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WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY
Retirees Association Oral History Project
Interview with Kathy Morris

Interview Information

Interview date: October 25, 2019

Interviewer: Dan Abrahamowicz (DA)

Interviewee: Kathy Morris (KM)

Interview Transcript

Dan Abrahamowicz: Okay, are you ready?

Kathy Morris: Yeah.

DA: Well, hello, everyone. This is Dan Abrahamowicz, former Vice-President for Student Affairs at Wright State University and current member of the Wright State University Retiree's Association. Today is Friday, October 25, 2019, and I'm pleased to be interviewing Kathy Morris, a 33-year staff member at Wright State University, who retired [like] three years ago as Associate Vice-President for Student Affairs. And this is part of the retiree's association oral history project, where we interview people who have retired from the university who have strong connections with Wright State University, and keeping a record of their remembrances. So, Kathy, thanks for being with us this afternoon. So, let's start off our discussion this afternoon and tell us a little bit about yourself. Where you're from, where did you grow up, where did you go to school, those kinds of things.

KM: Okay, I'm an Ohio girl, born and bred, I was born in Cincinnati-

DA: You were born in Cincy? I didn't know you were born in Cincinnati.

KM: Yes, I was born in Cincinnati, my parents had recently moved, relocated from New York, near the city-

DA: What were they doing in Cincinnati?

KM: My dad worked for American Bakeries, and his father was also- I think he was an executive at the time with American Bakeries, and my dad after getting out of the Navy took a job with

American Bakeries, and they had an opportunity for him in Cincinnati, so he and my mom left Yonkers, New York, and moved to Cincinnati, Ohio, where I was born.

DA: Were they New York natives?

KM: Yeah. So, all of my family until I was probably in my teens were all in New York, and the New York area.

DA: I'll be darned. Do you still have relatives there?

KM: I do, I do. People have kind of spread out a bit, but yeah, some of my dad's family is still there, and my mom's is still in the east coast. So, born in Cincinnati, and then when I was very young, probably 5, we moved to Cleveland. My dad was still with that company.

DA: Where in Cleveland?

KM: West Side.

DA: Rocky River?

KM: No, Lakewood. But you know this better than most- you have to be a Clevelander to get this- but if you live in Cleveland you pretty much know that you are either an East Sider or a West Sider. For some reason, East and West are not connected like other cities are. So, we lived in Lakewood-

DA: Where in Lakewood?

KM: In a duplex, on Hathaway Avenue, and I have vivid memories of living there, because the people who owned it- they lived above us on the second floor- and it was an Italian family, and my mother was Polish and Italian, and so she was thrilled to have somebody living upstairs who was making her own pasta, and cooking, and I can remember vividly walking in the back door, and smelling that sauce, I mean, it's still with me. So, until I was twelve, we lived in Lakewood, and then my parents bought a home in Rocky River. It's funny, because people say- if you're from Ohio and from the Cleveland area, and if you say Rocky River, they go, "Oh- Rocky River". Which in Dayton would be like, "Oh- Oakwood". But my parents weren't in that income level.

DA: Now was that the same house that your mother lived in forever?

KM: Same house. Same house that my mother lived in for 50 years.

DA: On Wager Road? No.

KM: No, close to. Just right down the street from Rocky River High School, on a little street called Woodside, and so we lived there until I went away to college, to Bowling Green.

DA: Did you go the Rocky River High School?

KM: I did. I went to Catholic school through 8th grade.

DA: Magnificat?

KM: I wanted to go to Magnificat for high school, but-

DA: That was Lakewood, right?

KM: No, that was Rocky River. No, that was St. Augustine's or St. Joe's.

DA: Oh, yeah, yeah.

KM: -but my parents said, "If you want to go to Magnificent, fine, but then we can't help you with college. So, I went to Rocky River High School.

DA: Pretty good school.

KM: It was a good school. I had a good experience there, I was involved in stuff, no complaints really.

DA: Now why did you pick Bowling Green?

KM: Not for any of the reasons that college students pick schools now. I think it was... I knew, for me, a public university is what was going to be affordable for my parents, so that pretty much limited me to what we know of public universities in Ohio. My parents told me I was not going to go to Kent, and that I was not going to go to OU [Ohio University]. You have to remember it was the 70's-

DA: -hotbeds of protest-

KM: Oh, yeah. You know, it's the wild, party schools, and issues-

DA: Sure. No fun [*laughs*]. You had to go to a "no fun" school, and that's why you picked Bowling Green.

KM: *[Laughs]*. Yeah, I remember driving out there with my parents to check it out, and them driving around, and they were taking me to the admissions office, and they're like, "So, this looks like a pretty good place!" Anyway, one of my best friends from high school- we both went there together, and we were roommates together, and a lot of West Siders from Cleveland went to Bowling Green, and I loved it there. I hated the winters there, but you would know, living in Toledo all those years. It's flat, and brutally cold and windy. But for me, it was a really, really good place to go to school. I was a Liberal Arts major, had fabulous advising from a full professor in the department of Speech, and had a great social life outside of the classroom.

DA: You were involved in a sorority?

KM: I was, and I-

DA: Which one?

KM: Gamma Phi Beta, otherwise known as "GuFuBU" *[sp?]* *[Laughs]*, go figure. Never lived in the house, it was like a little too restrictive for me, but I did eat meals there.

DA: And you met your future husband there?

KM: No, I didn't.

DA: You didn't?

KM: No, he went to school there, but I never met him there.

DA: I thought you met there.

KM: No, we had mutual friends, but no, he was three years older than me, so I did not meet him there. I got involved with orientation stuff, you know, I helped with that, helped with some peer advising-

DA: So, this is where you got your interest in student affairs work?

KM: I- it was so interesting how this happened. One of my sorority sisters was a Bowling Green resident. Her father was a faculty member in the College of Education, and I remember that she and I were in the same academic program in Liberal Arts. It was actually in the College of Liberal Arts, in the School of Speech Communication, in the Department of Interpersonal and Public Communication, and I was thinking of going into human resources by way of a liberal arts degree. She was thinking- one day tells me about this student personnel thing. I was like, "What is that?" And she said, "Go talk to Gerry Saddlemire over in the College of Liberal Arts."

DA: I'll be darned. The famous Gerry Saddlemire.

KM: It's this thing with student affairs, like, you advised the groups and the organizations and whatever.

DA: And Bowling Green has strong programs.

