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An Interview with Lee Scroggins

An Oral History Conducted by Claytee D. White

UNLV @ Fifty Oral History Project

Oral History Research Center at UNLV
University Libraries
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The following interview is part of a series of interviews conducted under the auspices of the UNLV @ Fifty Oral History Project. Additional transcripts may be found under that series title.

Claytee D. White, Project Director
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Preface

From a Montana childhood filled with memories of sub-zero winters to a whirlwind courtship and wedding to her husband of over three decades, Lee Scroggins brought an energy to all her administrative positions at UNLV.

Lee and her family moved to Las Vegas in March 1980. Within a couple of months she was working at UNLV and except for a brief hiatus in the late 1980s she remained at the university until her retirement in 2009.

She gives an account of her journey through the office staff levels she held. It began with a brief stint in the Education department (you couldn't rise a level until you had six months in one position); took her to the Business and Economics departments; the 1980s. After her hiatus from 1985 to 1988, she returned to UNLV to work in the Psychology department and eventually to the library.

Her interview traverses the evolution of the administrative worker from a time without technologies that became the common tools. It was an era without many copy machines, no Xerox, or computers. In addition, Lee touches upon procedural changes that were inevitable as the university grew

In retirement, Lee plans to "call her own shots" and enjoy life.

ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER AT UNLV

UNLV Oral History Project @ Fifty



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Peggy Scroggins 2/27/09
Signature of Narrator Date

Claytee D. White 2/27/2009
Signature of Interviewer Date

This is Claytee White. It is February 27th, 2009. And I'm with Lee.

Lee, would you pronounce and spell your last name, please?

Scroggins, S-C-R-O-G-G-I-N-S.

Thank you so much. How are you today? How are you doing today?

I'm doing great. Thank you.

Great.

Lee and I are here in Special Collections doing this interview.

So, Lee, all we're going to do is start with your early life. Tell me where you grew up, how many people were in the family, what your mom and dad did for a living.

Okay. Well, I was born in a small town called Superior, Montana. It's in the western part of the state in the mountains. I was the first of four children. My mother was a schoolteacher. And my father worked for the Federal Aviation Agency, which was then known as the Civil Aeronautics Board I believe. They met because my mother was a WASP in World War II. She used to fly into the town where my father was working in the tower at the airport and fell in love with his voice long before they met each other.

We moved around a lot. Most of the places I've lived have been in the western United States. Because to advance in the Federal Aviation Agency, you bid on a station that had another opening. So that's basically what we did. And my mother gave up teaching until -- I don't remember the year -- I was in fifth grade where she went and got her re-credential -- because of all the moving around it was a little hard to be a schoolteacher -- where she got re-credentialed. And beginning at the very end of fourth grade through high school I lived in Cut Bank, Montana.

What is the name of it?

Cut Bank, Montana, which when weather was reported was often the coldest spot in the nation.

Give me an example of how cold it could get in the winter.

Normally, typically it gets to 40 below zero for weeks at a time. We think it's warm by comparison and will actually go outside without coats when it gets up to zero. The coldest official temperature that I experienced there was minus 72 degrees. I have a cute and funny story to tell you about that day.

Please.

Because it was a small town and the people in the town had not passed a bond issue for a new boiler for the high school, we were not excused from school that day. We were told we needed to be there so that all of our parents could get the message that they really did need a new boiler in the school. As we tried to do our assignments, we could not write because the ink in our pens was frozen. And that's the truth. Needless to say, the bond issue passed.

Oh, my goodness.

So that's kind of a Cut Bank, Montana story.

Oh, I mean I feel cold. I feel it just listening to that story.

So now you know why I love Las Vegas.

Yes, I do. So now, do you still have family in Montana?

My brother still lives in Great Falls, Montana. I was there recently. I went there in the winter for my niece's wedding. And that was December 20th. And, yes, it was about 20-something below zero.

Now, is there any way to prepare for it now after being away from it for so long, to prepare for that weather?

Well, the one thing nice about it is you can bundle up for the cold. So you think the summer's here -- there's not much you can do.

Oh, my.

But I can go back and forth pretty easily because I've acclimated, you know, to both climates.

Well, good. That's great.

So tell me about going to school there. So most of your schooling, then, was in --
Most of it starting with the end of fourth grade was in Cut Bank, Montana. So that's most of what I remember.

And high school there as well?

Yes.

And then you went away to college where?

I went to college for one year in Bozeman, Montana at Montana State University I majored in home economics, which was popular in those days. And I loved it.

You learn all kind of things -- banking.

Had I finished school I probably would have become a county extension officer. That was kind of a goal that I didn't. I dropped out for financial reasons, because we have four kids in our family and it was kind of difficult to put everybody through college. So I opted out. And I went to business school at Kinman Business University in Spokane, Washington, where I learned all of my business skills.

Wonderful. It must have been a great school because I've heard great things about your skills.

