutions which existed in 1948 would become four-year institutions. Southern Tech would be the very last of these to make this change."]

What about getting university status? That's right at the end of your career. Was that a big deal on the Southern Poly campus?

AT: Well, I tell you, we went through a number of name changes, and the university was the last one of those that I went through. Every time that we were to have a name change, we would have faculty meetings on that, and we would get faculty input. We were still small enough school to do that. I don't think it would be that way anymore. In any event, we never wanted to lose our identity. We had built this name, and we always wanted to make sure that we had Southern Tech as the name. As they changed from STI—Southern Technical Institute—to Southern College of Technology, you always had that "Southern" there, even with the last version of the name, Southern Polytechnic University.

TS: You say that like you're not real pleased with it.

AT: Well, it's . . .

TS: It's a mouthful?

AT: It's a mouthful, yes, that's exactly right. And it was sort of imposed on us. We needed to get university status; we needed to stay up there.

TS: To have "university" in the name somewhere?

AT: Right.

BT: Who did all this changing with the university status? Was it coming from the Board of Regents that they decided that, "Okay, we're going to change this college into a state university"?

AT: Well, I think Kennesaw State went through a similar scenario.

TS: Except we didn't have a problem with the name. That was the difference. The Board of Regents turned seven state colleges into universities in June 1996, and another five later in the year. We got university status one month before you did because of [your] controversy over the name. We were Kennesaw State College, and we became Kennesaw State University.

BT: Right so you still had the Kennesaw State business, and you just added the university.

TS: Betty Siegel at one time wanted us to be Northwest Georgia State College or something similar, and the faculty went berserk over that.

AT: Okay, well, you've gone through some of the same scenarios that we went through.

TS: People liked the sound of "Kennesaw."

BT: It's not just the faculty. It is the graduates from Southern Tech or Southern College of Technology. They know that name and they know . . .

TS: Yes. So you tolerated the change to Southern Poly, but you weren't excited about it.

AT: Well, I wasn't, no, and I think the majority of the faculty probably was not.

TS: What would you have preferred?

BT: Al is not one to change fast.

TS: Well, I know at one time it wasn't going to Southern Institute of Technology because that made it sound like a broader, bigger place than Georgia Institute of Technology.

AT: Right. You've done a lot of research here. But I'm glad I had my tenure when I had my tenure there. Quite frankly, the last two years, when I was the acting department head, there's no way in this world I would have enjoyed that position, even if I were qualified to have it. It just was awful. I enjoyed the students; I enjoyed the classroom.

TS: You didn't want to be an administrator?

AT: No.

BT: He was the administrator of summers.

AT: Yes, in the summertime I would be the department head, but that was no big deal. Having the department though was too much. Tom Currin, who is now the dean of the engineering, was under me then.

TS: Well, I've got about two more questions. First of all I understand that your retiree group has been very unhappy about the consolidation. Could you talk about that a little bit?

AT: Oh, yes.

TS: I think I understand why.

AT: I honestly feel like we have been thrown out with the bathwater.

TS: The loss of the name?

AT: The loss of the name. We did talk with Lisa Rossbacher at our last meeting with her as retirees, and some of the staff too. One of the questions asked was what will be on the diplomas? What will the name be? First of all, Lisa Rossbacher couldn't answer all these questions. She hadn't been told. She was just dumped out, which was horrible.

TS: I agree entirely. Everybody I've talked to thinks she was done dirty.

AT: Definitely. There at the last gathering we had with her and some of our administrative staff that was there, they couldn't answer the question of what's going to happen now. One of the questions was what will be the name on the diploma, and Lisa Rossbacher said, "I think it's just going to say Kennesaw State."

TS: My understanding is that it's going to give the college as well as the university.

BT: So you'll have Kennesaw State University . . .

TS: Yes, if you have an engineering or engineering technology degree it's going to say Southern Polytechnic College of Engineering & Engineering Technology, Kennesaw State University.

AT: Lisa did allude to that. She said that she thought the engineering degrees would still have Southern Poly.

TS: But they'll be the only ones. The college of Architecture & Construction Management doesn't have Southern Polytechnic in its name, nor does the College of Computing & Software Engineering.

AT: Correct. The other branches that we have now will be just under Kennesaw.

BT: So you have an architectural department?

TS: No, no. But diplomas from the College of Architecture & Construction Management will not say Southern Polytechnic in the new Kennesaw State.

AT: So your original question, how I felt about all that—I really feel that I can't believe it. I can't. I've had person-after-person come up to me and say, "What do you think? Have we lost the identity, and what we were working to gain all these years?"

BT: The key is it was a unique school, and will it still remain a unique school?

AT: No, it will not. It cannot. I think [the Southern Polytechnic] engineering programs, the programs that you don't have up [at the Kennesaw campus] and could be accommodated on this campus, probably will survive in name and identity.

BT: You're saying that's what you're hoping.

AT: I'm hoping. I don't know. I don't know how industry is going to perceive it.

BT: That is a good point is how will industry know where these people are?

