Marcia Eaton

Interview with Marcia Eaton

Interviewed by Professor Clarke A. Chambers
University of Minnesota

Interviewed on April 20, 1995
University of Minnesota Campus

Marcia Eaton - ME
Clarke A. Chambers - CAC

CAC: It is Thursday, April 20, 1995. [I'm interviewing] Marcia Eaton of the Philosophy Department, a colleague in many shared enterprises over the years. It is a dark spring day . . .

ME: And cold.

CAC: . . . which is not unusual. This April has really been kind of nasty. Marcia, with that introduction, let's start with kind of an intellectual, academic autobiography as far back as you want to go . . . maybe, it's at high school that you had teachers that turned you on and encouraged you, etcetera. It's your story; so, you start in wherever you wish.

ME: No, I wouldn't go back that far because I was really bored by school until college. I did very well. I was always a good girl and a good student.

CAC: Where were you born?

ME: I was born in Galesburg, Illinois, and I went there to school all my life and, also, went to Knox College, which is in Galesburg. My father was a History professor at Knox.

CAC: What kind of history?

ME: American History. In fact, he got his Ph.D. at Minnesota.

CAC: Heavens.

ME: I did a lot of reading and so forth but school really didn't interest me until I went to college. I had a good education at Knox, liberal arts education.

CAC: You didn't stay at home? You went to the dormitory?

ME: Yes, I lived at home.

CAC: Okay.

ME: That was also okay. That was good, in fact. I was a *townie* and it meant I could have a car; so, I had a freedom that a lot of other people didn't have.

CAC: [laughter]

ME: I had a good time. My dad was dean while I was there. I was the dirty dean's daughter but that was okay. I had a lot of good friends, many of whom are still friends; so, that was good. My Philosophy education was not good; it was probably the weakest link in my education. I majored in Philosophy because it had fewer requirements than anything else and I didn't know what else to major in; so, that's what I did. I wanted to go to graduate school at Stanford in their Humanities program.

CAC: You'd heard that Stanford was big on the Humanities, with a capital *H*?

ME: Yes, yes.

CAC: How did you find that out? Did people direct you?

ME: No, I got some catalogs from various places . . .

CAC: You really had no mentors in college who kind of steered you?

ME: I don't remember whether somebody in college mentioned it; so, it must not have been.

CAC: With many people, it's just chance. They [unclear] and then they go.

ME: It was chance. I wanted to go far away. I wasn't sorry and I'm not sorry that I lived at home when I went to college but by the time I was ready to leave, I was ready to get far away. I applied at several places. None of them gave me any money because I was a woman; and I don't say that bitterly at all because other than that, I've never felt that being a woman really was a problem. I chose to go to Stanford in the Humanities program but I knew that my Philosophy background was very bad. I decided that the first year I really needed to devote myself to Philosophy and when I got there, I loved Philosophy so much that I gave up the idea of going into the Humanities program.

CAC: What kind of Philosophy was it?

ME: Stanford had a very, very analytic program, Logic, Philosophy of Language . . .

CAC: This would be true almost everywhere, wouldn't it?

ME: This would have been true at all of the really good departments—still is, I think.

CAC: And at Minnesota at that time.

ME: Certainly Minnesota. All of the top programs had an analytic tradition and most, I think, still do. There were two women in a class of twenty-two. The other woman was JoAnne Akalaitis who went on to be a rather famous theater director. She dropped out after the first quarter. I, however, did better than anybody else did in terms of grade point average because I worked very, very hard. I really felt out of my element. After that quarter, Donald Davidson, who certainly was and is the most illustrious of the faculty there—he was director of Graduate Studies—called me in, and said I had done very well, and so they had decided to give me a fellowship . . .

CAC: Bravo.

ME: . . . and was quite honest about not having given me one before because women didn't tend to stay in the program, which the other woman did not do. That, of course, made me feel wonderful and welcome and that Philosophy had found me and I had found it. Logic and Philosophy of Language were the areas I was most interested in, especially Philosophy of Language; so, I had a wonderful Aesthetics course from a woman, the only woman professor at Stanford. She was a visiting professor . . . just there two years. She went on then to Barnard. I wanted to work in the Logic of Literary Language.

CAC: Had the [Noam] Chomsky revolution occurred by then?

ME: No . . . well, it was occurring.

CAC: It was on its way?

ME: It was occurring. I didn't know about Chomsky yet but that's just because it took awhile for the work Chomsky was doing to filter down. I did read, in fact, some things by Chomsky in Graduate School but it was not yet what you identify as the Chomskyian revolution. We were reading [Rudolph] Carnap and [W.V.] Quine and Nelson Goodman.

I met my husband [Morris Eaton] at Stanford. He was studying statistics, and we got married before I finished my Ph.D.; and I had a child and that meant that I didn't finish my Ph.D. until 1968. I started Graduate School in 1960; so, it took me eight years. It took him only six years

and that was and is a source of some, I guess, bitterness that he didn't have to take time off when we had a child the way I did. For many years, I felt as though I was sort of five years behind him because he started teaching full time . . . I started teaching half time. He got a job at that University of Chicago. I followed him to Chicago, which is where I finished my degree, and I got a half time job at the University of Illinois-Chicago circle. It was a new department, a very exciting department. It was chaired by Ruth Bargan Marcus, one of probably two of the great women philosophers of the time . . . May Brodbeck being the other. Also in that department was a man, George Dickey, whom I guess I would describe as my mentor, though at that time that wasn't a word we used. He was in Aesthetics and he made sure that I started going to Aesthetics meetings and he was responsible—not for getting my first paper published—for getting my second paper published because he invited me to send a paper of mine to an anthology, which became one of the standard anthologies in Language and Aesthetics. He taught me how to do all of the professional, the right professional, sorts of things.

CAC: That's pretty important.

ME: It was very important. He was and is a very decent human being. I mentioned earlier to you before you turned on the machine that I'm now president of the American Society for Aesthetics, and have to give a presidential address a year from this fall, and have been thinking about how I got into Aesthetics. Certainly, one answer to that question is, I went to Stanford and had the right professors at the right time because Aesthetics was certainly at the margins of Philosophy, as was Ethics when I went to Graduate School.

CAC: Oh, I'll bet.

ME: That has really changed in the discipline. Ethics is no longer at the margins of Philosophy. It's right in the middle and I think everybody would agree with that. Aesthetics is still sort of marginal but it's less marginalized than it was.

CAC: What kind of folks does it attract the last twenty years?

ME: In my career, it has attracted lots of people like me who are drawn to it via Philosophy of Language and, indeed, Nelson Goodman's book, *The Languages of Art* . . . He's a philosopher of science, primarily. The fact that a philosopher of science took art seriously is one of the things that has made it okay for the rest of us to do Aesthetics.

CAC: Most of these folks go the way of literature. Does it include visual art, architecture . . . ?

ME: Yes, all the arts.

CAC: Music?

ME: Music, everything, right.

CAC: So that along the way, although you were not trained formally, you had to pick up these other interests?

ME: Right. I had studied music as a kid, piano, and voice, and so forth. There was always lots of music around. Music is the area I know least about . . . well, I know less about dance. I've learned a lot about the visual arts since I've become interested in Aesthetics.

CAC: A lot of that has been self-taught?

ME: Most of it has been self-taught, yes.

CAC: Best way. You had a good teacher, Marcia.

ME: Yes, yes . . . although I've been in a lot of discussion groups and so forth.

CAC: I'm surprised there was one person already at the Chicago circle in Aesthetics. I should imagine there would be one person for the department, if that.

ME: That's right. It was a very happy accident. It was an accident that there was somebody else in Aesthetics when I came here, too.

CAC: Who is that?

ME: Keith Gunderson.

CAC: Ah.

ME: Although, he's also in Philosophy of Science. He is a philosopher of science who has an interest in Aesthetics and, indeed, now there's a third, Geoffrey Hellman, who's also a philosopher of science, a fine musician, pianist, and he's very interested in Music Aesthetics. This is probably one of the strongest departments in the country in Aesthetics now, which people don't know.