Thank you very much. And that's what I did.

So what was Washington like compared to Cut Bank?

Well, I've lived in four places in Washington. Like I said I lived in several towns in the United States. Spokane was to me a huge city compared to Cut Bank. It was very cosmopolitan. They actually had shows there. You know, the Ice Capades came to Spokane, things that you could go to. It was, quote, unquote, civilization in a way. So I had to do a lot of adjusting. I mean I wasn't used to living -- I lived in the country. I didn't live in town in Cut Bank, Montana. I lived on the airport. So it was a lot of adjustment, you know, to go to a big city after that. But I adapted.

That's where I met my husband.

Were there dormitories to live in?

We lived in apartments, private apartments. I had roommates.

And the school provided you with a list of places to live or something like that?

Yeah. They gave us a list of acceptable apartment buildings back then. They were not like they are today. They were brick buildings with apartments inside of them and no elevators. We lived on the fifth floor. It was fun getting our groceries in.

Oh, yes. Oh, we don't think of that.

So what happened after business school?

Well, I met my husband. We didn't know each other, but we fell in love instantly. After two weeks we ran off sort of. We had nothing.

Oh, I love that story.

I dropped out.

You dropped out of business school?

I just like left the world. I called my parents and told them I was getting married. My mother did not believe me. But we did it anyway. Because you had to be 21 in the state of Washington to get married without parental permission, my husband had some relatives in California. So he hitchhiked to California, southern California from Spokane, Washington, and dropped in on his relatives and convinced them that we were going to get married. I followed him down on a bus -- I do not remember whether it was Greyhound or Trailways -- with my suitcase. And they put us up. We found jobs, got our blood test, found an apartment. And we were married 35 years.

Oh, that is fantastic. I love that love at first sight.

So it worked out really well.

What did your mom say after this?

And now I have to tell you when you asked the difference between Cut Bank and Spokane, oh, my gosh, L.A. I was frightened. I didn't get my driver's license because I was afraid to drive there. It was overwhelming to me that you could drive or ride for hours and still be in a city.

So what kind of work did you get?

I worked at a place called Information Control Corporation, which was one of the first silicon computer places. And what I was doing was basically procurement of their parts and that kind of thing, inventory and that sort of thing.

And what kind of work did your husband find?

He worked for -- I can't remember the name of it -- a tile factory that made tiles.

And you were happy?

We were happy and in love.

That's great. That is so great. What did your mom finally say about it?

She finally kind of accepted it. My father was right away fine with this whole plan. But my mother was reluctant.

But your father was fine with it.

Oh, yeah. But he knew me more. When I was growing up, I related more to my father than to my mother. There was just a better bond there. So he was fine with it.

So tell me how long did you stay in California?

Not long. We moved back to Spokane, Washington, which is where my first son was born.

Now, did you ever go back to business school?

No. I never went back to any school. Never went back to any school. And then we did, however, realize being young and broke, pretty much -- I had a temporary job with the city of Spokane, Washington working for the Building Inspection Department. He worked for a sign company hanging from great heights from the Bon Marche and other buildings with their signs. We did sort of realize at one time that school needed to be in the picture. Since he grew up in Arkansas, we then moved to Arkansas where his parents lived.

Where in Arkansas?

His parents lived in a little town called Gravette, Arkansas, which is where he grew up. We moved to Jonesboro, Arkansas where the University of Arkansas is -- well, no. Arkansas State University. Excuse me. And that is on the eastern side of Arkansas. He went to school for three years. He started out as radio-television major, switched over to biology. He didn't finish. Again, we were broke. But that's all right. The story of our life, up and down, up and down. And this is all being recorded, right?

Yes, it is.

Maybe I should not be sharing all of this.

No, no, no. This is wonderful.

But we were broke again. And I didn't adjust really well to living in Arkansas even though my oldest son and all of my grandkids moved back there and I go visit. They did adjust. So we wrote to the chambers of commerce of several towns and got information and made a decision where we wanted to move next.

So now, why after three years did he decide not to finish that last year?

We just couldn't keep affording it. I worked at a bank and he worked whatever jobs he could find, sign companies because he had experience doing that, fixing radios and televisions, doing different things. But it wasn't enough. Thankfully we didn't get student loans. So we went and we moved to Colorado Springs, Colorado, which is another place that I used to live when I was a child just previous to moving to Cut Bank, Montana. There I worked at Exchange National Bank. Interestingly after I started working at UNLV, when I was working in the business college, the management assistant in the accounting department had also worked at Exchange National Bank

like two years before I came here, which was just an interesting coincidence to me.

Yes.

And then I had my second child. And at that time I dropped out of the working-for-other-people world and became a licensed day care provider so that I could be home with my children. And I loved it. I had a ball.

How many children were you licensed to take care of?

