

Toni McNaron

- Early education 1-
 - attracted to literature 1
 - McNaron - Wilson fellow at Vanderbilt 2
- McNaron - high school teacher, private school in Vicksburg 2
 - lesbian tensions 3-4
- McNaron - graduate school, University of Wisconsin, 1961 5-7
 - Mentor, Helen White 5-
 - Dissertation on John Donne 5-6
- Feminist attraction to Renaissance 7
- McNaron comes to University of Minnesota, 1964 8
 - Monk, Sam 8
 - Tate, Allen 9
 - few women on faculty 9
- Undergraduate students, 1960s 10-
 - cultural mood at the University of Minnesota 11
 - support of Turnbull, John and Page, Roger 12
 - CLA committee on instruction 12-14
- Shifting moods in 1960s 15-16
 - impact on teaching style 15
 - issue of power in classroom 15 -16
- McNaron's memo on academic freedom and responsibility 16
 - McNaron - task force chair
 - her increasing alcoholism 18
 - embarrassment to department 19
- McNaron wins College Teaching Award 20
 - friendship with Moos, Malcolm 20-21
- University Committee on Blacks at university 22-23
 - Galusha, Hugh 22-24
 - Williams, Milt 23
 - leads to Martin Luther King fund 24
- Cambodia crisis, May 1972 25
- McNaron takes up women novelists and poets 26
 - Woolf, Virginia, 1972 26
- Anderson, Chester "Chet" - includes black writers 27
- Stanley, Anna 28-29
- Southern black writers 29-30
- Women's Studies 31-44
 - initiative from students 31
 - Hinding/Greene memo 32
 - Rose, Carolyn 33
 - CLA committee appointed 33
 - Ziebarth, E.W. - his role 33, 36
 - Page, Roger - his role 36
 - Wermtz, James - his role 33, 36-37
 - Smith, Harlan - his role 37
 - introductory courses 40

Affirmative Action 41-42
funding 43
CEW (Continuing Education for Women 44-45
Teaching adults 45
Faculty committees, meetings 46-49
McNaron comes out publicly, 1975 50

Interview with Toni McNaron

**Interviewed by Professor Clarke A. Chambers
University of Minnesota**

Interviewed on August 20, 1984

Toni McNaron - TM
Clarke A. Chambers - CAC

CAC: I am interviewing today, Toni McNaron, a colleague, and friend, and a member of the English Department, the first director of the Women's Studies Program. There are many things that we would have to talk together about and how far we will get, Toni, I don't know. I have found it very useful with other conversations to start with just a bit of personal biography, where you came from, why English, how you came to Minnesota, and what you found. You came as a fresh Ph.D.?

TM: Yes.

CAC: Then, we'll take it from there.

TM: I come from Alabama—not with a banjo on my knee. There was never any question that I would go to school; though, my parents had not gone to college. That was always in there for me. When I went to undergraduate school, they had just put *Sputnik* up and my brother-in-law said, "You're bright. You don't want to go into English because anybody can do English. Take physics and math." Being obedient and liking him, I did. I loved the math and stayed with math all through with a math minor. The first physics course I had was taught by a little man who was 4 foot 11 inches from Harvard, just out of Harvard with red hair. There were 120 students, 118 of whom were male.

CAC: [laughter]

TM: It was an engineering physics course. I was fascinated with it. All he had us do was work problems and take tests. He flunked 100 of the 120, gave *Ds* to 10—I was one of those—and the other 10 got *Cs*, *Bs*, and *As*. The university let him go shortly thereafter, but there we all were. I was not particularly intrigued with it after that. At the same, I had a wonderful professor in my sophomore literature course called Dr. Steve Mooney, who didn't have a Ph.D. but we called

him Dr. Steve. He did terrible things like take us fourteen miles off campus on purpose when we weren't suppose to go but twelve, and then turn the car around, and come back.

CAC: [laughter]

TM: He would have us to his house, which was thirteen miles from campus—he located it there on purpose—and served us wine when we weren't supposed to drink and told us all sorts of things about English literature that I'm also sure he wasn't supposed to do; so, at the same time that I was being very maligned in my major, I was being very seduced—not physically but certainly intellectually and emotionally—by this literary person. So, at the end of my sophomore year, I called home and said I was changing to an English major. My poor brother-in-law didn't speak to me for a year but we have, subsequently, made our peace and I've never regretted that shift. I've always loved stories and I think I've always loved language. It was sometimes used as a bludgeon. I remember I had to do *30 Days to a More Powerful Vocabulary* [by Wilfred Funk and Norman Lewis] in the second grade, which is a little excessive but, nonetheless, I've not regretted that.

After undergraduate school . . . Well, my father died. I was going to go away to school. I was going to go to Chapel Hill or Duke because those were the only good schools in the South. I was really very bright and had not had a lot of encouragement through school. I had one principal and a couple of teachers but, otherwise, it'd all been at home. I was really excited and, then, my father dropped dead quite unexpectedly and that meant no more money. The money we'd had wasn't a lot but if he wasn't earning a salary, there was no way for that; so, that went down the tubes and I went to the University of Alabama—and that was okay that I did that. Then, as soon as I was finished with undergraduate school, I really wanted to go to someplace that was more interesting. I got a Woodrow Wilson [Fellowship] and among the places that accepted me, I could go to Vanderbilt. I thought that would be nice, that's north, north of Alabama, and I'll go there; so, I went there and spent a year, again, not very challenged. I loved Nashville, the city, and I met some wonderful people in graduate school but there wasn't a lot going on in the courses.

Then, I spent two years teaching at a girls' school in Vicksburg, Mississippi. I went at twenty—I was ahead of myself—to teach at a girls' school having no information whatsoever about my own sexuality and within six weeks was in both heaven and trouble because I was being lovers with one of the seniors who was eighteen who didn't seem a lot younger than me but, obviously, I was the teacher and what I understand now about that, I wouldn't do that, of course, but I didn't know anything about anything. It was a church school. The head of it is now the head of the Episcopal church in America and he was on the way up then in Mississippi. I used to say when he celebrated communion, there was no room for God at the altar because it was too crowded with Father Allen. [laughter]

CAC: [laughter]

TM: He threatened to fire me bi-monthly and the little academic dean, Wade Wright Egbert from someplace in Arkansas, kept saying, "You can't do this. You don't have any evidence and she's a magnificent teacher; plus, she teaches all the English courses, and it's the middle of the year, and we can't find anybody." So, I stayed there.

CAC: And you probably weren't earning a great deal?

TM: No, but I got room and board for nothing; so, I saved more money than I've ever saved in my life. I saved almost all my salary. There is nothing to do in Vicksburg. There were two movies I saw: the *L-Shaped Room* and something else and that's all. The rest of the movies were awful. There was a chicken place to go on Fridays. That was it. You can't spend much eating fried chicken once a week. After the first year, then, I decided that I was going to stay there another year because I was savvy enough to know that if you leave a place, that's fine but if they leave you, then there are questions. I was, frankly, terrified and had nobody to talk to. I never talked to anybody about any of it, either about what it was like to be a lesbian or about what was happening to me professionally as a result of it. There was never a word spoken to anybody. I stuck it out another year, meanwhile, applying to graduate schools fiercely, knew by then a little more than I know now, knew that I needed to get out of the South. It was being very hard. I drove a VW [Volkswagen] and that was a mark against me in 1958 because I wasn't driving an American car.

CAC: Sure.

TM: I learned there that there are things called constellations of values; so, I'm indebted to those two years because I thought . . . One of the things that was true about me when I went there was that I was not a lynching racist. I was, obviously, a southern racist but I didn't call them *niggers* and I didn't want to have them killed; so, I was liberal or radical or something in their terms.

CAC: Were there Black girls at this school?

TM: Oh, god! no. No, no. What I found out very quickly because Vicksburg is the last place that fell to [General William Tecumseh] Sherman in the march across Georgia and Alabama . . .

CAC: I know it well. My grandfather was with him.

TM: Ah ha! Ah ha.

CAC: [laughter]

TM: They're very proud of all the days that they resisted that.

CAC: Sure, you bet.

TM: They fell on the Fourth of July so on the Fourth of July, they take down the American flag and put up a black flag. I said once in, I think, semi-innocence but I probably knew—all I knew about black flags was it was what anarchists flew—“Was Vicksburg an anarchist city?” I thought the druggist was going to kill me. I learned there that my views on race were very odd and very dangerous to me but, then, because I also drove a VW and that made me suspect and I wore pants on Saturday when I wasn’t teaching downtown . . . People called my employer and said, “This woman is downtown in pants. You’ve got to get that to stop. That’s not ladylike. She can’t do that.” I really learned that there were all these, you what I thought of them as, kinds of things about me . . . it wasn’t just that I wasn’t right about *niggers*, I wasn’t right about anything and that let me get some notion about how values are that I certainly never would have learned in school. And pretty early, by twenty-two, I really understood that it wasn’t just little isolated things that you got in trouble; so, that was nice.

CAC: I’m going to interpose. We don’t need to explore this in depth but I’m really curious. You’re twenty-one, twenty-two now as you’re describing it and you’re describing a real rebel. There must be something operating farther back that would put you . . .

TM: Oh, yes. I’ve done an autobiography [*I Dwell on Possibility: a Memoir*] . You can read it.

CAC: Is it all done? I’ve seen some of it.

TM: It’s all done. It’s floating around now.

CAC: Bravo.

TM: So, hopefully, somebody will publish it in a year or so.

CAC: We’ll urge those who are listening to this tape twenty years from now to find it.

TM: [laughter] Yes. I think it’s there. I do think it’s there. One thing, I can just say very quickly . . .

CAC: But why are people *odd* in that sense?

TM: I know. I can say one very quick thing. When I first learned to walk like, I suppose, most little children, I wanted to go further than I was supposed to; so, I was wanting to go out into the street. My mother, of course, gave me probably the same injunction that every mother gives her children, “Don’t cross the street!” I remember distinctly her saying that, turning her back, and my crossing the street, and knowing that there was nothing on the other side that I wanted. There wasn’t a ball, or a toy, or a friend. There was nothing there.

CAC: That's an early predisposition.

TM: Yes, it was a predisposition. It's true.

CAC: [unclear]

TM: When I, then, had a opportunity to go to Wisconsin to the Ph.D. program, I really knew that's what I wanted to do. I wanted to get as far away from the South as I could. I thought that would be different to go to Madison. It was billed as some liberal haven; so, I thought I would really fit it, and be better, and all that. Also, there was a woman there in metaphysical studies, who was one of the three best scholars of metaphysical English culture in the country, named Helen White. I had never had a woman teacher except in grade school and one in junior high. I think somewhere, it was a kind of proto-need to go study with a woman. Really a big reason I went was because she was there and it was a she. So, I went off to Madison in 1961 and had three very intense years there. John F. Kennedy was shot while I was in my shoe man's . . . One of my best friends there was a shoe man. I didn't have a lot of money and Cecil and I got to be friends. When I was low, he would take me to breakfast and sometimes when I had my paycheck, I would take him. I really loved him very, very much. I used to go by his shop a lot of times in the afternoon and just spend time there because I could talk to him and it wasn't about courses and grades. It wasn't that kind of frantic graduate school hothouse thing with him. I was in his store when the radio—he was listening to country music or something—came in . . . that's one of those things I just remember.

CAC: Sure, we all do.

