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## Joyce Howes, Former Assistant Dean of College of Mathematics and Science, Wright State University

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Kathy Morris

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**WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**Retirees Association Oral History Project**  
**Interview with Joyce Howes**

## **Interview Information**

Interview date: December 6, 2019

Interviewer: Kathy Morris (KM)

Interviewee: Joyce Howes (JH)

## **Interview Transcript**

Kathy Morris: Well, welcome, everyone. My name is Kathy Morris, I'm the former Associate Vice-President for Student Affairs here at Wright State, and I'm currently a member of the Wright State Retiree's board. The oral history project represents our organization's efforts to document the history of Wright State through stories and recollections of the university's founding faculty, staff, and administrators. Today is Friday, December 6, and I'm talking with my good friend, Joyce Howes, who retired from Wright State in 2015 as Assistant Dean of the College of Science and Mathematics. There's a lot more to her story than just her retiring title. So, I'm happy to say that because I've known her for so many years, we can have a really nice, casual conversation about her experiences at Wright State. So, let's start with where you came from. I know a lot of this, but let's start with the basics.

Joyce Howes: I grew up in Kettering, I graduated from Fairmont East High School in 1969, and I had every intention of going to college at Ohio University with my best friend, Debbie Jenkins. Debbie and I both applied for financial aid, and she was lucky, her family was poorer than mine [*laughs*], so she got quite a bit of financial aid, and I got a few hundred dollars, so I couldn't afford to go to OU. So, I pouted for a while, and then I signed up at Wright State, I decided I'd live at home another year and go to Wright State, which I did, and-

KM: Let me stop you real quick, because I'm interested in what your thoughts were about the university at that point in the institution's history.

JH: Well, it all... everything looked new in 1969, you know? It was still a small number of buildings at that time. It was a great place. I was just in a snit about not going to OU, and while I had been an honors student- top 5 percent and graduated in my high school class- I was a terrible college student, because, in retrospect, my analysis is that high school was easy, and college wasn't [*laughs*]. So, I didn't put in a lot of work, and I got terrible grades, and at the end of my first year of college, my grade point average was 1.8. And so I dropped out, and in the

next five years a whole lot of life happened, and then I came back and I did the work and I got good grades, and I graduated.

KM: So, you just kind of did a really quick synopsis of what for some people would be a long, long story. But I'd like you to expand a little bit on your perceptions of the campus at the time, when you first came, and maybe what the faculty were like, or what the advising was like that you had?

JH: Well, [*long pause*], I don't... I remember faculty, a few faculty- not faculty in Science and Math, because I didn't start out thinking I was going to be a Biology major, I didn't know what I was going to do- and I'm embarrassed to say I can't tell you any names of faculty who were influential then. When I came back to school, I certainly could. But I got some really good grades, mostly in Liberal Arts, and then I got an F in Calculus my first quarter in college. So, it was really an eye opener for me, and I thought... it was defeating, you know? And I was like, "I can't go to college, I'm not smart enough to be here." So-

KM: But what about your family?

JH; Well, right around that time, my parents- I have a younger sister who is ten years younger than I am, so she was 8 or 9- around that time, my parents moved to Florida, and I was in love, so I stayed. In love with the man who would be my first husband. So, I got a job, Doug and I got married a year or two later, and I thought that was going to be my life. He was working on his degree at Wright State, and was hoping to become a police officer, in what was then Wayne Township- it's now Huber Heights. And- I don't know, do you want this detail?

KM: Yeah! This is really, really interesting, to hear about the stories of people who were among, you know, the first that were here. Everyone's path is unique.

JH: Actually, my brother came to Wright State the first term that it was open.

KM: Okay, so you had a little knowledge of it.

JH: He's three years older- sorry, five years older. But he only lasted one term, too [*laughs*]. Then my sister- my older sister- also graduated from Wright State, quite a few years later. Anyway, Doug was working for the police department as a volunteer, and there was a crazy shootout one day, and he got killed, in the line of duty.

KM: I remember. You told me this story.

JH: So, at the age of 23 I was a widow, and I didn't know what I was going to do. So, I went back to school.

KM: So, that played into your thinking of 'time to be a student'.

JH: Time to...

KM: 'Get my life figured out'.

JH: Yeah. Time to move forward. It took me 6 months, I think, before I registered for classes. I had a job, that I kept working. But I had lots of support from my family, especially my sister, Sandra, who was just my rock during those couple of years. And still. So, I went back to school, I took a chemistry class at night while I was still working, and I got the highest grade in the class.

KM: Was that surprising?

