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William and Cynthia King interview, Professors Emeriti, Department of Classics

Lewis Shupe

Wright State University - Main Campus

William King

Wright State University - Main Campus

Cynthia King

Wright State University - Main Campus

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WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY
Retiree Association Oral History Project

Interview date: August 29, 2007

Interviewer: Lewis Shupe
Professor Emeritus, Department of Communication

Interviewee(s): Cynthia King, Professor Emeritus, Department of Classics
William King, Professor Emeritus, Department of Classics

LS: This is Lew Shupe, Professor Emeritus at Wright State University from the Department of Communication. Today is August 29, 2007, and it is a pleasure to be interviewing Dr. Cynthia King and Dr. William King. Now, Dr. William King we will refer to in this transcript as Bill. This is part of the university retirees' association's oral history project. Bill, Cynthia, it's so good to have you here.

BK: It's good to be here.

LS: To get started, could you give us some of your very first impressions of when you came to Wright State?

BK: How about the first time we came up here. We were living in Oxford, incidentally, because Cynthia was teaching at Miami-

CK: The chairman at Miami got a twofer.

BK: Yeah, he got a twofer.

CK: You know that Wright State wasn't Wright State; it was the Dayton campus of Miami University and THE Ohio State University-

BK: -and we were told when we were hired that it was a very short drive up, but it turned out to be an hour so. But in any case, the first time we came up we didn't know how to get here, so we stopped on Third St. and asked where Colonel Glenn Highway was, and were met with blank stares. Never heard of it, this was way over on the west side and of course it was early in the history of Colonel Glenn, I guess.

CK: Maybe it had just been named?

BK: It may have just been named, and of course-

CK: This was going to be 1964.

BK: -it was 1964, and of course then it changed its name, Airway Road to Colonel Glenn and so on. That's my earliest memory of Wright State.

CK: I think we stopped several times and we thought that perhaps it was a mirage. There was some sort of a preliminary get together for the faculty. I mean, I don't remember what it was, but this was right after Labor Day. Miami didn't start until much later, but he started right after that.

LS: Labor Day of which year?

CK: 1964.

BK: 1964, the very first year.

CK: It was on the trimester system. The first couple of years Wright State was on a trimester system. Miami was still on a semester system, and I taught five courses, including one on Saturday. But Bill had, what, you had Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday?

BK: I think so, yes.

CK: So, I think you had five as well.

BK: I had five as well, yes.

CK: They kept us very busy.

LS: Who was the person that contacted you about coming to the new campus?

BK: A gentleman by the name of Phil Bordinat-

CK: Actually, Bill, Henry Montgomery did the hiring-

BK: The person who was our immediate superior who hired us was Henry Montgomery, the chair of Classics at Miami.

CK: A grand old, grand old figure in the field of American classics, he was really quite an amazing man.

BK: -but the head of the liberal arts at what was then the Dayton campus was a gentleman by the name of Philip Bordinat, who had had interesting experiences in Africa, in Ibadan, Nigeria, someplace like that-

CK: I didn't know that-

BK:-anyway, I lost track of Phil.

CK: We'd love to know what happened to him. I think he went to West Virginia University, but I'm not positive, and he may not be living now.

LS: Well, you've finally arrived here at the new campus site. What was your impression when you saw it?

BK: Well, right before we got here, up here where there's now the Starbucks and the Subway shop, or sandwich shop and so on, there was a farm with alpacas-

CK: Llamas-

BK:-llamas, llamas-

CK:-and all kinds of things.

BK:-right where the upper parking lot is. It was the first time I'd ever seen llamas, I guess, outside of a zoo, and I don't remember the gentleman's name.

CK: I think he worked here, I think he was one of the service or maintenance men, I'm not sure exactly what he did.

BK: There was then the sign, which we later came to refer to as "the gallows"-

CK: No, that wasn't there yet.

BK: Was that not there yet?

CK: Oh no. I'm not sure when it went in, but it was not there yet.

BK: Dear, I believe you're right.

CK: I'm not even sure how we managed to find it. I think we had one dickens of a time-

BK: I believe there was a wooden sign, and I had not thought about that in lo these many years. I think there was a wooden sign that said "Dayton campus of Miami and Ohio State", and we turned in because there was no other road, nowhere else to go, just this one road aiming toward the one building, which was Allyn Hall. So, first impressions, well-

CK: "Where is this place?" A bit of a contrast to Miami-

BK: -or to the University of North Carolina.

CK: -which was where we were coming from.

BK: Um, that's all that I can think of right at the moment.

CK: Who called that meeting, was it Dr. Bordinat or Warren Abraham or, who was that guy that came from-

BK: It may have been Warren Abraham, because he was the-

CK: I think he was the one in charge.

BK: -the general liaison with Miami.

LS: Did you have any contact at all with Earl Theskin?

BK: No, I knew the name, the name is familiar but I don't-

LS: He was the Miami University representative at the beginning.

CK: More than Warren Abraham was?

LS: Um hmm.

CK: I thought Warren Abraham was the one from Miami?

LS: Anyway-

CK: Well that's the one with whom we dealt-

BK: Yeah, right, Warren was the one.

CK: -and then Phil Bordinat, but basically I dealt with Dr. Montgomery and so did Bill, because he was Bill's immediate superior.

LS: At that point, how long did you plan to stay teaching at Wright State?

CK: Who knew?

BK: You know, it never crossed my mind. I got here, and I thought it was nice enough and so I enjoyed everything. The accommodations were sort of rough in that if we wanted lunch we generally had to go off campus. There were machines if I remember, but I don't remember using the machines much, so I got to know Fairborn fairly well and things like the Hasty Tasty and whatever some of those other little restaurants are.