CAC: That comes partly by chance?

ME: It's very much by chance because just as my going to Chicago was because I was going with my husband so my coming here was because I came with my husband.

CAC: I see.

ME: I'll come to that in a minute.

CAC: All right.

ME: Before we get to that, I don't want to forget the other thing . . . looking back on why I am in Aesthetics, it really does predate Stanford. It goes back to Knox. I had an Art History class my senior year and it's the first time I had ever done anything with the visual arts because like a lot of us, I couldn't draw when I was in grade school. I thought either you could or you couldn't. Now, art instruction was so awful in grade school that when we no longer had to do it, I didn't do it anymore. The art stars went on and took art as an elective but the rest of us did something else. I took this Art History class, which I absolutely loved and in studying for one of the exams, we were to read the art historian [Heinrich] Woefflin, who has an analysis of the Renaissance. I knew that one of the questions on the exam would be, do an analysis of the northern European countries . . . was there a Renaissance according to Wolfflinian criteria? I knew that was going to be a question. I studied it. I knew it. I did it absolutely cold and, indeed, there was the question. Would Wolfflin have said there was a Renaissance in the north?

CAC: [laughter] Well, the precocious can frequently outguess the instructor.

ME: Yes, that's right. It is a fact that I should have known I was going to be a professor then. I answered the question. It was worth twenty-five points. The instructor gave me the full twenty-five points and his comment was, "Remarkably clear and comprehensive treatment for a woman."

CAC: [laughter]

ME: I laughed.

CAC: I should think so.

ME: I thought that was a funny thing to say. I wasn't angry. I certainly didn't think I should sue him. After all, he had given me full points and, I guess, I thought it was probably true.

CAC: Probably a compliment?

ME: He certainly thought it was a compliment but looking back, it was the fact that I knew what the question was going to be . . . it was a precursor of the fact that I was going to go into Aesthetics because that's exactly the kind of questions . . .

CAC: The kind of questions that engage you?

ME: . . . that aestheticians are engaged by. Then, the added "for a woman" also says a lot about my career. What I've been striving to do is to do things clearly and comprehensively, woman or not!

CAC: This was the early 1960s and things were beginning to break.

ME: That's right. Things were beginning to break . . .

CAC: But not at Knox?

ME: Certainly, not enough for me to be insulted by or even angered by.

CAC: Or even sensitive . . .

ME: And I'm still not angry about it. I realize now that he would have been sued and should have been sued but I have to say he didn't keep me from having a good education. I wasn't made so uncomfortable in the classroom that . . .

CAC: It was remarked to you and not to the class.

ME: It was a remark to me and not to the class, right; although, given that he made the remark to me, it must have colored his attitudes in the classroom. It's just that those didn't ever come through or if they did, I never got the message that women weren't supposed to engage in this kind of . . . I know a lot of women did and that's horrible.

CAC: At Stanford, you only had one woman professor?

ME: I had only one woman professor and they were quite up front about the fact that they hadn't given me a fellowship initially.

CAC: And in the Chicago Circle, how many women in Philosophy?

ME: The chair was a woman and I was really lucky. There must have been about eight when I went there . . . three of us were women. That was very unusual, very unusual. As I say, I never really have felt that I was discriminated against in any way that made a difference, that kept me from doing what I wanted to do. I'm very lucky because I know there were a lot of people for whom that wasn't the case.

In Chicago . . . my first job . . . I originally was part time and then took a full time job. We hated Chicago. We hated living in Chicago. We lived in Hyde Park. Joe, my husband, was . . .

CAC: He was at Chicago?

ME: He was at Chicago. He was the only one in his department that hadn't been mugged, literally.

CAC: Yes, in the mid 1960s particularly, it was a dangerous neighborhood.

ME: Very dangerous. Our son had never played outside by himself in Chicago where we lived in Hyde Park.

CAC: Oh my! Yes.

ME: So, it was either move to the suburbs and spend a lot of time commuting, which we didn't want to do. We didn't want to live in the suburbs. We loved Hyde Park. It was just didn't love raising a child there.

CAC: Sure.

ME: We decided that we would leave Chicago. Joe had already attained the reputation of being one of the promising young stars of the field. He could have gone almost anywhere and, indeed, when he first interviewed for jobs, he interviewed at eleven places as a graduate student and got twelve job offers, more offers that interviews.

CAC: Remember, the job market was much better in the 1960s.

ME: It was <u>much</u> better then and it was good in Philosophy, better . . . it wasn't as good as it was.

CAC: Never better in History before or since.

ME: Places would call and say, "Would you please come and teach here?" Minnesota then made a job for me and you were part of that; that is, you were a signator on a contract. You don't remember this I'm sure but I was originally hired part time in Philosophy and in Humanities . . .

CAC: Ohhh.

ME: . . . and there was a Humanities program, or Social Sciences program, or something.

CAC: Oh, yes.

ME: It went away . . . I think it had gone away before I came but it was a put together job.

CAC: My! I'm glad I have done some good things.

ME: [laughter] You definitely did. We came in the fall of 1972 and I was part time in the Humanities until . . .

CAC: I should add a footnote to that that it won't surprise you that whoever is chair of History—I had just become chair in 1971—is asked frequently by the college to play this kind of bridging role to American Studies, Humanities, Social Science, etcetera.

ME: Okay.

CAC: So, it was a natural kind of thing to fall into.

ME: You were also very active in interdisciplinary programs, which Humanities was.

CAC: True, yes.

ME: Humanities at the time was in big trouble, had been put into a kind of receivership, and had also hired a new chair, also a man from the University of Chicago, Paul D'Andrea, who turned out to be an arch enemy—I guess I can say that. When time came for me to be put up for promotion, Philosophy voted to tenure and promote me and Humanities voted to fire me. You may not remember that either but I became a kind of cause celebre in the college. Frank Sorauf was dean and called me over—had never met me . . . I had never met him—in his gruff way to see what this person was like that had caused all of this trouble. It was not a beautiful time at all.

CAC: But your own department was supportive?

ME: My own department was totally supportive and there were people in the English Department . . . Toni McNaron and Tom Clayton, for example, called the dean and said, "If Humanities doesn't want her, we do." People were wonderful with the exception of . . . And there were people in Humanities who were quite wonderful.

CAC: I'm sure.

ME: It wasn't just me . . . it was also Ken Zimmerman and Mischa Penn at the same time. They were cleaning house. I guess, that's the way they thought about it.

CAC: Mischa Penn was without an advanced degree?

ME: Right. Neither of them had had a very full research record. I, on the other hand, had published far more than anybody else in the Humanities program, including the chair of the program.

CAC: He was in the right place.

ME: He was in the right place, engaged in *artistic* work. The college decided that they would put me full time in Philosophy, which was wonderful, but at exactly the same time, the college

was looking for a director of a new program in Cross-Disciplinary Studies and you were a member of the Search Committee.

CAC: I was chairman of the damned thing.

ME: You, and Ted Wright, and "Corky" [Walter H.] Johnson.

CAC: You've got a good memory, sister.

ME: As you said earlier, "People remember things they didn't know they remembered." It's interesting that you've been a signator on so many of the things I've done here.

CAC: You're making me feel very good.

ME: [laughter] The dean then asked me to be director of Cross-Disciplinary Studies. After having been fired by this interdisciplinary program, it was quite wonderful.

CAC: What did you know about Cross-Disciplinary Studies at that time?

ME: Really, nothing . . . I still don't think I know anything about Cross-Disciplinary Studies in sort of pedagogical, curricular development sort of ways but Aesthetics is cross-disciplinary; so, I know what many of the problems are that people confront when they take on an interdisciplinary study. The college had decided that it wanted to provide an opportunity for freshman in grouping together courses along themes that I thought was very exciting. I still think it was very exciting. It was a very exciting thing for the few people that we actually were able to involve in that.

CAC: My recollections suggest that Roger Page was a crucial person in that?

ME: I think he was also on the Search Committee.