We were licensed to keep six, but we were allowed to have more at any one time as long as they were temporary and drop-ins as they called them. We were licensed by the Department of Social Services. They were extremely supportive. They would have meetings with us once about month. They would like share with us all of the new information. We'd share menus that we did. So even though it wasn't a job, it was a huge support group. And they would come around once in a while to inspect because this was their job. But when they did they would always bring coloring books for the kids or something, you know, so that the visit didn't seem intrusive or upsetting to the children in any way. And it was just a wonderful experience for me. I just loved every second of it.

You are amazing. So how long were you in business for yourself?

About two and a half years.

And your husband was able to find work in Colorado Springs?

Yes. He went into the fast food business there. He had a lot of different careers until he finally found his niche. He was a manager for a chain of restaurants called Taco John's, which is still open and popular in some states. While he was working for them, he was transferred to Denver. So we moved to Denver next.

That's not that far away.

No. Well, I don't think there's -- right now from what I hear from other people because I haven't been back there, there's not much of a gap of countryside between Denver and Colorado Springs anymore. But it was about an hour between the cities at the time. And so he did that there. He was robbed at gunpoint at one time and switched careers again and became a collector for Citicorp in their mobile home division. So people that didn't pay their bills, he got to make the collection calls and do the repossessions and things like that.

I worked there for Forest Oil Company when the oil companies were in their heydays. So it was quite a thing.

Yes. Colorado was --

Right. And I worked downtown Denver for quite some time doing that. And then as I started having issues with day care for my own children and needed to be closer to home, I found a job for Hunt Wesson Foods in their sales office, which was very interesting to learn the grocery business and all of the ways -- it was a fascinating job and it was a fun job because I was working with salespeople that were out there promoting their product. And to this day I still have a crock-pot that says Hunt Wesson Foods on it. It was one of their promotional items. And it still works.

Oh, my. So they're good products.

Exactly. And from there Citicorp transferred him to Las Vegas. So that's how we ended up here. In fact, he worked in Las Vegas for almost a year flying back and forth while I was still in Denver before we finally just decided this is ridiculous and we moved here.

So which year? Do you remember?

1980. We arrived on March 23rd, 1980. The reason I remember that is that our anniversary was on March the 22nd, which we spent in a snowstorm in Flagstaff, Arizona because we were trying to tow a vehicle. We were driving a van and then we had our car behind it. And the moving van went across on I-70. And we decided to take the southern route because of the weather and the storm. And we're the ones that ended up in the snowstorm. We had to pull off. We couldn't get past Flagstaff.

What an adventure.

So that was our wedding anniversary night, trying to find a hotel room when everybody else was in Flagstaff in the middle of a blizzard. But we did get here.

That's great. Yes. And so you were able to find a job.

It took me a long time to find a job. Back in that day -- well, it took a long time being six to eight weeks. But that have a long time for me. I was accustomed to like if I wanted -- usually when you were doing office work and everything, because your job can expand to almost any industry, it's not that difficult to find work. When I moved to Las Vegas my biggest challenge was -- because Las Vegas at the time had so many people that came and didn't stay, my biggest challenge

was almost every door I knocked on said how long have you lived here? And when I said a few weeks, they said, well, come back after you've been here six months. People were very concerned that you weren't going to stick it out or you weren't going to stay. And I had a lot of difficulty. It never occurred to me to try and find a government job until I had so much difficulty there. So when the state exams opened up I took the exam. And then taking the exam, you know how you get on that waiting list and everything. And you just kind of have to wait it out until there are job openings within state agencies. UNLV was the first agency that called me. So that's how I ended up here.

Oh, that's interesting.

Another strange coincidence but interesting is my younger son, who will not mind if you say this, had a lot of problems in school because he had dyslexia and learning disabilities. And the field of special education was still in its infancy. And he was having a lot of difficulty in school. And I was having difficulty as a parent trying to find ways for him to learn as a result. So I looked at it like a gift from heaven that the job opening that was open when I first came here was in special education. Not only that, but unbeknownst to me one of the professors was from my hometown in Cut Bank, Montana.

There's a little book called *God Winks*. And the example that you just gave is an example of God winking at you.

Yes. Yes. And it was a godsend. I could go to them. They understood. And they'd give me advice and they'd give me things to try. And they made sure that the schools did what they were supposed to do because schools were reluctant to do what they were supposed to do for children with special needs back then. They would go to the school district and say, no, the school was supposed to do this, this, this and this. And if they're not doing that, you need to tell them. And the guidance I got was tremendous. And even though I was only there for six months because like my father's job in order to get a higher grade of job and a raise you had to bid on a job opening that happened back then they were very reluctant to give upgrades within your job and give you more responsibility within your job. So basically if you wanted to move up, you needed to move out. So from there I went to college of business. And I loved it.

But you could still stay in touch with the people in education because you knew all of them.

Oh, yeah. And I did. Right. And I did.

So what was Business school like at the time? Where was it located?

Okay. The College of Business and Economics was on the fourth floor of the humanities building. And my office was right by the water fountain and the elevators. So I got to see everybody coming and going.