CK: Were. I don't think they exist.

BK: Were, yes. They've disappeared now.

LS: Now what were your first assignments in teaching?

BK: Um, I did a Latin class-

CK: I think you had four sections.

BK: -and four sections of the basic Classics 111 it was. We inherited the Miami curriculum of course-

CK: -which was a very good curriculum.

BK: -which was a very good curriculum, and the basic course was Classics 111 and Classics 112, two trimesters. And then I was doing a beginning Latin course, so that was four Classics 111 and 112-

CK: I can't remember, I'm not sure but I think you did have a five course load. I can't really remember that, I know you had a lot of the same thing and everything I had was different.

LS: And Cynthia, what did you have?

CK: [Laughs] It was different, including a graduate level course in something I'd never studied. Henry Montgomery was a laissez-faire kind. Let me see, I think I did beginning Latin, beginning Greek, I did a Classics 111, I'm trying to remember, maybe an epic course, I don't know, I know I had five courses. I about died, because I had never taught before.

LS: Oh, you hadn't?

CK: No. Bill had been- North Carolina at that time did not really have female undergraduates, of course I was a graduate student, but there wasn't really a tradition of female faculty, and female teaching assistants were not there, I don't believe.

BK: I don't believe so.

CK: I don't remember any female teaching assistants. At any rate, so I hadn't had any experience teaching. Bill had taught quite a bit, with Latin.

BK: I taught a couple of courses, yeah.

CK: The first course in Classics 111, I covered what I would have covered now maybe in half a quarter in twenty minutes then. I guess the students about died.

BK: I think they called her motor mouth-

CK: I graduated a jet jaw. No, I was a jet jaw up here. I tried, I worked on going slower.

LS: Tell us a little bit about liberal arts at that time, the number of faculty and some of your colleagues.

CK: That's an interesting thing.

BK: Um, Bob Power I will always remember because he was one of the nicest guys. He gave us this catalog-

CK: But that's going to be later-

BK: -this precious copy of the catalog, but that's when he was dean. I remember a couple of historians and some of them other than-

CK: Well, there was Al Smith-

BK: -Al Smith, who impressed me instantly because he started to leave one time when his class was out and I was coming in, and he looked and he had left the board still un-erased. He apologized and said, "Oh, I'm sorry, I'm sorry", and he got in and he was erasing, and I learned then that, yes, it's bad etiquette for a teacher to leave and leave the board all written up.

CK: I think his office was near yours.

BK: I believe Al's was. I remember several other people in Modern Languages: right beside me was a German prof, oh, the name just suddenly disappeared; there was a Spanish prof that I liked a lot, Heanon Wilkins-

CK: Boy, I didn't know a lot of these people, because I wasn't-

BK: -there was a fellow in English that I knew, Bernard Strempek, who was the first one who died. He was killed in a car accident turning in right out at-

CK: That's a bad corner.

BK: -Colonel Glenn. Yeah, it was a Volkswagen bus and there was a head-on collision, and poor Bernard, he taught composition, English composition. I don't know why, we had several interesting conversations, but I remember him vividly. I remember some of the people in Education, like Norwood Marquis, and there was a lady from Miami who did art therapy or something like that whose name was Ellen Abell, and I remember her because I would occasionally drive her back down to Oxford. And if I thought about it, I could probably think of several others.

CK: Well, Jim Hughes came with that group, with us, I know-

BK: Yes, Jim Hughes, he was one of the founding faculty.

CK: -and so we were always friendly with the Hughes'.

LS: I'm inferring that you were all together in the same building.

CK: Yes.

BK: Allyn Hall up on the top two floors, the third and fourth floor. The classrooms were down in the bottom, including the labs, which is where we used to have the faculty meetings. You know, they would cover up the sink and shut off the gas valves and so on and that's where we would have our faculty meetings. And the room was not entirely full, so there would have only have been, you know what, one hundred-fifty, I couldn't begin to tell the number, that could be easily found out.

CK: That had the science people, too, when you had these faculty meetings. See, I was down in Miami and not going to those, but Jack Redden would be there, too? Was it Redden and Bordinat and Warren Abraham?

BK: Yeah.

CK: And I'm trying to remember when Warren Abraham became ill because I think I was here by that time.

LS: When did you come here?

CK: I came the second year, Bordinat brought me up. Which was very nice of him, but that did bring about the nepotism problem, I guess. Phil Bordinat was really the one that insisted that there be some classics courses. Henry Montgomery, the good soul that he was, thought, "Well, you know"- he used to teach up here and the reason he thought it was closer was that I believe the classes were held for the Miami Extension at Roth High School, wherever that was, but that was a lot closer to Oxford than this place. So I don't think he ever knew where the campus was- but any rate, he gave us the impression that he thought, "Well, they really don't need for a school like that to have a classics course", so I really would thank Phil Bordinat for saying, "Oh yes, we're not going to open without that", so we appreciate him.

BK: As a matter of fact, Phil told me that he was told that you could have a choice; that you could have an ROTC program or you can have classics, and Phil said, "We'll have classics". Now, of course, there's ROTC, too.

CK: I didn't know that, that's very interesting.

LS: What were your impressions of the students at that time?

BK: The one thing I vividly remember is here I was teaching courses about the Ancient Mediterranean, and I would have students in my classes who had been over there, over and over. You know, military service, married to Air Force folks and so on. I remember one time I mentioned something in Turkey and this lady came up to me to say, "You weren't quite right about the location of [such and such a place], it was on the other side of the mountain you were talking about", and she said, "I know because I lived there for several years". [Laughs]

CK: And that would be my impression, too. I think we never, or I would never have lasted as long as I did if I had been teaching the traditional cohort of 18 to 21 such as you would have at a Vanderbilt or whatever. I remember talking to some colleagues at Vanderbilt, and they were burnt out. We had these really interesting students.