CAC: But he the staff person really putting it together?

ME: Right. At the time, every college in the country was groping with experimental courses, people wanting to do courses in all kinds of things, and that program was put under the bailiwick of Cross-Disciplinary Studies; and I think you must have been on the Experimental Courses Committee, too, when people were trying to get courses in ESP [Extrasensory Perception]. There were several courses in Marxism, which were in that program. I remember Peter Magrath and I had lunch with representatives of the American Legion . . .

CAC: Ohhh.

ME: . . . who wanted to discuss the evils of teaching of Marxism.

CAC: Yes.

ME: In fact, there were a lot of people who were critical of Magrath for a lot of reasons and, I think, many of them were quite good reasons to be critical but in terms of his support of not just me but the college and the teaching of Marxism, he was unflinchingly supportive and took on those devils. [laughter] I remember a lunch in the Campus Club and this was not the pragmatist, nor the people pleaser, nor the politician that we often saw. His standards were firm.

CAC: He carried the argument, which meant that you did not have to?

ME: No, I was there and had my say but he carried the argument and, I think, convinced the people.

CAC: That's a good story.

ME: Yes, it's a very good story. Recently, there was flak about somebody wanting a table at the freshman orientation and not getting a table . . . the Young Republicans, or somebody.

CAC: Yes.

ME: I wrote to Nils Hasselmo then and said that I hoped that in these days of remembering the 1960s as the good old days of financial wealth, that the good old days of the president taking a strong stand on academic freedom were not something we had to look back on nostalgically.

CAC: You heard from him?

ME: I did hear from him. He wrote back and said, indeed, he had finally taken what I think was the right stand and allowed various student groups to have a place at the table . . . literally, a table at the place, in this case.

CAC: [laughter]

ME: I was director of Cross-Disciplinary Studies for three years and I got to know wonderful people.

CAC: You started to describe the pedagogical structure that was there. No one yet has spoken about that; so maybe, you can.

ME: Okay, good. There were three kinds of things that were under the bailiwick of Cross-Disciplinary Studies, this special set of opportunities for primarily freshman in clusters of courses around a theme or a question. There was one on Law in Society and, of course, that was very attractive to students who thought of themselves as in pre-law. There was one in Language and Art, which was something that I was extremely interested in, in which students took some

English, Linguistics, and Philosophy. Then, there was one in a kind of pre-medical theme, medical sciences, in which they were assured of a place in Chemistry and Biology and then added some Liberal Arts courses. This was a yearlong program and these freshman were to be together in the same courses—many of them, of course, were large lecture courses but they had their own discussion sections—so, they could be together for a whole year. In addition to the normal course work, they met weekly for seminars on cross-disciplinary topics. There were teaching assistants [TAs] assigned to them and faculty were invited to come and give special lectures. It was a very, very good program.

CAC: You were there three years?

ME: I was there three years and then, Michael Root, my colleague, was my successor. Then, I think the program closed down because it was terribly expensive. The other thing that was in there . . .

CAC: Another thing they did was one on—I'm afraid it was called—Man and Earth.

ME: That's right.

CAC: It was an environment one.

ME: There was an environmental one one year.

CAC: And there was one called—it anticipated multi-culturalism—American Way of Life and the people teaching it came in and said, "No, it's plural. It's American Ways of Life!"

ME: Yes, Ways of Life. That's right.

CAC: [laughter]

ME: Then, there was one with a kind of mathematical tinge to it because my friend, Don Berry, in statistics directed one of these.

CAC: You said you met interesting folks . . . name some.

ME: Let me just say that in addition to an umbrella for this cross-disciplinary opportunity for freshman and independent studies kinds of things, what's now OSLO . . . OSLO was underneath Cross-Disciplinary Studies . . .

CAC: We should say for a person listening to this OSLO, Office of Special Learning Opportunities.

ME: Right . . . independent studies, and internships, and so forth. The Experimental Courses

program, which was by far the funniest because we got really off the wall course proposals . . . Various serious people like yourself, and "Corky" Johnson, and John Howe . . .

CAC: Oh, I'm serious, am I?

ME: . . . and Virginia Fredricks trying to hold the line for standards and yet be tolerant. It was quite wonderful. Then, there were several cross-disciplinary programs: Urban Studies, Women's Studies, Latin-American Studies . . .

CAC: Good for you.

ME: . . . East Asian Studies.

CAC: That's right, they fell under that administratively.

ME: That's right. I think it was a wonderful idea because they had an administrative location. They didn't like it because they didn't feel they had direct access to the dean and so there was a tension from the beginning. Women's Studies said, "Look, we don't have anything to do with Latin-American Studies. Just don't throw us all in the same garbage heap." That's not the way they talked but it was the way they felt that this was a way of just shunting them off into the corner; so, that didn't work very well. The people that I got to meet were the people who were really interested in students, and in ways of challenging students, and giving them a kind of learning community at the university, who also appreciated the fact that disciplines are very important but the boundaries are loose.

CAC: Porous?

ME: Porous, yes. Dick Skaggs, for example, in Geography . . .

CAC: Oh! he was such a . . .

ME: Wonderful, just very serious but open to new ideas. George Green, whom I haven't seen for a long time, from History . . . Don Berry . . . my colleague Rolf Sartorius, who was interested in the law sequence . . . Michael Hancher and Robin Brown in the English Department, who were interested in helping kids learn how to write . . . Robin then headed the composition program.

CAC: I'm remembering each of these programs had a composition component.

ME: Yes, that's right.

CAC: The composition was supposed to relate to the field?

ME: That's exactly right. They had their own composition sequence. The teacher of the composition class was required to come to regular meetings. All of the professors and TAs were required to come to meetings and talk about what they were doing. It's, of course, a reason it didn't last. People's energies flagged and it was harder and harder to find people who would dedicate the kind of time it took to doing this right. It was expensive because the college was paying special TAs in each of these departments and, in some cases, paying some release time for faculty.

CAC: Was there ever a formal evaluation of the outcome?

ME: No. Oh, wait a minute. Now that you say that . . . Darwin Hendel was, indeed, involved in an evaluation of this. Yes, there was an evaluation but it was like so many of the things we evaluate . . . God only knows what shelf it ended up on.

CAC: Or whoever read it!

ME: Exactly.

CAC: Your own subjective memory though was what about the experience?

ME: Very positive.

CAC: You had that feedback from the students?

ME: The students, yes. The students who stayed with it loved it. What happened is that—this was something we didn't foresee although we should have—people who came in as entering freshmen, [their] minds change very quickly about what in fact they want to study. They quickly got caught up in thinking, I'm really am going to major, not in Philosophy, but in something else and they became intent on starting to take care of major requirements.

CAC: Yes, yes.

ME: And although these courses all filled distribution requirements, they often didn't fill the major requirements as soon as these students thought they should be doing it; so, that worked against the program.

CAC: I know it's anecdotal but there was at least one student who was kept in the college because of it.

ME: Oh, really?

CAC: That was my son.

ME: Really?

CAC: Yes. He flopped around, and then he got into this, and it just turned him on, and then he stuck it out. He got enough of the enthusiasm that he could then create his own enthusiasm.

ME: Yes, I think that was true of a lot of the students.

CAC: How often, I have no idea.

ME: I think it was true that even the students who dropped out of the program had found a way to find a niche at the university that they might not have found.

CAC: My son took the Environmental sequence and in Literature they read Thoreau and other folks but he took a course in Botany and a course in Forestry. The Forestry course, he came to use in his career. I mean, who knows how things turn out?

ME: Right. It was a wonderful idea and I think that the program now, the Residential College program in some ways is similar to that.

CAC: Is that underway now?

ME: It is underway but I know very little about it.

CAC: Okay.

ME: I know that Gayle Graham Yates and Marvin Marshak are involved in it. I've talked to Gayle about it and she's very high on it. I don't know enough about it to . . .

CAC: This was a pretty consuming commitment to make for three years?

ME: Yes, it was. I taught half time and I had this half time administrative job.