TM: Absolutely. Madison was a good place to be because the school closed down instantly without a thought. There were huge services on that mall there. It was a very healing place to be. It wasn't like anybody was pretending that we could go about our business. I was glad of that. I think it was closed for three days; so, the people could watch the funeral.

I finished there very fast. I was in a hurry and Miss White knew me well enough and maybe knew anybody well enough to say, "I want you to get out of here; so, I'm going to help you get out of here very fast." I finished in three years.

CAC: What a rare bit of advice in graduate school that is. Oh, my.

TM: I took my pre-lims at the end of the second year. I wrote the dissertation in nine months and left.

CAC: And with her?

TM: Yes, with her.

CAC: On metaphysical [unclear].

TM: On John Donne's sermons. There are 160 extant sermons. There were a lot more that he . . . He was the dean of St. Paul's [Cathedral] for years and years. They are incredibly good. What I wanted to write about about Donne, which I also think is interesting, is another little step in my history, is he was like Augustine and [Saint] Francis [of Assisi]. He had everything and was quite a horror, and spender, and rounder, and had a real conversion, and gave all that up for God and language—the only thing he didn't give up was his love of language—but he gave it all up and became a preacher. I was fascinated with him because he used himself, like Augustine does in his sermons or talks or whatever you want to call those things, as his best example of why not to be a sinner. I was really fascinated with that. Again, I didn't have any language. I couldn't have said to you all the things I now understand about feminist history, and research, and putting oneself in the middle, and [unclear] identification with. I didn't know any of that but I went toward it like I went across the road. It feels like it was the same kind of blind thing. I don't regret working on him in the least . . . I really don't.

Miss White was wonderful to me as a person. We got to be somewhat . . . we got to know each other. I would walk home with her. It was sort of like a school girl crush because I would do things like carry her books. She finally employed me. One summer I had to stay there and didn't have any money. She made up that her library needed redoing; so, I would go to her apartment where it was all books. Everything was books except the room that had her single bed in it and the kitchen that also had books in it but they weren't to be filed. I made this beautiful alphabetical listing with categories, and sections, and everything. It was wonderful. The week I finished and went home, I was sitting in my slum apartment and the telephone rang. It was Miss White asking me, could I come and find a book for her?

CAC: Ahhh.

TM: That's when I knew that it had all been a charade so she could pay me and that now her books were in a terrible state; she couldn't find anything. So, I just felt, oh, dear. I loved her very much. And the University of Wisconsin helped her kill herself. I say this because of something that will come later about my own choices here. She was very, very active both in the English Department. She chaired it and did all kinds of other things, and, then, was active in the university. She was also terrible active as a Roman Catholic. Pope Pius—I suppose it would have been during that time— . . . She won the lay person's award in the world for contributions to Catholic activity.

CAC: One wonders if [Pope] John [XXIII] set her free. Did she live long enough for John?

TM: No, no, no. She died three years after I came here. She died in 1967. They asked her to be . . . Now, it's true, she said yes to all of these things; but they asked her to chair when she was ill and she did. They had decided they wanted an international department in English; so, she was the person then who flew across the Atlantic over, and over, and over again while

teaching, while ill, and died of some kind of brain clot or something. I went through a period of being really enraged and then adopting the victim pose for her. I now understand that they could only have been 50 percent responsible but I didn't understand that then. When I came here, I think a lot of my modeling was her; so, my throwing myself into all levels of activity at this university, I know was something about wanting to be like Miss White. When I decided many, many years after that that wasn't what I wanted to do, that represented both a personal break because I was really saying, "No, I'm not going to be you to her. Yes, you gave me lots of examples but I'm not going to duplicate your life because I see what it's like and it's suicidal. I'm not going to keep doing it." That's just a little intersection between the personal . . .

CAC: One wonders in the academic—I suppose in any world—our world, it may be that we learn style, in the grand sense, and attitude from our mentors more than we learn anything about the metaphysical [unclear], for example. I think people sometimes laughed with me about John Hicks who was a great historian but not a great scholar as young scholars would think historians should be. I think about John's influence on me and it was largely character, and style, and a relationship with students and with colleagues.

TM: I learned a lot about that because no matter how famous she got . . .

CAC: It's called mentoring, isn't it?

TM: Right. No matter how famous she got, she always participated in the orientation week program for freshmen where she had twelve of them to her apartment for tea. She always found some way to do that.

CAC: We're lucky if we get good mentors.

TM: Right.

CAC: And don't get killed by them.

TM: Ohhh! and don't have to kill them either. The stuff about why English . . . The beginning was what I said but I went into the Renaissance, again, without language but now I understand something very important. An incredible number of very, very bright female literary people until the present, right up until the present, have chosen to do Renaissance research. Now, that's not an accident, I don't think. For instance, in this department, in my department, the three feminists now are Shirley Garner, Mimi [Madelon] Gokey Sprengnether, and me; and all three of us have PH.D.s in the Renaissance. I don't think that's an accident. Also, the Renaissance is congenial to me as a lesbian—which I didn't know anything about when I went into it—because, at least, in the courtly circles, bisexuality was a fairly common practice . . . Shakespeare being the most notable example in his sonnets where he comes out as that, though it takes people forever to . . .

CAC: It's a bit guarded for the unknowing eye.

TM: Yes, right, right. I try to think about, what is it about the Renaissance that's so congenial to women? For instance, there are almost no important names in Eighteenth Century criticism anytime that are female. If you think about the Eighteenth Century, that's the period of rule making. That's when spelling rules were made up in England. It's when grammar rules were made up in England. It's when the first gay man was arrested in England. It's when insane asylums began to be built and people put into them because they were *crazy*. It's a real countdown period.

CAC: And we know it as the Age of Enlightenment.

TM: Right. Whereas, the Renaissance was all new stuff. In England, they were feeling silk for the first time. They were tasting tea for the first time. They were sneezing from spices for the first time. It was a very expansive . . . Psychology was born then.

CAC: Life was at dawn.

TM: Yes. I think that there are real reasons why I chose that though unconsciously, unintentionally, or something. It's true, I can't read Donne's love poems anymore. I just get angry; so, I have to just leave them as part of my past that was wonderful and to remember that I adored them once. Now, they're really too objectifying of the lady; so, I just can't. I don't want to cope with him and take him to task. I just want to leave him over there and say, "He was very important to my development." The sermons are another matter; they're still quite readable. Obviously, they don't have overt sexuality in them. If he's sexual with anybody, he knows it's God and that's a little more interesting to me. [laughter]

CAC: So, with all this background, you arrive at Minnesota in . . . ?

TM: In 1964 at twenty-seven, very bright in the head, very retarded elsewhere.

CAC: Although, you've just described a pretty rapid period of growth at Wisconsin.

TM: Yes, but not really emotional growth. Emotionally, I was not very . . . I was what a lot of precocious kids are. Our heads are ahead of the rest of us. We were *ahead*. [laughter]

CAC: You came into a department that probably knew its greatest days in the 1940s and 1950s and by the 1960s was beginning to slide. Did you have a sense of that when you came?

TM: Not when I first came, no, because Sam Monk was still here.

CAC: Oh, yes, dear Sam.

TM: Everybody made great things about him. I had read his book in graduate school and been told that he was one of the three great Eighteenth Century scholars; so, there he was. It turns out, he delivered newspapers to my mother's family's front porch in Selma [Alabama] as a boy . . .

CAC: Ahhh.

TM: . . . which was very strange . . . that connection. We couldn't get on. Allan Tate was still here. I was told I was supposed to like him. I guess those were the two really greats who were still here. No, I didn't know that. I had an offer at Michigan, and Indiana, and here. Those were the ones that interested me because they were big enough schools. I wanted someplace big, I knew that. Having lived in Vicksburg where everybody knew my car, I knew I wanted big. I had big schools but I didn't think I could stand it in Ann Arbor or Bloomington. Those both were little teeny tiny places; so, I didn't see (1) how I could be a lesbian in those little tiny places and (2) I didn't see how I could breathe. I very much wanted to come here. I very much wanted this job because it had both the city and the school . . . big.

CAC: Were there other women in the English Department when you came here?

TM: Mary Turpie was in American Studies but I didn't have much to do with her. There was a female in the English Department. Her name was Sarah Youngblood.

CAC: Oh, dear Sarah Youngblood.

TM: It was not possible for either of them to be of much help to me.

CAC: They knew you were there?

TM: Oh, yes.

CAC: Were there other women on the faculty beyond that small group in English? It really is very lonely to come into. The expansion of the women in faculty generally is five, eight years down the line from that.

TM: It comes in in my life time, during my tenure here.

CAC: So, you really are, in that sense, a [unclear].

TM: I was here for literally eight years before Shirley came. That was my first real colleague.

CAC: Isn't that interesting? I'm sure that's the case, history . . .

TM: Now, another single woman came here when I came here, Margery Stricker, now Durham.

CAC: Oh, yes.

TM: But we weren't able to be friends. She was worried that if she had lunch with me in the Campus Club, people would think she didn't want to marry. She said this to me when I said, "Let's go to lunch." She said, "Oh, I can't go to lunch with you because I'm here to marry."

CAC: There are so many painful things?

TM: Oh, it is painful. A natural alliance which the department afforded us, if we could have done it, couldn't be done. I was very sad about this. I didn't understand it and I was very sad.

CAC: So, you committed yourself to busy work at the college?

TM: I committed myself to busy work. I committed to teaching magnificently and very hard.

CAC: You knew that was really a first priority from the beginning? You knew that that was where you had . . . ?

TM: Yes, because at All Saints, no matter how ghastly those years had been for me personally—and they were ghastly— . . . I had never been told that I was a terrible person before. But, I had absolute peace and excitement in my classroom and those young women . . . I sent kids to every sister school with no . . . I sent them out of the South and off to *the* best places and just got so excited about that. They would memorize poetry. They were just wonderful. I just loved it.

CAC: How did you find the students here in the mid 1960s in your own classes of graduates?

TM: Very exciting, too. They were real different, see? The girls that had been at that school, though many of them weren't society-like southern women, they all had come from places with enough money to send them to a boarding school. They were often from broken homes, frankly, but they were from broken homes that had enough money to still send their kids away to the school; so, they seemed pretty protected and the environment was so protected. We were in the Civil War Memorial Park. It was literally protected; a cannon was out my window every morning. To see the sun, I had to watch the cannon first. What excited me most here first was that the students were often first generation to college and that they were absolutely open to being [unclear]. I had people who went off to teach at places where the students had learned already to be blasé . . . eastern schools. There was none of that kind of cultural veneer here that I think must be awful to teach against. I don't know what I'd do if I had to go to Yale; I really don't.

CAC: Frequently, these interviews turn into conversations.

TM: [laughter]

CAC: It will amuse you and, perhaps, encourage you, how many persons I've talked with who were themselves first generation college persons, as you said, and who at some point or another suggest what you're suggesting now, that Minnesota has a kind of openness and freshness, without that layer of gentility.

TM: Yes, and I really like that. I'd rather have ignorance than blasé because ignorance you can teach. Ignorance can be turned into excitement and knowledge. Ignorance just means they haven't seen it yet.

CAC: Yes.

TM: But blasé is they don't care whether they see it or not or it isn't worth seeing, that sort of thing.

CAC: I wonder as I've done these whether this is . . . I know it's not uniquely Minnesota but whether it's a higher kind of mood at Minnesota than at other Big Ten, certainly than at the eastern universities. There's no question about that.

