

UNCG CENTENNIAL ORAL HISTORY PROJECT COLLECTION

INTERVIEWEE: Karen McNeil-Miller

INTERVIEWER: Missy Foy

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MF: And if you could start, I guess, with just some general information like when you were at UNCG [The University of North Carolina at Greensboro].

KM: Okay.

MF: And just some general stuff, where you're from.

KM: I am from Spindale, North Carolina. I came to UNCG in '78 as a transfer student. So, when I got there I came in as a junior. Finished my undergrad in the summer of '80. And then immediately started grad school, and then finished my master's in winter of '81.

MF: Okay. What was your master's in?

KM: Special Education.

KM: Transferred from a little junior community college in my hometown. It's called Isothermal Community College.

MF: Actually, I've heard of that. But I don't know where it is—well, Spindale.

KM: It's in Spindale which is—the closest thing anybody may have heard of is Shelby.

MF: Okay.

KM: Or Charlotte, Gastonia.

MF: Yes, okay. I can place it on the map somewhere in my head.

KM: It's halfway between—it's just the bottom of the mountain that Asheville's on top of.

MF: Okay. I know about where it is now. And what was your undergraduate major?

KM: My undergrad was in early childhood education K—at the time it was K[indergarten] through 3. I think now they make it K-6.

- MF: Yes, it's K-6 now. I think they're beginning to develop some more changes in the education curriculum.
- KM: It's about time.
- MF: I got a thing in the mail to fill out. I guess people who have gotten teaching certifications. They've sent all these forms out for people to fill out about their recommendations. So I think some changes are in the works again.
- KM: Yes, it's time.
- MF: Yes. So what was the education department like at that time? I know that there were several programs that seemed sort of kind of in transit at that time like with the certification program.
- KM: I wasn't really in that much in tuned [sic] with the School of Ed [ucation] as an undergrad. I came in, as I said, as a junior and went straight to the school, applied to the school and was accepted. I applied for the special ed program. As an undergrad they had it. It was in consortium with Greensboro College. And there was a waiting list. And so I was going to have to wait a year to get into that program. So I thought, "Well, I've got to wait a year, I'll just get a master's." So I just changed my major to early childhood. Got that and in that other year got the master's. That particular program, at the time, I thought was considered real strong, the K-3 program. And I think—I can't remember the woman's name who was in charge of teacher certification at the time, but she was considered very strong. Now, I don't think she's—she's either not there any more, or she's—I know she's not in charge of teacher certification.
- MF: I can't think of her name right off hand, but I think I know who you are talking about.
- KM: I have her face. I can't—my impression. I just had to write a life case history for a graduate course I'm taking. And I had to write about my experience as an undergrad. And what I—as I think back and remember, the School of Ed was very impersonal at the time. I didn't feel like—even though that was—the school I was in, this was the profession I had chosen, I didn't feel like people really took an interest in the students at the undergraduate level. There were lots of—I guess they were assistantship teachers and people working on their doctorate, who were teaching courses. I think there was probably too much of that going on at the time for any stability. Because they had their own set of, you know, issues that they had to deal with it as I can understand now.
- MF: Yes.
- KM: And I think [Dean of School of Education] David Reilly was already looking to leave and go somewhere else then. So, I really don't get a feel for how he was—his leadership was accepted. In graduate school I had a better feel because I had an assistantship in the dean's office. And at that time I knew he was looking for somewhere else. There were too many—the perception was too much—too male-dominated a school given that the

majority of the people that come through the School of Ed are female, the majority of teachers in the world are female and there was this male-dominated faculty. They were a lot of concerns from other faculty and students on a couple of—especially the educational administration program. I can't even think of the man's name, Indian. He's—I know he's still there.

MF: I don't know a lot of the people in the—

KM: Anyway, he was very sexist. And right up front said, "Women didn't belong in educational administration." And he wasn't going to make it easy for them. So, there was a lot of that kind of stuff going on.