JH: Yeah! [*Laughs*] But Sue Cummins was the instructor, she retired many years ago, but was one of the- maybe the first woman professor in the College of Science and Mathematics. I wouldn't be surprised if that's the case. She was just awesome. And encouraging. I got a B in the lab because it was on Saturday morning, and I missed a lab, so I got a B in the lab, and she sought me out. She said [*excuse me*], she said, "You're getting a B in the lab", and I said, "I know, I missed a lab". She said, "But you've got the highest grade in the class and the lecture", and I said, "I know, I know, I'm sorry" [*laughs*]. So, she was- this would have been 1973 or 4, and she just was so excited and supportive. And then I took, you know, instead of going straight into calculus, I took Trig and other math courses that I needed- advanced algebra- before I took calculus, and then I got the highest grade in the class in calculus, the second time I took it. So, from there I was kind of on a path.

KM: Was that a strength you knew you had in high school?

JH: Yeah. I was going to be a math major. But Debbie and I both were going to be math majors. She did it, I didn't, and she spent her whole career at Columbus State College in their I.T. department, before there was such a thing as computer departments.

KM: So, to be at that point in history, and to be a woman in the sciences and math, in a STEM area, did you feel like you were alone in that category?

JH: There were other women students, and I was not traditional age at this point, I was in my mid-20s almost, and I think all of the science faculty, with the exception of maybe two or three, were men. And there certainly were more men students than women, in the sciences. But-

KM: But you seemed to... you found your niche. You were in a zone with classes that you were enjoying.

JH: I was just on fire with learning. Once I hit my stride, I couldn't get enough. And I made some fantastic friends- mostly women, but not all women- who were just as excited as I was, and we would literally drink coffee in what was then called... oh, shoot. In Allyn Hall, in what's now The Hangar.

KM: The Allyn Hall lounge.

JH: Yeah, but before that, it was something-

KM: The Bike Shop?

JH: It was the Bike Shop, I think. We would sit there and drink coffee and talk about what we just learned in class. I mean, we were super geeks.

KM: [*Laughs*] I love that.

JH: It was a good time, yeah.

KM: Did you finish your bachelor's degree- once you got going- in the typical, traditional window then? Were you a full-time student?

JH: I was a full-time student. I got a widow's benefit from Workman's Compensation, and some life insurance, and then I worked as a math grader when I was an undergraduate and earned a little money that way. So, in those years, that was enough to support me while I finished my bachelor's degree. So, yeah, I went full-time, year-round until I graduated-

KM: With a biology degree?

JH: -with a B.S. in Biology in June of '78.

KM: And did you decide at that point that you wanted to go... did you want to continue your education, or did you get employment right after that?

JH: No, I went right into a master's degree, because I just didn't know what else I was going to do. And I was really interested in microscopy.

KM: What is that?

JH: Using a microscope. You know, looking at stuff under a microscope, I was really good at it. Making the slides, doing staining, looking at the slides under a microscope. And I was really interested in microscopic structure, you know, cells and what's inside cells. So, what I was really

looking for was to learn how to use an electron microscope, which in those days was almost as big as this room. You know, it was just this huge thing. So, I did my master's degree with a faculty member in biology who had a project using the electron microscope that was in the department. So, I did a research master's degree in biology, and I was a teaching assistant, and here's where the turning of a corner happens. Which is that I found out that I didn't love bench science. I did it, I was pretty good at it, I finished my thesis. But I LOVED teaching. It just was the best thing I ever did that I got paid for, but I would have done it for free.

KM: For someone who says they're an introvert, that seems a little inconsistent with the idea of just loving teaching.

JH: [*Laughs*] I would further describe myself as an introvert who over the years has learned to behave like an extrovert. But it takes a lot of teaching. Less now than when I was younger. So, I was a TA, I taught lots of labs, I got to know the faculty in the department better, and when I finished my master's degree, John Rossmiller, who was the chair of the department at that time, hired me as a faculty associate. That faculty rank doesn't even exist anymore, it hasn't for decades, but I was basically a full time TA. So, I taught some of the same things I did as a grad student, I just did twice as much, and my annual salary that year was \$6500. [*Laughs*] Which was okay.

KM: I know. I can relate to those lovely starting salaries [*laughs*].

JH: I think we all can, yeah. So, then the next year- you could only be a faculty associate for one year. It was really designed to help students finish their thesis. So, the next year, I was hired as an Instructor, and my salary doubled [*laughs*], and that's when I started teaching lectures as well as labs.

KM: Would this have been during Dr. Kegerreis's presidency?

JH: Yeah, I suppose so. I finished my master's degree in the spring of '80, so this would have been '81, '82.

KM: What was your sense of the university at the time? How would you have described Wright State at that point, to somebody who didn't know anything about Wright State?

