

Nancy Allen
Interviewed by Nancy Taylor
The Evergreen State College oral history project
March 29, 2017, Part TWO
Final

Taylor: Okay.

Allen: Okay, so I got hired, in due course, after having two interviews in New York City with Evergreen deans; first, Merv Cadwallader, and then Charlie Teske. Apparently, people who got hired had two dean interviews, and then they had an interview on campus. Then, all the people on campus decided whether or not to hire them. So I had these three interviews, starting Christmas of 1970. And then, probably there was maybe another interview in the spring? No, another interview, maybe sometime in the winter of 1971; and then, a visit to campus in the spring of 1971, I guess. And that's how I got hired.

When school started in 1971, I was there, and I was teaching in a program called Human Development, which was designed by Richard Jones, who was a Freudian. He had a doctorate in Clinical Psychology, and he was quite a Freudian thinker. He, and, I think, Bob Sluss, who was a biologist on the planning faculty, had designed the program pretty thoroughly. There wasn't much left to include in it, like none of my ideas. So, I was a little bit put off from the very beginning, because it was all designed in place for us to go. And I had already, in my previous job, been designing my own curriculum. So I felt a little disappointed by that. [Added by Nancy Taylor: There were six faculty in this program: Richard Jones, Bob Sluss, Chuck Pailthorp, Eric Larson, Nancy Allen and Nancy Taylor.]

But I also heard that other programs on campus were not like that. I think our program might have been the most pre-organized of any of them. Actually, when I read over some of my paperwork, I realized that even though it seemed to me to be quite organized—and I didn't get along with Richard Jones particularly well—boy, there were a lot of things we just kept completely blank. Like we apparently started the year with no idea what the students had to do for work—what they had to do for written work, what they were supposed to hand in. There was no syllabus with any of that. We just sort of thought we would make that up as we went along, I guess.

Taylor: The idea that I remember is that students should want to work, so they will just do it.

Allen: Right.

Taylor: So they don't have to have any requirements, and you don't have to have any suggestions even, because the students came here because they wanted to learn. So, of course, they will do it.

Allen: They'll just do it. Well now that I think about that, as a principle, I'm surprised that Richard Jones held it. He also, in the early years, advocated this stuff called co-counseling, where he was saying that the college wasn't going to need a counseling center, because we were all going to learn to give each other therapy. He had a workshop that was up at Alderbrook, on Hood Canal, and I sat with another faculty member, whose name shall not be mentioned, and listened to his entire romantic history, while knowing his wife, under the full assumption that I would keep my mouth shut forever about it, because I was a co-counselor, and I was sworn to secrecy because I was operating in a co-counseling situation now. And that surprises the hell out of me, too, that people would think that ordinary people could give therapy to each other with no training.

Taylor: And we probably could do it with students.

Allen: Yeah. He also thought that we could counsel our own students in this fashion. I don't remember that he thought that they could counsel us in the same fashion. [laughing] But anyway, there were quite unusual ideas operating in that first year, which were a little far out for me, even me. But the program definitely was not far enough out in many ways, because there was almost nothing by women on the reading list. I remember being really frustrated by that.

The discussion that Richard and I got into was, we were all talking about authority all the time, because we wanted the teaching to be done out of authority, and not out of power. We didn't want to be teaching just because we were the ones who wrote the evaluations, and actually granted credit. And we didn't want to ever use credit as a sort of way to force students to do their work. We were very purist about that.

So, I said, "What is authority?" I had a hunch that Richard and Bob Sluss did not think I had any authority.

Taylor: Or me.

Allen: At all. Yeah, or Nancy. [We were considered just one person.] We didn't have any authority. So I thought, well, god, whatever this thing is, I've got to get it. I've got to know how to get it. So I asked him for his account of authority, and what he said was, "It comes from a father figure. In the family, the father has the authority, and that's how kids learn about authority, from their fathers."

I said, "Well, I guess I can't ever have any authority then, because I can't be a father. It's just not in the cards for me, so I guess I'm doomed." He just would not say anything about how he thought women could have authority. So, I certainly wasn't going to get any help from him. And I know he didn't ever think that I had any, actually.