CAC: You had only been here two years when you bought into that?

ME: I'd only been here three years, I guess.

CAC: You came in 1972. This is 1974.

ME: Right. I got to know all kinds of people all over, not just the college, but the university because . . .

CAC: The St. Paul campus was involved.

ME: . . . the St. Paul campus was involved and people from IT [Institute of Technology] were involved. That's right, there was a pre-engineering sequence.

CAC: I'd forgotten that.

ME: It also helped me to begin to learn that I didn't want to be an administrator with my life. That was fun for three years but that's not really where the greatest satisfaction came for me. The dean at the time was Frank Sorauf and the associate deans were Virginia Fredricks, and John Howe, and Nils Hasselmo. Sidney Simon came in after Virginia left. Those were the halcyon days of administration; that is, the meetings were fun . . . maybe meetings are still fun but I don't sense that.

CAC: Halcyon . . . I see. There was a weekly meeting of the cabinet?

ME: There was a weekly meeting of the cabinet. Peter Robinson, who was director of Honors . . .

CAC: Ahhh.

ME: I should mention Peter, too, because he became a very good friend. He and I went every other week. We were in the cabinet but only . . .

CAC: You were peripheral just like Aesthetics. [laughter]

ME: That's right. But that was fine, that was just fine. And Carol Pazandak was.

CAC: Ah, counseling services?

ME: Right. Mitch Charnley came to meetings.

CAC: Ahhh! Eternal associate dean?

ME: Yes, yes. Linda Viemeister then . . . Linda Wilson was. We had a lot of fun but then times were more fun then than they are now, I think.

CAC: We'll come back to that.

ME: Yes, we'll come back to that. Since then, although I've done administration in my department—I was chair for three years and, god help me! I've agreed to do it again beginning in the summer—what I really like most is teaching and research. I've been very, very lucky that the research problems have not dried up. I know that there are a lot of people, and a lot of people in Philosophy, who reach a point in their career and the problems have been pretty

obscure and narrow and they get to a point where they don't . . . I don't know if it's burnout. That's not been true for me.

CAC: How did you keep your research agenda alive, and growing, and developing? What resources did you have? How important were national meetings?

ME: Certainly, the national meetings were extremely important and the source of my strokes, that is, Gee! this is really good work. Aesthetics still is at the margin and because of that . . . I think this is true within one's own departments in a lot of places that one's closest colleagues do not provide one with the strongest source of support. Maybe, it's because things are so competitive and egos are what they are but the support I've gotten for my work has been from other aestheticians in the Society for Aesthetics. In recent years, I've found a couple of other niches. I've discovered that I'm really good at helping art educators understand what aesthetics is and how it can be integrated into classroom instruction; so, I have been spending a lot of time in the last five to ten years working with art educators.

CAC: You mean that's secondary art teachers?

ME: K-12.

CAC: Okay.

ME: That's been great. I really, really like it.

CAC: How does that work? Is this a workshop setting?

ME: Yes, workshop settings, anything from a half a day to two weeks.

CAC: What happens in those sessions? What do you do with them and for them?

ME: I get them to do aesthetics; that is, I do what I call my bag lady show.

CAC: Say something about that.

ME: I have a bag of objects. I do this in my Introduction to Aesthetics class, too, the first day. I have a bag of objects: a little oil painting, a piece of driftwood, a cake pan, a plastic toy car, a dried up orange. I put them out on the table, and I tell them to say whether or not these things are art or not, and then we vote, and then we fight. I do this as a way of modeling for them how you engage people in asking the basic questions, which is what philosophy is . . . asking the basic questions. You don't have to have the answers. You just have to love asking the questions and empowering students to ask the questions.

CAC: That kind of an exercise leads to empowerment?

ME: Yes.

CAC: What other kinds of exercises?

ME: I do an exercise on style, trying to define style. I break them up into small groups and they analyze the style of clothing of the others. What are they wearing? Why are they wearing that? What statements do they make wearing that? As the exercise becomes increasingly abstract, they are supposed to come up with a definition of what it means to say that something's in a particular style. There's an exercise in which I give them some poems about spring and they're to say which is the best poem. Of course, there's a lot of fighting about that but, again, the exercise is to show that people love to ask these questions and debate them; and they love to do it from they're very short on up, if they're turned on to do this. When art teachers are told they have to teach aesthetics, they are either angry or very frightened because they don't know what it is; so, I just make them feel comfortable thinking about what it is and that they can do it at a very simple level. Of course, by taking some course and reading some books, they can become more and more knowledgeable about it and integrate these things more and more into their classroom. They find it so much fun that I get a lot of positive feedback from them. Also, there are movements in art education. For example, the Getty Museum has as one of its missions art education and they are very interested in getting aesthetics into the classroom; so, they've been very supportive of these workshops.

CAC: I notice that in your CV [Curriculum Vitae] that you did a certain amount of community work with the Minnesota Humanities Commission. Is that similar to what you're describing now?

ME: Some of it, yes. One year, for example, I did a program with the Actors' Theater in which we raised aesthetic questions about three or four plays. Prior to each of the plays, I had people come in and raise some issues with the audience.

CAC: Ah.

ME: Then, the audience would go see the play and then, after the play, we would meet again and think about, What is creativity? Are the actors as creative as the playwrights?

CAC: You could move back and forth from these kinds of workshop settings into your regular classroom settings at the university?

ME: Yes, and into my research.

CAC: Tell me about that.

ME: My research, not just my writing—increasingly I've done writing about aesthetic education—but in my what I think of as my scholarly research, the topics are still in some ways very narrow, very logical, very analytical. For example, one of my recent papers is on whether

or not aesthetic properties are supervenient. Supervenient is a highly technical, logical, metaphysical term.

CAC: Now, you've got me, sister.

ME: Most people couldn't care less about whether or not aesthetic properties are supervenient. I find it fascinating. Everybody cares about whether or not something's a work of art, which I also find very interesting; so, I've been really fortunate in being able to move back and forth between circles of people who are very focused on very technical topics and the broader general audience which is not very focused at all and I find both rewarding. The fact that the technicians think that this popularization is a waste of one's talent doesn't bother me at all—fortunately.

CAC: If I'm listening correctly, you never had a career crisis, a career menopause?

ME: No, no. I never did.

CAC: Which is the point at which people become associate deans, sister.

ME: I know. I could have been, at several points, associate deans and deans.

CAC: Sure. I know that.

ME: I have to say that I was often pulled in that direction because I think I'd do it pretty well. People trust me and I think that's not true—that sounds horribly immodest—of a lot of people.

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

[Tape 1, Side 2]

ME: . . . thought that it's important for women to go into administrative jobs and it's certainly one of the reasons that I devoted so much time to committee work. You can hear by the way I say that, that that's part of this whole thing that I have found the least satisfying. I love to teach. I love my research. I've managed to do them all.

CAC: I'm referring to page nine of the CV, which lists the number of committees: Promotion and Tenure, [unclear] BA degree, Dean Search Committee, etcetera, but including the Senate Consultative Committee.

ME: Right, which I chaired.

CAC: Yes. Graduate Education. You did this through CLA [College of Liberal Arts] at the graduate level . . . through AAUP [American Association of University Professors]. There are just all kinds of avenues here.

ME: Yes. There was a year when I was on seventeen committees.

CAC: [laughter]

ME: It was the year when I was director of Cross-Disciplinary Studies. A lot of those committees I was on because of my directorship and it was also a year, I think, when we were doing the famous Chambers Committee.

CAC: Oh, that comes later.

ME: Does it?

CAC: Yes. That's the late 1970s.

ME: All right. Well, we were doing something. At any rate, that was just ridiculous.

CAC: And you still played wife and mother?

ME: I still played wife and mother. That's right. [laughter] In one way, it's horrible to have been able to do it because I'm very impatient with people who say, "Gee, I'm sorry I can't come to the meeting at 3:00 because I have to go pick up my kid." Somehow, my kid got home safely without being picked up by me. I say, "It's horrible" because I've become sort of cranky and crotchety. I did it when there were no Day Care Centers and my husband was no more supportive, probably a lot less supportive, in terms of what he was willing to do with respect to child care than most husbands are today. So, I'm very impatient with that as an excuse, much less patient than I should be, I know that.