KM: It was huge. I mean, Gerry Saddlemire was one of the pillars of the profession.

DA: Yes, absolutely.

KM: So, I went over there one day to make an appointment, and by this time it was my... gosh, it might have been either my spring quarter of my junior year... it probably was. Because by senior year, I guess we were thinking- you were already applying to things, and I knew I was going to graduate a quarter early. Because I was trying to get through school without going into debt. So, I went over there and went up to the department, and asked to make an appointment to talk with him, and he heard me mentioning his name, and he came out and said, "I've got time right now, come on in!" So, I spent maybe a half hour or so talking with Gerry Saddlemire, and he encouraged me to apply to their program, which I did, and I also by that time applied to Ohio State, because by then I had met my future husband. Summer before my senior year, I met him.

DA: But not at BG?

KM: But not at- no, it was just a very happenstance arrangement, hanging out with friends in the little town of New Concord, Ohio, where his family was.

DA: So, how did you... why did you pick Ohio State over BG?

KM: Because Lee lived in Columbus.

DA: A-ha. There you have it.

KM: And because they were the first one to offer me an assistantship. I really-

DA: So, it was a good deal.

KM: Yeah, it was. I mean, to go to graduate school without paying for it was a huge deal. And, you know, in our field you've got to have an assistantship, really, if you really want to-

DA: You had to have experience. An assistantship, a paid assistantship was a good deal. Room, board, tuition, and everything.

KM: Yeah, it was great, and the interesting thing for me was that-

DA: [*Talking to camera*] We were in the same program together. I went to Ohio State several years ahead of Kathy. She's much younger than I am.

KM: Not much. But anyway- and we knew some similar people, which is another part of that story, too.

DA: Exactly. Same faculty, too.

KM: So, yeah, you happened to really like that guy, and he became your advisor.

DA: Well, I liked the whole experience. But you didn't have a great experience at Ohio State.

KM: Not really, not with the academic side of it.

DA: Yeah, see, I loved it. But go ahead, so you go to Ohio State-

KM: -and I got an assistantship at Otterbein College-

DA: And you were an extern. An external assistantship.

KM: I was one of the bastard children.

DA: Yeah, that's a tougher road to go.

KM: Yeah. There were seven of us, though, so we kind of had our own little cohort.

DA: But it was just you at Otterbein, right?

KM: No, there were two of us.

DA: Oh, two of you.

KM: Yeah, my other friend was- Shelley Rose [*sp?*], she was from Atlanta, Georgia, and she and I are still in touch all these years later, over the holidays. But Otterbein, Ohio Wesleyan, Ohio Dominican, and Capital were the extern locations for Ohio State, so my first year I was at

Otterbein, and then in my second year I had the opportunity to work in the Ohio Union, the original Ohio Union-

DA: There's your union background, right?

KM: -which is where I kind of found my niche. It was like, "This is where I want to be."

DA: What was it about the... was it the Ohio Union, or union work in general, or the people, or what?

KM: I think it was both. Well, it was definitely the people. I worked with some people who were really passionate about a college union, and what it's there to do, and how it serves students outside of a classroom environment. I just really liked how they operated, and how they figured out how to manage operational things and business functions with programming. It was just a cool environment. And at Ohio State, of course, gameday is huge. I mean, everybody is coming in at the union.

DA: Oh yeah, of course. And the union is kind of the center of things, right?

KM: It was. So, I was really very fortunate to have both the small school experience at Otterbein, with that college union experience on the OSU campus. Because my first job out of graduate school was at a small private [university], and I don't think I would have had that-

DA: At Findlay?

KM: At Findlay. I wouldn't have had that opportunity, I don't think, if I hadn't been at a small school.

DA: Did you do union work at Findlay?

KM: I had a great title, I was the Assistant Dean of Students and the Coordinator of Student Activities, and I made 12,000 dollars a year [*laughs*]. Great title, horrible salary.

DA: And what year was that?

KM: '81?

DA: See, seven years earlier I started at 12,000 a year at Cleveland State. S they were underpaying you, definitely.

KM: Oh, God. Well, you know, it was I think I had a 10-month contract, too. So, truth be told.

DA: Oh, well, that's not bad then. So, you had summers off, basically?

KM: Yeah, I guess. Lee and I only stayed there for-

DA: You were married by then?

KM: Yeah, I got married in between my first and my second year in grad school. The reason we didn't stay in Findlay was it was just way too small for me. I felt like... I just didn't feel like-

DA: So, did you just decide it was time to move on, or did some opportunity arise?

KM: I saw a posting for a job at Wright State University. A place I knew nothing about.

DA: Saw a posting, where did you see that? In the Chronicle [of Higher Education] or something?

KM: Um... it had to be in the Chronicle. I know that there was nothing electronic back then [laughs]. So, yeah, I must have seen it in the Chronicle.

DA: And what attracted you to that position, the Wright State position?

KM: It was a public university, it was in-

DA: -a bigger city.

KM: Yes, and for my husband that was great. Because his job was a sales and territorial job, so we actually could have lived anywhere in Ohio, Michigan, Kentucky, or part of West Virginia, but he had major accounts in this Dayton area, so that worked out pretty well.

DA: And did you know anything about Wright State at this time?

KM: I knew very little about it.

DA: And what year was that? Like '82?

KM: Um... I started here in January of '83. No, I'm sorry, March of '83. I came and interviewed in January of '83.

DA: And what was the position here?

KM: It was Coordinator of Student Activities, and it was in the- we called it the Student Center. The University Center. Gosh, I'm losing my mind here.

DA: And was that part of the union of the university?

KM: It was. The University Center was Wright State's student union.

DA: And who was your boss?

KM: Lorna Dawes. Lorna was the one who hired me, and I knew I liked her right from the get go, just talking to her on the phone. Because when she was arranging the interview, we picked a date, and I said, "You know, I'm having wisdom teeth pulled a few days before that", and she said, "Oh my gosh, let's change it, because you never know how you're going to feel after that". And it was a good thing, because I had like a swollen jaw, with black and blue and purple for about a week, so thankfully I didn't have to come down there looking like a chipmunk. But we just connected as soon as I met her.

DA: Lorna was- what, the second union director in the history of Wright State?

KM: She was. Elizabeth Dixon was the first, and then she hired Lorna away from what was called the Office of University and Community Events, and Lorna was the assistant director until Elizabeth retired in '81. So, she was still fairly new in that role when she hired me.