BK: They were, yes. The average age, I used to know-

CK: Well, I think it's changed.

BK: - I think the first year the average age, and I'm sure this is in the records somewhere, was about thirty or something like that, and as the years passed the average age of the student kept going down.

CK: And these were also people who desperately wanted a college education. What got me at Miami, Miami at this time had a "three-cut rule" for excused absences. I was never asked here to give an excused cut for, what was it, a fraternity weekend or something, and that was an honor student at Miami. But no one ever asked that kind of thing [here], certainly not in the first ten years. People who took our courses, they were intentional about taking them. Now, that changed with the '87 General Education Program; there I could see a very great difference in students. But before that the kind of student who signed up for whatever, you know, a classics course, was a far more interested student; they weren't taking the course because they had to. Yeah, some of the courses satisfied various types of requirements, but they had other ways to satisfy those requirements.

BK: You mentioned fraternities at Miami, I was trying to think-

CK: Oh, I mean, Miami, the mother of fraternities, and football weekends! I can't remember, it was a fraternity weekend; this was a very good student, an honor student, a young lady but she thought she should have an excused cut. That was I think Classics 320, what we call 320, I'm trying to remember-

BK: -I was trying to remember what the students did here for entertainment, and so I don't think there was as much as there was later-

CK: That was a problem.

BK: -because as I said, many of the students were married, children and so on, so they didn't have time to worry about gatherings and such, which was a good thing because there was no place in Allyn Hall to have them.

LS: Were there any events or activities that ring a bell for you at this time, in those early days?

BK: Not that I can remember because- I'm sure there were because there were people who were very active- the problem was as soon as I was done I would jump in my little car and drive down to Oxford-

CK: But that was only the first year, Bill.

BK: Well, after that-

CK: After that we were in a broom closet.

BK: Yeah.

CK: He had his office on the fourth floor of Allyn-

BK: I don't know whether you want this in the archives or not.

CK: But this is a funny story. You're there on the fourth floor of Allyn, and "Oh yes, you're going to get to keep these offices", and the next year-

BK: The next year I was bounced out of my office and put in a broom closet on the third floor-

CK: Next to the ladies room.

BK: -next to the ladies room. It was absolutely quiet, except between classes. Oh, the bells, there were never any bells. It was explained to me that the bells didn't ring because it was too complicated a system.

CK: They don't ring bells now. There were bells back then, weren't there?

BK: No, there weren't.

CK: I mean, in any classroom?

BK: Not that I remember.

CK: Oh, I guess not. No, I don't remember any bells, you had to watch the time, yeah.

BK: I don't remember any bells.

CK: You could tell when class was over because-

BK: -you would hear, "bump, bump, bump, bump, bump", coming to the ladies room, then they would all clear out, and then it was quiet as a tomb for the next fifty minutes or however long.

CK: [Laughing] It was the best office we ever had; it was big.

BK: I'll tell you one little detail about it. It got hot one time-

CK: Well, it was May. It would run September to May.

BK: -and I called down to the physical plant, and I said, “Hey, my air conditioning is not working”, and he said, “What’s your number?” and I can’t remember the number, but every room was numbered. So anyway, they call back in a few minutes and said, “Your office is number [such and such]?”, and I said, “Yeah”, and he said, “But that’s a broom closet”. I said, “Well, anyway, can I get some air in my broom closet?”, and he said, “We don’t cool broom closets”. And over there was the heater, the radiator, so I said, “Well, why do you heat broom closets?”, and I’m not going to tell them what I did.

CK: Oh, yes you should tell them.

BK: It’s strictly illegal.

CK: Well, I know, but it’s over with, that’s 1965. 1966 actually, May of ‘66.

BK: They won’t come get me I guess. So I said, “Can you open a window?”, and you would have thought that I would have made the awful lest suggestion. “No, we can’t open the window, this is a sealed environment”.

CK: That’s what got me

BK: So the next day, I came up with a pair of pliers and a wrench and a screwdriver and an allen wrench, and I opened the window. I was very careful to shut it, but I remember one time I guess I was out and I drove in, and there were all these blank windows except that one office where the window was open. That’s a vivid memory.

CK: Well not only that, but it’s on the west side-

BK: Yes, the west side, so there was constant breeze-

CK: - they put Wright State in a wind tunnel, and he had to tie a string to something to keep the thing from blowing shut.

BK: I had a student- you were asking about students- I had a student who had been around the world, and I cannot give you the number, something like 86 times. He was in the Air Force, and I thought, “My goodness”, and he had been in like 250 countries, and I said, “you have really traveled”, and he said, “Well, not really”. I can’t remember his job, but it had something to do with calibrating instruments, so it was very typical for him to be met at the gate of Wright-Patt, and they would say, “Hey, you’ve got to fly out to Greenland, so check your instruments and do this and come back”, so he was constantly shuttling back and forth like that. I thought at the time that’s a remarkable experience, not that I wanted to do it, but you don’t find students like that in a typical university. And I think he’s also the same man that told me about landing on the runway here, and he said that Wright State is up on a hill and it’s higher than the base-

CK: It is? I didn’t know that.

BK: Yes, we're higher than the base. And I said, "Is that any problem?", and he said, "Oh no, we just aim at the building and try to miss it."

CK: [Laughing] You've never heard that before either, did you?

LS: [Laughing] Uh, no.

CK: I hadn't heard that. I didn't know we were higher than the base. I hadn't thought of that.