CAC: But you can sympathize with Marcia Clark [prosecuting attorney in the current O.J. Simpson case].

ME: I sympathize with Marcia Clarke, yes, absolutely.

CAC: In this list of committees, there must have been some that accomplished something?

ME: Oh, sure. The committees that I look back on that I'm glad I was on were the committees that had a definite purpose and it was over.

CAC: They were task oriented, goal oriented?

ME: Task forces. I'm not sure that all of those did much. My friend, how much did the Chambers report actually . . . well, probably quite a bit it was a step to the new liberal education requirements and so forth.

CAC: Yes.

ME: So, that kind of committee . . . a small committee. Let's take that committee. It was you and . . .

CAC: Roger was the staff person again.

ME: Roger Page, and Nils Hasselmo, and Ted Wright. [Note: Ted Wright, Department of English, was not on that committee] Who am I forgetting? Corky Johnson, probably?

CAC: You bet.

ME: It was sort of the old standbys. We worked very, very hard.

CAC: It was a small working committee.

ME: We held hearings, and tried to listen to everybody, and fought the fight. Then, it was over and there was something that didn't just sit on a shelf. The worst stuff . . . the years on the Consultative Committee . . . endless discussions which went nowhere.

CAC: Who was president when you were on that? Was this Magrath?

ME: Magrath.

CAC: Say something about those meetings, and who came, and what consequence there might have been or lack thereof.

ME: I think that in terms of actually accomplishing any specific things other than the necessary—let's revise the constitution . . . along these lines this year—nothing. Absolutely nothing was accomplished other than the fact that people in Morrill Hall—in particular, Peter Magrath but not just Peter, others in Morrill Hall—knew that they had somebody watching them. I think that that's the main purpose of the Consultative Committee, not that they get big jobs done, not that they make major changes, but that the administration knows that twice a month, or whatever it is now, they have to meet with the faculty.

CAC: To what degree was the flow the other way?

ME: You mean from the faculty to the . . .

CAC: No, no, no. From the president to the faculty?

ME: I don't know because I think Consultative Committees try. They produce these newsletters for example, but I don't know how many people read the newsletters.

CAC: You don't think that Magrath was using the committee to inform the faculty or to run trial balloons?

ME: No, I don't think so.

CAC: Okay. They were long meetings?

ME: Oh! long meetings and there were some people who were very, very good at raising issues. Ken Keller was on the Consultative Committee before he became . . .

CAC: Sure. Did you overlap with him?

ME: I didn't overlap with him but I did overlap with him on the Finance Committee. He was just terrific in seeing the big picture, and raising important issues, and being firm in pushing the questions. Fred Morrison was another person . . .

CAC: In the Law School.

ME: . . . who was just very good at seeing consequences of policies several years down the pike, raising hard questions, and not just sitting there and nodding, and not just sitting there and being territorial. That was, I think, one of my biggest disappointments . . .

CAC: Ahhh.

ME: . . . in committees, not just at the university level but the College Budget Committee, for example. People find it very, very hard to think beyond their departments, taking the big picture.

CAC: Do you think that's systemic, that they get on these committees thinking they are meant to represent their constituency?

ME: Yes, I think so, that's partly it.

CAC: Or is something else operating?

ME: Or they get on it thinking that if they don't that their department will be overlooked somehow unless they're at the table. It's one of the things behind the Byzantine ways that we have of building up these committees, that there has to be one person from this and one person from that. Yes. If you think you are there to represent the left-handed women in Ford Hall, then of course, you're going to make sure that talking about left-handed women in Ford Hall is what you do. So, yes, there's a lot of that. The way the questions are phrased makes us territorial.

CAC: Did you ever serve on the Women's Studies, Center . . . ?

ME: No, because I have never aligned myself with feminism because I've never wanted to; that is, I think I'm a feminist in the sense that I certainly have been a champion of the role of women but philosophically I don't think that there's a feminist way of thinking about things. So, I have not wanted to align myself with those programs, though certainly I've been on a lot of graduate student committees. I've given lectures and so forth. But, no, I've not been involved disciplinarily or in committee work in Women's Studies and that's been a conscious decision, a political decision of mine, and one that a lot of people have not liked. But I'm comfortable with it.

CAC: Could we take a couple of minutes out to discuss the Philosophy Department, its composition, the—I won't say party line—strong reputation or power of an analytical system which prevails generally in good schools of philosophy, as you suggest?

ME: Right, though it's changing.

CAC: Then they tolerate some historians of Philosophy and some Ethics, right? You describe it. Let's start in 1972 when you came here because [Herbert] Feigl was still . . . ?

ME: Feigl, by the time I got here, had retired and was . . .

CAC: But he's still a presence?

ME: He certainly was still a presence but he had become ill.

CAC: May Brodbeck was here and she was some presence.

ME: There's no question she was a presence but she became dean of the Graduate School soon after I got here and so she was not in the department as much as she had been before.

CAC: They did have the center. How did the center relate to the department?

ME: The Philosophy of Science Center and the Philosophy Department have always had an uneasy marriage and still do; although, it's much better now than it was when I first got here. May Brodbeck, for example, was never a member of the Philosophy of Science Center because Herbert Feigl didn't think women should be members of the Philosophy of Science Center. Although, he had a lot of respect for May and they worked a lot together; nonetheless, the woman's place was not in the Philosophy of Science Center. That was a source of real tension between the department and the center. When I first got here, the people in the Philosophy of Science Center had a reduced teaching load. That was a serious source of disagreement.

CAC: I'll bet.

ME: That changed but it was a very bloody battle during my young days here. I remember one of my earliest meetings, literally, chasing after Grover Maxwell, who had stormed out of the meeting, pleading with him to come back, in my middle child, daughterly, peacemaking way. Please, please . . .

CAC: I never inquired about your family. Are you a middle daughter?

ME: A middle daughter, and the only daughter between two very strong boys, and a lot of peacekeeping needed to be done.

CAC: Yes. Did he [Maxwell] come back?

ME: No, he didn't. But he felt bad about leaving. [laughter]

CAC: Good, you made him feel bad. Good!

ME: So, that, of course, is what the middle child always wants anyway, to make somebody feel bad. That's, as I said, been a source of tension, partly because there are jealousies—Why should somebody be in the center and not me? . . . although, now, I think almost anybody could be in the Philosophy of Science Center—and partly because there are suspicions that maybe there are empire builders over there and they're building the empire of the Philosophy of Science Center and, really, it's the department we should all care about. Although it's much better now than it has been, the department is still, I would say, analytically inclined, although that's changing. A lot of students, for example, now really don't think they should have to take Logic, which causes great dismay on the part of about three-fourths of us.

CAC: Is not Logic essential for a major?

ME: Yes, it's essential for a major but we also have one of the most stringent Logic requirements for graduate students in the country. They have to take a full year of graduate level Logic. It's putting it mildly to say, it's our least popular requirement. That's an ongoing battle as Philosophy changes and Philosophy is changing. Questions count as Philosophy now that would not have counted as Philosophy in 1960.

CAC: Example?

ME: Whether feminist epistemology . . . nobody would have thought that there was a real question of whether or not women have a way of coming to knowledge which is different from men.

CAC: This was created by Naomi Scheman?

ME: Well, certainly by Naomi and others. Those are questions that Naomi and other philosophers—myself included—take very seriously now. They just weren't questions. It's not that they weren't taken seriously; they weren't questions.

CAC: These questions came from the culture more broadly and not from within?

ME: Yes, that's right. So that the fights that we see, the culture wars within society, have their analogues in the Philosophy Department. It's been pretty bloody at times. We recently introduced a course in Introduction to Philosophy and Cultural Pluralism where instead of just looking at Plato and [David] Hume and [René] Descartes, we also think about [W.E.B.] Du Bois and Black Elk—not all of us. These are different courses, okay? There were a lot of people in the department who didn't think that should be an Introduction to Philosophy that counted for our majors. That was a very, very unhappy battle.