That's good.

This might be interesting. We had no computers. We did not have Xerox machines. When I first started at UNLV --

1980?

1980. When I went to work in the business college, I don't know if any office in the university had a Xerox machine, but we didn't. We had onion-skin carbon paper and typewriters.

But they were Selectric, weren't they?

Oh, I loved those Selectric typewriters. Those Selectric typewriters were great. Because of some of the academic nature, we typed manuscripts for the professors, as well as their examinations. But they used a lot of the Greek symbols. And there was a symbol element that you could put on the Selectric. And we got so good at taking it off, putting on the symbol element, type our little symbols, take it off, put the one with the print letters on it. Boy, we got really good at going back and forth with those elements let me tell you. You could line that paper up just any way. I loved those Selectric typewriters. I wished I could find another one. If I found one I'd buy it and take it home. I just thought Selectric typewriters were the best things that ever happened to office workers as far as I'm concerned.

So even above the computer you like the Selectric?

Oh, no. I was going to say for the time, at the time, at the time, at the time. The Selectric typewriter did not allow you to make mistakes and just delete and do whatever you wanted to do. You had erasers and an eraser shield. And we did have Liquid Paper back then, though. That's it.

Yes. That's true.

And we had ditto machines. That's what we produced all of the examinations on, those purple ditto machines. So we would have to type a ditto master, this horrible blue fluid that would just drive you crazy. If you made a mistake, you had to put some blue fluid on there that would turn

waxy so that you could make a correction on that master. So back then if you didn't have skills where you could type accurately -- and you were given tests. Like if you can type 80 words a minute with five mistakes, you could get a job. If you couldn't, you weren't going to get the job for certain jobs.

So how are your skills?

I could type really fast. I could type faster then -- I passed a test once at 100-something words a minute. But we also had to have shorthand because the professors didn't have computers either. And so some of the jobs on campus, if there was a lot of correspondence involved, they required you to pass a shorthand test in order to get the job so that they could give you dictation and you could transcribe it and get their correspondence out that way. Don't ask me to take shorthand or even read I that now. But back then it was something that was expected of office workers.

Yes. How did you have to dress in 1980?

On campus no one cared. Pretty much the dress code is what it is. I'd say it was even more casual than what it is today. Even the people in the more executive positions dressed casual. But you could do whatever you wanted. I mean nobody said. You could dress up or you could not dress up. I wore dresses more frequently back then because I had come from the corporate world where you definitely weren't going to wear jeans to work like I am today.

But it's Friday. It's dress down.

Right. But there wasn't a dress code per se.

So the Business school. Do you remember whom you worked for at the Business school?

Oh, yes. I still am in touch with many of them.

Oh, that's great.

I stayed in touch with them. Well, Dr. George Hardbeck was the dean. Let's see. When I first started it was a smaller college. So I worked for the Department of Finance and the Department of Economics. So I worked for those two departments. As both of departments grew I worked for the finance department and the marketing department. And the economics department had gotten bigger and had their own management assistant and branched off. As it grew some more I worked just for the finance department. And so we had the excitement of getting a new building. So I've been through that twice for the library and with the business college.

That's right. So you got Beam Hall.

Uh-huh. We got Beam Hall. I was on the fifth floor at Beam Hall, a lot larger office, the biggest office I've had in my career here, with our own private workroom. It wasn't a shared workroom. But remember, the workroom didn't have a Xerox machine in it. We still had ditto machines. We then started to enter the computer age. I was on the original campus committee to study what kind of computer should we get for the office staff. They weren't even considering them for faculty yet. But they did decide that maybe the office staff could use some word processors or something more modern than what we were using before. So President Goodall was the president at the time. And they formed a campus committee. And I was a classified representative on that committee. And that was really interesting. We gave our recommendations. And offices got word processors.

So do you remember what they were like?

Yes. They were DeckMates, which is I think from Intermation Company. They were not IBM based. They had floppy disks that were like this big.

Oh, that's right.

They did word processing and word processing only. They did not compute. But that's what we were using. We were using them to produce exams for classrooms. We were using them to type manuscripts. We were using them to type correspondence. We were using them to do the newest thing, mail merge projects. Now that we had a machine that could we could do mass mailings. So that's what they were basically being used for. I do remember they had what they called the gold key. That was the everything key, sort of like maybe a combination between what alt and control does to make the keys -- like if you want to go control B, that would be to bold. Control U would -- so you learned all of the control codes because there was no mass, of course, yet. There wasn't any of that. So you had to learn codes to select. You had to learn codes to do everything. But they were great compared to just having a typewriter.

Oh, yes. Oh, that's amazing.

So how long were you in the business school?

I was in the College of Business and Economics for -- back then it was business and economics. I don't know if it still is or not. But I was there probably fall of 1980 -- because I was only in

special ed for six months; you had to stay in the same job for six months before you were allowed to bid for something higher -- until -- I'm trying to think because it's hard for me to do dates. It's always been. Probably 1984, maybe '85. And then I had a break in service from UNLV altogether. And then I came back in 1988.