BK: That's where we get this breeze. Yeah, it's very windy up here, and it has nothing to do with the faculty. [Laughs] It's just the wind blowing constantly.

LS: [Laughing], these are delightful stories.

CK: Just wind him up. He's better than I am, I can't remember stories.

BK: I have the feeling I've probably run out.

CK: No, I doubt if you have. Those are ones I've never heard, either. I mean, I know about the broom closet because I was in it. Not only that, it was really a very nice office. If it had been air conditioned, I would have just as soon kept that office the rest of my career, because it had room in it. We had a good time.

LS: Cynthia, you mentioned the '87 education program changes. Could you talk just a little bit about that, and how it altered the focus of some of the things you did?

CK: Well, the Miami curriculum was really the basis of the curriculum that Wright State used up to that point. I don't remember and I've thrown out all the files of how many different general education committees I was on, but there was always the idea that one needed to tinker with that curriculum. Now, Miami had the notion and I had the documentation about it, that they had it perfectly organized and that it was working swell, but I think there were probably a lot of problems with it. It was much more limited than what Wright State evolved into. So we went from loosening that thing up, and I couldn't begin to quote what went with that, to allowing virtually anything. And then there was this notion that, "Wow, we have to tighten it up", and a lot of it came from the sciences because, you know, "You liberals arts people aren't doing any work", I'm sure you heard that, and I'm sure you know that in terms of the communication problem that they never got a communication course in the common curriculum, or the general education curriculum. Anyway, we went through this and finally it gets to, "Wow, we have to tighten it up", and my friends in business and science would say, "Well, it's going to be the liberal arts full employment act, but with these very limited number of options". So, in classics, there was no slot for classics, either, and the classics faculty was dragooned into teaching History 101, and that was required of everyone and a lot of students hated it. You and I were the only two who taught both History 101 and English 204.

BK: I believe, yes.

CK: Jan Gabbert taught a lot and still is teaching History 101; she has retired, too, and you're going to have to get a hold of her, but they are short on teachers for History 101 and I know she's doing a section this fall, and she's going to do a Classics 150. Well, anyway, it was very interesting; it was a very interesting experience, and I think it showed me a lot about what people face in terms of hostility to knowing anything. There was a great deal of preparation on the part of the faculty for seminars, [and] working together. They paid for me to go to Germany on that grant, I think you'd been earlier on your own dime, but [we were over in?] Germany so I looked for a lot of things, too for the medieval times. Classicists tend to go up to like maybe the end of Tacitus and 200 AD, and I never really thought much about the Middle Ages, but I'm glad I did. For me, I learned a lot, I had a big time. I started out the first quarter and I taught that, and the faculty were told we were going to have sixty person sections, but that soon evaporated. We were talking about Ed Melton earlier, and the good soldier that he was, he did like four- hundred person sections, eventually, and this is just intolerable. Anyway, my sixty person sections, I had all sorts of study notes and materials because I didn't like the book, and I'm sure people were totally lost. I had a very good student that we've been seeing up at the rec center in Kettering who loved the course, and he still talks to me about how much he enjoyed that course, but that's going to be the exception. Again, it was an older student who knew what he wanted to do. I mean, he does construction work and that sort of thing, but he knew what he wanted to learn, he wanted to know something, so I thought that was very funny. Well, I very quickly cut down the number of supplementary readings and very quickly tried to tailor the course to something that was more reasonable. Now, you were involved, Chris, you were a student, in what English did. What English did was very sensibly run a test course with a lot of different faculty to see how it would go, and History should have done that, but they didn't. They did try to help us, and I feel that I never succeed in doing History 101, at least to my satisfaction, but I had a wonderful time in English 204.

LS: Cynthia, what was your very favorite course that you've ever taught here at Wright State?

CK: Greek Vase Painting.

LS: What?

CK: Greek Vase Painting. We did it for the Art Department, too. Greek Vase Painting.

LS: Expand on that just a little bit.

CK: Well, one of my specialties was the painting in Greece of the 8th century BC, which is called the Geometric Era; attic geometric vases. And from that, I started working backwards to the Bronze Age, and forwards to attic black figure and red figure and Corinthian and so forth. That's not a course typically taught at an undergraduate level. There really aren't any good books for that, either, but you make out. I taught that a number of times and had a wonderful time with that.

LS: And that was your favorite course.

CK: Yeah, I think that's the course I probably enjoyed doing the most.

LS: Bill, what was your favorite course?

BK: Anything to do with poetry, probably. No matter what, because I've always like poetry.

LS: Okay, but what course did you teach that was your favorite?

BK: Well, I enjoyed the English 204. [And] I did things in Latin poetry and so on-

CK: Greek epigrams?

BK: Yeah, Greek poetry and so on. But, I would say that there weren't very many courses that I disliked.

CK: No, he taught an incredible amount of courses.

BK: I kept trying to find something that I liked [laughs].

CK: Well, you did Greek and Roman medicine, [and] you did law-

BK: That was not successful.

CK: I don't know that it wasn't successful?

BK: The law was, the course in Roman law was [successful], yeah.

CK: What you always suffer from, there aren't, there weren't good textbooks. More are coming out, but Bill was essentially- well, we both were, I made sort of a text book for vase painting, too- but that's the thing we got away with doing, a lot of things like that, having fun.

BK: Yeah, we could teach things that we had some considerable interest in that [was] not the sort of thing you'd typically do in an undergraduate class, and I do look back and think that there were courses that would have been more valuable for our majors-

CK: Like what?

BK: The Etruscans, you know-

CK: No, people liked that.