I decided that I had to figure out for myself what the answer to this question is: How do women have authority? Over maybe 10 years or something, I developed a theory about it, and I kept working on it every time I had a new group of students. I tested it out with co-ed classes, and with all-women classes, and basically, I decided that women's authority was always going to be a combination of a father and a mother; and that women had to learn to go back and forth between the father and the mother, as needed. And sometimes that was really difficult, because some students would need your father side, and other students would need your mother side, and you would not know what to do. It was kind of a complicated theory, but I developed that for a long time, and it was all simply because of Richard Jones and I having this debate about authority, which he really wouldn't participate in too much.

And Nancy, you said, on the thing you sent me by e-mail, that you wanted to talk about the retreat in Human Development?

Taylor: Do you remember that?

Allen: Yes, I remember the retreat. Well, the other issue that happened in Human Development, the one I remember the most, has to do with a student, Regon Unsoeld, Willi Unsoeld's son, who was in my very first seminar at Evergreen. But this issue I had with Regon started on the retreat. I cannot imagine this retreat. I would never, ever do this retreat. And I knew, immediately afterwards, that I would never do a retreat like this.

The retreat was in Camp Wooten, in Eastern Washington. I can't even remember what was there. I just remember there were some barracks-like living quarters, and some grounds, and picnic tables and stuff around there. We stayed there for two solid weeks, with the entire group of faculty and the entire group of students. Is that true?

Taylor: That's true. And the reason we did it was that there were no buildings on campus. Do you remember? There were no buildings on campus, and so we went there.

Allen: Oh, yeah.

Taylor: It's way over by Walla Walla.

Allen: Yeah.

Taylor: And Bob Sluss hired a cook that was [unintelligible 00:10:26].

Allen: I didn't know that part.

Taylor: You're right, I think we were there two weeks.

Allen: Two weeks.

Taylor: It was a sixth-grade environmental camp.

Allen: Hm.

Taylor: So, when we got there, Ranger Rick said, “Boys over here and girls over there.” It was really cold, so everybody went and got their mattress, and brought it to the main cafeteria, big hall. So 120 students were there for two weeks, eating horrible, greasy food, sleeping on mattresses.

Allen: Yeah.

Taylor: I remember we were reading Joyce Cary’s *The Horse’s Mouth*. And why I remember that, I don’t know.

Allen: I do remember the reading.

Taylor: Tell the story about Regon. There must have been something about Regon.

Allen: Well, there were no activities planned. I mean, basically, as far as I can remember, all that happened was we had our daily classes. We had our seminars, when we were supposed to have them, during the week. I think, at this point, each faculty had two seminar groups. We probably had four seminars during a given week, and then maybe we had—no, we didn’t have lectures, so maybe we had something besides just these four seminars, but I can’t remember what it was.

So there was a lot of free time, let’s just put it this way. And Regon was Willi Unsoeld’s son, after all, and he had been involved in lots of outdoor education exercises. So he knew some kind of encounter-group tactics that you could use in the outdoors. So he organized this thing once, this exercise for us to do during some of our free time. I remember that seminars were supposed to compete, and there was a barrier—there were two posts on the school ground, as it were, and then there was some kind of a wooden barrier, which you could raise and lower, and it would screw into the two posts. So you could put it as high as you wanted.

So Regon got, what seemed to me, to be pretty high. And seminars had to organize themselves to get everybody in their group across the top of the barrier. And I think there was maybe some rule, like you couldn’t put your feet on the barrier, or you couldn’t jump off from the barrier, or something. Basically, what happened was my seminar organized itself to get over the barrier. What they did was some fairly big guys made like stair steps of their backs—they bent over and their backs were stair steps—so other people could climb on their backs, and then boost themselves over the barrier, and sort of fall down on the other side.

So, the most active, agile people went to the fore, and they climbed up the staircase of the people’s backs, and they jumped over. And pretty soon, almost everybody’s over. There’s just me and a couple of other people. Then, there was just me. Okay, now, I am weak. I am not very strong.

[chuckles] No, there wasn't just me. There were maybe three other people. So, I am weak, and I'm not doing very well, and I cannot imagine how I'm going to even climb on the backs of these people to get myself over. I guess the people left on my side must have been the ones who were using their backs as stair steps.