CAC: How did it come out?

ME: [sigh] It came out by several of us working out a compromise. You know, the middle child making everybody see that . . . [unclear] off a little bit off here and a little bit there.

CAC: Who else in the department played this kind of moderating role, seeking a middle consensus?

ME: There are a couple of us, two or three of us, who are open to almost anything. One of the things that makes me most depressed about the world at large, and certainly about my department, is the increasing number of people who think they have the truth sewn up.

CAC: I see.

ME: I entered the profession thinking . . . I take seriously, very seriously . . . I think at the core of my being is Socrates' claim that the unexamined life is not worth living. I think that's what philosophy is all about but increasingly there are philosophers who don't genuinely believe that, and it makes for bloody battles, and it makes for, I think, an unhealthy atmosphere for our students, particularly graduate students. Undergraduates tend not to be touched very much by these kinds of wars. People still do what they do in the classroom. But graduate students, I think, feel polarized by some of these issues. I think there are several of us in the department who really do believe that we have to examine <u>all</u> of these issues.

CAC: Are these divisions generational?

ME: No. No, they aren't.

CAC: Are they politically correct divisions?

ME: Well . . . no. One of the reasons they're so difficult is that it's not as simple as that. It's a way of thinking that Philosophy should be done and thinking if you're a philosopher—this must be true in History, as well—that's who you are; it's part of your identity. Thinking that there is a good way to do Philosophy is not like thinking that there's a good way to refer to women and a bad way to refer to women. It's who you are. If somebody wants to teach *Black Elk Speaks: [Being the Life Story of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux*], surely we should let them do that but if people think that's not Philosophy, it's not that it's just a political view, it's a view about the nature of the discipline, the way in which criticism is at the core of what we do and fears that if I teach *Black Elk Speaks*, I can't be critical of Black Elk the way I'm critical of Descartes. You're nodding so you understand why that's . . .

CAC: With Black Elk's, you get a little problem of provenance there.

ME: Yes, all right.

CAC: [laughter]

ME: So, it's not as though people are just being cranky and being politically incorrect.

CAC: But you find an increasing rigidity in your own department and, perhaps, more broadly beyond that in the college or, perhaps, in higher education?

ME: I think so . . . in the world. Yes, I think there is. I think it's because people are threatened. They think that standards are going by the board on the one hand or they think that standards are oppressive. Both views, I find, utterly absurd but that's because I'm in the middle.

CAC: And a certain number of people within the academy blame this on the 1960s, that what we've inherited now are a lot of ideologues who were confrontational in the 1960s and now they're all full professors.

ME: No, I don't think that's right.

CAC: Okay.

ME: That's partly true but most of the people from the 1960s are getting pretty tired now.

CAC: [laughter]

ME: I think it's the people who are entering the profession that are very divided on these issues, people who think that there is a truth, that there is a fact of the matter, and people who think that that's an oppressive political view, and people who think . . . saying, "The fact of the matter is not a political view." It's not just people who are from the 1960s. It's the way people are engaging in the discipline.

CAC: That's one of the subtle changes you've seen the last twenty-five years. Are there others?

ME: Well, the profession—as I've said to people and they all nod—is not what it was when we entered it. Everybody nods but I'm not sure I know what we're all nodding at.

CAC: The profession of higher education or the profession of Philosophy?

ME: Both.

CAC: Okay.

ME: Both but, I guess, primarily higher education.

CAC: Describe it.

ME: There's far more worry now about numbers of students, numbers of majors. When I first came to this institution, none of us knew how many Philosophy majors there were or cared. Now, every single one of us knows.

CAC: Is this because of retrenchment?

ME: Yes.

CAC: Or other things?

ME: It's because of declining resources.

CAC: You found that setting in when, Marcia?

ME: I don't know. I think it's gotten a whole lot worse in the last five to ten years, partly because the university's attempt to deal with declining resources is to hire people who are better resource managers; and I think the people we've hired to do that really don't understand the enterprise. I think that we are experiencing something very akin to what the automobile industry experienced when the people who were hired as the top management and middle management were hired out of business schools rather than out of engineering schools.

CAC: Ah.

ME: I don't think they understood automobiles or even really cared about automobiles. What they cared about were automobiles as a way to get the profit line at the bottom of the page big; and I think there are a whole lot of people like that now in higher education—not just at the university but the people running the seminars for the leaders.

CAC: What seminars are those? What do you mean?

ME: Things like the seminars at Harvard and Penn State . . .

CAC: Oh, I see. Okay.

ME: . . . and that sort of thing for deans, to teach them how to be better deans and, of course, what they try to do is to teach them how to manage budgets. I saw, just this week, a statement out of the Carlson School about their vision, their strategic plan, for the next few years. Clarke, there is not a single mention of what they do as an academic enterprise. You could read that and have no idea what people study and learn in the Carlson School. I think that that's what's happening all over the university. It's depressing.

CAC: And yet, we still draw our administrative officers primarily from our professoriate, don't we? Is this a self-selection that goes on as people go up the line?

ME: It's true we do at, say, the dean level but at the staff level . . .

CAC: John Wallace was associate vice-president.

ME: Yes, and look what happened to him.

CAC: What happened to him?

ME: He got kicked out. Here, you mean?

CAC: Yes.

ME: Yes, right. His program was done away with and he found out by reading a report that they were going to recommend that his program be done away with. He didn't resign. The program he headed was terminated. Bob Erickson is a Super Valu person . . .

CAC: So to speak. [laughter]

ME: Yes. That's where he came from.

CAC: We should like someone with super value.

ME: We should but if we were growing lettuce and selling lettuce, that's right, but in the college? In many of the meetings I've gone to, the person who does most of the talking is not one of the deans but the staff person in the budgetary office. It's that sort of thing. I looked at the latest form that my chair currently has been asked to fill out. It's all numbers. How many people in this class? How many TAs are assigned to this? How many students are assigned to

these TAs? It really is numbers. What is it . . . the thing that we're all supposed to be doing now?

CAC: Well, I'm retired.

ME: Responsibility centered management, is that it . . .?

CAC: Well, accountability?

ME: . . . where colleges are going to be able to budget on the basis of the tuition that they bring in?

CAC: Oh.

ME: Now, is the Philosophy Department going to have to manage on the basis of the tuition it brings in? I think there are a lot of us who think that's the way things are going and that makes it a very different enterprise than it was when I came here in 1970. This is happening all over and it's happening because the world is a different place.

CAC: The 1980s happened.

ME: The 1980s happened and the demands on the state budget have changed. How much are we now spending on prisoners? Way more than we were twenty-five years ago.

CAC: Health, prisons, welfare are competing demands.

ME: That's right. We are trained to think about big ideas and we do it really, really well. What we don't do really, really well is think about who our students are, who they're likely to be ten years from now, and what changes we should make. I don't think we should make any changes. We've still got to teach Plato! What kind of a world will this be if we're not teaching Plato? But that, of course, is not the kind of answer that people want when you're asked for a so-called strategic plan.

CAC: Lay person out there frequently ask me, "Are students different now than they were ten, twenty, thirty years ago?" They ask you and what do you say?

ME: Are they ever. Yes.

CAC: Go ahead.

ME: I'm really honest with my students about how different I think they are and how that depresses me. Here's the best example I can give. When I first started teaching—my first job was at Iowa State but my first real job was at the University of Illinois in Chicago—at Chicago

Circle, my students were almost all students still living at home with their parents who for the most part were first generation, at most second generation immigrants. Nearly all of my students were the first person in their family to go to college. These were not kids from privileged homes . . . lower middle class, working families. I taught Introduction to Aesthetics and the first paper assignment was to read Aristotle on their own, the poetics, and to choose a person from their own reading who they thought qualified as a candidate for a tragic hero, and to justify their choice in terms of Aristotle's criteria. They did the assignment before I started lecturing on Aristotle. They chose tragic heroes that were, in fact, tragic heroes. Some of them were a little stretching but they knew they were stretching and said, "Aristotle wouldn't like this about Willie Loman because he wasn't really of noble birth."