BK: Well, I know people liked it, because I liked it so much, but I think there were courses they could have benefited more from.

CK: I don't think that's true, I think you're absolutely wrong.

BK: I don't know, it may be that if you see some teacher who is so wildly enthusiastic about something as I was-

CK: Bill, that's a very important subject. It's very important for art-

BK: Well, it is now, but-

CK: Yeah, this is the kind of way things went on at home. The other thing he's not talking about, a really unique course, "How We Know About Antiquity", and Janice picked that up and kept [it] going, and that was totally Bill. I helped you work on it, but, you know-

BK: Yeah.

LS: What I sense is that at that time you had a freedom.

CK: Yes, before '87 that's true.

BK: A great deal, a great deal of freedom.

CK: Well, and we still did after that, that's not true.

BK: Yeah, we did, we did.

CK: It's just that we- is it not nice to say- we got more of an exposure to the great unwashed.

BK: Yeah.

CK: More in the 18 to 21. Especially those that, I don't want to say bubble gum, but the ones that really weren't interested and they were dragooned into taking the courses. And it isn't that I blame them for saying, "What is this? Why do I need to know anything about ancient history?"

BK: I would say that the freedom that we had, if we did a course and then decided we wanted to do it backwards the next time, we could do it that way.

LS: You specified '87; did you mean '67?

CK: No, I mean '87. Because that was the big change in general education. Before that, it was essentially tinkering or fiddling around with Miami's curriculum. I mean, I think that there were great descriptions of how it had changed, but it really hadn't changed; they simply had made it loose. And the more you did that, the less coherence there was.

BK: Now notice, you mentioned '67. There was a nice display- is it still there, downstairs in the library?- where they painted out the sign of, "Dayton Campus", and replaced it with, "Wright State University"-

CK: That must have been the sign we saw.

BK: Do you want more of this? I can talk more about this.

LS: Sure, those are interesting stories.

BK: There was a debate about naming the university, what should we call it. I can't remember very many of the suggestions; University of Southwestern Ohio, Wright State, which is what it finally became, Wright. The one I vividly remember, because the students taught me, somebody suggested Wright Brothers University, and that immediately got a cheer, [makes sound while drubbing lips].

[Laughing]

CK: I knew about Wright Brothers, but I didn't know about the cheer. It would have been better to have that, though, because there was constant confusion- in our field, anyway- between us and Wayne State University. I still get mail addressed to Wayne State University, Dayton, Ohio. So if we had something like, "Wright Brothers", what's wrong with that?

BK: I will never forget in class one time, and this whole matter came up and somebody asked, "What's going to be the name?", and I said, "Well, I don't know, but here are some of the things that I've heard". And spontaneously, when I mentioned Wright Brothers University, they all went, [makes sound while drubbing lips].

CK: Well, why?

BK: Well, "Bwight Bwothers University".

CK: It's hard to say, I guess.

BK: Right.

CK: I think he talked more to his students than I did. Although, I did talk to them. [Laughs] I never heard any of that.

BK: That made a profound impression on me, but I can't remember what else.

CK: Now, I was involved with the seal-

LS: You brought some very interesting memorabilia, and you mentioned the catalog there. Would you just speak-

CK: Well, you don't want to put THAT in the oral history, do you?

BK: This belonged to Bob Power, who was the dean of the College of Liberal Arts for several years, that's why his name is on it. I don't remember where this was in his career, but anyway he kept his catalog handy. But if you look closely, you will see "1969-70 Official Bulletin", it

somehow got misspelled. There was a lot of laughter about that, you know. I don't know if there is a copy of this in the archives or not, but-

CK: I kind of treasure that [laughs], I don't want to give that up.

BK: Maybe we could leave that to you in our will.

CK: Well, we could try to do that.

LS: You're wearing medallions. Tell us about the medallions.

BK: All right. First, let me point out that there is a plate here with the same medallion on it.

CK: I didn't get one of those.

BK: It's a lovely plate-

CK: I think it's only for founding faculty.

BK: Now, let me tell you about the medallion, because that's a matter of-

CK: That's funny. As I said, I was on the seal committee.

BK: There was a great argument, we actually had several large meetings about the seal.

CK: No, the seal committee did. Because of students on it, it had degenerated into-

BK: Yeah, but I remember one time we had a meeting in Oelman Hall, and there was a lot of yelling back and forth and so on. No one could figure out what the seal should be and there were some rather egregious examples drawn up. One of them actually picked up the Mad River and it looks very much like the med school emblem now.

CK: That's a serpent, I think. But still, it was nice.

BK: Yeah I know, but the seal essentially looked the same. It was nice. But we had these fiery meetings, and of all the silly things to worry about, because as somebody [said], and maybe it was the president at the time who said, "Fifty years from now who is going to care what the seal is". So in the midst of this, I got this phone call. It was President Golding, Brage Golding, the first president. I got this call from him, and he said, "Can you come over to my office?" I trotted over to his office and he said, "You know about the conflicts and fussing and arguing about the seal?", and I said, "Yes, sir", and he said, "I'm tired of it, so I've designed a seal myself". And that's the seal. Now, the general feeling about it was that it was not very well liked because everyone thought it looked like a nuclear power thing- although, not really, it's three triangles put together- and Golding had a little set of comments about it. And I said, "Well, it's certainly very nice, it's very simple and harmonious", and blah blah blah. Then he said, "No, I'm not really interested in your opinion about the seal"- he was kind of an abrasive little guy- and he said, "It's been a long time since I studied Latin"-

CK: He was very proud of his Latin. He came from Chicago.