Anyway, what happened was everybody saw the problem. I was the weakest person there. How was I going to get over? And the remaining people picked me up and threw me over, and I landed rather hard on the other side. I wasn't seriously hurt, but I was really pissed. I was really outstandingly pissed, and ashamed of myself, and ashamed of everybody, and just hostile as hell. So then, of course, the other people got themselves over really fast, and the next thing you do in this exercise is you have to discuss it all, and you have to have to analyze it. We have to re-tell each other the story of how it went, and how it happened. And, did you like this process, or did you not like this process?

So I was just sort of shrinking into myself. And the students were discussing it, and they were telling their stories, and they were talking about how the organization went, and nobody's mentioning me, or anything like that. So everybody gets pretty much talked out, and I'm just sitting there, trying to fade into the background. Finally, Regon turned to me and said, "Nancy, what did you think?"

[laughing] And I just couldn't even say any words. I just burst out crying. I said, "Ah-h-h!" I just screamed, and started crying. I could not articulate anything about how I felt about this process. So then, there has been a demonstration in front of my entire seminar that I am over-emotional, physically weak. I can't get it together.

So then, we had these weird—Nancy says we were all sleeping together in the dining room on some kind of mattresses and sleeping bags. But one night, my seminar—it must not have been my entire seminar, but some people in my seminar, who, I think, were all guys, designated themselves to help me out. [chuckles] They came and picked me up, in my sleeping bag, and took me outside to sleep with a group of them, who were all out there. I guess maybe they were sleeping under some kind of shelter outside, but they were all huddled up in a group of sleeping bags on a tarp or something, and they were all sleeping together.

And they brought me, and put me in the middle of this, and said, "We just wanted you to be with us, and we wanted you to know that we support you, and we think you're great. So we're going to take you out and have you with us, as a group." And I just thought that was so awful. I mean, the whole thing was such a demonstration of having no power. Just having my body thrown around, picked up, moved, at the will of the students. I just thought it was so horrible.

Taylor: And this was after Richard said you had no authority.

Allen: Yeah.

Taylor: Wonderful starting point.

Allen: Actually, it might have been before that. Did we have the discussion about mother figures and father figures in the first week?

Taylor: No, I'm sure we did not.

Allen: I think this was before we actually talked about it openly, but I'm sure that made me feel like I don't have any authority. So, I had to start leading a seminar in that situation, where I had been shown to be completely at the physical will of my students. And that was really tough. Really tough.

And then, Regon turned out to have very serious problems, which, I don't know, this kind of sounds like standard depression to me. He was in my seminar group, obviously, and he would come to seminar during the first quarter of that year, and sit at the table with his head on the table, and completely unresponsive. He wouldn't talk to anybody, he wouldn't say anything, he wouldn't do anything. He would just bring his body there, and sit down and put his head on the table. And that was very hard to do anything about. I had to try and grab him outside of class, and try to talk to him about it.

I don't think he wanted to be there. He didn't seem to want to do any assignments, even though the assignments that there were, were fairly minimal. I mean, all I wanted was to get some interest out of him, and to get him working on something. He just wasn't willing to do it. I cannot remember how it worked out. I just remember it being stuck in this situation where I couldn't get him to do anything.

Actually, I've seen him around town. Until at least recently, he still lived in Olympia. I think he became a high school teacher, and I've heard he's a very good one, actually. But we have kind of joked about what a difficult student he was. I really don't think I ever experienced as difficult a student as he was in that seminar. And that was my introduction to the whole process.

Taylor: Do you remember, in that program, we had three seminars a week. One was a book seminar, which was the least important one, according to Richard Jones. The next one was to be a self-study.

Allen: Yeah, I remember there were self-study seminars.

Taylor: You'd look at the mirror, and tried to find out who you were. And the third was an internship seminar.

Allen: That's the one that you did.

Taylor: That's the one that I was supposed to do; at least I was supposed to do the organizing of it. I remember—maybe you remember this—it was in our program, but it was across the college—in March, there was a rebellion across the whole campus, because nobody was doing any work.