CAC: [laughter]

ME: Now, I cannot tell them to do that paper before I've lectured on Aristotle because they can't read Aristotle on their own. That was the first change I had to make. In the last three or four years, I have gotten choices of tragic heroes that would blow you away: E.T., Old Yeller, the dog, the Incredible Hulk. Clarke, absolutely horrible examples. Students come to me and say, "I don't know what a tragedy is." I will say, "Haven't you seen a movie recently that made you cry?" That was the other thing. I had to change it from, Tell me somebody that you've read to a movie because they don't read anything anymore.

CAC: Yes.

ME: This year, this spring, I've given that same assignment and now I'm handing them a list of examples of tragedies, novels, plays, and operas, and movies.

CAC: And real figures, historic figures?

ME: No. I have them do a fictional character. It can be somebody like Henry V but it has to be from the play.

CAC: *Shakespearience*?

ME: Right. I would stretch that if somebody came in and said, "Look, let me do Richard Nixon and the Watergate." Somebody who knew enough to come and ask that question . . . I taught this course in the fall and did this assignment. I had an incredibly bright young woman, one of the brightest students in the class came, and she said, "I'm having a lot of trouble with this assignment but I think that I have a tragic heroine from the *Incredible Hulk-Part II.* I said, "I haven't seen it but tell me what's the story?" She said, "I've only seen twenty minutes of it." They don't even watch movies all the way through. They click. Their attention span is minuscule. I now teach and build into my lectures, every twelve and one-half minutes when they're expecting an ad, I stop and let them talk to each other about a problem because they can't do it. Now, they get better. I can go from twelve and one-half minutes to fifteen. They're

bright. I don't mean they're not as smart as they were. They just don't know how to read. They don't have a shared background that I can draw on, that I can assume so that I can give assignments and do lectures accordingly, and they really haven't learned how to think. They haven't been pushed. Now, they enjoy it. I don't think they're evil, bad kids. It's just realistically, they don't have the skills or the knowledge, the shared background, the facts that the students that I had in the early 1970s had.

CAC: How about graduate students?

ME: They certainly know better how to read and how to write. They don't have the shared background knowledge either in many cases.

CAC: Again, this would be in contrast with twenty, twenty-five years ago?

ME: Right, where you could assume that everybody would have read . . . That is largely a matter of where students have gone to school, and what they've majored in, and so forth. My graduate classes are much better and I have to say, I'm teaching a class also this quarter, a 5-level Aesthetics class which is just a joy. There are ten kids. They're mostly Philosophy majors. We sit in a circle. We read articles. I'm teaching them how to write summaries of arguments. How to get the argument of a paper. They come to class and they've done that. They've struggled with trying to do that and the level of discussion is wonderful. So, they can do it. It's not that they're warped, or retarded, or stunted, or something, it's just that at the introductory levels . . .

CAC: Have you done Honors Seminars?

ME: Not for a few years. I have done them and they're wonderful. They're great. I've done that twice, I think, and both of those have been great. But there, again, it was like the graduate students, by the time people get to 5-level classes in Philosophy, they have learned to read because they've done it in all of these other . . .

CAC: They have survived?

ME: Yes. That's right.

CAC: Simple courses and learned something from them?

ME: Yes.

CAC: I'm going to shift the conversation just briefly and then we'll come back to some reflections. You've also lectured abroad: Denmark, Netherlands, United Kingdom, China. Do you want to say something about that?

ME: That's been great. I love getting away from this place and, in particular, I love getting away and teaching and working abroad. Most of my time abroad has been when I've been on sabbatical; so, I've been doing research. My teaching abroad has been really limited to lecturing, of course, but I think the only actual teaching I did was in Munich when I was on a faculty exchange program there, you know, where I had my own classes. Germany is so different from the United States. Although, I didn't realize this for several weeks, the students were amazed that I expected them to talk.

CAC: Yes.

ME: They expected me to do all the lecturing. They warmed to it and loved it eventually but that was difficult. Also, the one thing I remember most about teaching at the University of Munich was that every time I went in to give a lecture, the janitor was there just washing up the board from the last class. They washed the blackboards after every hour. They must have had . . . how many janitors, I don't know. We teach, in many cases, in really squalor. They've stopped washing the windows in Ford Hall.

CAC: I would think of this as change the last thirty years, too?

ME: Yes, they don't wash the windows in Ford Hall anymore.

CAC: What we refer to as infrastructure is . . .

ME: It's really crumbling. They don't wax the floors. We used to have Howard, the janitor, who took great pride in waxing the floors every week . . . now, maybe once a year. That's the biggest change.

CAC: Just to put one brief person question . . . your sabbaticals . . . you had to work these logistically with your husband's career?

ME: We've managed to take them the same year, which has been great. We always have travelled.

CAC: That's good.

ME: Originally, the countries we went to were countries where he was invited. He also taught on the exchange in Germany but he did it because I wanted to do it. Our time that we spent at Warwick in England was because I was invited to go to Warwick. Yes, we've been really, really lucky. I have to say, my husband has been just wonderful. We have organized our lives, and careers ,and raising our son on the whole very successfully; although, of course, I've done more than he did but . . . that just goes without saying.

CAC: By this time in the conversation—frequently they are conversations more than interviews—we kind of turn to reflection about, What's the big meaning of all of this? You did talk about the growing trend toward business principles and business strategies in academic governance but you also spoke about what you perceive as a larger lack of trust within the academy now than fifteen, twenty-five years ago. That's not a very positive way to reflect upon this experience and maybe there are positives that you would want to add? How do you perceive this issue of trust? I ask it because I've heard other people say the same thing.

ME: Yes. I don't know what the problem is. Part of it, I think, stems out of—in a small sense in my own department—being threatened by people that one thinks don't have the right standards or on the other side thinks has oppressive standards.

CAC: Yes.

ME: Maybe, that's inevitable as fields change, and time changes, and so forth but I don't think so. When I was at Warwick, for example, the department at Warwick is more diverse than my own department, radical Marxists, and radical feminists, and old-fashioned proprium logicians; and yet, every week, they have a faculty seminar where one of their own reads a paper. Whatever battles they have are funneled into philosophical discussion that are handled with respect. It's not that it's a patting on the head . . . gee, that's a great idea. There's real challenge. I don't see that here. I would love next year, as chair, to start that in my own department . . . have a faculty seminar where we read papers of our own work to one another but I don't think we can handle it. Maybe, we'll be able to if I can do some things I'd like to do but people wouldn't come, they would dismiss . . . oh! I'm not going to hear what she has to say this week or he's just going to be talking the same old stuff and that's uninteresting. It's not just a lack of trust. It's a lack of respect for the academic enterprise as I understand it and I think as everybody understands it but just feels that, for whatever reason, they're not being given a fair hearing. We demand that our administrators consult with us and we do spend a lot of time in consultation at this university but when it's done, people don't feel as though they've been listened to, unless they get their own way.

CAC: Ah.

ME: Right? The view is that consultation will always result in people doing what I've said they should do and when it doesn't, then you feel as if nobody has listened to you. In fact, I think oftentimes, consultation is just sort of a tack-on . . . we're going to go through the consulting process just so we can say we've gone through it, not because we care about what people think or not because we think they can help us solve this problem.

CAC: Now, do you think you understand University-2000?

ME: No. No. Certainly, there was a lot of consultation. They distributed all these materials to us. I think that most of us think that it's not going to make any difference in our lives anyway

unless they put a whole lot of money behind it or if it does, it will have an adverse affect on our lives. For example . . . take the stress on undergraduate education and making undergraduate education better in Goals-2000. That's what they say out of one side of their mouth. Out of the other side of their mouth, they tell us, "Of course, resources are going to dwindle and your classes have to get bigger." Now, how can I possibly have my students write more if instead of twenty-five, I have forty-five and no TA? It's a sham. I can assign my students more writing but can I actually make sure that they get more feed back? It's these mixed messages that we hear that make us extremely skeptical about what we're hearing. Then, also, Clarke, partly because in the last couple of years I've been chair of the Scientific and Scholarly Advisory Board which oversees the regents misconduct policy, I've seen the underbelly of the institution, charges of fraud—I can't name names—some illustrious cases which have been covered in the press . . .