DA: And what kinds of things did you do in that first job?

KM: Well, there had been a vacancy in the position for about nine months-

DA: For the Coordinator of Student Activities?

KM: Yeah, so it was kind of running amok, as I recall. I remember one of the first things that I did when I got to the office was to throw out a bunch of junk that had been accumulating and had piled up over a long period of time. And my primary responsibility was advising the program board, which was called "UCB", or University Center Board, and Inter-Club Council, which would later become a part of Student Government's house of reps.

DA: Okay, so you had the old predecessor to the Union Activities Board.

KM: Yeah, mm hmm. I did not have Greeks. At Findlay, I had Greeks, I had Program Board, I had all of the leadership programs, and I also worked with the women's residence halls.

DA: So, you were at a residential college at Bowling Green, a residential college at Wright State, residential college at Otterbein, and Findlay was a residential college. What did you think of Wright State? What was it like, and what were your impressions of the place?

KM: Oh, wow. When I came down to interview-

DA: -and this was in early '80s?

KM: This was in January 1983, I came down, and 675 wasn't built, so I remember coming down 75 and then, gosh, backroads coming into the campus, and it was a mid-morning kind of interview schedule, and I remember being surprised that I didn't see anyone anywhere, and I was like, "What the heck? Where is everybody?" And then later I found out there were tunnels.

DA: Oh, yeah, *[laughs]*. Right, and it was wintertime.

KM: Yeah! So, that was like the first thing. Where was everyone? And then I found out what a unique place this was. So, my impression of the campus- and I only really saw University Center, the tunnels, and Allyn Hall, because I met with a bunch of students and Joanne Risacher, who at the time was Director of Student Development, that was her title. She was not in the same reporting structure as Lorna. Lorna... well, she and Lorna were peers-

DA: And the VP [of Student Affairs] was Elenore?

KM: Yes, Elenore Koch. So, a lot of really strong women, and that was another thing that I think really resonated with me. Like, wow, they have women who were in these leadership roles.

DA: I'm trying to think back then, there weren't many women who were vice presidents of student affairs.

KM: No, and there weren't many women directors of university centers, and there weren't necessarily a bunch of women who were in charge of all of the other areas of student life, and that was really what Joanne's job was. That impressed me quite a bit.

DA: So, um, take us through a timeline of your various jobs at Wright State, starting in March of '83 as Coordinator of Student Activities-

KM: Right- oh, and I've got to tell you a funny story about that, too.

DA: Sure.

KM: I was there less than two days, when John Kwon, who was the Executive Director of Auxiliary Services- that's the person to whom Lorna reported-

DA: So, she wasn't in Student Affairs?

KM: She was. Auxiliary Services was in Student Affairs, and it included University Center, Dining Services, Residence Life, the bookstore- which was a self-op at the time- and... I think there might have been something else that John had responsibility for. He had come from DePaul University. But I was there maybe two days, and he calls me into his office and he said, "We're giving you a raise", and I said, "Well, I'm glad you like my work!" And he says, "Your secretary makes more than you". She was a civil servant.

DA: So, they had to give you a raise. So, you made \$12,000 at Findlay, what did you make at Wright State?

KM: \$14,500.

DA: Was that after the raise, or before the raise?

KM: I think that was before the raise, so maybe that got bumped up to 16. I don't remember, I just remember laughing my head off when I left the office, like, "Okay, that was great". So, I was in that role doing those things for the first couple of years, and then I was promoted to an Assistant Director of the University Center-

DA: And where was the University Center? It wasn't the Union as it exists now-

KM: Part of it.

DA: Oh, part of it.

KM: The part that is right cross from Hamilton Hall, the part with the pitched roof area.

DA: Yeah, that was there.

KM: That was the original University Center.

DA: So, basketball was still played in the old-

KM: -in the P.E. Building, which is now part of the Student Union.

DA: Okay. So it was considerably smaller than it is now.

KM: Oh yeah. It had the upper and lower levels, and that building had actually had an addition put onto it, so if-

DA: The University Center did?

KM: The University Center, if you were in the lower level and started walking down the hall towards where Student Government's offices were on the lower level, that's where it probably would have ended. They put an addition off the back of it at some point and added those extra meeting spaces and what have you. But we really didn't have a lot of space in the University Center. It reminded me a lot of a student center at a small private [college], like what you would see at Bluffton University.

DA: Because of its size, or-

KM: Yeah, it was just... you know, Wright State had 15,000 students then, but it didn't have a lot in the way of student life. You know, we had one residence hall- Hamilton Hall- at the time, and we had-

DA: When was The Woods built?

KM: The Woods was built in the '80s, the late '80s-

DA: After that, okay.

KM: Late '80's, early '90s.

DA: Because that was the second group of residence halls, after Hamilton, or really the first group built after Hamilton.

KM: Correct. But the university had- only a couple of years prior to my arrival- acquired Forest Lane, which had been a privately-owned apartment community.

DA: So, we had Hamilton, Forest Lane, and that was about it.

KM: That was it. So, in terms of having a bunch of students on campus all the time... they were around during the day, but not so much at night.

DA: So, what was the culture at the university like? So, wait... so, you came as the Coordinator of Student Activities, then you became Assistant Director after what period of time?

KM: Oh, man. Gosh. Three or four years, maybe.

DA: So, we're well into your tenure at Wright State, and you're Assistant Director, so what were you doing as Assistant Director?

KM: I was responsible for a new program, called the Contemporary Lecture Series, and I was working with Lorna on the university's Artist Series, which was a standing committee that appointed faculty to it- I think Faculty Senate appointed people to that committee. I think that's how they got appointed, I'm not exactly sure. But that program worked very closely with the College of Liberal Arts and the Department of Music for these events that we would bring to campus.

DA: And just for context, the president at that time was Mulhollan? Or no.

KM: Yes, because when I came to Wright State, Dr. Kegerreis was, and then-

DA: -and Elenore was still the VP-

KM: Elenore was still Vice-President until 1992.

DA: Some time down the road. So, talk about the culture of working here at Wright State at approximately that time. Now we're in the mid '80s, right?

KM: Yeah, I liked it. It was an opportunity to kind of create and do new things, because it was still kind of young. I mean, think about it, Wright State was only... it was founded in, you know, really it became Wright State in '67, and here it was '83, so it was only... not very old when I started working here.

DA: Sure, sure.