TM: There's all the difference in the world between here and Wisconsin. Wisconsin's just a glorified All Saints. That's a very upper middle class.

CAC: I see.

TM: All of them live in dormitories. Oh, no, the feeling there was entirely different.

CAC: But they claim that particularly in their graduate body that the East gets as far as Madison but not as far as Minneapolis.

TM: Maybe, in graduate school that's true but the students that I saw were unteachable. I couldn't get those freshman excited about anything. They were interested in the dorm party that night and where they were going for Christmas holidays.

CAC: Things were breaking loose at the time you were there.

TM: Yes, oh, yes; so, it wasn't the worst time. That was the thing that excited me the most about the students here and that still excites me.

CAC: Did you know that your engagement in department . . . well, more college than department matters was in some ways a modeling on your mentor at Wisconsin? How do you explain that in personal terms now?

TM: I don't do well without praise. I just know that about me.

CAC: You're in good company in that, Toni. [laughter]

TM: I need you to tell me that what I have done is good and, then, you'll get more from me. If you're silent, eventually, I don't know what to do.

CAC: The department was largely a department of silence.

TM: My department largely could not tell me, "You're good."

CAC: Yes.

TM: So, I simply had to do something to get some strokes. Roger Page was the first person and . . . what was the fellow's name who was the associate dean? Isn't he an historian now?

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

[Tape 1, Side 2]

TM: John Turnbull and Roger were the people that opened up the university for me. Turnbull asked me to come and talk to an Honors class he was teaching about *Cat and Mouse* as a [unclear]—sorry—Black comedy. I'd never heard of Günter Grass. I was not a contemporary person but there was somehow I must have thought, this is the thing to do. So, I bought the book, and read the book, and found an article about what Black comedy was—I didn't know what Black comedy was—and went, and talked about the book. Then, the next year I was put on a committee, an instruction committee. I owe huge amounts to both of them and have told them that. Roger, of course, very rapidly wanted me to be and helped me to be the chair of that committee and that was a wonderful assignment for me. But, it was also the first place that I learned that getting a policy passed doesn't mean you've gotten the stuff in the policy done. I was very disillusioned because we turned out a wonderful document—I'm sure you've seen it—called the Evaluation of Teaching or the Importance of Teaching or something. That whole document, that was mine, ours.

CAC: Oh, all right.

TM: I wrote it but the committee did it. We got it passed through all the college committees. Of course, it called for a periodic evaluation whether the teacher wanted it or not. It was the first time that was called for and we were all so excited on the committee. It was a wonderful committee. I still remember some of those people. Tom Noonan was on that committee and Mr. Tom Scott was on that committee. One year, David Kieft was on that committee.

CAC: He would be a skeptic.

TM: Oh, yes. He and I got along.

CAC: He was the one person who resisted the implementation in our department.

TM: It already existed before he came on the committee.

CAC: You would know the position. He felt that it was an intrusion on the sacredness of the relationship with students. In a way, that's the only good strong point to be made against it.

TM: Right. He and I always had good relations because, though we didn't agree with how the other one talked, we recognized that the other one was a very good teacher; so, there was a good respect between us. We never had any trouble. Learning that . . . I just felt awful when I found that out. I was very disillusioned. It's like, I suppose, people who find out that when you work hard, you don't get ahead. That's really what it's about.

CAC: [laughter]

TM: Because we had worked like little puppy dogs and done lots of good lobbying and politicking with people in the Senate, and in the this, and in the that to get it passed. "Easy" [E.W. Ziebarth] loved it. He thought it was a great document; and then, I noticed that nobody in my department was doing it, that my chair never said a word about it. Then, we got the results in from other people; so, that was a potentially souring experience for me but I still loved it. The Importance of Teaching . . . that's the name of it.

CAC: In your own personal satisfaction, you had strokes until the moment of disenchantment?

TM: Oh, yes. I think really it was that psychological need, Clarke, that kept me doing things and also something about fathers.

CAC: Oh, tell me about fathers.

TM: My father was very undemonstrative.

CAC: Oh, I see.

TM: I think he loved me but he was undemonstrative. The kinds of things he said to me were . . . I would bring home a 97 in history and he would say, "Why didn't you get 100?" He would help me with history. He was fascinated with history; so, he would help me with my history. But what helping me meant was, I had to recite verbatim the assigned pages night by night. He would say, "Here's the topic, Indians in America." I was supposed to say what was in the book. If I'd miss *a*'s, *an*'s, and *the*'s, we stopped and we had to do it over again . . . so very stern, not affectionate. I really needed approval from people who reminded me of him; so, I think that was

the other thing that kept me saying, "Yes," to Mac [Malcolm] Moos. Mac Moos even looked like my father.

CAC: Oh, my! We'll get to him later.

TM: John was old enough and had a little beard and Roger was old enough and had a little beard; so, I liked it a lot that they thought well of me. That pleased me very much.

CAC: It was just at this time, in the early, mid 1960s—I couldn't date it but somewhere, 1962-1964—I had a graduate student, female . . . Marjorie Bingham . . .

TM: Oh, I know her.

CAC: . . . who came to me. She was in one of my early seminars. She said, "You know, Professor Chambers, you don't know that the women in your class have never had a woman teacher. I have never in Social Studies. They've had one in English . . . or second grade but they've never had anyone in History, or Political Science, or anything who has been a woman. You just have to be sensitive to the need for praise and encouragement as a first thing." I said, "Marjorie, you know you're doing the best work in the class." You see? I remember it so well. One learns from the best students a great deal. I can remember the very incident. It was kind of one of those turning points. I thought, my god! that's right. People do need that.

TM: That's right.

CAC: I always assumed I was bright and had encouragement but I always assumed that . . . you know, didn't need that kind of support . . .

TM: So, I think that's what had to be doing.

CAC: Things are happening in the 1960s. Ooof!

TM: A lot, yes. No more homecoming for a few years. There was no homecoming, remember?

CAC: I can remember McCosh's sign in his bookstore, "Homecomers, go home." [laughter]

TM: [laughter] Now, there's homecoming and no McCosh.

CAC: Yes. There are cycles in the affairs of humankind.

TM: That's right.

CAC: We're now in the mid 1960s and things in the mid to late 1960s are really beginning. It's not only an evaluation of teaching but it's the coming of the war and it's the agitation and [unclear] Afro-American Studies Department. You were involved in both of those, I know.

TM: [sigh] The part about the war—I've thought about this for this—that's the most important for your purposes are what effect my political street life had on my classroom, and academic, my more professional life. I got it one day that there was a way in which lecturing for ten weeks, testing, and grading was not unrelated in my sphere of influence to what the country was doing to the colony of Vietnam. I understood something about academic colonization. In that scheme, I was not the one on the right side; I was the one on the wrong side. That was very hard for me because I had thought of myself as this forward looking open-ended blah-blah and really figured out that that wasn't quite true. My classes and I then vowed . . . Also, the other thing that was coming out at that time were all those books [unclear] about teaching—John Cowle and Herbert Kohl, K-O-H-L—when there really was some interest even at places like Harvard in the classroom. I read all those things just avidly. One of them was by a guy named Peter Elbow—I'll always remember his name—and he talked about being a prostitute in his classes if he just went in and gave information without knowing whether anybody wanted it or not, that he was being paid, and he went in, and he talked. He had started saying to his classes, "This is a course in blah-blah. I know all these things about it. What do you want to ask me?" If nobody asked him anything, he left. And he would come back the next class hour and say, "Today, we're reading Melville. What do you want to ask me?" If nobody spoke, he left. I was intrigued with that. I didn't quite do that because I don't think I was brave enough but I did talk about it. It's different for me to say, "I'm a prostitute," than for him to say he's a prostitute. It's a metaphor for him. It's a possibility for me. I think I was very confused by a lot of the stuff that was coming out and around. What I did was vow that I would stop lecturing, testing, and grading without anything in between. I, then, did the whole romantic stuff about, I was one of them . . . one of the students, just another voice in the classroom. I think my students must have gone through a terrible time for the next two or three years because I mostly just withheld information from them is what it feels like now. I wouldn't tell them esoteric things about the Renaissance. I wouldn't tell them about how an ode is constructed. I'm pleased to say that I found some middle in the 1970s sometime and now understand power. The feminist movement has really helped me understand power really well. The anti-war thing really was just, don't have any. We will all be peaceful and together somehow and we will abandon power.

CAC: That's true but I can't imagine that you were ever really taken in by *Greening of America* [by Charles Reich].

TM: No, not that book. Not that idea.

CAC: But the kids were somehow going to save us?

TM: No, not save us but in my classroom, I thought I should let them have the same weight as I did and that what they had to say might be just as important as what I had to say. What the feminist movement has really caused me to do because, of course, at first women didn't want to talk about power—that's been a very late issue to talk about—but what has really helped me are words like accountability and responsibility and accountability is most important. I'm accountable for my training and my learning and I'm accountable to those people who come into my classroom; so, I can't just clam up and pretend. I have to say to them, what they feel is as important as what I feel. That's very clear to me. That's where it does seem equal. If I feel elated over a poem and one of them feels scared, there's no weighting in that but if they think the poem is about chickens and the poem really is about pigs and I know that, I really must tell them that it is not about chickens.

CAC: [laughter]

TM: I really must do that and not let them wander out of my class with that misinformation from the text.

CAC: Do you know what you're describing is that at just about the time, the vice-president's bureaucratic office, way up there in Morrill Hall, is provoked into providing a document for the Senate on Academic Freedom, and Responsibility, and Accountability.

TM: Do you know who wrote it?

CAC: Go ahead.

TM: Me. I did write that one because none of those men would do the work.

CAC: Tell me about that. Maybe, it's chronologically up but it fits in here.

TM: Gerry Shepherd was the vice-president and Gerry was another *father* and I was very seduced by his way of dealing with me because he was very friendly. He encouraged me to call him Gerry. I didn't have to call him Vice-President Shepherd. I was still very young when you think about it.

CAC: I understand.

TM: That's not an excuse but it really is true and I hadn't done therapy. I hadn't work through parental blah-blah. I was taken in by being able to call a big shot Gerry. I'm a little embarrassed to say that but it's true.

CAC: There are worse things to have happened.

TM: I know, I know. When he asked me to chair that thing, I didn't know that he was trying to find a patsy that would do something that really nobody wanted.

CAC: I think there was a latent longing for that kind of a document.

TM: Oh. Well, it sure wasn't on the faculty's part.

CAC: Oh, a large number of the faculty.

TM: Do you think so?

CAC: Yes. I think power didn't carry that document. I think there is an eagerness to believe at that point.

TM: Okay, well that's interesting.

CAC: That's just one person's sense. But he appointed you as chairman of the task force?

TM: Yes, chairperson of that task force.

CAC: How large a group was that?

TM: Eighteen or twenty.

CAC: Oh, my heavens!

TM: We reported to the regents directly.

CAC: Oh, my heavens! What other . . . it must have been a strong committee.

TM: It's when I met Sam Krislov. He was on it.

CAC: Good grief.

TM: It was people like that. One of the other college deans . . . several of the deans were on it. Sylvan Burgstahler from Duluth was on it. The vice-chair from Morris was on it. It was a lot of seductively big shots.

CAC: Any other women?

TM: No.

CAC: You were chairman of all these strong men . . . okay.

TM: And we met, and we met, and we met, and we met, and we met.