MF: Wow. You think that's a thing of the past.

KM: You'd like to think it was.

MF: Yes.

KM: And at the time that I was in grad school there was starting up new programs. The special ed program I was in, the master's program, was only in its third semester. There wasn't even yet a graduate in class when I started. And that's undergone a lot of evolution. I think it was a strong program at the time. I think it's getting even stronger program now. They've added a lot of things around counseling programs have been beefed up with Dr. Nicholas] Vacc. And I think now with Dr. [A. Edward] Uprichard—and as dean that he is trying to make some changes. It was just a lot of unrest over there from what I understand from the faculty.

MF: Yes. I think they still have a lot of graduate students teaching undergraduate courses as well. Because I think out of all the undergraduate courses I had had, I don't remember ever having a course taught by a faculty.

KM: I only had two, I think—two courses taught by tenured faculty or even assistant professors.

MF: Yes. Did you live in the dorm while you were there?

KM: Yes. My junior year I lived in Cone High Rise, which I despised. It was just too cinder-blocky. I guess it's—we didn't have any—the school didn't have—the building didn't have a personality. My senior year I moved to Winfield, which I loved.

MF: There is a big difference.

KM: Then I lived off campus after that as a graduate student.

MF: Could you say a few things about student life living in the dorm? And then, being a town student as a graduate student? Because student life when this was a women's college was

considerably different than as a university. And, well, of course, we still didn't have any co-dorms at that time. But there are still quite a few differences.

KM: Okay. Again, at Cone I was unhappy because it was just too impersonal. There weren't dorm activities. I mean, you put something up and, then eight hundred girls would read it, and maybe twenty would show up and there would be twenty that you didn't know. There was much more of a family atmosphere in the smaller dorms, I thought. Dorm activities—you know, there was only one kitchen. So, there were lots of popcorn parties and that kind of thing. So I enjoyed from the dorm aspect. Of course, I enjoyed the smaller dorm better. The older dorms also I thought had more amenities than the newer dorms—Cone, and I forget the other high-rise.

MF: Reynolds?

KM: Reynolds. They didn't have a—none of the rooms had sinks in the rooms. So you had to go all the way down the hall just to wash your hands. The closets were—didn't have doors. So you had to put up curtains. And it just—and the walls were cinderblock. So I thought—and the older dorms had sinks and had closets with doors and had windows that raised instead of the ones that turned and just pulled open a little bit so you could get a fan in your window in the small—in the old dorms.

Other student life issues—part of it—I think I have a couple of different perspectives. One being someone that just came in as a junior. And groups had already formed. And secondly, being a black student on campus. I think it was easy for me to get into—it was easy for me with my personality to get into the evolved cliques. Because I just kind of have a—I just show up in groups and have a “Well, here I am, now deal with it” attitude. Whereas, other people who are more shy probably would have a hard time as juniors or as a transfer student coming in. Because I didn't think at the time—at least among the black students, it wasn't a very inviting group. They weren't disinviting. I mean it wasn't that they didn't want you. It was just that nobody ever thought to invite you in. So it was kind of a rejection by omission. But if you would show up at something, they would welcome you in. So it was kind of you had to take the first move. I also thought—I still think the campus has absolutely no idea how to support and care for people of color.

MF: Yes, I think also with the international students they have the same problem.

KM: It really is. I don't think they really have a—I think the problem is they don't understand the question.

MF: Yes. I know the Neo-Black Society formed sometime in the early '70s. And I think that at that time, I guess, all-white student council did not understand the need for that. And in fact they were very against it and even tried to withhold funding and so forth. And—

KM: We were put in a closet, which now is a space on campus everybody wants.

MF: Yes.