Allen: I do!

Taylor: The faculty said, "Well, you know, you can't require work because the students are supposed to want to do the work, and so if you require it, you have un-done the whole motivation that they brought. They wanted to come because they wanted to learn, and that was the only reason they were admitted, and so you couldn't compromise that and require them to do something."

So, there was going to be this big symposium for the whole campus. It was in March, and we were going to close the college for three days, and have this—

Allen: Is that when Richard gave his lecture?

Taylor: I don't think so, because it snowed, so the college was closed because it snowed for three days. So, when we came back, everything started up again, and we never had the symposium. But I do remember—I always think of it as sort of like a Shakespeare timeout. We had these three days where it snowed, and when we came back, people started requiring things.

Allen: That's very good!

Taylor: When we started up again, we had requirements. They had to write a certain amount, and there was no more thought that, well, you only did it because you wanted to do it. You did it because it was required. I think the college changed its requirements after that March of 1972.

Allen: I think that was a very good thing to do.

Taylor: Maybe I'm making up a story.

Allen: No, I think that's quite possible. But what I remember is that there was still a lot of the same ethos around. For example, for a number of years, there were certain number of quarter hours of credit in a program, and when students finished a program, they got academic credit. But for the longest time, there was this rule that you couldn't quantify the academic credit they got. There were 16 quarter-hours in every quarter, and if a student was part of the program, and acting like part of the program, then that student had to get full credit. And if a student wasn't part of the program, even though the student might be there, if the student wasn't doing stuff, and acting like part of the program, then the student got no credit. It was either all or nothing.

Taylor: Yes, that happened for several years.

Allen: I thought so.

Taylor: And it wasn't even 16 credits. They got four credits, I think. We didn't even have the numbers set up, because it was awhile before we got that thing called course equivalencies. I don't know when it happened, but you're right, it was several years.

Allen: I think a lot of students got by with doing almost no work, and still got full credit, because faculty couldn't stand to give them no credit. Or, there was some kind of an idea about what no credit was that was just so extreme. It's like you had to be a hermit.

Taylor: I remember being advised in that situation, and I couldn't do it either, but they said, "Well, you write an evaluation, and in the evaluation, it's the equivalent of a D. You did the evaluation based on the quality of the work, but they got the full credit. It's like passing a course with a D. But, since the evaluation—

Allen: But that's not a good thing to do.

Taylor: Some people, I remember, used to say, "Would you rather get no credit, or do you want a bad evaluation?"

Allen: Right, I remember that, too.

Taylor: It wasn't a very good system. But it has its problems now, or after that, because people sort of nickel-and-dime credits, so you might get 14, or you get 13.

Allen: Right.

Taylor: And that wasn't a good solution either.

Allen: No, I know.

Taylor: So then, it became a big thing. "Well, I got full credit." So you had no choice. You were just assigned to Human Development, right?

Allen: Yeah, I had no choice in where I was the first year.

Taylor: Back up a bit. When you arrived on campus, before we ever started teaching, what did you know about the college, and what were your expectations? And then, how did they get either . . .

Allen: I don't think I had thought through much of anything, or had anything very clear. But I had come from a place that was being "innovative," and my authority figure at that place had said that I should come to Evergreen. So, I certainly expected Evergreen to be innovative.

I liked the people who I knew. I knew the group of faculty who interviewed me—which included Al Wiedemann, and Rudy and Gail Martin, and Bill Aldridge, I remember. And, of course, there weren't any women on the faculty at that point. Except you were around there, but you were not faculty yet.

Taylor: No, I was not.

Allen: I liked everybody, and I knew somehow—and this actually has proved to be true—I knew it was the place for me. I knew I would be very involved in making it work. I never, ever, ever, in any single moment, thought about going to teach somewhere else, or thought about, well, I hate Evergreen and I want to leave. I never, ever, ever entertained such a thought. I had maybe two or three super-bad experiences with faculty members I was teaching with, and they didn't make me have a less positive view of the college. I always just thought, this is the place that my fairy godmother has put me in. This is the place I need to be. And it turned out to be, in the long run, a super-super-good place, for me.