CAC: That was a pretty sensitive document, I think in some part because of legislative concerns.

TM: I remember I met Regent [Elmer] Andersen. He was a pleasant fellow.

CAC: Former Governor Andersen, yes.

TM: Former Governor Andersen. The person I liked best was [John] Ingve. Ingve was very straight forward. I just liked him a lot. When he wrote a note to the committee and said that not only did he like the report but it was well-written, I just felt real good. I did like him. He seemed like a good person.

CAC: Did you think this was another report then that was going to lead to disillusionment? You suggest that nobody really wanted it among the faculty.

TM: I didn't feel as bad about it. That may be because my alcoholism was further progressed than it was when I wrote . . . See, all this time that I'm on this rising spiral, in terms of my professional life, I'm on a descending spiral in my private life because my alcoholism is progressing a pace. I'm less and less able to not do it everyday.

CAC: But never so bad that you can't function very well?

TM: Oh, no, no. I never missed a day of teaching.

CAC: And you chaired a good committee, chaired . . .

TM: [unclear], and I chaired all these meetings, and I wrote all these reports. I can remember typing that report with a bottle of bourbon on the typewriter stand and just typing, typing, typing into the wee hours to get it done for the regents the next day; and then, being up the next day, and being at work, and doing stuff. I couldn't do it now. Now, I'm sober; I couldn't do it. [laughter]

CAC: You've had good chemistry and were younger.

TM: Much younger. I think the place where my soul was in greatest jeopardy in relation to that document was that that had to be passed by the University Senate. The place of teaching was a collegiate document and really once our committee gave it to "Easy," he took it through the councils; so, it was the end. It really was that we saw ourselves as a work group and, then, if I was going to see myself as anything bigger, it was as head of the work group. But there was nothing public about that document. We did it all up in Johnston Hall around a table. The Academic Freedom and Responsibility document was very, very different because it had to be passed by the Senate, section by section, and as the chair of a committee appointed by the

president, or the vice-president, or whoever it was, I had to take it through the Senate. That was very heady stuff and I was at my combative best/worst, whatever you want to call it. I would not now be happy to call it best because it seems very manipulative.

CAC: I'm guessing at this point that your home department where your promotion and standing didn't care . . . or would think of this . . .

TM: Was really hostile.

CAC: Yes.

TM: Oh, no, no, no. Sam Monk wrote a note, right before he died, to me saying that I was an embarrassment to him because every time he picked up the *Daily*, I was in there doing something else . . .

CAC: What a sad . . .

TM: . . . and that people should not be so public, that I was an embarrassment to the department because I was so public.

CAC: No wonder there's a little drinking. I know it's more complicated than that.

TM: Not a little. Not a little, but lots.

CAC: That's just one factor but it certainly is a major one.

TM: Yes.

CAC: One's academic home is the department.

TM: That's right. It just wasn't for me.

CAC: Yes.

TM: The only person there that was important to me was Shirley but we didn't see each other there much. We saw each other at our houses.

CAC: Sure.

TM: Doing that stuff through the Senate was . . . I can remember going out of those meetings having gotten that group that did not want that thing to vote yes to another section and feeling a kind of false elation and power . . . that now I just shudder when I think about it now. I'll say something about the Black stuff.

CAC: Yes.

TM: That was different somehow. Partly that was different because it came from Moos.

CAC: Well, partly because you were [unclear].

TM: Right. I knew something about that in my emotions and I had an emotional attachment to the man who asked me. I had no emotional attachment to Shepherd. I wanted power from Shepherd and approval but I didn't like him. I didn't feel warmly towards Gerry but I felt very warmly toward Moos in a personal sense; so, for him to ask me to do that, in a sense, was the best example . . .

CAC: He sought you out?

TM: Yes.

CAC: How did he know that?

TM: He came here . . . It was a real accident. In 1967, three years after I was here, I won the college teaching award, that you and I both . . . I won that. In those days, there was a banquet and each of the people had to say something about teaching at the banquet. It was the alumni banquet.

CAC: Some things were done better in those days.

TM: So, I went, of course. It was one of the few times that my then partner was willing to come someplace with me. She was very terrified of being identified but she was willing to go to that dinner; so, we were there. I was all [unclear] up. I knew that there was a new president; Wilson had gone and there was this new president. "Easy" must have asked him to come to this event as some kind of way to put the college forward positively to the university. I noticed that one of the late arrivals was somebody I didn't know, a tall thin man. So, Moos heard me . . . I know what I was saying; I was talking about using undergraduates in courses to help teach because I'd gotten an EDP for that and my department had thrown up its hand in horror.

CAC: I'll bet.

TM: EDP didn't even know quite what to make of it that I've gotten it.

CAC: For the record, that's Education Development Program.

TM: He must have liked what he heard because two weeks later his secretary called and said, "President Moos would like to have an appointment with you." That was the beginning of our friendship. We went to lunch probably once a month, if not more.

CAC: Good heavens.

TM: We were very close.

CAC: Because you know Mr. Moos didn't have that relationship with very many people.

TM: No, the chauffeur would pick me up at the English Department and we would go to the Blue Horse for two hours.

CAC: He wouldn't take you to the club downtown because women would have to go in the back door.

TM: Right.

CAC: How marvelous.

TM: We went to the Blue Horse.

CAC: [laughter]

TM: We had wonderful lunches.

CAC: I'll bet.

TM: That was all very wonderful.

CAC: What do you think he was up to?

TM: I think he liked me.

CAC: Oh, I'm sure of that. It would be difficult not to.

TM: [laughter]

CAC: He must have been very lonely for some kind of companionship?

TM: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. It was not a simple relationship for either one of us. I don't want to put on tape all those details.

CAC: Sure.

TM: I prefer not to do that. But we were very close. I was good for him, and he was good for me, and I feel real sad.

CAC: Then, that leads to the Black thing.

[break in the interview]

TM: We're talking about my participation in the Morrill Hall incident. I very happily served on that committee and there met two men from the community who renewed my hope in professional men, in particular, in legal and financial men. The lawyer was a judge and I can't remember his name anymore but the business person was Hugh Galusha . . .

CAC: Ohhh.

TM: . . . who was then head of the Federal Reserve Bank. We met at night the first night in the regents' room in Morrill Hall. I, of course, had my parking spot and that hadn't been any trouble for me. We were all there and this person on the list named Galusha—it said, Federal Reserve Bank; so, I was all ready to hate him, money, filthy lucre—was late, late, late. I guess [Paul] Cashman was talking to us and was annoyed that the man was late. He came bursting into the regents' room with his little bald head, and his little glasses, and a very elegant briefcase. He put it on the table and said, "It's impossible to find a place to park at this university. Couldn't you people at least make a parking . . ." So, I thought, oh, well . . . pffft, that's the end with you. You just lost it man.

CAC: [laughter]

TM: We became just *the* best of friends. I met his family. He met mine. He came to my classes. We had dinner together. I still see Emily periodically, one of his daughters who's in the arts field in funding. I just thought he was one of the most wonderful men I had ever known because he was both organized and humane. I couldn't find many of those here that combine that. The organized ones seemed to me to care about nobody and the ones who were nice couldn't not get their pieces of paper together; so, I was terribly impressed with Hugh. Now, Hugh was probably some kind of model for me, too.

CAC: Boy! you were in good company. There were many who had that respect and affection for him.

TM: He was just wonderful. He did a neat thing for me. He liked language. He loved language, you know.

CAC: Yes, oh, I know that.

TM: He would call me in the middle of the day and say, "I found a word," and he would tell this word and we would talk about his word. He and I were two of the only people we knew who had the book *An Exaltation of Larks* [by James Lipton]. Do you know that book?

CAC: Yes.

TM: We really just connected. He said he wanted the Federal Reserve Bank to edit a series of pamphlets on how the economy affected people on the Iron Range, in the Reservations, blah-blah-blah and would I edit that. That was one of my first outside connections. I worked with a wonderful group of people at the Federal Reserve Bank, the writers, the . . . I just loved it. It was a great experience for me. I was demolished when he died.

CAC: I know it and to go off as a wilderness man and do such a dumb thing . . . it was just awful. [unclear] somehow finally . . . [Hugh Galusha died of exposure when a snowmobile party in the West was caught by a sudden mountain blizzard and had to seek shelter in a cave. The intense cold that night led to his death.]

TM: Right. Oh! I hated Jim Klobuchar. I had a hard . . . I had to forgive him years later because I blamed him for taking all those men there.

CAC: And Alan Page was there . . . not to receive blame.

TM: Yes. That was the personal gain for me out of the Morrill Hall thing.

CAC: This was a community/faculty committee?

TM: Yes. There were three faculty, three students, three community, one central administrator, and one civil service person.

CAC: How many of these were Black and part of the protest or was this a committee to respond to the other?

TM: No, no. There was one Black man . . . that's the third person whom I liked, too, Milt Williams.

CAC: Oh, sure.

TM: A little, spare, tiny person, very committed.

CAC: He subsequently changed his name.

TM: Yes, right. I liked him.

CAC: It was not a mixed committee in that sense . . . a mixed community but it was not to incorporate . . . ?

TM: Oh, no, no, no, no. Milt was the token Black from the community but there were no Black students.

CAC: He was both militant and soft-spoken.

TM: Yes. He is. He was very good. He was very good. I really liked that committee because we told the truth. We told the truth to the university and Hugh did most of the writing of that report, or much of the writing of that report.

CAC: Heavens. That wouldn't be known.

TM: He especially wrote the sections on information about the scholarships because we had lots and lots of testimony from people who said they had told the Black students blah-blah-blah about money and Hugh was one of the people who kept saying, "You can't tell somebody. You have to find out if they've heard you. You have to have them say it back to you."

CAC: Oh, my.

TM: I just thought, you lovely creature. I don't care if you're rude about the parking space, I'll give you my parking space. [laughter]

CAC: [laughter]

TM: We'll park together . . . whatever you want to do. That report, of course, didn't go anywhere. It was a little MLK [Martin Luther King] fund.

CAC: I see. This didn't lead up to the establishment of the Afro-American Studies Program or Department?

TM: No. It may have had some . . . they may have used it.

CAC: [unclear]

TM: No. This was an investigation of the university and what we said was that the university was at fault, that it had been highhanded, that it had had no understanding of dual language and dual culture, and that if it had Blacks pissed, it deserved it.

CAC: Yes. Did Mac Moos play a regular part or [unclear]?

TM: No, he [unclear].

CAC: Oh, it was by his initiation?

TM: Yes.

CAC: He was quickly receiving all those Black students all this time, I would imagine. He had more furious things to do than that.

TM: Oh, yes. One of the moments I was the proudest to teach at Minnesota was when . . . until the second time that the students did stuff . . . oh, no that's the war. I've got it confused.

CAC: They came at the same time.

TM: Yes, there were always demonstrations.

CAC: You bet.

TM: The moment I was proud to be here was when there was all that student stuff, and Moos refused to have the [National] Guard, and told [Charles] Stenvig to send the police home. This campus stayed calm and had Experimental College instead of a blowup. So, I had been terribly proud of him, and proud of us, and proud to be here. Then, the next time when he was away in Canada at that conference of presidents or whatever it was . . .

CAC: Yes.

TM: . . . and wouldn't come home and, then, the National Guard did come, and I was personally maced trying to get to my car that afternoon, and because of the deep personal connection with him, I felt betrayed.