JH: It was great. You know, to backtrack a little bit, when I first started at Wright State, and I was 18 and met a few people, and we used to... you know, this was hippie time- the late '60s- and there were a few faculty that were really connected with the students around social and political issues- and the war, of course- and this group of students had a semi-permanent campout in the Wright State woods, in what is now the biology preserve. So, a couple of friends and I got invited one night to go and sit around the campfire and spend the night, and I find that one of my professors is there, Ira Fritz, who anyone who has been around very long would know that

name, and he just held court around the campfire, and talked and talked. It was one of those early formative experiences about what it's like to be around intellectuals.

KM: And to be a grown-up.

JH: Yeah, and to have those kinds of conversations.

KM: And to be a part of that environment.

JH: Yeah. So, yeah, I have never had a horrible experience at Wright State, and I've almost always had positive, enlightening, enriching experiences at Wright State, from 1969 to today. It's just been a part of who I am, for so long.

KM: Let's talk a little bit about transitioning from the role of an instructor to one of a staff and administrator. How did that happen?

JH: Well, in those years, "Instructor" was a tenure track position, without the possibility of tenure. Because I did not have a terminal degree, I did not have a research program, I had no way to earn tenure. So, after I had been an instructor for seven years, I had to stop. And so I was... well, as you can imagine, I was in a panic, you know, 'this is the best job in the world, I can't believe I have to leave.' So, what happened was the folks in the Biology Department- who were family- created a staff position for me, and I became "Assistant to the Chair", and "Laboratory Manager" for the introductory biology labs.

KM: Do you remember who the Chair was at the time?

JH: It was still John Rossmiller, I think. I hope I've got that right. But by then I had relationships with these faculty- Tim Wood, Jerry Hubschman, Jim Amon, Jim Runkle, Wayne Carmichael- these fantastic friends and mentors. Just good human beings, every one of them, and fine scientists. And so I spent five years as Assistant to the Chair, which meant I did academic advising, I did the class schedule, I did all kinds of administrative stuff for the department. And I also ran the freshman biology labs- most of the work was done by student employees and graduate assistants. So, that was great, and then the big jump happened in 1993, when I got kind of an... well, let me back up. At the time that I was... transitioning to the Assistant to the Chair, a year or two after I was in that job, Randy Moore came to the department as the new chair. A brand new chair, young guy, but he was also a terrific friend and mentor. But Randy traveled all the time, he was just- Rich Millman was the dean at the time, and Randy drove Rich crazy, because Rich wanted the chairs to be at a chair's meeting- every other Wednesday, say, at this time- and Randy just couldn't abide by that, because he had places to go [*laughs*]. He was a very successful textbook author, and he went to conferences and things, so he would send me to chair's meetings to take notes, and that's how I got to know Rich Millman, and my dear friend, Marc Low. And so two years later, Arlene Foley- and I can't believe I haven't

mentioned Arlene until now, who ran all of the teaching labs in biology- she was another mentor, who helped me so much in my teaching and-

KM: She was there when you were a graduate student?

JH: Right. When I was a GTA, and then also when I went into a full-time job. And then she retired. She had been the first Assistant Dean in Science and Math. No, I take that back, Lois Cook.

KM: Oh, yes.

JH: Lois Cook was the first Assistant Dean.

KM: The matriarch of the college for a long time.

JH: A long time, yeah. I worked a lot with Lois, with Science Day and other projects, and then Arlene was the second Assistant Dean, and when she retired, by that time I knew Marc, especially, and Al Smith- Al Smith actually succeeded Arlene, but for less than a year, he had a retirement date in mind. Then they did a search and hired me as Assistant Dean in 1993.

KM: When do you remember the two of us getting introduced, and how we met?

JH: I sought you out while I was still in Biology, I'm pretty sure, or maybe it was right when I first went to the Dean's Office, because I was looking for a mentor- somebody on the staff side, somebody who had administrative responsibilities- and I think I invited you to lunch and picked your brain, for the first of many times [*laughing*].

KM: That's funny, because I don't recall that initial conversation with you. I just remember you and I having many, many lunches-

JH: -and we hit it off.

KM: -and just hitting it off right from the get go, and how fortunate to be able to work at a place where you end up becoming not just colleagues, but friends with people across your area of supposed content knowledge. I was lucky, as a young professional, to have met several faculty by way of programs that I was involved with, and I think what that taught me was that you can't just function in a vacuum in an institution like this. You have to really, you know, reach out and become knowledgeable, or at the very least aware, of people who are part of the place.

JH: And people who want to help you be successful.

KM: Right.