KM: There was a huge student tradition, however, and that was May Daze. A big tradition. There was also a lesser tradition in October Daze. We had the rock- not in the location that it is now. But when I think about things that were traditions, the biggest one hands down was May Daze, and it was a big outdoor event that was held the first Friday in spring, and students lived for this event. And the program board- UCB and ICC- were the main sponsors. And I'll tell you, after that first May Daze- which was three months after I arrived- I thought I would be fired, based on what I saw happen and what they did.

DA: Were you in charge of it?

KM: Yeah, I mean, basically I was. But [*laughs*], I remember thinking, "They're allowed to do this?" Because, you know, here I'm coming from... my context was what happens at Ohio State on Michigan weekend, and how things get planned so that you don't have chaos. There was

nothing that was really organized about this, other than the fact that the students made arrangements for beer, and bands, and booths.

DA: And beer, and beer, and more beer.

KM: The three B's: beer, bands, booths, all out on the parking lot, okay? So, we would take over, basically, what is the parking lot right across from now University Hall, and kind of in proximity to Raj Soin College of Business. There was a different traffic situation then, too. The road was different. But we pretty much took over the whole parking lot, and we had a massive tent for the clubs and organizations, and we had another big tent for the bands that performed, and then there were the beer trucks. And what I saw that first event was students collecting money, pouring beer-

DA: And this was mid-afternoon, right?

KM: This was all day. It started mid-morning, and it went until the end of the normal work day. And I have to tell you, like, the electricians that would come out and take care of all of our electric cords, they would be drunk by noon, you know? And students were on top of the beer truck, I remember, that first day. I remember students digging their own holes for mud tugs that they decided to do, and filling them with water, and I thought, "This is insane". There were no points of entry, it was just like a free for all. And I remember saying to Steve Homan, who was police-

DA: I remember that name, yeah.

KM: -he was part of the police department then, and I remember saying, "We can't ever have this happen again". I mean, it's got to be enclosed with fencing, and there have to be points of entry, and... oh my God, it was just... it was a little crazy.

DA: So, that was mid-'80s, and then how long before you became director of the union?

KM: I became director when Lorna and her husband took an opportunity- an offer to Pres [*Preston Dawes, Lorna's husband*], to go to Princeton. Pres was-

DA: Princeton, New Jersey?

KM: Yes. Pres was a Princeton... he was a Princeton grad, and a Presbyterian minister, and he was given an opportunity to take a position at Princeton, so they moved from Dayton to New Jersey, and Lorna recommended me for promotion. And that was an interesting time-

DA: And that was 1990, you said?

KM: It was '92 when I became director, and we were already well underway for the expansion of the University Center to what would become our Student Union. And it happened at an interesting time because there was a lot of transition in university leadership. Dr. Mulhollan was leaving the university, and Harley Flack was becoming the new president, and the entire cabinet was getting changed out, which often happens. So, at that point in time, Joanne Risacher was named acting Vice President for Student Affairs-

DA: In '92?

KM: It was probably... yeah, in '92. And because there was so much change in all of the vice-presidential areas, there wasn't a lot of attention being paid to us. Meaning, the Student Affairs folks.

DA: Was that a good thing, or not?

KM: It was a mixed bag. Because we were allowed to get involved in things that today I don't think we'd have half a chance to be involved in. We kind of had an idea of what our budget would be for "F, F, and E"- furniture, fixtures, and other expenses- and there were other things that were kind of out of our control altogether, but we were doing things with the Purchasing Office that's I'm sure we- I know for a fact we wouldn't have been able to do later on. We were able to pick things that we thought would be most appropriate for the facility, and meet with vendors and do things that were totally usurped at another point down the road. So, it was kind of exciting to be our little team of people, and seeing the earth get-

DA: Yeah. I mean, a lot of autonomy!

KM: It was great. I mean, I remember the day that the ramp that was the entryway into the old P.E. Building was taken down, because the new Student Union was taking all of that space that had been the Physical Education Building, and incorporating that into the University Center.

DA: Did they knock down the old Physical Education Building?

KM: No.

DA: They just remodeled it.

KM: They kept the whole thing.

DA: They just took the ramp down.

KM: The ramp, and a good thing, because the ramp was falling apart. There were chunks of concrete falling out of it [*laughs*]. They never drove any vehicle up on this, but it was a concrete ramp, fixed in by rebar into the building, and that area was like by the top of the stairs that lead into the bookstore now. That was the entryway into the old P.E. Building.

DA: I'll be darned.

KM: So, yeah, and... okay, I'm just going to have a momentary gap with names. Um, Allan Rinzler was the reason we were able to get the building connected-

DA: -and he was on the Board of Trustees?

KM: He was on the Board of Trustees, and the university was not necessarily inclined to enclose that space. I think they initially thought they would just-

DA: -and this space we're talking about is sort of the atrium of the union now.

KM: The atrium, yes.

DA: And they were going to leave that open?

KM: Yes, and he said, "That's ridiculous. Find the money, we have to make it all come together." So, it was because of his support that that piece was not open.

DA: So, the front part of the union, which is where all of the meeting rooms [are], and the other part was not going to be connected?

KM: Well, the project had several pieces. It began with the three-story tower, that is essentially offices and student service functions, which is the front-facing part of the Student Union, and the meeting complex. And then you have all of the renovation that needed to be happening inside in some part of the original University Center. It was not a total reno, at that point.

DA: So, that part of the union is new.

KM: Which part?

DA: The part that you just described.

KM: The tower, and the meeting rooms?

DA: The tower and the meeting rooms, yes.

KM: The tower and the meeting room complex, they were new. Then there was work that had to be done in the existing P.E. Building to make it “new”, plus the atrium. That was all new.

DA: Was the multi-purpose room part of that?

KM: The multi-purpose room, or the Apollo Room, as we call it, was the auxiliary gym.

DA: So, that was already there.

KM: That was the place where the baseball team used to practice during off-season, and other activities. And, of course, as I mentioned, the main gym is the university bookstore, plus they incorporated some other elements from that space for storage and such. But it was a really interesting project, because there were so many different pieces and parts to it. It wasn't like building a new building. The architect said it wasn't like a “10”, it was like a “12”, in terms of designing it. You had all of these different elevations. So, when the building was opened in 1993, Harley was the president, we were in a weird mode of vice-presidential search for what would become your job, and... what else was happening then-

DA: So, when you became Director... were there dominos? Because- let's talk about Bill Shepard and the staff that you had.