AT: You have, hopefully, been told this by someone else. If not, I definitely want to bring this out. Each one of our technology departments at [SPSU] had an advisory board that was from industry. We would meet regularly with them, and we would find out what industry liked about our graduates, and what they would like for us to change in our programs. So we have this feedback [from] industries that are actually hiring our graduates. People [who graduated from SPSU] that have become very big in their own companies would be part of these advisory boards. That was carried on all the way through. The other requirement of our faculty was definitely that they be part of and current with what industry was doing too. For instance, in civil you had to have professional licenses as well as college degrees—surveying licenses and so forth. I don't

know what's going to happen now. I hope Dan Papp took enough with him in those two years [as interim president of SPSU] to have an understanding of how unique this school was, and hopefully to try to maintain part of it. But I just cannot believe what has happened. I just really cannot. I'm really quite glad—and I've heard this from a lot of the faculty there—they say, "You ought to be glad you're retired." They're not happy either. They don't know what's going to happen.

TS: That certainly has been an issue. Hopefully, some of that uncertainty is beginning to be resolved as they find out, at least, that they've got jobs.

AT: But not all of them did. And what sense would it have been to do this crazy thing unless you could pare back some of the costs? I think that was one of the reasons.

BT: That's probably the basic thing is to make the monies work for the university system.

TS: That's what they claim.

AT: My wife, unfortunately, was a classmate of our chancellor.

TS: Oh really?

AT: Yes.

BT: Yes, we know both of them. We know Dan Papp and we know Hank Huckaby.

AT: Dan Papp was a member of our church. So we knew him then.

TS: In the Lutheran church?

AT: That's correct.

BT: And Hank Huckaby and I went to school in Young Harris [College].

AT: I think the world of him.

TS: You think the world of . . . ?

AT: Dan Papp. I think he is one incredible individual.

BT: And the truth of the matter is, as much as I know about Hank Huckaby, and what I have known through the years, he's an incredible person too. So we're having somebody who is trying to make it work is what I'm looking at. But it's difficult. I would hope that they would leave the name of Southern Polytechnic State University in there somehow wherever it is appropriate. I have another question. You're going to have the two campuses. Is it like having satellite campuses?

TS: It's going to be the Marietta Campus and the Kennesaw campus.

AT: What do you do with an English course?

BT: That's what I was going to say. Where are the basic courses—are they going to be taught only at Kennesaw?

TS: No, they will be taught on both campuses. I haven't been involved in making these decisions, but . . .

BT: It makes sense to not have the student go to Kennesaw State to take the English course and then come back to Southern Poly [for engineering courses].

TS: No, they'll have the option.

BT: It's a beautiful campus in Marietta, so surely you need to make use of it.

TS: Oh, they will. I guess the question [for the faculty] is going to be where the department office is going to be located.

BT: That's a good question.

TS: I interviewed one of our physics professors who is excited about the consolidation because Southern Poly has a physics major and Kennesaw doesn't, but he didn't know in October where the department office was going to be with the new consolidated Physics Department. He assumed it would be on the Marietta campus, but he still didn't know. So there are still a lot of questions, I guess.

AT: Do you have any other questions?

TS: What are you proudest of from your career at Southern Poly? And what do you want people to remember about Southern Poly after the consolidation is a fact, and ten years down the road people will have forgotten a lot of this history? What do you want people to remember? What are you proudest of?

AT: I don't know whether you've had this happen or not, but when you have young people that come up to you, meeting you somewhere—you're shopping or you're in a restaurant . . .

BT: Arizona.

AT: That's right, or climbing a mountain in Arizona and they come up to you . . .

TS: Someone came up in Arizona?

BT: It was Colorado, wasn't it?

AT: Yes, but in any event, they come up to you, and they say, "Oh, thank you, Professor Troemel, for all that you have done for me, for the knowledge that you gave me, for my profession that you have given me. I can't thank you enough for that." Well, money can't buy those sorts of things. So you asked what I'm most proud of. I guess it's that.

BT: The students.

AT: The students and what I have been able to do for them for their professional lives and in the surveying profession. The last conference that I sponsored on the campus, the Surveying and Mapping Society of Georgia had an annual event—it was really for continuing education requirements—on the Southern Poly campus. I chaired the last one. The auditorium there is about 500 [seats] in numbers. That last one that I had one of the professors that I had hired to take on my responsibilities in the surveying area . . .

BT: And that he had taught.

AT: And that I had taught. He had gone on and gotten his master's degree and could now come back to the school and teach. Behind my back he stood up, and he said, "I want those people that have had Professor Troemel—how did he do this?—in twenty years, in such a time frame, stand up."

BT: In such a year, from this time frame and this time frame.

AT: "For those of you who had Professor Troemel in this decade stand up." He went through the whole thing. Before he was all over with it, 500 people were standing in that audience. That is when they surprised me with the Troemel Mark. The Troemel Mark was done right outside my office on weekends by the faculty and the students who would come . . .

TS: And you didn't know about it?

AT: I did not know it. One Monday I came in, and they had had this huge hole dug in the yard, because a blue book monument can't move. It has to be in such a massive amount of concrete. They do monitor the movement of the earth with this now, but it has strict guidelines for the government to approve it. So I came in, and I asked the professor, "What in the world are you doing around this campus?" He said, "We're putting in some fiber optic cable." They knew I was wanting fiber optic cable in our building, so that's what he said, and I fell for it. But anyway, they did this all behind my back and unveiled it there at that meeting. So you asked what I'm proudest of. As far as the school is concerned is what I've given to my students. Money can't buy that.

TS: Well, that might be a good way to end the interview.

AT: I think it is.

TS: All right.

AT: We didn't make it quite as long as Kathy Hall!

TS: This is great.

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