Team teaching, and written evaluations, no grades, and no departments, all of those things were wonderful innovations, in my view. I think it made it so that—like I have a hard time talking to people, or I did. I am what you would call an introvert. And now, I've read a whole book about being an introvert, which is very interesting, and makes me feel extremely confirmed in a lot of reactions I have. But I have not had an easy time in my life talking to people, and Evergreen was perfect for that. I had small group, upon small group, upon small group proliferating small groups of people to talk to, and interesting issues to talk to them about. I don't think I could have ever been in a better place. When I read over all my self-evaluations, I realized that I was always like believing. I was like a true believer about Evergreen, like I really had these principles, and I really—

Oh, actually, I think I just said I never thought about leaving the college, but I did think about leaving the college once. It was in a faculty meeting when people had decided that we needed to get rid of written evaluations, and we needed to go to a grading system. I was sitting there in my seat, and I was thinking, nope. Not going to do it. If this happens, they've thrown the baby out with the bathwater, and I'm not staying here. But that's the only time.

Taylor: Did you come with a mission yourself?

Allen: No.

Taylor: Or did you come with an open mind, and found out what the college was doing, and bought into it?

Allen: Yeah. [sighs] Yeah, I bought into it, but I also helped create it. I mean, if I had wanted to do something different, I would have advocated doing something different. I certainly was not a flaming radical, but I made it very clear that I didn't like Human Development. And I made it very clear that they weren't accepting my points of view, I wanted to do more about women, blah blah blah. So, the second

year, I was coordinating a gender roles program. That was Merv Cadwallader's doing. So, to some degree, I formed the college that I wanted to be in as well.

Taylor: Do you want to talk about that second year? Are we ready to do that?

Allen: I guess.

Taylor: Maybe back up a bit, because I think, while you came and bought into what was there, you were forming it. So, during the first couple of years, and continuing, there have been constant tensions, and maybe you could talk about what you fought for, and what the tensions were.

Allen: I'm not even sure—I mean, I think you always had a bigger picture vision. One thing I said, in a very early self-evaluation about myself, is that I'm a kind of miniaturist. I see little things. I analyze one paragraph of a book. I take a little thing, and I show it to people, and I make it mean a whole lot for them. That's one of my main teaching techniques. So, I don't think I was always aware of the big-picture issues about Evergreen. I knew that a lot of Olympia people thought Evergreen was a school for basket weaving, or just a hippy-dippy school. I knew that there were threats to shut down the college in the Legislature.

But the issues I experienced had a whole bunch to do with gender, and they were about my sense that I had no authority, because I wasn't a father, and trying to create some authority for myself. And doing women's studies as a sort of way to go about all that, and to get the students used to that set of ideas. And there's something about the M 'n M Manifesto. I remember being at the meetings for the M 'n M Manifesto, which was when Rudy Martin and Dave Marr put out this document, which everybody had to get together and discuss. But I don't remember, except that one of things was about work. Like people not doing enough work, and how the work was supposed to happen, and how it was supposed to be organized, and how it was supposed to be credited. I think that was part of the M 'n M Manifesto.

I wish I remembered more about the issues of that. I think it's in the college Archives. I think I should probably go study up on it.

Taylor: I don't remember either. But I do remember the tensions—and you bring up one—about, should we keep evaluations or grades? That was from day one. The easiest thing to do would be to stop evaluations and do grades. That would be the easiest thing to do. And to constantly have to fight that battle. Team teaching. We have had to fight that battle for years, and it's under constant pressure. How to do advanced work without creating departments?

So, in my mind, from the very beginning, there were what would be called traditional college practices; that's sort of the default position. And what we were doing was always balanced by, well, should we go back to the default position? So you always had to fight for these tensions, these things. And I think they are values that you hold dearly.

Allen: Yeah.

Taylor: And I do. Things like coordinated studies.

Allen: Yeah.

Taylor: Things like teams that are at least three people. I can remember Richard Jones standing up and saying, "It's got to be four. It's got to be four." And it's fewer and fewer, and less and less full-time now.

Allen: Right.

Taylor: One of the issues I think we'll get to with you is the foreign language issue, because that's been an issue forever.