And did you still keep that time that you had before?

Yes, I did.

Good. So in 1988 you came back.

So in 1988 I came back, was reinstated. I went to the Department of Psychology. That was a very interesting experience. And Lori Temple and I go way back because she and Don Diener were both professors in the Department of Psychology at the time that I was their management assistant. And we still see each other out on the sidewalk and say hi and all that happy stuff. You know, it's just like family almost when you work in a department, but you're still here even though you've gone on to another department. Whenever you see people from your previous department, you're still very family almost.

And where was that located?

And that was in Wright Hall, the old Wright Hall, the old wing of Wright Hall, of course, compared to what it is right now.

Yes. The old building.

Right. I don't remember exactly what floor that was. And let's see. Chuck Rasmussen was the chair at the time. I think he's since retired. And then there was an incident that probably isn't public record that happened in the Department of Finance that caused them to ask me, almost plead with me to come back to work in their department after a certain person left and rebuild it pretty much.

But isn't that interesting, though, and exciting for you?

Right. So I did. And I stayed at the College of Business until -- I would have to look on my records to give you dates. So don't transcribe the dates. But someone can tell you, oh, yeah, Lee transferred at this date. Another job opening came up -- I just don't remember the year, probably '90, '91 -- for one higher grade level. And that was in the affirmative action office. The campus used to have an affirmative action office. And that was back in the humanities building. But then

I was on the third floor. And I worked there pretty much until the university moved that function over to HR, right before they did that. But I think the affirmative action office was open for only a few months after I left there. But how I came to the library was it was the next grade level.

So how many grades have you been through now at the time you moved --

I started as an administrative aide two. And then we went from management assistant one, two, three, four to executive assistant. And the executive assistant is the top of the line for that series.

And are you still there now?

Executive assistant? Yeah. There's no one else to go in that line of work.

So in order to do anything different, you would have to go into a different line of work completely?

Yeah. Or have a college degree and be hired as a professional staff.

I see.

But like the people that do what I do at the level of the vice presidents and some of the other deans are on professional staff contracts.

Did you ever want to do that? Did you ever think about --

Going back to school?

Uh-huh, to do that.

Not really.

Good. What are some of the --

I never thought I would be working as long as I have. I always kept thinking, oh, next year I'll be not working. Oh, next year. It's just temporary.

Yes, temporary.

Tell me about the affirmative action office. What kinds of things did you guys work on?

The kinds of things that the office did that I didn't personally do, we were responsible to guide search committees across campus. So typically someone would -- we only had a small staff. We had the director of affirmative action. We had a professional staff affirmative action officer and then me as a management assistant and a couple of student aides. But either the affirmative action officer or the director would meet initially when a search committee was formed and give them

the guidelines. And then they monitored the search. They were a lot more careful about monitoring the search itself to make sure that things were done in an equitable manner.

We also handled all of the sexual harassment and discrimination complaints or grievances when people were at the phase of trying to resolve things informally. So there would be mediation going on in our office. You know, we'd set up the appointments and usually in the office because it was more neutral territory for both parties. But oftentimes they would investigate these complaints. The affirmative action officer did that, go around and interview people. She later became the state EEO director. But she used to tell me I listened to this story and I listened to this story; the truth is always somewhere in between.

That's right.

The truth is always somewhere in between. And that's kind of stuck with me all this time. It wasn't a hugely busy office when it came to things like that, which I think is a good thing. But when things did come it could become quite intense. There was at one time an incident where I ended up having to call the university police because a fistfight had broken out in our office, whose parties will remain unnamed. But that was probably one of my scariest days at work.

Oh, I can image.

Because you just didn't know what was going to happen next. People could get quite emotional about these issues. And so it could become tense at times.

But in addition to doing those kinds of things, we also kept all of the statistics for the I-pads and various reportings. So we'd keep all kinds of statistics by college, like how many males, how many females, how many of which ethnic background and all of that kind of stuff. And we also reviewed and just kept our eyes alert for forms on campus and things like that that might need to be brought up to speed to the modern age. We looked for any real or perceived violations of the Discrimination Act and that sort of thing. So we were active in -- and I was also invited to go to some of these things, which was very interesting to me. We were active in community liaisons with the various chambers of commerce and things. The Board of Regents had put together a big committee on a culture on campus. And I would go to those meetings and take notes. It was just a very interesting, interesting, interesting job.

You've had an interesting career here.

Yes. It was because of my background in affirmative action and having to learn all the policies and procedures and all of this kind of stuff that after I came to the library the first dean utilized me for a lot of personnel-type things.

Okay, good. So who was your first dean at the library?

Matt Simon.

Tell me about Matt.