JH: Um, because of the odd progression of my career, starting as a staff member, and then... starting as a faculty member and then going into an administrative role, I had relationships with so many faculty already, and-

KM: You had heavy-hitter connections. The entire College of Science and Math, the names that you just mentioned, were all people who were huge foundational members of the college.

JH: I could also mention Jim Hughes in English, who at that time when I was an undergrad, you just had to take X courses from the humanities, and X from the social sciences, and X from the sciences, and all of that whole category that had to be humanities, I took all English classes from Jim Hughes, because he was just a god [*laughs*]. And he used to tease me, because I was the only science major who ever took every one of his classes. So, yeah, faculty... I don't think it's a bygone era. I think in general, faculty tend to be pretty good people, most of the time.

KM: I would agree with that, too. You know, in fact, when I think about... as you were mentioning an overwhelmingly good experience at Wright State, that's generally how I would characterize it is that far and away, the people that I became colleagues and friends with were people I knew I could pick up the phone and call, if I had a question.

JH: Always, yeah.

KM: So, you were the third or so Assistant Dean at the college, and that was a career that you had for many, many years.

JH: Twenty-two. Twenty-two years I was in the dean's office.

KM: What kinds of things, during that period, jump out at you as being significant in terms of your impression of the university? It's students? The campus's physical plant, the growth of the campus? What strikes you?

JH: Well, even when I stopped out for five years and then came back to campus, the Biology Department was there now, and at least one other big new building, during my five-year hiatus. The campus had grown pretty dramatically, and that has continued, as you know, until-

KM: A lot of that was during Mulhollan's... there was a lot of physical growth to campus during his tenure.

JH: Right, and programs were growing, and developing new programs. My focus in the dean's office always was student success, and so from the beginning I did things like talk to students about 'Why are you not succeeding? What are you going to change?'

KM: Didn't you have a hand in getting the Dean's Circle started?

JH: That occurred... a student, Cole Badinsky [sp?] came to me- he was our senator for science and math- and he said, "We're the only college that doesn't have a student advisory board", and I said, "Well, I think we should fix that". So, yeah, he and I worked together, and we cobbled together a charter, and-

KM: I thought you played a big role in that, and I know, just from reading Wright State news- while I was still working, but subsequent to retirement- there is always something really significant that jumps out at me when I see something about the Dean's Circle in the College of Science and Math.

JH: Well, you know, it was so easy for me, because the students did all the work. They needed a sounding board, they needed somebody to pay for stuff, they needed ideas about how to get things done. So, I spent a lot of time with the Dean's Circle. I don't remember the year that that started. It was... I just don't remember.

KM: Well, you did a lot outside your role within the college, specifically. You had other responsibilities that you volunteered to take on. Can you talk about some of that?

JH: Oh, you must be talking about Banner implementation, and semesters conversion.

KM: And there are other things besides that. I'll prompt you when necessary, but let's talk about Banner conversion, which was... whoa, that was brutal for so many people.

JH: Banner implementation was a huge deal, and it turns out that the Registrar at that time, Dave Sauter, had a wonderful opportunity to go back to his alma mater- Miami University- as the Registrar, and although it probably flew in the face of everything he thought was appropriate, he resigned from Wright State just before Banner implementation was going to start. Yes... that's right. So, I got asked to serve as a liaison between the CaTS implementation team, and the academic side of the university, which included academic advising, class scheduling, all of those things that are involved with students being able to register, and get their grades-

KM: It was a massive shift in the way that the university did its business.

JH: It was huge. So, I shifted some of my duties to my dear colleague, Susan Yeoman, who worked with me all of those twenty-two years in the dean's office. Except the last one or so, because she did retire before I did, even though I told her that she wasn't allowed to do that.

KM: [Laughs] They don't listen to you sometimes.

JH: Yeah, so, during those couple of years, I think it was as much as three years, when especially Banner-Student was being implemented- you know, Steve Sherbet was doing Banner-Finance, and other people were focused on different modules with Banner, and my focus was on Banner-Student, because they needed somebody who knew the administrative world of students to make sure that Banner was set up properly. And I don't know that we achieved that, because there are still things that don't work very well, but yeah, I worked with the folks at CaTS, who I knew a little bit but I never worked with. It was a whole new universe for me. I learned computer jargon, you know, but I worked with fantastic people, and time after time after time when we would meet with them- not just me, but others who were involved from various colleges, we would meet with them and would explain why this has to be this way. And they got it, and it worked.

KM: And that was so important, because while you may have an expertise or knowledge in how to do certain things systemically, or with a system, doesn't necessarily mean you understand the world of the people that you're serving. Meaning, you know, what does it take for an academic advisor to interact with a student, and how do the needs of that student get mixed into this whole process we're working on.