Allen: Yes, that's true.

Taylor: We're going to get to that. We won't get to that right away, but that was a direction you went.

Allen: Yeah, that's about the middle of the '80s.

Taylor: Okay.

Allen: I had remembered that I had spent 10 years at Evergreen without ever teaching Spanish, which is not true. But I did spend something like seven years at Evergreen without ever teaching Spanish.

Taylor: That is so strange. Is it because you didn't have a chance?

Allen: No, it's very clear to me what the reason was. The planning faculty was stone dumb about foreign languages. They wanted no such thing as a foreign language. Susan Fiksdal found out something talking to Charlie Teske. She found out an astonishing detail about Charlie Teske's attitude toward foreign languages.

Anyway, I was the only person on the faculty trained in a foreign language department. I was trained in the Spanish department at Columbia University, and there was not a single other such person. So I just said to myself—and also, I had taught nothing but beginning Spanish for three years at Rutgers, and I absolutely hated it.

So I said, "Okay. All right. I have it. This is my way out of Spanish. I will just be a literature person. I will teach literature in coordinated studies programs, and that's what I will do." And I was very happy doing that.

But I think it had to do with time. Because I think that the first time I taught a four-quarter-hour Spanish class at Evergreen, it was because I was a Danforth Visitor. I was spending three-quarters of my time visiting people, visiting faculty, and consulting with them about their teaching. I was spending a week at a time with different faculty in their classes. And then, I had a little bit of time left over, so I taught this four-quarter-hour Spanish class. That was about seven years into the life of the college, and I loved teaching this little Spanish class at Evergreen, because I just felt so much freer about what I could do, and we didn't have to stick to the book all the time, and I could give funny tests, and we could joke around. I thought it was really great.

That's what gradually got me started into developing a language program. But really, Susan Fiksdal was the person who did more in it than I did. We finally got repeating programs, in both Spanish and French. First, they happened every three years, and then they would happen every two years, and the students would get a really intense language experience. But that didn't happen at the beginning at all, because nobody wanted it. Nobody had any understanding of different kinds of people; languages they might speak; how language might shape your reality. None of the above did anybody ever think about.

Taylor: The only way it got really going strong was when it was combined with study abroad.

Allen: Right.

Taylor: You would do language because it was scheduled as a full-time program, and you were doing the language and the culture, and you were going to end up going to Spain or France or South America.

Allen: Yes.

Taylor: And then, the other thing that happened, which—Susan was hired quite early . . .

Allen: I know, by Andrew Hanfman.

Taylor: . . . by the second year. But Andrew Hanfman was hired the second year, I think. And we used to laugh. We would say he was the foreign language department, because he spoke like 11 languages.

Allen: I know.

Taylor: He had experience, and knew the language, but he wasn't . . . he hadn't had the training for teaching. So, his point of view about how to do it was you just do it. I think there was no notion that there was any particular training or skill to teach language.

Allen: Yeah, but . . . well, but the training there was, would be if you were in an education department, and nobody—okay, if you were in a Spanish department, for example—not Columbia, Columbia didn't do this—but lots of places would use their graduate students as TAs in the beginning Spanish classes. So, you would get teaching experience, but nobody would teach you how. Unless you just happened to

have another faculty member in the next class over, and they decided to give you some hints or something, you would just be on your own in class with the beginning students.

Taylor: But there was a language lab, probably. Evergreen had none of that. They had no support.

Allen: No.

Taylor: And no notion—

Allen: But at the beginning, it wasn't even the days of language lab.

Taylor: Maybe not. But the other thing is that if a student came from high school wanting to continue their French, or their German, or their Spanish, they had no way of doing it, because they had to do whatever they did full-time. And if you wanted to stop and just do Spanish full-time, you could do that. But then, after going to Spain, you couldn't do anything more.

Allen: You couldn't keep it going.

Taylor: That tension happened with math, it happened with foreign language, it happened with music. That's never gone away, and it's never been resolved, because it's really not compatible with the full-time studies team teaching kind of philosophy. And that's been forever, and it's going to resolve. But that doesn't mean that it's good. It just is the problem. It's still the problem, I think.