KM: Yes, there were dominos. Because Lorna had not only hired me in '83, but I think maybe a couple of years- within a few years of that time or the next year- Bill Shepard was a student, and he was-

DA: -a student employee?

KM: He was a student who was hired as the first student Building Manager. The university used to have these other people who managed Building Operations at night. They weren't student employees. Bill was one of the first. He was chipping away at his bachelor's degree- and ended up getting married while he was still chipping away at his bachelor's degree- and then was hired on full-time. I think he was still chipping away at his bachelor's degree-

DA: He was like an Operations person, right?

KM: Yeah. So, he really learned about all of the secret, weird places in the building, you know, before most other people did. Then he became an Assistant Director when... let me think. No, I think when I was named Director of the University Center, Bill was promoted to Assistant Director. And then-

DA: Who else was on the staff then?

KM: Pam Davis.

DA: Oh, yeah, my goodness.

KM: I hired Pam when she was-

DA: She's still here, by the way.

KM: Yes, she is, and I knew Pam because she was really involved, she was a Resident Advisor in Forest Lane, she was really involved in her sorority, and she was involved with Inter-Club Council things. And when my secretary retired- and it was a really weird timing thing, it was near the end of Pam's senior year, I needed someone temporarily and we were able to arrange her as an interim hire, and she was really good at what she was doing. So, when she finished her degree and when we posted a position, I told her to apply for it. So-

DA: And what was that position? Was it accounting or bookkeeping or something?

KM: No, no, it was... oh gosh... it was a little bit of operations, because our box office operation was part of what she took responsibility for. And everything that involved our lecture series, and artist series, and I forgot to mention the Madrigal Dinner, which Lorna and I started the year that I-

DA: Well, talk about that. What year did you guys start the Madrigal Dinner?

KM: The very first year I was here.

DA: So, '83?

KM: Yeah, December of '83. I had been aware of madrigal dinners, Ohio State had one, Findlay did something kind of like it, and Lorna had been to Indiana University's madrigal, which was huge.

DA: And just explain roughly what it was.

KM: It was intended to be a collaborative event that would showcase Wright State's Music Department, while giving our food service operation and our Student Union/ University Center operation a showcase.

DA: And the university students.

KM: Yes, because it really was focused on students, as performers and singers and all of that.

DA: But, also the community.

KM: And community, we had community performers and people involved. The first year was very small, and it was done in what was the cafeteria in the University Center, and we engaged two faculty members in the Theatre Department, who put the original script together and wrote the original script. As it turned out, after that... gosh, I'm almost certain that Dee, and-

DA: Dee?

KM: I'm trying... the two faculty... and I'm totally gapping out on his name. It's just one of those moments that happen when you retire. You forget names. But Bill Rickert, very quickly into the Madrigal Dinner's history, became the Lord of the Manor, and he reprised that role every year until it ended, and the same year we retired, Dan. 2015 was our last year, I believe.

DA: 2016.

KM: 2016? We retired in 2016. We didn't do the Madrigal that year, so it was 2015.

DA: Oh, right. That's right, so, '83 to 2015. I see. Go ahead.

KM: Yeah, so we did it 32 years? God.

DA: Yeah, it just kind of had its run, right?

KM: Yeah, it did.

DA: So, you became Director in '92, what stands out in your mind in those early Union years...

KM: Oh, it was heady. It was heady stuff, because college unions around the country were all- I shouldn't say all- a lot of them were getting renovations, and new ones were being built. And I was 36 years old when we opened that Student Union. To be a woman at 36 and to be in charge of a Student Union-

DA: And when did the union open? '94?

KM: '93.

DA: '93.

KM: We opened it in... no. Gosh. My son was born in '93. We christened it in '94. So, yeah, to be still a fairly new professional by most standards- most college union directors were men in their '50s, period. If you went to a professional ACUI meeting, it was mostly men, so-

DA: Yeah. Like Dallas Garber.

KM: Right, so to have a 207,000 square foot-

DA: [To camera] Dallas Garber was the director of the union at Toledo.

KM: And I knew him, you know? It's just interesting. We had hosted conferences here, before we opened the Student Union, so we were pretty much plugged in professionally, and my friends at Ohio State, who had been my mentors, were still at Ohio State-

DA: Still the same crowd.

KM: It was.

DA: What was his name, the director there?

KM: Wendell Ellenwood.

DA: Wendell Ellenwood, right.

KM: Who is still living and is 98 years old. I saw him in celebration of his birthday.

DA: Were there problems that stood out in your mind in that time period for Wright State or for you folks in the Union or Student Affairs? Well, you mentioned a search going on-

KM: Oh, gosh. Well, the search going on for the position that would ultimately become you. Yeah, they had a hire for the position that shocked pretty much everyone in our division, because we were included in the interviews, and-

DA: And this was- now we're talking '95, right? '94-'95?

KM: Gosh. Um... yeah.

DA: Because I think I first started interviewing at Wright State around late '94, or spring of '94, something like that.

KM: Yeah, so, the first person they hired lasted four months, and then was fired, and then Bill and I [*laughs*]- by that time, Bill was promoted to Associate Director at that point, and Pam Davis-

DA: -and you were the Director. So, you promoted Bill?

KM: Yes, and Pam Davis was our Budget Manager, I think that was the title she had at that point.

DA: And by then, Joanne was still... had been interim-

KM: She had been interim, and she had applied for the position and was encouraged to do so, and then did not get the job.

DA: And then she was in the mix, along with myself and the guy who eventually got the job who was fired after a few months.

KM: Yes, so Joanne decided at that point to retire from the university and decided to go back and get a PhD.

DA: But in the meantime, Elenore left when? Elenore Koch, who was the VP-

KM: Elenore left in, um, she left before Lorna left, because- it was probably around '90- I think Lorna reported to Harold Nixon for a couple of years.

DA: And then Harold Nixon came in, from '90 to... 90-something.

KM: No, Harold was there... seven years maybe.

DA: So, he came after Elenore.

KM: He did, he came after Elenore, but he left after the university announced- when Harley Flack announced he was going to a Provost model.

DA: Right.

KM: And I remember clearly him saying, "I'm not going to report to a Provost". So, I was Director maybe a year? No, that's not right. Yeah, maybe a year when he left.