JH: And we go right down to the micro level. If this transaction doesn't work, this student doesn't get registered for their classes. Or this student gets kicked out of their classes. Or if this date is set too early... I mean, there were so many minutiae, all of which were critical, and like I said, we didn't get them all, but we got most of them, and the groups worked together so well, at least in Banner-Student.

KM: Were you chairing the USAC committee at that point- at somewhere along that point?

JH: Somewhere in there I was.

KM: Because that was another huge responsibility to take on.

JH: I did that twice. For some reason.

KM: That's right. I forgot about that. Yeah, why did you do that twice? [*Laughs*]

JH: I don't know. But I loved USAC. I think it has evolved quite a bit from when I was involved, and it's still very important. But, yeah, at that time USAC had a direct line to the Provost- at least- and sometimes to the President. It was a really dynamic relationship between staff-unclassified staff. One of my first issues was that the unclassified staff council was called the "Professional Staff Council", and I hated that. PSAC. I said, "No, if we're professional, that implies something about classified staff.

KM: Because there was PSAC and CSAC.

JH: Yeah.

KM: So, it created that [*makes a dividing-line motion*]

JH: Right, so, professional, and not so professional.

KM: And not so professional.

JH: That was stupid, so we changed it to Unclassified Staff Advisory Council, which is actually more accurate. But that was all good stuff. I got to know so many people around campus doing that. I guess I just couldn't stay home, you know, I was always... and then, I got started working with Lillie Howard. Talk about someone who will give you opportunities [*laughs*]. Lillie gave me so many great experiences.

KM: I'd have to say that I was in the same boat with you on that. She did expand our horizons, didn't she? Lucky us. So, you were involved with the First Year Experience, that whole study that was being conducted, and now I'm going to have a mental gap on... what we called that. Oh, Joyce.

JH: I remember sitting around the table in the President's conference room, with all those great people. That's where I first met Rich Bullock.

KM: Lucky us.

JH: Lucky us, yeah.

KM: So, is there something that you would identify during that period of time that was the most meaningful thing to you in terms of your involvement on campus?

JH: I think the... you know, one of my mantras was always that Wright State is really, really good at helping students one at a time. We're excellent at that. But then, if you back off a little bit and you think, "But what kind of systemic things can we do that help ALL students?" Or most students. Or this group of students, or that group of students. And being involved on both of those levels was really invigorating and inspiring, because we talked to academic advisors who always met one-on-one with students, and we talked to deans, who... we wanted to make programmatic changes in how student services were delivered in the colleges. This was always college-based, the work I did. As opposed to the non-college operations on campus- I would never call them non-academic.

KM: No, I get what you're saying. Very focused in the area that was very obviously your area of expertise.

JH: Well, it wasn't... you know, who knew I would ever go in this direction. You know, I didn't know anything. But when you're with so many people who are learning together-

KM: It levels the playing field a little bit, doesn't it? When you all kind of start on a project, and everyone's trying to figure out how to make it successful, and everyone's contributing bits and pieces of their own expertise to the project, it does feel pretty good.

JH: Well, and it really knocks the introvert right out of you, when you're collaborating with fifteen other people for a single goal, and everybody brings something else to the table. You know, I was a loner when I was young. I had friends, but I wasn't a social person. I'm still not, very much, beyond my small group of friends. But, boy, you get involved in some of those big committees, and everybody's got a job, and everybody's contributing and collaborating, and by golly, good stuff gets done.

KM: It seems to me that around the time you are describing, that there was so much good stuff happening at Wright State. There was a lot of growth in the campus, the student experience was improving- and not just how we knew it was improving in the classroom, but we were seeing other flickers of growth and enhancement, in student life, and the campus's reputation was-

JH: It was stellar at that time. Yeah, I think it was, too. I'll never forget the time we and several other of our colleagues were involved in the accreditation process. The first one that I was involved with, that Lillie Howard led. I remember being so proud, because the site visitors came and they said, "We've never had anything like this". The report is fantastic, the hospitality is great, everybody was... and so, boy, you know, you get to be proud of stuff that you've done, which is really a good thing, and rewarding.

KM: Well, Lillie had a way of having expectations of excellence, from everybody that worked with her. If you were on a committee with Lillie, you knew you'd have an assignment, and you knew you'd better deliver, because she would expect you to deliver. And I think she also knew. She did her homework about the people she invited to be involved in things.

JH: She tested us out at first on small things, right?

KM: Yeah, I think that's probably true.

JH: And then she just kept piling it on, because she knew who would do the work.