BK: He was very proud of his Latin, -“so I want you to tell me if my Latin is right”, and I looked at the seal or his drawing of it, and it says, “Ad Docendum, Investigandum, Serviendum”, and I said, “That’s very nice”, and I started to make some suggestions. He said, “Isn’t that the proper way to express purpose in Latin?”, and I said, “Well, yes, sir, that is one way to express purpose”, and he said, “Good, that’s all I want”. So, Brage Golding himself did it, and then he ushered me out of his office. And that’s the history behind the seal, which I don’t think is being used anymore, which is too bad.

CK: But, you mean they aren’t using the motto, either?

BK: I don’t know, are they still using it?

LS: I don’t know.

CK: What’s on the diploma, what’s on your diploma?

Chris Wydman¹: It’s used in presidential correspondence and other official documents [from the president’s office].

BK: Is that right?

CK: Which is funny, that’s very funny. They use the nice plane which, I think that’s on the North Carolina quarter. If you look at the North Carolina quarter it looks just like it.

BK: Anyway, these badges [holding up medallion hanging around his neck], or these things are, what, 25th anniversary?

CK: Yes, because yours is 1989, mine is 1990.

BK: They are heavy bronze, and it’s the sort of thing that Wright State can do very well, you know?

LS: An interesting follow-up of the seal is that we interviewed Gary Barlow, and he had been asked to submit a number of the designs for the seal to President Golding, and that is what-

CK: I’ve got a file on some of that, but I haven’t seen his designs. Did you submit that design or was it Golding’s?

LS: It was one of them.

CK: I always laughed at this because, you know, serviendum is like for being a slave. [Laughs]

¹ Chris Wydman, WSU archivist, was present during the interview.

BK: Well, not really. It means to be of service-

CK: Yes it is. For teaching, for research, he meant for teaching, research and service, but *serviendum*? I don't know, I think I would try to find a different word.

BK: We can quibble about the Latin, but President Golding was sort of an abrasive little guy-

CK: But he didn't waste time and I liked him.

BK: No, he didn't waste time, he was very busy.

CK: I liked him, except he didn't think there were enough administrators. I wonder what he would say now. I believe he is still living, I'm not sure.

LS: Yes.

CK: I wonder what he would say now. Because he would always argue, you know, it would be the faculty senate or whatever it was called, the academic council, and they would say, "We want more faculty", and he would say, "No, we don't have enough administrators".

LS: You brought some other memorabilia, "Traditions Change" [referring to a piece of memorabilia]. Mention the tradition of changing the mascot.

CK: Yeah, we liked Rowdy Raider, and that's why I made sure I kept my pennant. I do like the wolf, and I especially like the wolf statues that are around, I think those are wonderful.

LS: Why did you like Rowdy?

CK: Hagar the Horrible is one of my favorite cartoons [laughs]. And they took him out of the regular daily paper, he's only in on Sunday, and I think that's too bad. With Helga and Hamlet, I just like Hagar.

BK: I don't know how to put this gracefully-

LS: Try.

BK: - but the seal with the airplane is absolutely unique, I mean, there's no other place that could have a seal like that-

CK: North Carolina would.

BK: - and it's completely unimaginative.

CK: That's true.

BK: Same with the wolf, you know? Every place can have a wolf, and probably every place has a wolf, but it just struck me that Rowdy Raider, you don't see a lot of Rowdy Raiders among university mascots.

CK: Maybe they do? I mean, we don't know enough about university mascots.

BK: Well, I kind of look around, and I see wolves and leopards and panthers, you know?

CK: What they should have done was put a Helga along with him, a Mrs. Rowdy. Then they wouldn't have been offending anybody. I think that was the reason-

BK: There was some argument [that] he was very bellicose and war-like and so on, it's sexist, what have you.

CK: It's a raider. They're raiders. What are you supposed to be? Well, anyway, I liked Rowdy.

BK: And as President Golding said, in another fifty years it's not going to make any difference.

CK: Oh, I don't know. Especially the wolves that sit around, those are so nice. I haven't been to any of the games, but I suppose they have somebody in a wolf outfit running around, and that's nice, too.

BK: I don't remember who did the colors, the green and the gold.

CK: That was probably a committee, I think the seal committee.

BK: That was probably the committee, I suppose.

CK: Well, that was probably Gary. He's keeping his mouth shut over there.

LS: If you were asked to describe Wright State when you first came here, in one word, what would it be?

CK: Oh, gosh, I have no idea.

LS: Try.

BK: Um, one little building in the middle of a cornfield. [Laughs]

CK: That's not one word.

BK: I was trying to get it all together. Um, "exciting", I think.

CK: Yeah, that's good. "Challenge".

BK: Yeah, "challenging", "exciting".

CK: And it was fun. Because you could do, [pause], we had a lot of freedom.

BK: I think that most of us were aware of the considerable potential that was here. I mean, even when we came up and there was just one little building, Allyn Hall. The library was just one little room of Allyn Hall-

CK: That's what I would talk about. Because here we were, working on dissertations at Chapel Hill, and we got this letter on the library- was that from Phil Bordinat?

BK: Yes, that was from Phil Bordinat.

CK: The twenty-five books and classics that you feel you could not open [a library] without. I think it was twenty-five, it may have been fifty, and I thought, "Oh my".

BK: No, it was twenty-five, because everybody was told that, you know, but it was a question of space.

CK: Well, yeah, the library was on the balcony of Allyn Hall, where the cafeteria was, and there was a little balcony. And they took that balcony out, I don't know when but they took it out, but that's where the library was. At any rate, I thought, "Oh my god, twenty-five books and classics". So we sent our list up. I don't know where my copy of it is.

BK: I'm sure in History and English they all thought the same thing. I doubt if we kept that letter.