Matt was -- is still a very colorful character. He had an amazing mind. He was very creative, very visionary. And like a lot of people that are like that it made it difficult for him sometimes to be as "deanly" as some people expected him to be. But he was very interesting, a lot of fun to work with.

Oh, yes. I can image.

My job was great. I did dress up when I had that job in a suit and high heels most every day because [of] his contacts and beginning to get the building together and everything involved a whole lot of politicians. And at any one moment we would be having politicians or meeting with politicians or I might be going to take notes at a meeting with a politician and things like that.

When we were going the original planning --

And we're talking about the planning for?

For like the pancake breakfast and everything, which Marta was heavily, heavily involved in. I mean it was kind of Marta's baby. I know because Marta was in our office all the time. Lee, how am I going to get the trash? What am I going to do? So I was making the administrative paperwork to get things happen. And Marta was out there getting people involved and enthusiastic and getting them to donate things. It was quite an activity, you know, to have that initial pancake breakfast for raising funds for the library.

Oh, that's what it was for. So you sold the breakfasts?

I didn't actually go to the pancake breakfast. But I was just heavily involved in making the fliers. Marta's like let's make this flier and let's do this and let's do this. And she's so enthusiastic, you know. And we were doing, running and getting it done, you know. It was just a kickoff to get people interested. The library society people that we had back then would invite people they knew to come. We had Lonnie Hammergren there.

What was he doing?

I'm not sure. I don't remember whether it was when he was a regent. It was probably before he became the lieutenant governor.

Okay, yes.

And just people -- I don't remember all the names right now. But there were several people. So we had that going. It was just fun.

Now, was he on the committee or was he just one of the people who would come to the breakfast?

Who?

Lonnie.

He had his fire truck there. This is one of those stories that maybe I should -- well, okay. You decide whether it's appropriate for the public or not.

Well, the good thing about this is -- have you seen his house? So he wouldn't mind you telling any story about him.

Well, his fire truck showed up at the visitor parking lot at five o'clock on a Friday before the pancake breakfast insisting that it needed to be parked there. And the parking attendant was totally beside himself. And I needed to convince him that his fire truck couldn't be there, which I eventually did.

Did he drive it himself?

I don't believe so. But it was just the whole thing. But it was there as kind of a float, as kind of a big attention-getter for the pancake breakfast. It just didn't need to be there then. But it's just one of those funny things where it's just -- you know, the parking person just didn't know what to do. And I'm calling parking. I'm calling everybody. It's five o'clock. It's Friday. But we made it.

Oh, that's great. That's a great story. Wow.

So after Matt Simon you worked for Myoung-ja?

Myoung-ja Kwon became interim dean -- well, yeah. I worked for the provost briefly because there was no boss. At the time that Matt Simon was let go. Myoung-ja was in Korea and didn't know it happened. So she was quite surprised when she got back to learn that she was going to be the interim dean again because she was interim dean prior to when Matt was there is my

understanding. I wasn't there during that period. So, yeah, it was a big surprise.

And you worked for the provost?

Well, no. I just said briefly because --

Oh, the provost had to take over until Myoung-ja got back.

I had to get my marching orders as I asked for them in those direct words. I said, you know, there's like a lot of confusion here right now. I'm getting told -- you know, so many people have so many ideas about what's supposed to happen and to what things. And I need marching orders now. Marvelous, boom, boom, boom, one, two, three, this is what I want done with this, this, this and the next thing. And they came over to my office several times to get -- and this is just kind of a history of the technology kind of a thing. Several times they ended up having to come over to my office and use my computer in order to get messages out to the library staff about the transition because back then we didn't have a mechanism for people to just send E-mails to everybody. And they had to be at my machine in order to do it.

So we can do a campus-wide anything.

So it's new. What we can do now is new because we couldn't do that. The technology wasn't there yet for that kind of mass communication, if you will, for an entire organization without being at a particular machine still.

Isn't that amazing?

So we've come a really, really, really long ways. I think that's what amazes me the most when I look back is what we were working with then and what we're working with now. Just totally amazing to me.

That's amazing. I'm so glad that you have this memory because I haven't talked with anyone who's told me any of this. So this is wonderful.

Well, I will tell you that the day they took the ditto machines away all of the management assistants were thrilled. We are going to get to use a Xerox machine to make this? We're going to get to have a reprographics office to make this? Wow. Because that fluid was dangerous. And you could be kind of not feeling too good. And, plus, that also meant that you didn't have to collate anymore because the machine did it. It was great.

Oh, yes. Oh, I can imagine how happy you and many other executive assistants were. Wow.

I don't think the executive assistants -- but I wasn't an executive assistant then.

So what was your title now?

Then?

Yes.

Management assistant something two I think. Depending on the grade level that you had kind of depended on the type of work that you did. So working for the faculty and assisting them with their manuscripts and their tests and that sort of thing was a different grade level than the person like in a dean's office that had more budget responsibility and in the college. Yeah.