KM: Yeah, and I think you're right about this particular topic, because now when I think back to that, we were doing a lot of things across our division. Within our divisions, across divisions and colleges, you were routinely in the company of people who were doing work in an area different

from your own, and it was really... it was really something that made me feel proud about the institution.

JH: And I don't know how I got this lucky. But I didn't know any other assistant deans who worked as much as I did outside their college. And I always had Susan Yeoman, you know, holding down the fort on those weeks that I was gone half the time. You know, and she's another whole story, I just have to talk about Susan for a minute.

KM: Talk about Susan.

JH: When I first went to the dean's office, Susan was my secretary. That was the term at that time. She was my secretary, so she kept my calendar- you know, all this time I never had anybody taking care of me before, right? So, she kept my calendar, she just did... we learned how to do that job together. And along the way, she finished a bachelor's degree, and got a promotion from classified to unclassified staff, she finished a master's degree, got another promotion-

KM: I remember working with her when she did a project with me as part of her graduate program.

JH: Right. She took advantage of the opportunities to work with people across campus as well. So, pretty soon neither one of us was ever in the office [*laughs*]. No, that's not true. Susan was mostly in the office. But we just grew together, it was one of those magical partnerships that lasted twenty-two years, and actually I just had lunch with her a couple of weeks ago. She's still just doing wonderfully.

KM: Isn't that great? Isn't that great to be able to say that you worked with someone that closely for so many years, and to have that growth experience together.

JH: Yeah. Yeah.

KM: So, we're now well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century talking about all of this, and when did things start shifting for you in terms of thinking maybe I want to step away and maybe I might think of retiring? How did that come about?

JH: Well, I had a five-year period working for a dean who didn't care much about what I did. Um, [*pauses*] I'm not going to name names. But anyway-

KM: Oh, you can.

JH: Okay, so, Roger Gilpin was a terrible dean, and-

KM: -and you say that because?

JH: He just didn't care about doing the job. He was very engaged in his chemistry publications, and his... he had a couple of different big publications that he had to update every year, and he just didn't care about undergraduate student success, really. And so, I didn't need support from him, and I certainly didn't get support from him, and by the end of that five years when he stepped down as chair, we weren't communicating very much. So, that was my five-year kind of dark time, and he did not appreciate how much work that I did outside of the college. But then after that, Michelle Wheatly came in as dean, and she was terrific, and very supportive, and that was thrilled that she didn't have to spend much time on me, because I didn't need a lot of support from her. So, that was a hard time for me in my career. It didn't slow me down too much, but it was not as fun. Then, I would say toward the end of my career, maybe the last four or five years, I just was getting tired, you know? Maybe all the big projects were done. We were on semesters, you know, and I was tired, and I was at like that thirty-three year mark or something, and thirty-five was not very far out there, so I just made a decision somewhere in there that thirty-five was going to be a big enough number, and I think I had thirty-four years and eleven months or something when I retired. And I haven't-

KM: And that was in February of 2015?

JH: February of 2015, yeah, and I haven't looked back.

KM: Well, you say you haven't looked back, but you didn't stop [*laughing*]. Because clearly, you're still here. So, let's talk about that. When did you get the bug to be back in the classroom?

JH: I always loved teaching. Always. But when I was in the dean's office, I think I taught one class, one time- a night class. And I just really didn't have enough time to devote to it, to do it the way I wanted to, so that was the only time I did that. But I always loved teaching, and I never lost track of my friends in the Biology Department. I'd still met for beers, and came to potlucks and things like that. Even while I was in the dean's office, I still maintained my friendships there. So, I got an offer, you know, 'Why don't you come teach Non-Majors Biology for us?'

KM: And that's not a small task, because you're talking about a very large class.

JH: Well, I think... they're not as big as they once were. I can remember in the '80s, teaching in 109 Oelman to 400 students.

KM: Oh, yikes!

JH: Yeah, but it's more like 200 students now.

KM: That's still a significant number.

JH: Yeah. I gave an exam yesterday to 165 students. But... so, that started three years ago, I'm in my third year of teaching one course each semester. I'm going to teach in the spring, it's the Bio 1050 and Bio 1070, the Non-Majors Introductory Biology courses, that are required for Nursing students, but also anybody who has to take a science class. You can take Biology, or Chemistry, or Physics, or Earth and Environmental Sciences.

KM: I would have been one of those students, and I would have loved to have had you as an instructor.

JH: So, it's been great, it's been an opportunity to make a little extra money, and be in the classroom and be in the department. I'm an unusual adjunct in that I actually have an office and a computer, which is-

KM: Well, you have history. *[Laughs]* You have history that probably no one else has.