DA: Okay, and then Joanne became Interim-

KM: -became Interim, and I worked with Joanne through the completion of the Student Union's expansion and renovation. And she was there when we christened it, you know, when we had our grand opening, which was really pretty fabulous.

DA: So, you did the search for VP, it failed, talk about the next round where you traveled all over the country [*laughs*].

KM: Oh, God. Well, you know, it was such a nightmare because- first of all, when they had that first search there was no one from our division on the search [committee]. So, we were pretty ticked off when they hired the person who ended up getting fired. It was like, you know, "We could have told you that". So, I kind of shot my mouth off, to a woman who was the assistant to Harley Flack- that was Lynnette Heard- and I said, "You know, this is really pretty crappy, the way we've been treated. There was no one on the committee? How can there be no one from Student Affairs on the committee for our Vice-President?" So, the next thing you know, I get called into Harley Flack's office [*laughs*]-

DA: The president.

KM: Right, and not only did I get put on the committee, but he told me that he wanted me to go visit the institutions- the two institutions where the finalists were located, [*points at Dan*], and that was Toledo, and the University of Nebraska at Kearney.

DA: And you weren't alone. You went with-

KM: I went with Barbara Gamstetter, and Bruce Lewis, the Police Chief. Barbara was-

DA: The administrative assistant.

KM: The administrative assistant to the Vice-President. I'm not sure why he picked her to go. Or even the Police Chief, to be honest. [*Laughs*] I had no idea.

DA: Now, they weren't on the committee, right? You were the only one on the committee.

KM: I was.

DA: Who chaired the committee then? There was a faculty member from Education.

KM: He was on your Athletic board.

DA: Yeah, I can't remember his name. I remember- so, there were three searches. I remember Perry Moore chaired one search for Vice-President for Student Affairs, and they interviewed at

the airport for that, and then they called off that search for some reason- lack of diversity, I think it was- and then they had the second search where-

KM: -where they hired the guy they shouldn't have hired.

DA: Yeah, and Lillie Howard chaired that group, and they hired that guy, and then the third search, which was with this guy from the College of Education that you were on, and you traveled to Nebraska-

KM: And in the meantime, Student Affairs is reporting to every single vice-president that was in the Cabinet. It was just a cluster.

DA: Sisler, it was Jack Sisler for a while, who was the Advancement VP, John Flishauer, who was the Provost- *[Laughs]*

KM: It was just ridiculous. Just ridiculous. So, you know, we would have our- we would get together with our divisional team, and just kind of catch up with each other, because nobody was leading us. It was really kind of depressing.

DA: Sure, yeah.

KM: So, Dan, that brings us to your era, when- and I remember coming back-

DA: In '96.

KM: -and Harley Flack saying, "So, who should I hire?" *[Laughs]*, and I was like, "You know, I didn't think that was what you wanted me to come back and tell you. Let me tell you what I learned from these different people." That was bizarre.

DA: Okay, and so you become... actually, did you become Assistant VP before Associate VP?

KM: Yeah. You pulled me into the office, like, three months after you got there, or four months, and you said, "I have way too many direct reports". In the meantime-

DA: I mean, if you looked at an organizational chart, there was me and then there was like a dozen direct reports.

KM: I remember, though, from the time you came until that point, the Director of Housing- is what we called it- had left for a job at Northern...

DA: Right, what was his name?

KM: Michael Coakley.

DA: Michael Coakley, right. And a woman succeeded her as interim.

KM: Yes.

DA: Do you remember her name?

KM: Cynthia Wells.

DA: [*Laughs*] You have a better memory than I do.

KM: Well, you know, I remember thinking to myself- because I knew Michael really well, we had been friends-

DA: Michael Coakley?

KM: Michael Coakley, -thinking, "God, I would never want that job". I mean, when I had to work as a hall director, I was just miserable.

DA: Well, part of it was the unique sort of aspect- or distinctive aspect of Wright State housing, which was a partnership with a private company in Iowa, right?

KM: Right, and he obviously didn't like that too much.

DA: Michael didn't?

KM: Michael didn't, and you know, I think a lot of it was orchestrated by Ed Spanier, who was the then Vice-President for Business at the University. So, decisions were that didn't necessarily involve the student affairs professionals. It was a business decision, and the university wanted to grow, and they needed to do it fast, and so the private developer was hired to build housing, you know, and partner with the university. That's a story for another whole conversation.

DA: No kidding.

KM: But suffice it to say, when Michael left, and you called me into your office and said, "I've got to reduce some of this- direct reports, and I want you to take on Housing", I just kind of went, "Oh, for God's sake".

DA: Well, we went back kind of to the auxiliary model. What, you did the Union, you did Housing... what else? Student Activities?

KM: I think I still had Student Activities.

DA: Right, and that was Katie Deedrick's still, right?

KM: Yeah. We called it Student Life, the Office of Student Life. No. Yes. Yeah, I think it was.

DA: Yeah, something like that. Katie did a million things.

KM: Yeah. Katie wore like ten hats.

DA: And that included Recreation, too, which was part of the Student Union.

KM: Well, because the Student Union had Recreation in it.

DA: But we combined it, didn't we? We combined... Recreation was a second department, or a separate department-

KM: It was a stand-alone department, and we re-org'd some people around.

DA: So, you got promoted to Assistant Vice-President.

KM: Right.

DA: So, what did you do with the Union?

KM: Well, I remember telling you, "If we're going to do this, you have to promote Bill to the Director's job. Because I'm not going to be able to pay any attention to the Union for the next year. I have to catch up on all this other stuff".

DA: So, Bill became Director of the Union, and then we combined Recreation with the Union, since most of Recreation's stuff was in the Union, right?

KM: Yes, exactly.

DA: Which thrilled the Director of Recreation.

KM: Well, we moved her into Disability Services.

DA: That was later, though, right?

KM: It wasn't too much later. But yeah, it was later.

DA: So, you had Housing, Student Union, Student Activities, Recreation, and so what was-

KM: -and then I think you added the Career Center to that, at some point.

DA: That's right, that's right. So, what was it like when-

KM: -and then Gary [Dickstein] and Student Conduct, for a while, too.

DA: But then you moved from the Union to the wing-

KM: Well, yeah, I was in the Union for a year, and then I moved over to Allyn Hall- which we still called the wing-

DA: The administrative wing of Allyn Hall, where all of the vice-presidents were.

KM: The administrative wing, and we were there until they finished building-

DA: University Hall.