CAC: Did you talk with him after that about it?

TM: Yes, I told him that. He was clearly . . . I'm not privy to what happened to him in his own self. I saw the results of it but he never said anything to me about it but it was clear when we talked about that that he was riddled with guilt and not doing well, that he knew . . .

[End of Tape 1, Side 2]

[Tape 2, Side 1]

CAC: You spoke earlier about the impact of the war on your own classroom teaching and perceptions. I assume the same thing was true with the Blacks and all of the things you were doing in the community and around?

TM: That effect was in terms of content not mode. The war really affected the mode of my teaching. The Black thing really said to me, you're whitening them out. You don't teach any Black writers. So, I began reading Black.

CAC: At what point did you begin teaching women writers? Would this have been early?

TM: No. My first class was in Virginia Woolf in 1972.

CAC: Was that through Continuing Education?

TM: No, no, I did it in the English Department.

CAC: You were doing things earlier . . .

TM: Yes, I was doing things earlier that included women . . .

CAC: . . . with CEW [Continuing Education for Women].

TM: . . . in CEW.

CAC: Oh, in a very major way.

TM: But we taught classical women, like Austen and Brontë . . .

CAC: And there was Dickinson. You did one on her for me.

TM: That's right. But they were little spot things. The first time I just bit off and said, "This is a course. It gets four credits," was in Woolf. I remember, I wouldn't put in the course design until I had read all of her novels, all the essays that were then extant, in print, and all of [unclear] because I didn't want anybody to ask me a question in the curriculum committee that I couldn't answer. I could have taught her years earlier and wanted to but I wouldn't ask for it.

CAC: You wanted to be over-prepared.

TM: Right. I'd done things like check college catalogs, ladies' college catalogs, from all the Big Ten, the eastern schools, the California schools because I was trying to say to the department, "We could be the first," and we were. It was the first full-fledged course on a woman writer that I could find. There had been women in other courses but not a full-fledged four-credit course.

CAC: I interposed. You were talking about Black writers.

TM: I just knew I had to start reading and so I did . . . first men. I read Malcolm X, and [Eldridge] Cleaver, and [James Arthur] Baldwin and started incorporating some of their stuff. I also understood that I had to begin to do something because what it brought up was all my memories about me in the South as a child and during the 1950s when the Supreme Court stuff had come down because I was present at a lot of really ghastly things that are also now in the autobiography—thank god! Sara came here.

CAC: Sara Evans.

TM: Sara Evans. She did some addition and figured out that I would have been in college when Arthur Inussi went. He was the first Black man to go to college. So, she did a little thing with me and when I finished, she said, "You have to write that. You're under obligation to write that. I don't care if you have a writing block. You have to write that because you were present at something, a moment, that's really important. You have to write that." I tell her that that was the seed of the autobiography.

CAC: Sometimes we need not only encouragement and praise but a spur [unclear]. [laughter]

TM: I need a cattle prod. I really did get it that I couldn't just couldn't keep talking about white literature and that was very exciting . . . so that I could be supportive for Jim [Onwuchekwa] Jemie. There was a man [unclear], an African, whom the department hired momentarily because he was African and spoke with an Oxford accent; so, they could overlook his being Black. I was one of the people that pushed with other people for that. By then, I had got it that we needed somebody who looked like that to teach that, not just Chester and me that were kindly but we needed somebody . . .

CAC: When you speak of Chester, it's Chet Anderson?

TM: Right.

CAC: He was doing that, too?

TM: He began including Black male writers in his Twentieth Century courses. He was one of the first. [unclear]

CAC: It was okay because he was white, and male, and senior?

TM: Senior. I think the senior sort of helped him the most. [laughter]

CAC: I see.

TM: Because they're wonderful white men over there. Now, there's a wonderful young white man who's a psycho-analytic critic and he doesn't get any credit for being white and male. He's psycho-analytic and that makes him *off the wall!* [laughter]

CAC: [laughter]

TM: It's not quite as bad as being a feminist but it's mighty close. It's neat though because then he is getting to be a wonderful feminist. He's always asking us, "What can I read?" or saying to us, "I just read this Victorian thing from a psycho-analytic standpoint and this looks like blah-

blah. Do you think this is blah-blah?" We look at him and say, "That's blah-blah." So, he's wonderful. He's a great colleague.

CAC: You speak of the war changing your style in the classroom, less though the substance. It was really feminism that changed my style in particularly advanced classes . . .

TM: How nice.

CAC: . . . more than anything. But it's the same thing as you're talking about.

TM: Yes, right. I think it's more coherent.

CAC: I began to have graduate students join in creating a class. It wasn't saying, "Ask me questions" but really sharing in creating the syllabus as we went along, the questions we wanted to ask and . . .

TM: That's neat though.

CAC: In my case more than Black and more than the war.

TM: That's interesting. I also got to spend time with Anna Stanley during the Morrill Hall thing. I had met her earlier because by . . .

CAC: Was she a southern Black?

TM: Yes, Mississippi. She grew up out of Milwaukee but her roots were in the South. Her grandmother was the person [unclear] and that's her person . . . is a Mississippi person. She goes down there periodically to see her.

CAC: She's the one I knew best . . . a remarkable person.

TM: Oh, she's really eloquent.

CAC: Yes.

TM: Tormented and eloquent.

CAC: Must be.

TM: Anna and I met each other personally. We had met each other through my partner who was working at Metro Community College who got Anna into Metro to start school because nobody wanted to have her. Then, after she finished at Metro, then, Barbara helped her get into the CLA [College of Liberal Arts]; so, I had known about Anna but I hadn't really spent time

with her. I remember the funniest . . . I'll put this on the tape because surely he wouldn't mind at this point; it's so long ago and I can say it very kindly. There were all those speeches on the [unclear] Northrop Auditorium during the Jackson massacre and the Kent State incident. The Jackson thing had just happened and so they had enough sense to ask Anna to speak. Then, I was going to speak as a white southerner. But before that Paul Cashman was speaking and Anna and I were behind one of the big pillars waiting to go out to talk. Cashman in his wonderfully awful way tried to be a street person. Paul was lots of things but he wasn't a street person.

CAC: [laughter]

TM: At one point, he said—he held up his fist [unclear]; it wasn't a belligerent gesture but he held up his fist—"Right on!" Anna and I looked at each other and just broke up. We both remember that. She works now at one of the co-ops around town; so, I see her periodically. We both often remind ourselves. We talked very briefly behind the post, very fast. I found out about her grandmother. She found out about me.

CAC: Heavens.

TM: It was just very quick southern stuff. She said, "We know things though we were on opposite sides that the rest of these people will never know." That's one of those things that just . . . That's an across-barrier statement. That's acknowledging differences but acknowledging sameness. It's real strong politically. That was one of those crystal moments that was more important again than anything that went on around it.

CAC: And works when it comes spontaneously, and naturally, and not thought about.

TM: Yes, and won't work when you force it.

CAC: Yes.

TM: That has given me courage to teach lots of Black southern women writers because I do think I know something about them that a white northerner doesn't know even though, historically, I'm their oppressor.

CAC: But you can begin with separation but connection both with the students that know where you are?

TM: Yes. Yes. I can also read the writing right. I know how to talk Black, southern Black. I don't know how to talk northern Black, street black. I know that Black southern speech because I heard it as often as I heard white.

CAC: I'm just thinking that a lot of the male Black is northern or ones removed from the South, at least. It is Harlem, and Chicago, and Richard Wright, and so on.

TM: It's very abusive, filled with cursing, not in sentences.

CAC: Yes. But the southern Black writing is often female?

TM: Yes, oh, yes.

CAC: Are there male Black southern . . . this just occurs to me as we talk that there . . .

TM: There must be but there are not many that come to mind, are there?

CAC: It's a sexual difference, as well a regional thing?

TM: The South—this has nothing to do with what we're doing now—is a very, very congenial place for female use of words. If you think about all the great southern women writers . . . there is [William] Faulkner but, then, there are all of those people . . .

CAC: Yes, yes, of course, [unclear].

TM: . . . [Katherine Anne] Porter and [Carson] McCullers and [Flannery] O'Connor, just lots of people . . . and [Eudora] Welty. I thought about that a lot and so have they and Welty has even talked about it in the *New York Times*. It's something about the storytelling, the oral tradition. The oral tradition is very close in the South, partly because of such poor education. It may linger at the expense of their progress in the white world, the white male world, but because stories and oral is so close, the people who handle that probably in most parts of the country are probably . . . the majority of them are women. I don't think a lot of those things are novels; they're stories . . . stories.

CAC: Sure.

TM: I trying to work critically on what the difference is because I would like to be able to articulate. I say to my classes—all the people that are southern understand it—that Toni Morrison's *Sula* is a story and *The Song of Solomon* that won the book award is a novel. There's a real difference . . . something about poetry, something about the intensity of emotion, brevity, directness, direct appeal not through the head . . .

CAC: [unclear] you have to, right?

TM: . . . through some other organ first.

CAC: We're wandering . . .

TM: Yes, we're wandering.

CAC: . . . but in my romantic moments I sometimes imagine that history had a very early appeal; I mean, when I was eight or ten, I kind of knew that. I didn't know about being a history professor but I knew that and I think in some major part because my mother, who was small town her life, was connected to the Civil War. Her father had been in it four years and was steeped in that tradition. She told stories and she told stories in some part because her mother lived with us and was blind.

TM: Ah ha!

CAC: So, my mother had to read but she also had to talk and they talked and talked and I was much the youngest child. My mother was forty-three, forty-four when I was born.

TM: My mother was forty [unclear] baby.

CAC: I was treated differently from my older siblings. I was permitted to listen in and my mother told stories. My colleagues in history sometimes make fun of me because I still have a sense of narrative . . .

TM: Fun.

CAC: . . . which is not what historians are up to.

TM: Eeek!

CAC: You understand? Not all of them you understand?

TM: I won't understand.

CAC: [laughter] [unclear] history has become for many something else.

TM: A manipulation of data.

CAC: Sure. See, how it happens . . . ahhh?

TM: It's wonderful.

CAC: Now, how does it lead into Women's Studies and the origin of that? That's another really important and key thing. You were first director, coordinator, and so forth. Where does that come from? Where did the initiative come from?

TM: The initiative came from students; so, I suppose the connection . . .

CAC: Graduate . . . undergraduate?

TM: Both.

CAC: Were they connected . . . ?

TM: They were meeting for lunch and dreaming about a Women's Studies program.

CAC: That's a rare thing to happen . . . that boundary . . . baccalaureate is a heavy frontier.

TM: No, right away. It was something called University Women Feminists . . . see, there was a women's group here for students before there was a program.

CAC: Tell me about it.

TM: Undergraduates and I think a couple of graduate students formed something called, I think it was, University Women Feminists.

CAC: Okay.

TM: That group is the group that began thinking seriously about some courses. So, they began meeting for courses. The two graduate students—you know them both quite well—were Andrea Hinding and Elsa Greene. At some point in 1972, I think, the undergraduates sent—the undergraduates didn't come themselves—the ones nearest to me. It was a real kind of pecking order thing. They sent the two graduate students to my office during an office hour with this proposal that they'd written. It was pages, and pages, and pages, and pages, and pages long that these people had put out already.

CAC: Do you have that?

TM: No, I don't know where it is. A woman was just here from somewhere doing her dissertation and . . .

CAC: I know, I talked with her, yes.