JH: I do have history. So, I've loved that. But enrollments are dropping, as we know. The institution has mandated, basically, that all introductory science courses should be available online. Not switching to online, but they should all be available online. And students like to take courses online. So, the need for an adjunct to stand in front of the classroom and teach is diminishing.

KM: When you have a course like biology where you have a lab, how do you do that? You can't do that.

JH: Well, we have a wonderful, smart faculty member who is working on interactive labs.

KM: Okay.

JH: And I believe she will pull it off in a way that makes them meaningful. Not just, you know, looking at a picture of a dissected frog, but really interactive. But for now, the lecture is online, and the students still have to come to campus for the lab. So, it's really not available to anyone except for Wright State students. But they still choose that, because they can go to class in their pajamas. There was a period of time where they did that in person *[laughs]*.

KM: Oh my gosh.

JH: Fortunately, I don't think that lasted very long.

KM: So, were you... did you join the retiree's association after you had started teaching again? Or was that before?

JH: Yes. My... let me get this right. My first full year on the board was as president-elect, so that was two years ago. Last year I was president, and now this year I'm past-president, so this is my third year on the board. Mary Kenton- god love her, another one of those friends that goes back over thirty years- invited me to lunch, and arm-twisted me into agreeing to serve on the board and be president-elect.

KM: Gee, sounds like someone I know. Hmm.

JH: Hmm. *[Laughs]*

KM: That's okay. That's a good thing.

JH: But that's why our board is as terrific as it is. Because people take an individual interest in recruiting good people to come and be on the board.

KM: Well, there's an awful lot of good people at Wright State.

JH: Yeah.

KM: Well, I don't have to follow the script for this that was started when I think they first started doing interviews, but I like these two questions that were part of the rubric that I was given, so I want to ask them to you. If you were asked to describe Wright State back then, when you first came, what would that word be?

JH: One word?

KM: One word.

JH: Alive. Vibrant. That's two words. Vibrant may be a better word.

KM: And if you were asked to describe Wright State now, what would that be?

JH: Um... *[long pause]* struggling?

KM: Okay. I think a lot of us would probably be picking the same word, but, you know, it's kind of interesting, I'm wondering what you think- this is not one of the questions- what do you think that word would be five years from now?

JH: I hope it will be "ascending". I don't think we're... we may not be ready to start up that hill yet. I don't know. I shouldn't even have an opinion, because I'm not part of what's going on at Wright State right now. But I'm still very interested and committed to...

KM: Well, clearly you are. I mean, a lot of people who retire from the institution, whether they choose to be members of the retiree's association or not, don't necessarily stay connected in the way that you've stayed connected with the institution. So, I think Wright State's very lucky to have had you. And I do think that your history is probably much more unique than most anybody's. I don't know many people that can claim that they were an undergrad, graduate student, instructor, staff member, senior administrator at a college- that's pretty rare.

JH: That's a weird path.

KM: I wouldn't call it weird. I'd say that's exceptional, and lucky for Wright State.

JH: And, oh boy, lucky for me. What a golden career I had at Wright State.

KM: Yeah.

JH: Should we talk about the most interesting thing I've done since I retired?

KM: Yes, let's talk about that. Should I do an intro to that conversation?

JH: Okay, if you'd like.

KM: Okay. So, Joyce Howes, who I know to be a very passionate person, and who feels very strongly about perceptions of inequity or lack of caring on the part of individuals or groups or organizations, usually wants to respond to that, not by just talking about it, but actually by doing something about it. So, with that lead in, let's talk about perhaps one of the most exceptional things that any human being could do, and that was...

JH: Well, let me lay the groundwork. Two years ago- has it been two years?

KM: I think so.

JH: I think it has been two years, maybe even a little more. The layoffs were happening all over campus, people were losing their jobs, positions were being eliminated. It was so painful to observe. Every week, more names. It was not easy to get the names, but we found out more and more people who had been around for so long and had been excellent employees were losing their jobs. So, one day there was an email distributed to the entire university community, to both the staff and faculty listservs, from Phil Combs, who was a... let's see, what would he call himself... he was the technical guy in the Center for Teaching and Learning, he took care of computer issues and equipment issues and so forth.

KM: He was the CaTS rep.