KM: And we had to fight a couple of times to keep that space because there is so much—the artwork on the wall, nobody wants to destroy that. I mean I think there—students who are there now who could put up great things on the wall, but there's so much ownership and emotion and sentimentality around the stuff that's already there. So there're a couple of walls were kind of avant-garde that are up for grabs. But I think as they put things up on those walls, that's going to come to mean a lot. And they're going to be upset if somebody wants to move those, to change that. So I don't know what's going to happen fifteen years down the road when all the space is taken, and every space there's some class or some group saying, "No, you can't paint over that wall. That wall means such and such. And that wall symbolizes this."

MF: Yes.

KM: I don't know what will happen then. It will have to go to the dorms or something.

MF: Well, they'll end up with the same problem there.

KM: Yes, that's true.

MF: Did there seem to be any sort of a—this is kind of a question, sort of shot-in-the-dark question. I really have no idea. Did there seem to be any sort of placing black students like with international students—they all get placed sort in a dorm on one side of campus there? And did there seem to be the same sort of set up with any other minority students trying to place them kind of all in a group, or trying to disperse everybody among campus, or?

KM: Well, I don't know. It's hard for me to separate sometimes whether they were placed there—

MF: Or people—

KM: Or whether they chose to be there.

MF: Right.

KM: Blacks tended to wanted to be together. Because in the caf[eteria] it was—I don't even know how the caf is organized now. But there was the north dining room. That was where all the black folks ate. There were a couple of—three or four whites that came in, but you just knew that's where all the black folks were. So, when the people from A&T [North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University] came over and wanted a punch, they stood outside north dining room. So I think that was by choice. I think some of the housing was on purpose. But—so then they put them all together on purpose thinking, "We'll separate them off." And then they liked it. And so then the next year, everybody would want to be in—not in Spencer, but where were they? Phillips Hawkins.

MF: Probably. The furthest one.

KM: The one up on the corner, yes, that's where they all—and ended up liking to stay. Then there was one dorm on the quad, Phillips, I think, or Bailey.

MF: Bailey.

KM: Is where a lot of the black guys stayed. So I think it happened both ways. I think the university did part of it on purpose. But then it turned out that the blacks liked it that way, which gave the university an excuse—which gave them the out to say, “Well, we were just meeting their needs,” instead of, “We just kind of wanted them all together because we're not sure about them yet. So, we want to see—keep them all in one spot where we can watch 'em.”

MF: Did there seemed to be any of that same attitude in classrooms? Because I know at the primary levels and the secondary levels in education around this area, around the Triangle and all, that there seems to be this real tracking.

KM: Yes.

MF: And expectations that black students will do poorly or something. I mean jus—it's hard to overcome preset expectations right from the start.

KM: I think before—up till the time that people select a major and start taking major courses, I think there's a lot of that because you sit down with your advisor. So you've had—they look at your transcript. So they kind of put all of them in pre-algebra, you know, whatever the low algebra is. So I think when there were all the general classes, the liberal arts classes, I think there was some of that. I also think in some of the—especially in some of the—I think it was west—one of the Western Civ[ilization] courses. I'm convinced Western Civ and English 101 are sorting devices anyway. I mean, they've always taken more people out of the freshman class than they can have in the sophomore class. And they use Western Civ and English to sort them out. I mean, those classes are designed to make people flunk out of school. So they can—

MF: Bleeding courses.

KM: So they can get the classes down to the size they need for the sophomore years. I think of some of those—and I think some of those teachers on purpose are some of the toughest teachers on that campus.

MF: That's a good possibility.

KM: Oh, I'm convinced. There's no doubt. It's like, in high school Algebra I was a sorting class.

MF: And the early classes in any major sort of geared that way. The same thing happens in graduate school with your colloquiums too.

KM: I don't know about the colloquiums. I don't even know what those are. I mean I know what a colloquium is here. But we didn't have those at the time. You have to do presentations?

MF: And major amounts of reading and major amounts of writing, and I think it's sort of designed to see if you can—

KM: Endure.

MF: Yes, if you can endure, yes. And if you can make it through that, then the rest of it is almost downhill from there.

KM: It's an endurance test.

MF: Yes.