TM: . . . she asked me if I knew where that was. I don't have any idea. Andrea might know; you could ask Andrea. They asked me to read it, and if I would start coming to lunch, and that they were going to several other faculty and asking them to read it, and if they would come to lunch. I read it and got very excited, knew that it was a document that could never be presented to the college because it didn't read right, and it wasn't rhetoric, you know; but I knew that it was exciting. I said, yes, I would start going to lunch; so, I started going to lunch. There were a couple . . . Joanne Arnaud came to lunch.

CAC: In Political Science?

TM: Yes.

CAC: Elsa [Greene] was writing her dissertation on . . .

TM: Emily Dickinson.

CAC: And on [unclear]?

TM: Right.

CAC: And just beginning to feel her way toward a feminist [unclear]. Boy, I tell you, [unclear] hard to do the first time. Whew.

TM: Right. It's true. We started meeting. I think there was one other faculty person who came occasionally but I don't remember who she was. Carolyn Rose had agreed to participate and that was very, very important.

CAC: She was a widow by now? [Widow of Arnold Rose, Department of Sociology]

TM: Yes, and a full professor. That was the important part for us is that she had clout here and was very respected, not just that she had the rank. She had the stuff that went behind it and should go behind it.

CAC: She had a straightforward style, right up front.

TM: A lot of people found her . . . but I liked her a lot. We did it! What Joanne and I then did with Elsa's help and Andrea's help was take the content out of the student document and put it pretty untouched into a frame that read the way it needed to read to be heard by the college. We took that to "Easy," and he was receptive, and said he would form a dean's committee, an ad hoc committee, which I chaired; and they were then both on it and then faculty was on it. Jim Wertz was on it, I remember. He was, I think, maybe the token man.

CAC: Otherwise, "Easy" appointed a full female committee?

TM: Yes. It wasn't very big.

CAC: With a charge to establish a program or to [unclear]?

TM: No, a charge to write a document that would really go through then, that would establish a program, with governance.

CAC: But with that expectation in mind?

TM: Yes, yes.

CAC: Not just to just to see whether it was feasible or not?

TM: No, we sensed that if we gave him what he wanted, he would okay money for it if he got the college to say yes.

CAC: This is 1969, 1970? When is it?

TM: Probably 1970, 1971, near the ending of his tenure.

CAC: That's right but the first retrenchment is May 1971, so that the money is running out?

TM: Yes.

CAC: That's not a part of the context.

TM: Okay. I don't remember that part. He said that he'd like it anytime within the year and we finished it in a quarter and we were very pleased with ourselves; so, we sent him this air tight document after ten weeks. See, it was actually on me historically because I had been on the college council when Afro-American came, and Chicano came, and Native American came; and I heard the various forms of racism cloaked in academic terminology that went on there and realized very clearly, even through my alcoholic haze, that people were voting for it to get those people with the flags and the sticks out of their offices . . .

CAC: Sure.

TM: . . . and not because they really thought it was exciting intellectual stuff . . . that those of us who were voting for it, out of some kind of scholarly, intellectual position, were in a tiny minority and, oddly, though we were voting for it for conservative reasons, were the radicals. I did a lot of thinking about when is conservative radical . . .

CAC: [laughter]

TM: . . . and then I got excited about that and actually wrote some stuff about that in my journal because it's like plat maps [unclear] then they rub up against each other. What happened with Women's Studies was that not one question was asked in one council. We would go en masse because by then . . . who was going? . . . Edith [Mucke] . . .

CAC: Was Anne Truax part of that?

TM: Anne Truax. They were both on the committee. Edith, and Anne, and me, and these graduate students, and there were a few others by then . . . I don't remember names. The

undergraduates were always there . . . that first cadre, Lois Carlson, and Jackie somebody—I've never known her last name—and Donna Kerstenberger who was active in student government. We were there. Carolyn came to the Social Science one, and was ready to do battle, and none of those men asked a single question; and we kept going out of the meetings, on the one hand tickled but on the other hand, I was very uneasy because I thought to myself, now, if they needed to say their racist stuff couched in academic terms before they would give credence to these other departments and if they only did it out of fear of these weaponries, what are they about now? All I could figure out was that they didn't think it was an important enough issue to engage in.

CAC: Or they were tired?

TM: Ummm . . .

CAC: [unclear] Toni, it was going to be by soft money, at least in my department. That's why it's a momentary thing.

TM: Okay, I see.

CAC: Some of the senior persons in my department thought not only of Women's Studies as faddish—and that was the word that was used—but women as faddish.

TM: [laughter]

CAC: I mean in the academic . . .

TM: Oh, in the academic world. I was going to say, we've been around since almost the first.

CAC: [laughter]

TM: [unclear] days you had to be by yourself.

CAC: So, that there was a kind of dismissal? This is your story but I have the feeling they figured, well, the others were going to get a program status and their own budgets, you see. That's what they insisted on.

TM: Yes, yes.

CAC: And Women's Studies was kind of felt, well, a little soft . . . partly it was soft, I think, because of the retrenchment that came right at that moment but also because that what women do can't be that important.

TM: Yes, that figures. We had made very conscious political choices not to stage elaborate demonstrations with flags and sticks. The students wanted to do that; they were very up for it. The faculty, including me, all urged a different reason, sweet reason.

CAC: Well, you see, it went right through.

TM: Yes . . . and it has never been funded appropriately. I think, however, that had it not been "Easy," it wouldn't even have gone through.

CAC: I see.

TM: I think he was instrumental.

CAC: "Easy" Ziebarth?

TM: Yes, right. Certainly, the next dean would have had no truck with him whatsoever. I would say that to his face; so, I'm not just saying it to the tape.

CAC: Oh, I know that. We collapse time in our memory. That other dean was two and one half years away and Ziebarth was still okay. His health began to switch soon thereafter. But he looked like he had staying power.

TM: Oh, he was instrumental because not only did he do what needed to be done, but then he set Betty Jo Points to finding space, finding a chair. He greased a lot of tracks for us.

CAC: I suspect in a functional way that John Turnbull, whom you mentioned earlier, also?

TM: Yes, and Roger [Page]. Roger was wonderful. Roger really got excited. He was on the planning committee. He was the dean's representative.

CAC: I see. Very good. So, he and Jim Wertz?

TM: That's right, there were those two men. Roger got very excited about it; he really did.

CAC: The governance of Women's Studies, once established, was a scandal from the point of view of the college as well, was it not?

TM: I guess so, yes.

CAC: You guess so? You know perfectly well it was.

TM: [laughter] It was because there were all these people on a committee that had nothing to do with the program, that knew nothing about the program.

CAC: Tell me about that. I didn't realize . . . okay.

TM: My sense of the scandal may be different than yours. [laughter]

CAC: [laughter] It's not mine. I'm speaking for the college, my friend.

TM: Oh, the college. I see. From my standpoint, we were hobbled by a committee that had to have four men . . .

CAC: Oh, I didn't know that.

TM: . . . that had to have people who weren't teaching in the program. There were certain safeguards, I guess, so we wouldn't go off and do something weird like teach about women . . . I don't know.

CAC: Who were these four men then?

TM: Jim Wertz . . . he was okay.

CAC: He was sympathetic, sure . . . and he had access to EDP monies.

TM: Right, he was very helpful to us—though his style was always patronizing.

CAC: I would guess.

TM: But his heart was in the right place and did good things but needed to be thanked over, and over, and over again for having made it possible. The surprise was Harlan Smith. They put Harlan Smith on, I think, as the watch dog because he was from Econ. Harlan, though he was very skeptical of everything and wanted to hear nothing about feelings and all of that, got to the point within less than a year that he was saying, "There is content that needs to be taught." He would say that to his colleagues in Economics.

CAC: Did you ever meet Margaret Smith?

TM: Oh, I love Margaret Smith. She now takes courses from me.

CAC: So, you know part of the answer.

TM: Yes. Men were getting help from home and I didn't know that then.

CAC: You were also getting help from the anti-war movement because Harlan in his mild forceful way was part of the . . .

TM: I'm not surprised at that. I liked him a lot.

CAC: I suspect he must have operated through [unclear] and through the DFL caucus.

TM: It's so amazing to me he's going to retire soon.

CAC: Hes' sixty-eight, sixty-nine.

TM: I just talked to him this spring and he said he would retire at the end of this year, that they're kicking him out.

CAC: We talk about the history of 1960s and early 1970s and you get the counterculture, and the Black, and the anti-war, and the feminist thing; and it's precisely . . . Now, here's Harlan Smith who still wears a white shirt and a tie in the middle of the summer.

TM: Yes, it doesn't matter. It really doesn't.

CAC: He was in the anti-war and he has a feminist wife . . . just a link up.

TM: He was a surprise because we also thought he would just be impossible. What's nice, Clarke, is that I don't remember the man anymore who was the nerd. I always like it when that happens.

CAC: Bravo.

TM: That feels like I've really forgiven them because I can't even remember their names. Some people would say that that's unkind that I should forgive . . .

CAC: Well, unkind and probably unhealthy but we choose not . . .

TM: I don't remember his name. He was short, I remember that.

CAC: Then, there were other women who were not teaching or attached to the program?

TM: No, no, and who were very . . .

CAC: For example, Anne Truax and Edith Mucke but they had to . . .

TM: But that was different.

CAC: Yes.

TM: Their whole commitment was to women.

CAC: Sure.

TM: They were wonderful. No, it was academic women who didn't really know whether they believed in Women's Studies or not.

CAC: Shirley Clark?

TM: Yes, yes. Andrea. Who hears these tapes? [unclear]

CAC: Andrea, who helped establish the program.

TM: I know.

CAC: But she came to have other priorities?

TM: Right.

CAC: Yes.

TM: Then, there were two or three people who actually taught in the program. Joanne was on it and I was on it.

CAC: Joanne is soon to leave because she took the Science [unclear].

TM: Oh, they treated her miserably. She was wonderful.

CAC: I did some weekend retreats with her.

TM: This university could have profited so if it could have kept Joanne. She was right on the edge of a huge writing . . .

CAC: [unclear] writing that never came up because she could never establish herself academically.

TM: Right.

CAC: And that was the end.

TM: I talked with her when she did her trial here, the case. She said that for five years after she was fired she just couldn't write a word. That's really serious. She really was . . . she had drafts that we had read and she had presented in colloquy that were just going to do some wonderful stuff about women in politics. Oh!

CAC: Elsa Greene, whom you mentioned earlier, was she acting part time coordinator or something that first year?

TM: No.

CAC: I was trying to remember what her role was. She graduates then and goes elsewhere?

TM: It was all instrumental rather than titled. She would like to have been the coordinator. She applied the same time as various others and I applied. She was one of the finalists interviewed for the coordinator and, then, they didn't choose her; so, then she went to Indiana.

CAC: Who taught the early courses? What were the early key courses?

TM: The Introductory Course . . . that was taught by a number of us. I taught a section. Joanne taught a section and Carolyn taught a section so that one had a kind of political history of feminism. Carolyn's was mostly sexual as being that kind sociological, families, in groups. Mine was some kind of what are the issues of feminism.

CAC: You had a common syllabus, common things you covered?

TM: No, no, no, no. Quarter by quarter.

CAC: Oh, I see.