CAC: Is this a committee separate from the Judicial Committee?

ME: Yes, it's a separate committee and most people don't even know . . .

CAC: I didn't realize that.

ME: . . . it exists because the Judicial Committee can only oversee cases when they reach the point of dismissal for cause or failure to get tenure. But there are other things that we can do to people.

CAC: I see.

ME: This committee came about largely because of federal guidelines. There is a lot of fraud in universities—not just this one—having to do with reporting of data, plagiarism, the use of human subjects in experiments, and so forth.

CAC: You think that the degree of these commissions are . . .

[End of Tape 1, Side 2]

[Tape 2, Side 1]

CAC: How long has it existed in the university?

ME: It has existed for two years.

CAC: Okay.

ME: It's a committee that is appointed by the Regents professors. Regents professors nominate members.

CAC: Heavens to Betsy!

ME: They are chosen by the president after the approval of the regents.

CAC: Oh.

ME: It's a fairly small committee, ten people. It represents the whole university and the members are chosen partly because they're people who are thought of as having some integrity but also to represent not just their own department but to represent research methodologies and practices; so that what counts as inclusion on a list of who gets to be counted as a principal investigator . . .

CAC: Oh, all right.

ME: . . . is not something that worries philosophers very much. So, who gets to be called the principal investigator is not something that my research practices give me much ground to answer. On the other hand, what counts as plagiarism in an English article is something that I would be much more likely to understand than somebody whose research is mainly laboratory animals would understand.

CAC: Sure.

ME: It's to represent that kind of scholarly practice. We get complaints from all over the university, some of them incredibly serious, some of them I think of as in the whining category. I think there is a whole lot of whining going on in society at large . . . people who want to have somebody to blame if things go wrong.

CAC: We talk about victimization in the larger culture, don't we?

ME: Yes, exactly. We are litigious in the university as well as in the society as a whole. There is a case going on right now that's being overseen by somebody that you know and respect very well. He called and said, "I'm at the end of my rope. I have had these parties in my office now, both of them, for several hours. I thought I had it settled and, then, two days later, one of the parties called after talking to his lawyer and he doesn't like the resolution that we came up. He wants to go ahead with a full-blown investigation." It's that sort of thing. So, it's not just what people are actually doing, it's the demands and the time this takes. Each one of these panels has to spend hours.

CAC: Is it [unclear] as a whole [unclear]?

ME: We oversee it.

CAC: Okay.

ME: We choose the panels. We look at the reports and make recommendations for sanctions if a dean or other administrator wants us to. It takes hours and it's not fun.

CAC: It exposes you to things you don't want to know?

ME: That's right. Of course, a lot of these things we do know because they're in the newspaper all the time. People don't act with much respect of one another and in lots of ways, it's because people don't seem to trust one another. You say, "Gee, isn't that too bad?" Then, you realize that somebody's falsely reporting data . . . how could you trust that person. There are a whole lot of people now, I realize, here that I don't want teaching graduate students how to do research because they're not trustworthy. Now, maybe, that's always been true, Clarke.

CAC: But not monitored?

ME: Not monitored or if we knew about it, we took care of it within our own little family or we didn't take care of it and a lot of students and others suffered tremendously. I think we're just learning, feeling our way, how to reconcile these various claims. On the one hand, we want to be a family, a community of learners. On the other hand, there are a whole lot of dysfunctional families, and things go on that shouldn't go on, and that you can't keep behind closed doors. People need to be protected and academic freedom needs to be protected. I think that's one of the reasons that it's not such a happy place. We're learning how to deal with these things and I'm not very optimistic that we're going to be able to do it.

I'm now trying to arrange a meeting of the chair of Faculty Affairs, the chair of the Judicial Committee, myself, and the university grievance officer, and the chair of—probably another committee you don't know exits—the Academic Integrity Committee in the Graduate School, which is another research committee. All of these committees are watching over these things. There should be some coherent way to get these people working together so that we all don't end up having to deal with these things independently. Every time we turn around, the vice-president's office insists we have to have a lawyer present. [sigh]

CAC: I've heard this from the Judicial Committee people the last twenty years, also.

ME: Right.

CAC: I hope it won't surprise you but please you that in the interviews I've tried to hear words and . . .

ME: [laughter]

CAC: . . . persons whose career and character you would respect have found their own way to use this word *respect.* Now, it's not a novel word but it's interesting in the context that I've been listening that *respect* is a kind of ultimate word; and it's usually put in a context of sadness.

ME: Yes.

CAC: That there has been a failure there.

ME: And then, wonderful things though do keep happening, don't they?

CAC: Let's say those.

ME: On Monday, at the end of my Introduction to Aesthetics class, we had been talking about Plato's belief that beauty is an absolute and that mathematical beauty . . . you could get at intellectual beauty.

CAC: Ah. Euclid looked on Beauty bare . . . [from *Sonnets* by Edna St. Vincent Millay]

ME: Right. [laughter] I said, "How many of you know what a golden section is?" Nobody knew and I said, "By Wednesday, I want you all to have looked up and be able to come and define a golden section and I want you to go out and look at Northrop Auditorium and decide whether or not it, first of all, is pleasing to the eye of all human beings, whether it was designed according to the golden section." I went back on Wednesday and I said, "How many of you looked it up?" About four out of sixty had actually done it but one kid not only had looked it up, he had gone to the archives, gotten a picture of Northrop Auditorium in 1929, made me an overhead of it, went to the architecture library and got a model, not just of the golden section but the golden rectangle, the golden circle, and made an overlay that showed that Northrop Auditorium was <u>absolutely</u> designed according to golden sections and golden rectangles.

CAC: [laughter]

ME: It was a wonderful, just a wonderful class! It wasn't just that this student . . .

CAC: And the fellow students . . . ?

ME: Appreciated it. We then had a wonderful discussion about whether or not beauty could be reduced to this sort of mathematical ratio and whether there was a beautiful human face.

CAC: Ahhh.

ME: It was a <u>terrific</u> class, and they were excited, and I was excited, and it was just wonderful. That goes on all the time in classes all across the university. The students don't know how to read but, nonetheless, it's still an incredibly exciting occupation. I still don't think there are any better.

CAC: I think that's a good ultimate statement.

ME: Good, good. I do believe it, although . . . [laughter] I also went to a . . . they have these retirement seminars. They invite you to come and learn about retirement before you get to it.

CAC: Oh, oh, oh.

ME: The room was overflowing.

CAC: And that says what to you?

ME: It says that a whole bunch of us want to get out of here . . . can't wait.

CAC: I just counted before you came in . . . you're fifty-seven. Do you want to stay another eight years?

ME: No.

CAC: Okay.

ME: If we can afford it, and we probably can since both of us . . .

CAC: What are you going to do?

ME: I don't know. There's a whole lot of reading and writing I want to do. I want to learn how to draw and I believe now I can.

CAC: Do you want to keep some connection with the university?

ME: I would like to teach one course a year but I don't know what one.

CAC: I did that for four years after my retirement.

ME: Yes. Are you glad you did that?

CAC: Oh, yes!

ME: Would you want to do it now?

CAC: No.

ME: But you're still connected?

CAC: Yes, you bet. We'll talk about that off record. [laughter]

ME: [laughter] All right.

CAC: That's a nice way to end on a positive note.

ME: Good.

CAC: Thank you very much.

ME: You're very welcome.

[End of Tape 2, Side 1]

[End of the Interview]

Transcribed by:
Hermes Transcribing and Research Service
12617 Fairgreen Avenue, Apple Valley, MN 55124
(612) 953-0730