KM: It's exactly what it is. I thought of something else I was going to tell you about campus. Oh a couple—when you mentioned student government. The year I came to UNCG was the year that the first black SU[Student Union] president. And I forget what his name is or was.

MF: I have it written down somewhere.

KM: Well, he flunked out of school. So that—so all the blacks were pissed off. That gives all the white, “We'll see. We told you.” And then, the second guy when I was in graduate school, the second guy, David something, David because SU president. And then, David worked at Sears, and David was involved in this felony thing at Sears with—people would come in and charge things, and he wouldn't give them their card back. And when they'd leave, he'd get something else and charge on their card. So then, he had to quit because he was a crook. So, there's two. I don't know if there's been another one since. I know the upcoming SU president and vice president are black.

MF: Oh, see, I didn't realize that.

KM: I just saw that in the paper. So I don't know if there has been one in between. But we're still waiting for one that will make it through and not—

MF: Have a respectable reputation.

KM: Yes, just make it through without screwing up. I don't care if he's a good student or he or she is a good student. They just need to be able to hold office through a year without some—

MF: Yes, well there have been plenty of white students in student government who have had their share of problems.

KM: Yes, but nobody pays attention to that.

MF: That's right.

KM: That doesn't make the paper. People don't talk about that.

MF: Well, even as recently as—I guess this was in '86 because it was when I was graduating—I remember there was a—this big controversy that the student newspaper had started printing little police logs, and they started—either somebody was just a person with a name, or they were a black person with a name, you know?

KM: Yes.

MF: And you never saw them say, “Joe Smith, white.”

KM: Right.

MF: But they would do the other. And they couldn't understand what—

KM: —why people were upset?

MF: Yes. But when someone said, “Why don't you print, ‘Joe Smith, white,’” and they said, “Well, why?”

KM: Right.

MF: I just thought, “Okay.”

KM: The other thing that used to happen, and I've been following this as a trend too. When things—it seems that when things start happening around campus, you know, people come in, and the first of the year they're too busy in the books. And so, around spring when people are just coasting toward the end of the year, that's when issues will come up. So then what happens is—it happens right before spring break, and it kind of diffuses over spring break. Administration says, “We'll study it over spring break.” Or it happens, and then summer comes. So nothing ever gets resolved because half of those people who are involved graduated. Then, of course, your energy's died out by September again for something that happened in May. So the university always been able to get out of those kinds of things by either saying, “We'll form a committee.”

MF: Yes, that's a good one.

KM: Just a natural break in the schedule diffuses things even if it's a mid-year or semester break. It's three weeks. And everybody's gone. So there's really nobody on campus to

keep things going. Then you come back, and people are into new classes. So just the whole—I'm sure this isn't just UNCG. It's just the way that the academic calendar is scheduled. You really don't have time to get something moving and see it to completion before either you're gone or the key people are gone.

MF: One thing that I was just wondering is with A&T so close, did black students at UNCG feel sometimes almost more connected to A&T even though they were attending UNCG? 'Cause I know a lot of A&T students now come over and attend events on campus and even well—the Greek system was new in the '70s, but I know there is at least one black fraternity on campus at UNCG. And I know that a lot of A&T students will come over for Step Night, or—I can't remember exactly what it's called.

KM: I don't think—I don't think the blacks at UNCG felt a real strong connection to A&T. A lot of—well, I wouldn't even say a lot. Some of the—most of the women on campus either had boyfriends back home or boyfriends on campus. And not many people were dating people from UNCG. Now, the A&T—and most of the people from A&T that would come over would be guys.

MF: Right.

KM: And they came to eat in the cafeteria. I mean they came to hang out. But, you know, you would always find them standing around at 5:30 to 7:00 [pm], standing out looking for punch. And they still do that. Apparently, they have been doing that for years. I met this guy that went to A&T in the '70s or late '60s. And even then he was talking about coming over to UNCG to ask for punches.

MF: That's real common thing around the cafeteria at dinnertime—people standing outside.