KM: -University Hall. Then we moved over there.

DA: What was the change like for you?

KM: It made me sad. I really loved the Union environment, so I wasn't really thrilled to be, you know, sitting in the building with all the politics of the university swirling around.

DA: Um, talk about students during this time.

KM: It was evolving. By that time, you know, not only did we have Forest Lane and Hamilton Hall, we also had all of The Woods, we had The Village apartments, and then within a few years we built the honors building, which you probably remember was a huge deal for us, because that was a showpiece at the time for attracting students of higher academic ability, and it had amenities in it that we didn't have in any of the other residence halls.

DA: And it was big.

KM: It was big, and we opened the first wing one fall, and then by the next academic year we had the other parts of the building finished. But that was huge.

DA: So, actually there is a lot of residential stuff now. A couple of new buildings at College Park-

KM: We built- yes, because College Park was also built, and then we added-

DA: And those were residence halls, right. I mean apartments, sorry.

KM: -we added, um...College Park and University Park after that-

DA: Right. So, that was like double the housing.

KM: So, we were up to 3200- potentially, 3200 beds, so we had a solid core of student life. We had students not only living "on campus", there was more housing opening in private areas-

DA: -around the campus.

KM: -adjacent to Zink Rd. and what have you.

DA: So, this so-called "commuter" institution then evolved into- well, less of a standard commuter institution, and more of a residential one.

KM: Yeah. I would call it, they were "resi-muters".

DA: Yeah, absolutely.

KM: They were- you know, they might have had a car, but they were walking the same distance to campus as the residents were.

DA: So, we had 3000 residential students out of an undergraduate population of 14000 at the time, roughly.

KM: 15 or 16, Dan. It was growing.

DA: Undergrad, I'm talking about undergrad.

KM: Oh, undergrad, yes. Yeah.

DA: So, 14000, and with graduate students, 16 or 17000.

KM: Yeah, you know, it was changing. We were seeing things open across the street, because of course by then, 675 was not only built, but things were happening across the street from us on Colonel Glenn, and other development was happening.

DA: It was kind of like the heyday of the university, in term of enrollment growth and everything else.

KM: It was, it was.

DA: So, we went through Harley, who passed, then President Goldenberg-

KM: Who really... he was pretty focused on additional growth of the campus, and I think the research reputation of the university-

DA: So, he came from [School of] Medicine.

KM: He came from Medicine, so we were seeing greater emphasis on STEM related initiatives, and-

DA: He was very interested in attracting valedictorians and salutatorians.

KM: He was, and he was also interested in development and fundraising. He hired Marcia, Marcia Mueller.

DA: The Advancement VP.

KM: Marcia, you know, took the first steps I think towards getting campaigns together that would make a difference for the university.

DA: The first major campaign, which was like 50 million or something, which is like chicken feed compared to now-

KM: Right, but for Wright State, that was huge.

DA: Huge. Very big.

KM: That was huge.

DA: And so, you were Assistant VP for a while, then at some point you became Associate VP, and damn if I remember-

KM: That happened when-

DA: Was that when we started talking about enrollment stuff?

KM: Well, it happened when Dr. Goldenberg decided that he was going to step down and retire.

DA: Yes.

KM: And... oh, no, I'm wrong. I'm wrong, because I didn't step away from that role- that Associate VP job with enrollment stuff- until he stepped down.

DA: That's right, because-

DA: Jackie McMillan ended up-

DA: Well, we were planning for it at the end of Goldenberg's tenure, Hopkins was kind of designated as being president, remember we went to-

KM: Colorado. We went to Denver twice.

DA: -we developed an enrollment plan, we were going to reorganize things, where all of the enrollment stuff was going to report to you, Hopkins comes in, then what happened?

KM: Um, well, when my role changed with that-

DA: -so, you got promoted to Associate VP-

KM: I was- yes, as Associate VP, I was working with...

DA: Admissions? Financial Aid?

KM: Yes, which were both still in Student Affairs-

DA: The Registrar was going to move-

KM: -and then trying to collaborate with the Graduate School and the Registrar's Office, which had a fairly new director in that role.

DA: I can't remember the guy's name.

KM: No, that was when we hired Marian.

DA: Who was the guy before him, uh, before her?

KM: Oh, um...

DA: Yeah, well.

KM: Yes, we're both-

DA: But he was in, and next was her.

KM: Yes. And, so... I'm trying to think. Bill was made an Assistant Vice-President then, because you put the Union-

DA: No, wait, that was after- so, we had the Associate VP thing, you were going to run Enrollment-

KM: -yeah, yeah.

DA: -Hopkins comes in and he blows it all up, threw everything out the window, and created an Enrollment Management Division-

KM: -right...

DA: -and then, you were still Associate VP, but then somehow... then you went back to the Union-

KM: I did.

DA: -as Associate VP, Bill comes over to-

KM: Advancement.

DA: -to do fundraising for Student Affairs. What a mess.

KM: Right. That was really crazy. But I remember you and I both going down to Dr. Hopkins and saying, "This isn't working".

DA: Yeah. "What the hell's the matter with you".

KM: We couldn't get the Graduate School to get on board with being collaborators, and it just felt like this wasn't the way we should be doing it.

DA: Well, anyway.

KM: So, he agreed, and-

DA: But then-

KM: But then-

DA: Then what happened next?

KM: So, Bill was moved into an Advancement thing, I re-assumed responsibility for the Union and Rec, the Career Center... um, gosh. I was working on other things that were priorities in the Division-

DA: Gary [Dickstein] got promoted at the time to Assistant VP, Simone [Polk] moved out of the Chief of Police and became Assistant VP-

KM: -and took on some other roles at the Division.

DA: When did you come back to the University Hall, then?

KM: I never left it.

DA: Yeah, you did.

KM: Oh, it was maybe... I was only over in the Union for-

DA: A short period.

KM: A very short period of time, until we could... Bill and I just exchanged keys.

DA: Well, anyway, you ended up back as Associate VP, and what were your direct reports in the last few years of your time? Do you remember?

KM: Dan Bertso in Housing, Eric Corbitt in Student Union...

DA: -the Rec piece...

KM: Well, but that was still-

DA: Yeah, part of the Union, right.

KM: Why am I forgetting?

DA: Did you have Career Services?

KM: I did, until Career Services got pulled out of Student Affairs, for that crazy project involving "Ohio Means Jobs", and- yeah.