JH: Yeah. So, I did not know Phil. I knew his name, I knew he worked in CTL, and this email outlined Phil's previous few months, I guess, with his health concerns, which is that he had Type II diabetes and had suffered kidney failure, and was on dialysis. And then just a few days before he sent this email out, he had gotten notification that his position had been terminated- and this must have been in the late summer- and that his last day was October 1. So, he was about to lose his job, his income, his excellent health insurance coverage, and his community, and it seemed... it just made my blood boil. I was so angry at MY institution that this happened, and so, Phil... the purpose of this email was to ask people to please consider being tested to see if they might be a match. Because on the national list, it could take as much as two or three years to get a kidney, but if you find your own donor, then it can happen right away. So, I was so pissed that I just picked up the phone and called the phone number in his email at the University of Cincinnati Transplant Center, and I talked to a very nice woman, Tina Stanley, and Tina sent me a questionnaire- a survey kind of thing- to make sure that I wasn't, you know, like a crazy person. So, I answered that, sent it back in, and then she sent me a package of blood tubes that I took to CompuNet so they could draw the blood, and then they sent it right back down to UC Health, and that was it, and I didn't hear anything so I just assumed that was the end of it. Then about two months later, I get this phone call from Tina Stanley, saying, "Oh, by the way, you're a match".

KM: What did you... what went on in your head when she said, "You're a match"?

JH: I think my first thought was, "Oh, cool!" [*Laughs*]

KM: [*Laughs*] Not, "Oh my god, what was I thinking?"

JH: No, and I truly didn't think anything would come of it, but I was really excited when it did. So, then I was teaching, of course, it was... it must have been in maybe February or March, February, probably. So, I couldn't do surgery until the semester was over, so it was scheduled for... no, it was earlier than that, because in December Phil and I both went to UC on the same day and got this huge battery of tests, medical tests. So, that was when I met- actually, I think we had coffee one time before that. So, once he... I guess I got permission to contact him and let him know. They told him he had a donor, but he didn't know who it was, and that was up to me to contact him, so then we had coffee, and then we went down to UC and did this whole day of testing, which was amazing. Probably tens of thousands of dollars-worth of medical testing, you know?

KM: What kinds of tests do they do?

JH: Oh, lots of bloodwork- I counted eighteen tubes that the phlebotomist filled up. Um, MRI's of my abdominal organs, an MRI. I did stress tests with the dye contrast. Um, chest x-rays. I don't even remember. It took all day. I met with a psychiatrist- again, to make sure I wasn't a crazy person [*laughs*]. And all of that came back fine, I didn't have any red flags. So, we scheduled the surgery for April- it must have been the end of April, or maybe it was even May 1- and we

checked in at about the same time, and I went to one operating room, and he went to the other. My surgery took about a half an hour, his took about three hours, I think. It's easier to take one out than it is to hook one back up. So, that was it. It was just the most amazing experience, and I actually had lunch with Phil a week ago. He still has-

KM: How's he doing?

JH: He's doing alright. He has not rejected the kidney, and he still has other health issues, but he had other issues before the transplant. So, yeah, he's doing okay, and I... my body doesn't know that anything's different.

KM: Well, your friends were all in awe of you, and that was a pretty remarkable thing to do. Another reason why I think you are just one of the best human beings I know.

JH: Aw, man, thanks.

KM: Pretty cool stuff.

JH: I think my background in biology was really relevant. Because I have a basic understanding of the fact that one kidney is enough, There are people who are born with one kidney, because of an accident or injury they only have one kidney, and it was... to me, that was not a risk.

KM: And you family got behind you on that?

JH: It took them a minute. But, yeah. My older sister, especially. She kind of lost her cool right at the beginning- "Why would you do that?" But they came around, I gave them data about how low the risks were- *[laughing]*

KM: Of course you gave them data, because that's how you are. *[Laughing]*

JH: So, it's turned out to be a non-issue in the family, in terms of what their concerns were. But it was just an amazing experience, the whole thing.

KM: It sure sounds like it. Of all... you were clearly at the top of my list for people I would want to interview in my role for historical preservation. For all the reasons that you've outlined in this conversation. Of course, it's always easy when you've known the person for as long as we've known each other and have lots of fond memories of Wright State that we can share, people that we care about.

JH: Oh, almost all good, I mean-

KM: Yeah. Really. I think so. I think if it wasn't all good, we wouldn't have gotten involved with the Wright State Retiree's Association. We wouldn't have-

JH: I don't have any negative feelings about Wright State or my career at Wright State. It makes me sad to see some of the problems that Wright State is having, but it doesn't make me hate Wright State or anything like that. It just makes me hope that better days are coming.

KM: I agree, and I think that's probably a great way to wrap up our conversation.

JH: Okay.

KM: So, I think I'm going to do this, [makes a cutting motion], and we can go find Chris, and he'll turn off the machine and do whatever editing he needs to do.

JH: Okay, thanks.

KM: See, wasn't that easy?

JH: It was not painful.

[*Laughing*]

JH: Let me go find him.

*End of interview*