KM: Because UNCG—

MF: Has the transferable meal system.

KM: And they have the best food in town.

MF: Oh, sure. I had gone to East Carolina [University] and then transferred to UNCG, and the food was great at UNCG. I don't know what anybody complains about. They need to go eat somewhere else.

KM: I know—they need to go eat somewhere else.

MF: The food service is really good.

KM: But, no, I didn't see—I didn't see that much of a connection. And sometimes I think there was even some resentment from the students on campus. Because you'd have people—and that didn't necessarily come from people at A&T, but it would come from other people in your community—and they would say, "Well, if you were going to Greensboro,

why didn't you go to A&T? Why didn't you go to a black college?" And that just kind of sets up this mental thing in your head. I just quit dealing with them.

MF: Or wanted to go to Bennett [College]?

KM: Yes.

MF: And in Durham I get—in the Durham area, I guess, they say, "Why don't you go to NCC [North Carolina Central University]? I never thought about that. But, yes, I can see there must be a rule pushed to support the black institutions in the black community.

KM: And I think it's—when people ask you that with all good intentions. But they say—it's stupid. They say things like, "Well, why would you go to a white school when you could have had a black experience?" And I'm like, "I am black. How can I not have a black experience?"

MF: Yes.

KM: I'm just around 5,000 other people that are having a black experience. It's a difference.

MF: Did there seem to be—I know there is now, but I really can't imagine what it was like in the late '70s, even though I did transfer to UNCG in '83. But, still, I guess it was probably similar. There seemed to be a real sort of—I don't know if it was on purpose or not—but sort of a neglect for any kind of African-American culture or anything. Just a real lack of understanding or neglect. Neither of those words really explain what I'm trying to say, but—

KM: Well, again, I think they just don't understand the question. They're not yet to the point that they even understand why it would be good—why it's important. They can't even get to the—they are not even at the awareness level yet. So implementation is null and void. And so they end up in knee-jerk reactions. They don't understand. So what's the big deal about having black faculty? What difference should that make? "Good faculty is good faculty," is the argument.

MF: Oh, sure. Just like good students are good students. You shouldn't choose students on the basis of race. But you can't get beyond—you can't have true integration if you don't do that for at least a time.

KM: And, also, if people had equal access and equal opportunity up through high school, then, sure, you could just pick. But—

MF: But that doesn't happen.

KM: You can't start and say, "All right. We're going to be equal here at college" and neglect all the reality that these people live with.

MF: Right.

KM: Or have lived through, I guess.

MF: Yes.

KM: So, see, I still see some of that. I think the university now is coming back towards more of a student focus. I felt from probably '83 up until '90 that the focus was not on the students. The focus was on, "Let's build some more buildings."

MF: Oh, sure. Soccer fields.

KM: Let's get the physical plant in order. And who cares if these kids have anywhere to live or anywhere to park by these new buildings? I think maybe they're coming back around to some of the student things. Because the new dining hall and that area is definitely student centered. I've seen more pictures in the paper of kids in that water fountain, water plaza, or whatever that thing is called. Whatever they call it now.

MF: It's pretty inviting though—jumping in.

KM: I know. You know they had to—I can't imagine any architect or the university approving that not knowing you put this pool of water in the main student hangout—

MF: —that you're going to—

KM: —and that people are not going to get in. So don't tell me this surprises you. Because if it does, you really don't know your job very well. You really don't know—you have no ideas about the students you serve.

MF: Yes.

KM: And so don't start punishing them. You put the—it's like saying, "Come on. We dare you to get in this water."

MF: It is nice and big and inviting.

KM: I haven't seen it since it's been filled. I was walking around this summer when they were building it. I haven't seen it since it was built except in the paper.

MF: I just went and sat out there a couple of weeks ago. As I was sitting out there, I think about fifteen different students ended up in the pool there, yes.