DA: Well, but then you got pulled out of Student Affairs and got moved to the temporary Associate VP for Career Services-

KM: I think by then, you and I were both thinking, "What the heck!"

DA: "Time to get out of here"

KM: "What the heck is going on?" [*Laughs*] It was... starting to get a little fuzzy.

DA: So, in the meantime, we did some interesting things, right? We helped grow the Student Affairs program in higher ed-

KM: We did. There were initiatives that became... well... they were... we were validated by making those things happen. The food pantry that Simone was working on, the program working with foster youth that were coming into our academic programs without any support or assistance, those were huge.

DA: -The continuing vitalization of housing, and growth of housing.

KM: Yeah, we were trying very hard to figure out how to create additional spaces for our residential population, and at the same time, negotiate our way out of an agreement with AM Management.

DA: It's sort of funny. In my mind, I remember '96 to 2006. 2006 to 2016- when you and I both retired- is a blur. Because everything- I mean, all kinds of weird things happened, and-

KM: But you know what? During most of that time, Dan, I was finding myself thinking what a great team we had in Student Affairs.

DA: We had an outstanding team.

KM: We had people with so much experience at Wright State, sitting around that table.

DA: Well, Bill was there, we had Gary was there-

KM: Katie Deedrick- Katie.

DA: Katie Deedrick.

KM: Katie. Cheryl [Stuart], you know, who had-

DA: Simone Polk.

KM: And by this time, too, we had- Counseling and Wellness was very much entrenched in Student Affairs.

DA: That's right, Bob Rando, and eventually moved to-

KM: And we had the Police Department-

DA: The police-

KM: That was huge, having the police.

DA: Athletics-

KM: Athletics.

DA: -Mike Cusack and Bob Grant.

KM: We had a lot of-

Da: Of course, we had the Nutter Center, but let's forget about that [*laughs*].

KM: Most of the time, I thought- while all this other chaos as swirling around us- we had a team of people who... relied on each other, and who knew each other's strengths and weaknesses-

DA: Despite what else was going on, they knew what they were doing.

KM: We did. I always felt that way.

DA: And then you decide to- at some point, to step down, to retire. What was... what was your thinking in the last stages of your time here.

KM: Um...

DA: We're talking probably now 2014, '16- '14, '15, '16...

KM: Well, I think on the upside, the university's Campaign for Wright State was going gangbusters, and there was more and more money being raised, and the President was doing a lot of traveling, and the Advancement Division was doing really good work. But the President was gone a lot, and the leadership in the Provost's Office had changed, because of issues, and the President's right arm- the Executive Vice-President- was kind of doing his thing, and decisions-

DA: -and they had the H1B1 crisis with the Provost and that hysteria-

KM: Yeah-

DA: And the debate. The debate. Oh my God.

KM: Well, the debate... you know-

DA: That's another hour's worth of talk.

KM: Yeah, it is, and I remember you saying to Gary and me, "You guys are nuts. If you want to be involved in that, that's up to you, but I think you're nuts". And I remember Gary and me saying, "Dan, so much of this is supposed to be focused on the student experience. We have to be." So, we inserted ourselves into things, you know, only to find out we were going to be asked to do a bunch of things that financially we could not afford to do.

DA: You were totally undermined.

KM: So, we were really kind of happy when the plug was pulled, because- and I think I told you that Gary and I had actually written a letter- in draft form- that we were just about to give you to give to the President, to say, "We'll do whatever you tell us, but we really in good conscience don't feel good about it".

DA: That was... that was a very stressful period. That whole debate thing-

KM: It was, but by that time, you and I had already decided we were leaving-

DA: That's right, because that was the summer before the retirement incentive-

KM: Right. They had offered a voluntary retirement, and I think you and I were both on the fence, until we saw the plan. You went away on vacation and came back not wearing socks and having beard stubble, and I thought, "he's out of here". *[Laughs]* I remember saying to you, "You're leaving, aren't you?" And I remember you saying, "Yeah, and you should think about it, too." And I had already been talking to Lee about it, and looking at it, and we both said, "You know, we've had a pretty good here."

DA: Yeah, and in retrospect, thank goodness we both got out of here. And Simone, good for her, too.

KM: Yeah. Here are my takeaways from Wright State. And I've had more opportunities... I had more opportunities at Wright State in my career than I think most people ever have, and that's why I would tell grad students- which by the way, you and I didn't even talk about the involvement we had with our higher ed program, and how much we did.

DA: I mentioned it briefly, but yeah.

KM: We did a lot of work for them.

DA: I know.

KM: And that was a big part of my job, too, was matching assistantships to students, and-

DA: Another thankless sort of activity we engaged in.

KM: Yeah. But you know what, we helped a lot of students with that.

DA: Sure.

KM: We helped a lot of students. So, I feel like-

DA: But that program helped a lot of people get jobs.

KM: We are still in touch with so many of those people, who are doing really good work at many places around the country.

DA: And the university decided to sort of let it languish, I think. Too bad.

KM: That's too bad. Because one of the last things I did at a board meeting was [to] show how many graduates we had in that program, where they were placed all around the university, and-

DA: You know what I decided? We did all of those board meetings, and all of those wonderful presentations, and I don't think the board gave a rat's ass about any of them, between you and me. A couple of them did. Yeah, right.

KM: I think a few people on the board did. But all I know is we did some good work.

DA: Oh, yeah, of course.

KM: I don't regret any of that. My family has an endowed scholarship for students in the Student Union-

DA: Well, you are- you know, one of the reasons for these historical preservation things is to sort of codify the pioneers and their thoughts about what happened at the university, and I think you should consider yourself one of the people who helped grow an outstanding institution of higher education, and the great work with students and student life, and you should feel proud.

KM: Well, I do feel good about it, but I also have to tell you- and as I said this at our little farewell event- I was really, really fortunate to have terrific mentoring and supervision. I only had three supervisors my entire career at Wright State. One of them, of course, was you for 22 of those years. Lorna for almost 10, and Joanne for a couple. And how many people can say that?

DA: Oh, absolutely.

KM: You know, so, lucky me. I still feel like this place has my heart, and I'm glad we're both doing this retiree's board together.

DA: Well, it's nice to stay connected, even after retired.

KM: Yeah, I think so.

DA: Well, thanks for doing this. Good to see you again, as always.

KM: You, too.

DA: Alright, we're done.