TM: A three quarter course but taught by three people. Then, there was a senior capstone seminar. It was a wonderful thing. I taught it twice and just loved it. It's still there in the program. Then, we had as the other courses . . . Women in the Law that was signed off by, I think, Harlan, and it was taught by a group of women lawyers in town who would come to talk about custody law and [unclear] law.

CAC: Because there were no women on the faculty in Law School then?

TM: No. Carl Auerbach was the dean. He was apoplectic that there was going to be a course that had a law in it that wasn't in the Law School. He wrote to "Easy" and to everybody saying, "This is a travesty and [unclear] . . . Rrrr, Rrrr!" We did it anyway.

CAC: There are lots of surprises in the world but that's not one of them.

TM: No, no, no. Then, we had a course, a neat course, called Comparative Study of Women. That was the stuff that anthropologists did because by then Janet [Spector] was here. Janet came for this first fall of the program. She said she was the first person who came here with one in her [unclear].

CAC: Then Sara Evans comes very soon after that?

TM: Sara was next, right . . . the next year. Then, I coordinated a course called the History of the Courtly Love Tradition where we did a fascinating thing with music, art, and literature for the Thirteenth through the Fifteenth Centuries in France, Italy, England.

CAC: Now, Toni, you would know that the scandal I spoke of earlier . . .

[End of Tape 2, Side 1]

[Tape 2, Side 2]

CAC: . . . talked all day and all night. That was the scandal.

TM: Ohhh, dear me.

CAC: You knew that.

TM: I don't know if I did.

CAC: [laughter]

TM: Well, I don't know if I did.

CAC: Okay, I see. The perception of others of what you folks were up to, right? Oh, no, that was the scandal and [unclear] becomes a joke then because, you see, women are pretty incapable of self-governance.

TM: A lot has been done to sabotage that department through that program, through joke, innuendo, those kinds of semi-acceptable modes of discourse. Gay/straights is still being plagued with that. It's the silliest thing I've ever heard of. Now, it's always people like Ruth Ellen [Joeres] and Sara who have to go and say to somebody, "Oh, come off it. Who? Where? Here we are! We aren't split from . . . What are you talking about?" It's very boring.

CAC: It's also in the context, Toni—I'm not telling you anything you don't know—in which Affirmative Action for the first time is coming to be an explicit legal . . . When it gets legal, then it's pretty important, right? All departments are faced right then, bango! in 1971, 1973, 1975 with Affirmative Action?

TM: Right.

CAC: It means not only does the college, which has had earlier socialization to other expectations, have to tolerate Women's Studies but they have also in their own daily conduct to . . .

TM: To have to tolerate women.

CAC: . . . to tolerate Affirmative Action and more than tolerate them, they've got to move. There's a good deal of tension all through these line departments.

TM: I think that the Affirmative Action stuff from above, coupled with the existence of the new program that was becoming more and more visible whether you liked what we were doing or not, really put a squeeze on some departments to hire because we were writing places like History saying, "You've got to have a woman. Do whatever you need to do with Allan Spear but you've got to have a woman. Get him to leave his ball out of the box."

CAC: You remember on soft money, the History Department hired Anne Boylan.

TM: Yes. That was the first check.

CAC: When we had to set a priority, I was chair; so, I know the story very well.

TM: Oh, I know you made it happen.

CAC: In 1973, we had to set a priority of what next new person would be hired; and it came out . . . we say, don't we, "without dissenting vote"; it was not unanimous but it was *without dissenting vote*. We had a search and it was Anne who was so able and dear and Sara who were the two finalists and Sara came.

TM: Yea! Sara! [laughter]

CAC: Anne did awfully good work when she . . .

TM: Hmmm!

CAC: I still correspond with her in New Mexico. She's a wonderful person. Departments were facing fact all across the line.

TM: Yes.

CAC: And they're facing it again in times of shrinking resources.

TM: Yes. Now, I have understood that that in terms of History, Women's Studies was a little late but if we could have gotten ourselves together two years earlier . . .

CAC: Yes.

TM: . . . our funding base would have been entirely different because it has really been crippling to have the funding base that we have. It's especially difficult because as the coordinator, I, of course, was in touch with the other fledgling departments in other schools around, at least in this area, and went to Wisconsin because this program was the model program. People came here from all over the country. People asked for our document. It was one of the great documents now that had been done about Women's Studies. It is sort of is like my own personal history at the university . . . a woman is without honor in her own country kind of thing. Here nobody was paying much attention to us at all and wouldn't give us any money, and any space, and any faculty, and any anything—which is still true, essentially—whereas nationally, we were just seen as this magnificent thing. It's so interesting to me because the university now says, "We will give top billing, merit, everything, everything, to the highest ranking units in the college. So, in CLA, the units that they rank top are the ones that are first, second, third . . . I don't quite get it because Women's Studies here has always been in the top ten in the country and has usually been considered in the top five in the country.

CAC: Yes, but the other ratings are graduate ratings, you see.

TM: Ah, yes, yes, right.

CAC: There's no program there except you're teaching a course this fall in the Advanced Feminist Studies Center.

TM: Yes.

CAC: Where does the money for that come in?

TM: I'm teaching it because I have a contract now that a third of my work is in Women's Studies. I've written a formal contract and I'm only two-thirds in English now for the rest of my tenure here.

CAC: Good.

TM: So, that's how I'm teaching that course. We had gotten \$25,000 from Al Link and [Ken] Keller to hire a half time director, Ruth Ellen Joeres, from Germany, who will just be wonderful, and a secretary. We've, finally, unfrozen some space from Link up on the fourth floor of Ford [Hall] for a couple more offices for the center. So, it's a beginning.

CAC: You knew that you are doing that course right when I'm doing mine and we've had a certain number of students in common. I said, "You go with Toni." [unclear]

TM: I didn't know. That's awful thing of how do you know what to do?

CAC: They aren't competing by subject matter.

TM: No.

CAC: Some of our students [unclear].

TM: What else do you want to ask me?

CAC: I was wondering . . .

TM: I want to say something about governance. Do you want to ask me something about Women's Studies?

CAC: About CEW, Continuing Education for Women.

TM: Ohhh, CEW was a home for me. Along with Turnbull and Page . . . Louise Roth, who was Edith's predecessor, somehow found me—I don't know how she knew I was here. My third year here, Dennis Hurrell and, I think, you . . . No, you didn't run it till later. Somebody else ran it before you . . . maybe Turnbull ran it.

CAC: What course?

TM: Ideas in America. Did anybody ever run that but you?

CAC: Jack Levenson ran it.

TM: Levenson, that's right.

CAC: And he left and I took it over. I had it for eighteen years.

TM: I know I did it for you for a long time but I thought the first time it wasn't you.

CAC: Hurrell had New Worlds of Knowledge.

TM: Yes, and I went to that. They both asked me to do sections in that. From that day to this, I don't think a year has gone by—except last year and this coming . . . it's interesting now that Edith isn't there—I'm not being asked to do . . .

CAC: Well, we're doing different things, Toni.

TM: . . . CEW.

CAC: Nor am I.

TM: It's so strange. I feel real lonely about it.

CAC: Yes, so do I.

TM: I really loved those women. I've always taught there. They were called Rusty Ladies—that's what some people told me to call them when I first came here.

CAC: That's what they called themselves.

TM: It's what they called themselves . . . and I remember I wouldn't do it because I knew what that metaphor suggested to me, especially coming from the South . . . the ladies; so, once I'd had one of the classes and met the women, then I wouldn't do it. I think that program has been incredibly empowering for a kind of woman who would never find her way to this university if she had to come and take from you and me right away. She just wouldn't do it.

CAC: You bet.

TM: It grieves me if it's going to turn away from that path. That's very unfortunate. It must be horrendous for you.

CAC: You did courses of your own as well as this variety of things?

TM: Oh, yes. I did both some English courses . . .

CAC: You did some one shot things but also your own courses?

TM: Right, and then I did courses that I thought up . . . courses in Women's Autobiography, courses in poets. I started reading novels because I was taught with them—I don't know what to do with novels; I've just never have known what to do with novels. Poetry and plays . . . I know what to do with poetry and plays. Novels . . . you just listened to your mother read novels. What do you do with them? What do you walk in front of a class and say about a novel, I've never known but I thought I'll try to read novels with these women and see if I can think of something to say; so, they've opened up that forum to be by being able to teach there where it was a little less stressful for me. The courses there I liked teaching best were the ones where I didn't have to give grades because I taught some [unclear] credit. That's what I like best.

CAC: Increasingly, [unclear].

TM: [unclear] to Plymouth Congregational Church on Tuesday nights and teaching people like Margaret Smith for six weeks . . . no grades, no papers, very hard work, very rigorous analysis, changing their life.

CAC: Very, very hard work because they insist upon it?

TM: Right. They read a book a week, a big book a week. I get students who groan when I want them to read a book a week. These people have homes, children, jobs, all the stuff . . . they do a book a week, they don't flinch. I love it. If I could make a living that way, I'd quit here now . . . but I can't make a living that way.

CAC: I shouldn't tell you your business but you cherish your other commitments, educational, here as well.

TM: [laughter]

CAC: I mean what a good time you're going to have at that fall course.

TM: Oh, yes. One thing I would like to say on this tape is I want to talk about faculty governance.

CAC: Please.

TM: Understanding now in hindsight that I said yes to assignments out of my own personal needs, just like Miss White said yes out of whatever her needs were when she shouldn't have, realizing that I made the university some kind of substitute father and lover, that I was a workaholic . . . I understand all that; so, accepting my part of my history in faculty governance, I, nonetheless, feel really clear that it seems to me that the university in the time that I have been here—let's assume things are cyclical and so it will come around again—the university heard the word, and dipped into, and really momentarily believed in some way faculty governance but has been out of that pot for a long time, and at the same time has been, for some reason that I don't ultimately understand, compelled to think it needed to still have the same requisite committees filled with faculty so that it could boast consultation, I think is the word now. I stopped serving on anything when Women's Studies was over. I used the excuse of exhaustion from coordinating for three years and a year's leave to just break that. That was in 1976. I served on nothing until two years ago. I did departmental stuff but no committees for anything. Two years ago, quite frankly because I wanted support from the college in what I assumed would be my last bid for promotion to full professor because it would happen at that time one way or another in or out of court, I agreed to serve when the dean asked me to on the Assembly and then, at the same time, on the Policy and Planning [P&P] Committee.

CAC: You had to be elected to the Assembly.

TM: Yes. But I agreed to serve on Policy and Planning Committee. I agreed to that. Yes, that's it . . . I agreed to let Women's Studies put my name in . . . that was it. But I said yes to something. I thought, okay, I'll go back and see. I'm different. Certainly, I'm sober. I'll work [unclear] program. I'm happy. I'm writing. I'm older. I'll go back. I'll see what there is here. I can bring wisdom, and perspective, and all those things. [laughter] I was amazed really at how far out of faculty governance the university had moved in between 1976 and 1982, those six

years, because we were uniformly expected to be silent and to agree. Mostly, we were read to in documents and while I do like stories, I do not like documents, especially when I can read them so much faster. It's terribly inefficient.

CAC: Oh, my.