KM: And I think I was listening to Vice Chancellor [of Student Affairs, James B.] Allen. He says, "Well, it's got to be the cleanest water in the city because there's been people coming in and pouring soap bubbles. He said, "We've had bubble baths for five or six times already."

MF: They must have known that—

KM: They had to know that was going to happen, or they are really out of tune. But I think maybe they are coming back around to more of a student focus. Because I was in a meeting, and they were going to start building some—they're finally going to come to the 20th century with student housing and build some suites and some apartments.

MF: Oh, that will be nice.

KM: Because people—very few people choose universities for the academics. I mean you can get a good academic background at any university in the state. People go for all the other—they choose it for the other stuff. And now we need to start doing some of that other stuff.

MF: For its extracurricular reputation. Yes, I think perhaps they realized that they were losing some students because there wasn't enough for them to do. I've heard of quite a few students who started at UNCG and then transferred because they felt there wasn't enough to do.

KM: Not enough student life.

MF: Yes, although I enjoyed it. I was more connected to Greensboro.

KM: It's one of those things you have to—it's a university that you have to go and make your student life instead of student life already being there for you to just pick and choose. You have to create it.

MF: Yes.

KM: And some people like that, and some people don't.

MF: I'm sure. Town students were—there was quite a large town student population at that time as well. Did they seem sort of—it seems lately it's become sort of a mixture of being connected and disconnected to the university as a town student. But I remember, at least when I was an undergraduate, that town students seemed rather disconnected from the university.

KM: Yes, they always seemed on the fringe. And as a graduate student I felt similar. I mean I was real connected to the School of Ed and McNutt Building. I mean I knew everything that was going on there. But as far as university wide, I had no idea. But I also wasn't involved in the town student formal organization. I didn't go to town student lunches or any of that. Because for some reason I didn't consider myself a town student, but I was.

MF: Sure. I think it also has something to do with how far away from campus you lived. Because I think there are a lot of people who live right in that perimeter neighborhood, and they don't consider themselves town students.

KM: And I think there's a difference also between being undergrad and a graduate student.

MF: Yes.

KM: Because you're not going to—as a graduate student you're usually either working or in school full time. And that takes so much energy, you're not into all that other stuff. You're too focused, right.

MF: Yes, you don't have time for it.

KM: Right. Elections, what?

MF: When were they?

KM: And you don't eat in the cafeteria. You know—you don't buy a student plan. So, you don't, you know—you just—on the campus.

MF: You don't have money to eat in the cafeteria.

KM: No. You go to that one little building and the library. If you don't pass stuff between where you are and the library, you just—and the parking lot. That's a little triangle I had: my car, the School of Ed and the library.

MF: Yes, that sounds familiar.

KM: So, if I didn't see anything in between there, it was by me.

MF: I tried to do the graduate student council routine this year. That was something.

KM: What's that like?

MF: It's a lot of people sitting around griping and not really getting anything done. Exactly what you'd expect. Yes. So, and it's kind of time consuming. So by the end of each semester. the numbers dwindle considerably. People start—

KM: People are out doing papers.

MF: Yes, people start not showing up for the meetings. Unfortunately, this semester I was one of those. Didn't have time any more to just sit and listen to complaints that weren't going to be solved anyway.