CK: No, but it was wonderful. We have, and I don't mean to brag, but we have a very good collection in classics for a school of our size.

BK: And of our age.

CK: We would have people teaching for us, certainly when Jan was chair, adjuncts that were working on degrees at OSU or Cincinnati, and they would prefer to be here because the stuff was easier to get at. But, of course, OSU has a wonderful library, so does the University of Cincinnati. Classics libraries, you can't beat that. But, anyway, we have a good collection for what we are, and I feel like we did it. And I keep bugging the library, anyway.

BK: Yeah. Well, you did it, you did it. You were the library rep, mostly.

CK: Well, yeah, but we were thinking about what would be sensible, you know, what would be the best thing to have.

LS: That would be interesting if you could find your original list of twenty-five books.

BK: Yeah. My original list, you could probably find the letter in Bordinat's files.

CK: Well, but we probably don't have his files.

BK: Well, no, but the university may have them.

CK: Yeah, that could be there. I don't think I kept it, you know, because of having to move around [in the] various remodeling at Millett. That's the time when things get purged, files get thrown out. I had a complete file on the library in hard copy, and you could have traced the process of the ordering with the "BPR's", the book purchase requests and so forth, and with great regret I threw them all out, because there's this electronic catalog. I had things in my file that the library didn't know it had, that had gotten dropped out of the catalog. Some Erasmus stuff, as I remember. I think they managed to find that. It was probably the stupidest thing I ever did, but you just can't keep everything. Especially when Bill and I, at the end in 2000, in order to bring in another faculty member, we were starting to share a position, you know, going from the two full-time positions to half-time each. So we were going back into one office.

BK: What we would call a graceful retirement.

CK: That's the point at which we really threw out, Bill never kept very many files, but I'm afraid-

BK: I got rid of them rather quickly.

CK: -I kept everything and I'm in the process now of throwing out a lot of stuff at home, too. Anyway, the point of the matter is that I doubt very much that I have that anymore.

LS: Let me come back to the one word. Use one word to describe Wright State now.

CK: Oh dear.

BK: I would still say "exciting", I think, the things that are going on here. It has matured a lot, it's not like it was back in the old days.

CK: I don't know, I would say "different", but very friendly. I would say "friendly", and I think it was always friendly, too, exciting and friendly. I wonder if students feel that way.

BK: I hope so.

LS: What do you think is unique about Wright State, when you compare it to other universities?

BK: There is something about the small size, campus-wise. I do not know how- I've been spending some time over at Indiana University- how do you get from one side of that campus to the other, between classes or in 10 minutes?

CK: Especially if you are disabled, then you don't.

BK: - Or say Ohio State or Cincinnati? But here, this is a fairly close-in campus, although you will hear people complaining bitterly if they have to go from Allyn Hall to the Russ Engineering Center, which is a short distance, really. Now for me, now being in a wheelchair, the thing that I am constantly thinking about is how convenient it is to get around through the tunnels. Somebody really had their head on straight, for getting around in bad weather and [voice trails off].

CK: “Welcoming”.

BK: I believe so.

CK: The one word I’d use is “welcoming”, and perhaps I think that because of comparison to other campuses.

BK: I wonder how many other schools have people in golf carts, running around and helping freshmen move in and so on. I imagine there are some, but-

CK: But there were no dorms to begin with.

BK: There were no dorms, right.

CK: But the fact that it has tried to be accessible to students and faculty, thinking in terms of those things. Also, the staff is very helpful. The computer staff- and I’m hopeless when it comes to the computer stuff- you know, CaTS, and they’ve been very nice to help us out.

BK: I would hate to reduce my one word for the university to “helpfulness”, but I think that’s, you know, helpful to students, helpful to staff-

CK: Again, I wonder do students feel that way, though. Maybe we feel that way because we’ve been here forever.

LS: You talk about being here forever. You must have seen some very major changes. What do you think is a significant change that you have experienced during your years at Wright State?

BK: The change in age of the students is one thing, and I wish I could remember what the average ages are now, through the years, but now we are getting numbers of younger students in, and it does change the dynamic of the university. But it also means that we are, I don’t want to say competing, but cooperating, competing, matching- maybe that’s a better word- other schools, like Miami, and Ohio State and so on, the idea that students will come here.

CK: Maybe becoming more of a “normal”, quote-unquote, university.

LS: Cynthia, what major change do you think has been the most significant, in your years here?

CK: Well, probably what he was saying there. I mean, I think it’s becoming more of a “normal” university. But I hope we continue to be welcoming to the so-called non-traditional student.

BK: Yeah, I think that's very important.

CK: That's what kept us going, I know it; the non-traditional student.

LS: If you could go back, would there be anything you would have done differently?

BK: I don't believe so. I don't think so. I don't want to say that everything I did was perfect, or even good for that matter, but I cannot think of anything that I would be so dissatisfied with that I'd say, "Oh, I wish I could have done that differently". I mean, I can think of hundreds of lectures that I gave- "Oh, did I really say that? Did I really do that to that poor student?"- I can think of several students that I said mean things to, but-

CK: You know, I think something that did change the dynamic are the student evaluations.

BK: I wasn't going to touch on those.

CK: There was a very interesting fellow, I think he's still probably teaching for political science, John Morrisette; he was a real character. This would be toward the end of the time before we retired; he came in to teach classes when I was coming back from my Greek vase painting class or something like that. He was talking once about his German classes when he was in college, and how mean the teacher was but how much he learned, and I said, "John, did they have student evaluations?", and he said, "You know, you're right, they didn't". You wouldn't dare do that. I don't remember the description exactly of what it was he was doing, and I think he was complaining about, maybe, his students not doing quite as much as he would like them to do. He taught quite a few honors courses also, and he was an excellent teacher. I think you went with me to one of his lectures.