But, back to your second year, with Female—Male Roles in Society.

Allen: Yeah, it was called Female—Male Roles in Society. [laughing] Which is the most clunky title I can imagine. I hate that title.

Taylor: That was 1973.

Allen: No, that was—yeah, '72-'73. That was a five-person team. [laughing] I can't believe that.

Taylor: You were the coordinator.

Allen: I was the coordinator.

Taylor: Who was on that team?

Allen: On that team, oh my god, what an amazing team. The team consisted of Larry Eickstaedt, probably—definitely—the most rational person on the team. Then, there was Betty Kutter, who was recently hired. It was her first teaching experience at Evergreen. And, of course, she was a very hard scientist, and had never imagined herself teaching anything related to gender roles. Plus, being married to a guy named Sig Kutter, who also had a faculty position. Then, there was Ron Woodbury, who was one of my better friends ever at Evergreen. Okay, and me. Betty, Ron, Larry, and Naomi Greenhut. Her name, when she was hired, was Bonnie Alvarez, but her name, when she was a little Jewish girl, growing up on the East Coast, was Bonnie Greenhut. And then, she had married a Latino guy, and her name was

Bonnie Alvarez when we hired her. During the course of at least a couple of years at Evergreen, I think, she dropped her husband and went back to Greenhut, and then changed her first name back to her original first name, which was Naomi. So, she was Naomi Greenhut.

We were in a feminist class, and I was always presenting myself as a feminist, and she told me that feminism was an outdated concept, and I really needed to be a Marxist, because she was a Marxist now, and she was a thoroughly convinced Marxist. So, she was always after me to start believing in Marxism, and she had an extremely religious way of promoting it.

It was a very, very, very difficult team to get organized to do anything. [laughing] And I don't think that I had any real authority, probably mostly with Betty. I had a lot of authority with Ron, and Larry was fine. I guess I didn't have authority with Naomi either, probably. So, the two other women [laughing]—the two men are supporting me, and the two women are not. Undermining me in various different ways. It was kind of crazy.

Taylor: And you didn't choose the team. The team was just put together? Or, did you and Ron talk about it?

Allen: Yeah, I think so. I don't know exactly how the team came together. I certainly didn't choose all these people. I may have chosen Ron, and I may have chosen Larry. But I don't think that Ron was in the first year of the college.

Taylor: I think that was Ron's first year as well.

Allen: Yeah. Okay, so there's Bonnie and Betty and Ron. So there's only Larry and I who are veterans of one year, and then there's three brand-new people. Crazy.

Taylor: When I thought back on it, I didn't realize you did it the second year. But it was the second year, huh?

Allen: Yeah, because Human Development was a two-year program. It was designed to run for two years, and I did not want to be in it.

Taylor: Neither did I, so we both left.

Allen: Yeah.

Taylor: And Leo Daugherty joined it.

Allen: Yeah. And Winnie Ingram. When did Winnie come?

Taylor: I don't think Eric Larson stayed in it. I think Chuck Pailthorp did. So, it was Winnie and Leo and Bob and Richard and Chuck.

Allen: Oh, geez.

Taylor: They probably had a better second year than a first year.

Allen: Yeah, they probably liked it better, that's for sure.

Taylor: So that was just the second year?

Allen: Yeah.

Taylor: How was the whole content and the whole program received by the college, or by the students?

Allen: I can't remember.

Taylor: Because feminism isn't very out front at this point, I don't think, in 1972.

Allen: Well . . .

Taylor: Was there a demand?

Allen: Well, wait a minute. Yeah, feminism was around. Otherwise, I wouldn't have existed. Because when the planning faculty turned out to be exclusively male, the college got all kinds of criticism from feminists in Seattle. At least this is what I heard. So, the guys—I don't know if it was any guys outside the deanship, or what it was—but anyway, the guys decided that therefore they needed to go on a woman hunt. So, they specifically went looking for women to hire, and they found eight. And how big was the rest of the faculty at that point?

Taylor: Fifty altogether. The women were less than 10 percent—no, less than 20 percent.