- KM: It's kind of that life cycle again there. I mean you're going to be gone before your issue can be resolved. And then the next group is going to have another issue.
- MF: What about—what do you remember about drinking on campus? Because I know with the introduction of the Greek system—. Also around that same time—I guess it was somewhere around '68—they were allowed to have beer in their rooms if they were over eighteen.
- KM: I didn't really notice a lot of—I didn't drink a lot myself then. I didn't notice a lot except around Spring Fling—those times. And so this is when the drinking age was eighteen. So we had beer.
- MF: Yes, there used to be kegs at Spring Fling, yes.
- KM: You just had to get a ticket and get stamped. The Greeks weren't there when I was there at all. Greeks started the year I was in graduate school. So I was never involved in that. But it was always—of course, it was always a problem at Spring Fling. And, again, I can't explain it, but I think there's a cultural difference between blacks and whites around that drinking issue. I think—I don't think—I'm not saying blacks drink any less. I just say blacks are more private with their drinking. And so, they don't—at Spring Fling you wouldn't see a lot of black people out just drinking and getting drunk in public. Now private house parties and that kind of thing, that's another story. But I just have not noticed that blacks are real public about that. So you didn't see that a lot.
- MF: Yes, I think most of the bars around campus are usually populated by white students. Yes, that's an interesting observation. I never paid attention.
- KM: Blacks drink a lot, but they drink—they just get in their dorm room or go off together somewhere and drink in small groups where nobody else is around.
- MF: That's interesting. I've never thought about that. But when you say that, it rings true to what I've noticed. And then, another thing I wanted to ask you about is more recent—a lot of the major controversy going on within the Alumni Association which I guess seemed to come to a peak when Barbara Parrish, [Class of 1948, president of the Alumni Association and alumni secretary], resigned?
- KM: Well, she resigned because of it.
- MF: Right. Everything seemed again to come to a head about that time. I guess what I'm asking is what your views on that are, or what you see as having transpired?
- KM: Well, I have some real strong feelings about that. Well, also the year—I guess it was the year I was—or the year after I graduated undergrad we formed the Black Alumni Council. And so right around the time this whole thing started brewing, I was co-chair of the Black Alumni Association and was on the alumni board of trustees. And so this kind of came up, but didn't—when the meat happened I was off. I wasn't chair anymore. But I

had some real strong feelings. I felt that [Chancellor William E.] Moran was pushing them out and trying to do it very quickly by just saying, "The person that works for the Alumni House works for the university. She doesn't work for you. You want to have your organization, fine. You go somewhere else and have it. This is our building. It's a state building."

And I think if it were not for the fact that Betty [Crawford] Ervin [Class of 1950], who was president of alumni at that time, was such a strong woman that he would have just rolled right through it. I think the woman that is now president, Ann [Phillips] McCracken [Class of 1960], if she had been president at the time, she's—she's strong, but she's not get-in-your-face strong like Betty is. And I think had she been there or someone the teensiest bit weaker than Betty or the teensiest bit not as strong, he would have just rolled right over the organization. But she just said, "No. This isn't going to happen."

And the university—a lot of alumni had a lot of bad feelings about that. And at the university that year that they were in mediation, annual giving was down because a lot of people like myself said, "Well, I'm going to wait until this thing is settled. And then if there are two organizations, I'm giving my money to the Alumni Association." And that's how I feel now.

There are a couple of things I have to straighten out with the Alumni Association. It's just because I like having my library card. So, if you give money to the university, you get a library card. So I want to know, "If I give money to the Alumni Association, will I get a library card?" If not, then I need to give ten dollars to the university to get my library card. Because that means a lot to me.

But I'm real supportive of the alumni and its efforts. I think Brenda [Meadows Cooper, Class of 1965] will be—Barbara was great. But Barbara had a connection with the people from her era. She knew exactly what they wanted, exactly what they'd like. She was very good at getting it. She—hard as she tried, still had a hard time understanding what is it the young alumni want, what is it they need. So I think Brenda has—so, the organization has got down pat how to deal with and what makes old graduates happy. And I think Brenda now has some insight as to now what makes young graduates happy. Because we started giving them feedback. The Alumni Association would always complain, "We have these trips. We offer these trips to alumni, and none of the young alumni ever go on the trips." Never thinking—

MF: There's not a lot of information put out about them to young alumni.

KM: Yes, but even if they have information, nobody's stopped to consider what person in their mid 30s can just take two weeks off? You know, people of that age have families. And so they can't take two weeks off and go cruise down the Nile for four thousand dollars. You know, they'd have to make childcare arrangements. Most people at that age don't have two weeks' vacation. Or some of those trips were for a month. It's like you'd have to work twenty years somewhere to have a month off.

MF: Or have four thousand dollars.