So your position here, well, up until a few days from now, what exactly is it?

Okay. My position here is executive assistant. Basically it is just exactly what it says. So depending on who has been dean my job has changed tremendously. It's whatever things that you can do, what projects or tasks or things that you can do that are going to help them get their job done without having to pay too much attention to everything else. So different deans have had different needs. When Matt was dean he had me focusing -- and this was actually written in my job description -- that my job was to bring everybody up to speed and have the library be in compliance of all the policies and procedures of the campus. There were some pockets of thing that probably just weren't communicated because there was nobody in the library maybe before I came that was that aware of things and, also, because of vacancies in positions of the person that might have been the one to do that. I don't really know how because I wasn't here. But I do know that was a pretty big assignment because it required changing the culture of what you can and can't do and how the policies played and that sort of thing. He also had me focus on all personnel-type things. And he focused on the visionary things, the building planning, the external type of stuff.

And it also largely depends on the university's administration. And also the university's missions and how things evolve. So at different times the dean's focus has been more on management and less on external things. And then at other times the dean's focus has been almost exclusively external and very little management where the associate deans would be the more management-type things. And then I've seen phases throughout the history of the campus just as we grew and needs changed. I've seen the deans be asked to keep their focus some on management but mostly on external. So it's different by a lot of different things. And then that, of

course, affects what is useful for me. So if you have somebody that's more focused on external stuff, you're going to have your executive assistant be focused on more things of the daily internal nature. Other way around.

So my job has changed every time we've had either an interim dean or dean change. What I have done has changed. So it's like even though I didn't change my place where I sit, my job is not anywhere near the same from one administrator to the other, which to me has kept it interesting because I think if I had stayed at the same job for as long as I did and it hadn't changed because with my personality that would have been not a good thing.

Oh, yes. Boring and everything else.

But to me I like that my job changed even though I didn't go anywhere.

Right. Which administration, campus-wide administration most impressed you or that you admired most?

That is really hard to say because I admire some of them for different things. I think I admired Dr. Goodall's administration because he seemed to me -- I mean he asked me to be on the committee. And I was a management assistant in an office. He seemed to be really in tune to get the in-users of the product involved at the decision-making phase rather than just having people have a vision and then thrust it upon the in-user. And he listened to all the voices. You know, I was very impressed with that. And he seemed like a calm administrator, if you will.

I don't really remember the sequence of different presidents and vice presidents because I was not dealing with them as much in a management assistant position as you do with that office in an executive assistant position. So we're going back in time here.

While I don't know Dr. Baepler as a president, I got to know him over the years because I used to like to walk over by the museum and the garden and we'd talk from time to time. And I found him to be very down to earth, very, very good, very, very smart. And we got to talking about how the beginning of the Xeriscape garden started and all of that. So it's just like some fascinating conversations there. And then he would converse. I like I think people that aren't too worried about the hierarchy beyond knowing what your role is to get the job done. So I thoroughly enjoyed that.

Dr. Maxson I didn't know that much. I know there was a lot of controversy during his

presidency. But I wasn't really involved in any of those issues. However, I was working in the affirmative action office at the time that he was the president. And its windows where the office I was in faced out onto the campus mall. And I know people at the time -- you'd hear little -- you know, how people like talk. Oh, he's just into photo ops. He doesn't really care. Well, I observed out my window one day on a very windy day a student drop the notebook and the papers just went flying. And I observed Dr. Maxson chasing after them. So he cared whether other people thought so or not.

Yes. Oh, that's a wonderful story.

So I think that's nice. Kenny Guinn I don't know that much about him. And he was hilarious.

And he wasn't here that long. What do you mean hilarious?

He wasn't afraid to have a good sense of humor and express it. There was an incident where we had a problem patron in the library that ended up going over there. And I appreciated the sense of humor that came out of his office as a result of that. It just kind of lined up your day from having had an experience of dealing with someone that, frankly, needed medication and wasn't on it that day as it turned out. We didn't know that at the time, however. So it was just a nice way of like, okay, you can let go of this and get on with your day and still have a good day anyway kind of a sense of humor kind of thing.

Dr. Harter I never got any feeling for one way -- you know, I didn't feel it at my level is what I want to say, any one thing one way or the other. I think as time goes on, you know, I have no idea about Dr. Ashley at all either.

So I think as the university's grown there's become more and more layers between the different offices and positions on campus just as a natural result of growth. But it's kind of sad because when I first started here you could call anybody regardless of -- because there wasn't that many people here, you could handle everything by a phone call. You never had to send a student somewhere else. You could find out. And because everybody knew everybody else and pretty much knew what they were capable of and not capable of and what their knowledge level was in certain areas and what it wasn't, you were able to really accomplish a lot just by making some phone calls and doing things informally. And then as we got bigger and bigger and bigger, there got to be more and more papers and more and more of a bureaucracy, more and more

accountability, more documentation of accountability kind of stuff. You needed more documentation of everything. And so in that respect the growth to me is a little bit sad because before it was everybody knew everybody. And now it's all of a sudden you've got to fill out a form to submit to somebody to fill out a form.