BK: I did.

CK: It was one of those open honors things. I know he was a retired officer from the Air Force, but I don't know of what.

BK: I think it's kind of a touchy issue, but I certainly would agree that the method of class evaluations is not helpful.

CK: Well, I have no idea what the situation is now, and whether they are still kicking that around and trying to get a good instrument or something, but it changed the dynamic. I think maybe there was a lot more trust between faculty and student before those things appeared.

LS: You mentioned trust. As a last question, describe the nature of the relationship between administration and faculty; your perception on?

BK: My problem there is that I really have not had that much to do with other administrations. I think like all faculty members, I got to where I thought that I could do a better job of running the university than most of the administrators; I'm convinced of that as a matter of fact [laughs]. I would say that, and I hope that I'm not going to offend anybody or make anybody mad, but I've

made several suggestions to administrators, and they have been greeted with something less than enthusiasm.

LS: Give us an example.

CK: He doesn't want to! [Laughs]

BK: We're soon going to be celebrating- this is going to get touchy- a fortieth anniversary program, and the announcement that came around, somebody talked about responding to community needs, and I think that is a very important thing. But I think what the university should be is the intellectual leadership of the community, rather than sitting here and waiting for the community to tell us, "Hey, we need this, we need that". It sounds awful to say this, but we should be telling them, "Hey, you need to do this, you need to do that". I realize that's a very idealistic view, but I do think universities are important intellectual resources. I mentioned this to an administrator some years back, and he looked at me and said, "That's a good idea; write it up". And my immediate response, internally, was, "My God, here I am teaching all these classes and so on, and here you are sitting over there shuffling papers; you write it up". I think Cynthia had a similar experience.

CK: Yeah, I would go back to History 101. I thought it would be a marvelous thing if we'd have some kind of a map that, you know, people could walk on. One of the places we used to like to go, we can't now, is Chautauqua, New York, and along the shores of Lake Chautauqua they have laid out a relief map of the Holy Land; Palestine Park. Jerusalem has its own plaster, plate-sized thing, and there's the Dead Sea, and there's Masada and there's all this stuff. Also, at one of the schools we saw that they had-

BK: At John F. Kennedy Elementary School, I was riding my bike, my hand cycle-

CK: No, that wouldn't have been your hand cycle.

BK: Yeah, I was riding my hand cycle.

CK: Was this recent, then?

BK: Yeah.

CK: Oh, okay, sorry.

BK: - and there is this large parking lot, and drawn with chalk was a map of the United States. It was a huge map, and I looked at it and a couple of teachers were going by, and I said, "Gosh that is just lovely", and they said, "Oh, yes, the students come out and look at it". Well, needless to say, the next time it rained it had all washed away. But I thought at the time, and Cynthia thought, [that] we've got space here, [and] we could put up a map of the world or something, because knowledge of geography is fairly weak.

CK: Oh my goodness, we'd give regular outline map tests and Bill would end up with, what, Sweden in the Mediterranean? I put a map test on everything, and it just drove me nuts. We certainly did this long before you lost your legs, and then we got, "That's a good idea, why don't you write it up."

BK: And that again was coming from one of the administrators, upper echelon.

CK: We also fought to try to get a timeline up somewhere, because there's no concept of time; no concept of space, no concept of time. Jan Gabbert arranged- and I can't think of who [else], it was somebody in the Registrar's offices son, I'm trying to think who it was, Heyward, Hey-

BK: Maybe it's best not to give names.

CK: Well, no, he made a wonderful timeline, and it was put up in Millett Hall. It didn't stay up there very long, because of course we're not [abruptly moves on], then I had around my office a Bayeaux tapestry, and that got taken. I've got one more copy of this [shows copy and unrolls it], you know, you pull it all the way out and it was strung around the-

BK: This was the big invasion of 1066, to cast your minds back.

CK: But to try to get people to see things visually, I had all kinds of art posters connected with history and we had bulletin boards. We had wonderful big bulletin boards that we would try to get students to come and look at, and they did, and then another administrator-

BK: Somebody who will be nameless said that was a fire hazard.

CK: - said we couldn't have these bulletin boards. But somehow Education continued to have their bulletin boards, with their fire hazards on their floor. This is where I get mad at administrators, they don't think very creatively.

LS: Okay. Now, we are coming to the end of our discussion, but is there any one thing that you would like to share with us that would be enlightening about your time at Wright State?

BK: Something enlightening about my time. Beware of administrators. [Laughs]

CK: Well, I imagine every faculty member has probably heard that all along.

BK: I bet you every faculty [member] says that. The only thing I would say is encourage even more faculty cooperation. One of the things I've always liked here is-

CK: That was the good thing about the general education shift in '87, because there were a lot of get-togethers across departments, and it was lots of fun.

BK: A lot more faculty association and relationships and so on.

CK: You almost have to do it intentionally; you can't have it by little cliques.

BK: If you think about how it is in a big university, where professor X is over there and professor Y is three miles away over there, they will never see each other. Their only identification is, "Oh, I'm in the phone book". So I think this is one of the really nice features at Wright State. The faculty has always has always gotten along well, and I don't mean 100%, but substantially well, and I think anything that you can do to encourage this sort of inter-faculty good cheer is good.

LS: Well, thank you very much, this has been a delightful interview with you, and we appreciate you taking the time to do this. Thank you.

BK: Well, thank you, thank you.

CK: Oh dear. It wasn't enlightening on our parts, but we had fun. We'll have to say we've had fun.