KM: So, it was just not a mindset that understood why they couldn't take advantage of it. "It's a great deal. You know, it's regularly a ten thousand dollar trip. And we're offering it to them for four thousand dollars." They didn't understand. And so now they started with some of the smaller trips like a weekend trip to Busch Gardens. That's something you can take the whole family. You get on a bus. You go. It's something you do anyway, and it costs you a couple of hundred bucks. They haven't had a lot of fill rate on those, but you've got to get them started. I think it would be a mistake to do two and say, "Well, nobody's interested" and then stop. You've got to convince them that you're serious. And so I think they're going to make some effort to that now.

Then there's the young alumni—there's a young alumni, then a Black Alumni [Association]. And then that causes some of the old guard consternation of, "Why do we have to separate out?" Which is the same issue the university with, "Why do we need a Neo-Black Society? Why do we need an International Students? Why do we need Young Christians? We're all students." Not recognizing that different people have needs. They want them met. They're no longer willing to be this melting pot because if you melt and if you're like everybody else, then that's denying—somebody is trying to deny you your uniqueness. And people are saying, "We don't want to give that up anymore."

MF: Well, then, you also have to become like the majority. You don't have a choice.

KM: The other group that the university now has to start doing a better job of from the alumni point of view are males. Because I think they should also be considered a minority. Because the young alumni, they're still all women that come back to things. Black alumni, it's still all women.

MF: I think there's a fear of male domination. I think that's why nothing has been done partly because of the history of the school. They're afraid to do too much because they're afraid they will take everything over. So, it's kind of a Catch 22 for some of the older.

KM: I could see that. I hadn't even thought of that.

MF: Well, they now already say, "Well, all the men run student council," which isn't true, but I guess it would look that way.

KM: But they run. They're the ones that run.

MF: Yes. Yes. Whenever a female runs, she runs a 50/50 chance just like anybody else of winning. There have been quite a few. So, it's—I don't know. I can see where they get that from.

KM: And somehow part of it is a mindset that men have been—men don't necessarily—women go to college to get grades. And men go to college to get experience. Because experience is going to pay off for you much better in the long run. I mean nobody—nobody looks at your transcript. Nobody asks you—people don't hire you because of your grade point average. The only time anybody looks at your transcript is your first job. Because that's the only thing they have to go by. But after that it's total job performance.

And so I mean 4.0s [grade point average] are great, and those people should be commended. But if that's all you leave campus with is a 4.0, you really are behind the eight ball. You're behind everybody else. I'd rather hire somebody with a 2.6—2.7 that was active in six or seven organizations. I know they know how to—they have practice dealing with people. They've had leadership roles. They learned a lot of lessons that's going to do them well on the job.

MF: Yes. Also I want to make sure—I'm sure there are things that I've skipped. But if there's anything that stands out in your mind that—?

KM: I think we touched on the fringe of about everything. I think one of the keys to the whole university environment is admissions and whether they do a good job or not. I'm not real sure they—I am sure that they're doing as good a job as they can given the current leadership they have. I'm not real impressed with Chuck Rickard, Charles Rickard [director of admissions].

I think that's the key. I think they have to have the mindset that says, "What do we want on this campus? Do we want a campus full of good students, or do we want a campus of people who will contribute to the university, to the life and the culture of this university?" And I think the answers are: we want both. Because I think if you just go out looking for the kids who are going to be good students, you have to spend a lot of time being a good student which means you don't have time for a lot of other things. And it's all those other things that keep the campus going that will make the next group want to come there.

MF: Yes, I think that it's just been recently that they've really started to implement some kind of cut off as far as quality of student. I think before they would take anybody who was willing to pay tuition and fees.

KM: Right.

MF: So, I think they're in a new era with admissions.

KM: I can't think of anything I'm burning to say.

MF: OKAY. Well, thanks so much for your time.

KM: You're welcome. I enjoyed it.

MF: Okay.

[End of Interview]