Just now that I'm starting to leave am I making the effort, which maybe I should have done before, to go around and meet people that I have done business with for years over the phone and by E-mail that I wouldn't know on the sidewalk if I saw them. And it's been really nice for me to be able to do that. But that's the difference, you know, between being a small university and being a very large university.

On the other hand, there's major pluses of the growth as well, major pluses. So I'm not like going to be moaning about the good old days that much. We are able to accomplish a tremendous amount not only just because of the technology but because some of our growth was so painful and we didn't know like which department was going to handle what kinds of things. And some departments are still being moved around a little bit like you report to this vice president -- no, maybe we'll have you go to that vice president. But even through those growth pains we have been able to do so much more than we were ever able to do before. It's amazing to me. It really is.

That's great. One of the things that I have heard about you over the last couple of weeks --
Uh-oh.

-- is that what are we going to do when she leaves? She knows everything.

Well, if I decide to expose everything I know, it will come out as a work of fiction. They can rest assured that I am not going to share stories. No. Seriously, and because I am an executive assistant, I do learn more than maybe a lot of other people had the opportunity to learn about the behind-the-scenes things that go on up to the point that a decision is made whereas most of the world learns about the decision. I have been in a unique position to get a good sense of timing of all kinds of things. And it's something you can't teach anybody. That's right. And I like kind of know who -- I don't always know who knows. But I am still, in spite of all of our growth, pretty sure I can get it within two calls. If I don't know who knows, I know somebody who's likely to know who knows. And then we'll go from there and maybe the third call I can get something

resolved just because I have been here while it's growing. So I have seen the changes and I know other people that have been -- my first way of resolving a small problem might be to call somebody that I know used to work in that office 15 years ago and will probably know somebody that still knows about that thing whereas a new person just doesn't have that. And, yeah. But they'll get their own. They'll get their own whereas a new person might already know. Well, I know exactly who should be doing that job. I don't have to go call two other people to find out who might know about that. So it works both ways, really.

Well, I know that you're going to be missed, sorely missed.

Well, thank you. Thank you.

So tell me what you're planning to do.

Here's my line and I'm sticking to it. I'm planning on playing by my rules. I think that's always been the golden apple for me even when I was in my 20s. When I quit my job, I'm going to play by my rules. I'm sure some people are not going to miss me as much as others because of that. But, no. Normally they will thank me in the end. But sometimes it can get a little intense because I'm like, excuse me, but, no, we're not doing it that way. And I'll be like the momma. And it doesn't matter to me if I'm talking to somebody that's seven positions above mine when things like that happen. So I'm sure I've been a thorn in many people's sides at least once especially when the one dean asked me to bring everybody into compliance with all the policies and procedures.

Oh, yes. Yes.

But seriously that is part of the job to be able to look at the institution as a whole, to be able to make decisions based on how it's going to position the library as a whole rather than on how it's going to position an individual's career. And sometimes that can become a conflict. And you need to be able to have the skills to work through that and still make sure that the library and the institution is -- you know, everything is not going to even appear to -- because you want to make sure that you're doing everything right. And you want to make sure that you're doing everything to the best of your ability. And sometimes there's a conflict between seeing it from my chair, which I see, versus seeing it from somebody else's chair because I might know something that's going on in another office that other people can't know that's going on. And, yet, I know this. And maybe my -- and that pretty much comes with the territory of being an executive assistant

anyplace on campus, not just the library. But it's just part of -- you asked, well, what does an executive assistant do? That's part of what an executive assistant does. They try to see cause and effect. It does help when you know the other players as well as you do from being here for a long time. But it's certainly not impossible for someone else to catch on pretty quick.

So I don't know. But, yeah, I'm going to play by my rules. I'm not going to worry about the university's rules. I mean within reason, of course. I don't plan on doing anything. I don't plan on making any major changes. I'm fortunate enough that in my personal social structure I already have -- I'm probably the last one out the door that did the retirement scene. So I'm not like the first one out so all my friends are still going to be working. So that's a good thing to know. I just plan on relaxing. The kinds of things that I like to do already I plan on being able to spend more time doing them and doing what I've been doing for quite some time and that's playing it one day at a time and knowing, though, that I have like more options because I don't have a job.

Oh, yes. That's wonderful.

Wonderful jobs are wonderful. And I'm grateful for being lucky enough to be someplace where I can have fun when I come to work and enjoy my job. But if given a choice between working at a great job and not having to work at all, I'm sorry, not having to work at all sounds really darn good to me.

Yes. That is great. I really appreciate this so much, Lee.

Oh, thank you.

Oh, this was wonderful, wonderful. Any closing remarks? Any funny stories that you thought about?

No. I think we're good.

Okay, great. Bye-bye.