TM: I get it . . . what students must do when they have lectures like that. I just started cutting meetings. I couldn't stand the thought of going at 3:30 in the afternoon. I'm already tired at 3:30 and I want to get home with my dog and Susan. To get me to stay here, there's got to be some little something that's might going to happen, you know? I would go to P&P. Every now and then we were sent something ahead of time so that we could come potentially prepared and ask a question. Most of the time, we were given it on the spot. You can't ask questions when you're supposed to be approving twenty minutes after you've gotten it in your hand . . . blatant examples of a charade. There was no even attempt to fool us into thinking that we were having an opinion in this. We had these documents sent to us though; so, I would do what I had always done [unclear]. I would read them with a pencil and make marks in the margin and raise my questions and go eek! and out! and good! and all of those things . . . correct the spelling errors, the split infinitives. I just did it. I would arrive at this thing and here would be all these people, many of whose faces I remembered from before—we've all aging but there we were—and I feel kindly towards them. People like Dominic Argento . . . he's a delightful musician and a great composer . . .

CAC: Ohhh, yes.

TM: . . . but he doesn't want to be at a faculty meeting any more than I do. He didn't want to waste his time reading that claptrap. He wants to write notes. That's what he does . . . writes notes as we read jargon. Nobody would raise a question. The first year I was on P&P, I had all these questions and after about the third meeting, I started going home and saying, "Nobody had raised a question but me." Whereas, in my earlier days, I might have thought that was an opportunity to shine, now I just felt lonely and depressed about it because it suggested that nobody was doing anything. But everybody was attending, getting their name checked off. I wish the university would just say that it's through with faculty governance, that there will be these small consultative groups for these people with deans, vice-presidents, [unclear] because what it does is buy a lot of faculty time away from other activities that might be more stimulating. Even if they were home golfing, that might be better for their health. They'd be taking exercise.

CAC: Yes. [sigh]

TM: I don't have a sense that there is any interest in faculty opinion presently. That's just my reading of this.

CAC: Historians are very uneasy with cyclical . . . we say there are cycles, then they become the unexplained, except they presumably have an aesthetic motion of their own, right? But, those of us who were active in our careers in that kind of work in the mid 1960s through the mid 1970s had another model; and I have often asked myself and as a participant, an historian, I have a hard time saying, "What was it then, unless it was a cultural climate in which everything was under question, everything."

TM: I think that's true, Clarke.

CAC: It was counterculture. We rattle off that word and we don't . . .

TM: But it was more important than wants to predict. It was to me the kind of subversively present thing that female culture is now because lots of people who have nothing to do with it who are still being affected by it.

CAC: And there were students who were forcing it. You and I shared a student, Billy Golfus . . .

TM: Oh, Billy Golfus.

CAC: I was teaching a sophomore course in American Studies in the late 1960s, I would guess. Billy Golfus has a chance to enroll in it. He didn't know who I was. Pretty soon, he was sitting up on the back of his chair with his feet on the seat zapping other students who were, in his opinion, asking dumb questions and zapping me. Ohhh, I'll tell you, talk about anarchy and the students didn't know how to handle it. I didn't know who this strange bird was who was high when he came most of the time on marijuana.

TM: Right. And all that hair [unclear] everywhere.

CAC: Well! I began to realize in some cases, he was right . . . that there was bull shit going on in the class. [laughter]

TM: Oh, yes. People like that were real important.

CAC: But, then, one carried to one's own committee work sometimes that kind of disposition. Maybe, those committees needed to be zapped also.

TM: That's true.

CAC: One time, I remember wearing my hippie beads to a departmental meeting when I was chairing it just to send a signal that subversive things were going on. I wouldn't do that now. Not . . . I wouldn't be afraid . . . it would just be a silly gesture. It wouldn't say anything. But boy! it said something then. I wore a black arm band to a department meeting and my senior

colleagues inquired not out of hostility but out of lack of . . . what was that? What was I doing?

TM: Yes. Oh, yes. It's all there.

CAC: All those revolutions are latent still . . . those divisions, the ethnic, the Black, the Chicano, the women's, those things, the anti-[unclear] . . . those are still latently there; so, maybe the cycle comes again, you see.

TM: Yes, that's what I hope [unclear].

CAC: [unclear]

TM: But it is also true that if the cycle returns for faculty governance, some of us, i.e., me, will politely decline because it is very clear to me that if I'm going to be exhausted by activity that is extracurricular, I wish to be exhausted by it in an area that affects me personally; therefore, I am willing to give my time to the Center for Advanced Feminist Studies as I did last year—on overload. I was a director. I had no release courses and no salary or limitation. I wouldn't do it indefinitely but I did for a year and I am more exhausted at this point than I have ever been in my teaching and I need a vacation desperately—which I will get in four days. I would do that but I did it because I got something back all the time and because the Center would benefit me along with . . .

CAC: Ohhh.

TM: . . . all the people.

CAC: That's the central point. We did it because there was a pour-back.

TM: Yep. And that was true with the strike. I didn't sneak food into the Union for them. They ate it but I got something that was incredibly important to me in personal growth terms. I don't read Black women writers now *because I'm supposed to*. They're the best writers writing with a few minor exceptions like [Adrienne] Rich. If I don't get something back, I'm not willing anymore to strain myself.

CAC: The best document I taught this last year in an adult, non-credit Humanities setting was the *Color Purple* [by Alice Walker] . . .

TM: Oh, that thing is just . . . I don't know of many settings in which you couldn't inject that book.

CAC: . . . with a variety of people, dentists, and lawyers, and free-lance journalists, young and old, women and men.

TM: We didn't stop at ten thirty. Here it is five minutes to eleven.

CAC: These interviews, conversations, sometimes go on forever or they tag off. That's kind of nice. I think we've kind of tagged off for this morning.

TM: Good.

CAC: I thank you.

TM: You're welcome.

[break in the interview]

CAC: For the tape, let me say that we turned it off thinking we had finished our conversation; and then, we began to talk about the alcoholism which you had talked about earlier on the tape and then your coming out. I think it would be interesting to share that.

TM: Okay. They were simultaneous. Within the same twenty-four hour period, I poured all the liquor out of my house and told the first people who already knew, and laughed, and were delightful but told them in my words that I was a lesbian. Then, I became active in the women's community but not at the university for a few years, with the Literary Journal, a book store, a treatment center where I would do classes, things like that. Then, in the summer of 1975, when I was going to have to teach the Intro Course and students had begun to put pressure on the faculty to at least spend a day or two on lesbian stuff, I thought, oh, dear, what will I do now? [sigh] So, I talked about it with friends and decided that what I would do is put two class days into the syllabus, assign lots of readings so that they would be overwhelmed with reading material, and then ask four of my friends of various ages who were already out in the community to come and do a little panel on lesbianism, and I would introduce them as community lesbians who had agreed to come. I was going to let somebody else take the heat and I was going to be the teacher. The four people agreed. It was all settled. The night before I was supposed to do it, I couldn't sleep. I kept trying to think, how am I going to introduce them? They were the first thing that was going to happen and the next day we'd talk about the readings. So, I was trying to think, how am I going to do this. All I could come to in the night was that I was going to say a lot of things about lesbians in the introduction and then once use a pronoun and say *we* and assume that everybody would sort of not get it. It would go past the students but I then would have not denied myself by saying *they*. [sigh]

I went to bed and I got up the next morning, and got in the car, and was driving to school. It happened I came [Interstate] 94, and then [Interstate] 35, that little piece of 35, and then I cut the thing that goes East Bank/West Bank, and I take the East Bank, and I come up across the river, and I park behind the Union. I was very nervous. I had asked my two best adult friends who were in a partnership to come to class just to give me personal support though I wasn't going to say anything and then to go to lunch with me afterwards because it was just huge for

me to do it here somehow. I was driving the car. I was all thankful. I had got on 35. I was off 35. I remember it just absolutely. I was making the turn where you slow down to thirty [miles per hour] off the ramp to come onto Washington and I thought, I can't do it. I can't do it. Then, I just got petrified. I parked the car. Then, I didn't know what I was going to say but I knew I couldn't do it . . . that I had to be more present than that. What I did was stand up and say that I had asked four of my friends to come, and I had done that partly out of cowardice because I didn't want to talk directly as a lesbian, and that the only other motive that I could give it that was a little nicer was that I had come out in the 1950s when heterosexual people weren't talking about being sexual, let alone me. The first words that were said to me about it were, "I'm going to fire you for it." I said, "I felt that I would have nothing but bitter things to say to you and I'm concerned that you get several different varieties of what it means to be this; so, I've asked these people." I sat down and I just shook for the whole rest of the forty-five minutes. It was neat because Connie and Jean were in the back and they couldn't believe it. I'd told them what I was going to do. They were just kind of . . . like this. They took me to lunch at Professor Munchies. [laughter] I remember I had a tossed salad and it felt like my feet weren't on the ground for three days after that, I was so excited. Then, I took a year off.

CAC: But there was no immediate response to it?

TM: No. It didn't matter, I had done it.

CAC: I understand that but one anticipates with great fear that there [unclear] things that are going to happen.

TM: That somebody's going to spring things at you, right. No, nobody did that. Nobody dropped a course. Several students wrote in their journals that they were repelled. That's good. That's something to deal with. From then on, I simply incorporated the course material as a matter of course. Like if we do women novelists, we do some on lesbian novelists. If we do poetry . . . I just put them in like . . . right? I just do it. The second important thing that I did that I think is what has unfrozen my writing is the year after I was coordinator, I took a year off without pay because, at that point, I thought I couldn't teach at the university, that its values were simply . . . it was all the African stuff . . . it was very apparent. I just thought, I don't want to work here. We don't share fundamental values so how can I keep taking money from these people? I didn't want to be paid. I didn't want a sabbatical. I was due a sabbatical. I refused it because I thought if I was getting their money, I couldn't think clearly. I remembered what Virginia Woolf says, "If you are taking an allowance from your father, you can't argue with dinner."

CAC: [laughter]

TM: I thought, no, I can't take their money. I lived on savings and friends and there were people that would have me to supper once a week routinely so I wouldn't have to buy food for that day. It was just wonderful, very loving. I thought seriously, is there anything else I can do

in the world to make a decent living that would not confront me with all of this? That was interesting. That was the year that the Women's Studies Program was being reviewed externally and Florence Howe was one of the external visitors. I was not told of the review or Florence Howe's coming, was not asked to contribute anything to the review, etcetera. That's another piece of history that may not concern us here. Florence Howe called me because the first thing she had said to the then coordinator was, "Where is Toni McNaron's report? Where is it?" so, she called me, and we went to dinner, and she came to my house. We talked a long time both about the program, and how I thought it was, and so forth. Then, she wanted to know why I wasn't teaching, and I told her, and I told her I was thinking about leaving. Florence Howe—who at that point was fairly homophobic because the feminist press had a lot of trouble because they wouldn't print the stuff that was sent to them if it was lesbian—said to me, "I want you to go back. You are one of the four lesbian feminists with tenure in America."

CAC: Heavens.

TM: "That is the only shred of external power you will ever have to teach. You do teach and that's a podium. That's a forum." And she said, "You think it's easy to work there. I can tell that you think you ought to be doing something harder, tougher. It is hard to work there for you and I want you to go back." That was a great gift from her. It was a great gift from her.

CAC: Oh, I'll tell you . . . and that fast. She had to learn those things that fast. She knew them in a general way but not specific.

TM: It was a beautiful gift. I've thanked her over and over again. It's amazing to me that since then she's left her husband and I think has a female friend; so, she's come a very long way in her own life. Then, I came back and the spring before I came back to teach, I went to my chair, who was then Larry Mitchell . . .

[End of Tape 2, Side 2]

[End of the Interview]

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