Allen: Yeah. So, yes, there was some feminism going around. And I had done a women's studies class at Virginia Wesleyan, so I already knew some books to read, and things like that. There were some kind of seminal texts coming out in the first years of what we have come to call '70s feminism. So, yeah, I felt like there was some basis for it.

Ron, in particular—Ron had two daughters, and Ron is the first guy I ever knew who was such an avid male feminist, and would go around mouthing feminism to everyone he met. So, he was very, very supportive, and pretty much free of the most blatant, worst kinds of sexism that other people were practicing all the time. And so was Larry, actually.

Taylor: How about the students?

Allen: I don't remember the students having any trouble with it at all. But I should go back and look at my self-evaluation for that year, because I don't remember myself being very explicit. I think that I read that self-evaluation, and I don't remember being very explicit about it. I think I wasn't very explicit about it because of the faculty problems, which I didn't want to get into addressing. But I think the students were fine. I think there were way more women than men. I don't remember it being a problem for the students.

Taylor: Do you remember how the curriculum was developed? Did you do it as a team?

Allen: Yeah, we did do it as a team.

Taylor: And everybody stayed for the full year, right?

Allen: Yeah, I think they did. Yeah, I think so. Unless . . . you know, when I read my self-evaluations, I noticed that I had more times when I was not teaching in coordinated studies than I remembered. I think it's the third year I taught a group contract called Women and Literature, I think it was called. That was an all-women group of students, and it was just women's literature.

And then, there was that year that I did the Danforth, and I got a sabbatical. And there was a bunch of time that I was not actually teaching coordinated studies, even though that's what I remember I was doing the whole time.

Taylor: Because those are the memorable ones. Although this Women and Literature program that you taught by yourself . . .

Allen: That was really thrilling for me. I loved that. The other thing I really loved was invented by LLyn De Danaan, and that was called the Ajax Compact the first time—

Taylor: I didn't know that you did that. I did that, too.

Allen: Yeah, I did that. I did it a couple of times. I did it once with Susan Smith, Susan Perry. And I did it once with somebody else, too. I can't remember.

Taylor: I did it with Helena Knapp, just once. That was like 1975. I think that was the second year, because when it was started, it was started by LLyn and somebody named Mary Moorehead. It was an older woman—probably not really that older—and they called it Ajax Compact, and nobody understood why, because it had nothing to do with the Greek Ajax, it had to do with the cleanser.

Allen: Oh, I understood it perfectly.

Taylor: But then, it changed names.

Allen: Yeah, nobody could understand it, so we started calling it Reintroduction to Education.

Taylor: For women, Helena and I had 50 students, I remember.

Allen: Yeah, it was very, very popular. And I still know one student from there, from the one with Susan Smith. She is a state worker, and she is older than I am. She is in her eighties. And she loved it. She can still tell me all about it, and how important it was.

Taylor: That's true. I found the article in the newspaper about it. That was a very, very successful—because we got women who hadn't written anything but a Christmas card for 20 years or something,

and didn't have confidence that they could do anything. But, they were so motivated, and so willing to do whatever.

Allen: Yeah, right.

Taylor: And it was education in the best sense. It wasn't training, it was education. They just wanted to read and think and talk. We did that for a number of years, and then the thought was, well, we just sort of used up the community. But there's probably those same people still out there.

Allen: I'm not sure. I mean . . . [sighs] . . . hm. I think maybe what was interesting about those women is that they had made—they really expected marriage to work out for them, and to be it. Marriage and raising kids, that was going to be their life. Then, it turned out not to be, and they needed something different to do. And I think there are probably many fewer women who have that initial sense that, okay, this is the way my life is going to be, and I don't know how that affects the population for Reintro.

Taylor: That's probably true. Talk about—in terms of the early couple, three years—teachers that made the biggest—that were your mentors or friends who were people that you learned from, and what you learned from them.

Allen: Hm. Well, I thought it was really interesting looking over my self-evaluations, because this place, where team teaching is supposed to do so much for you, and you're supposed to be a co-learner and all of that stuff, I'd have to say—first of all, I found myself thinking, okay, who were the most important people I taught with, in terms of my development. [chuckles] I think the two most important people I taught with were Thad Curtz and Ron Woodbury. So then, I thought, wow, isn't that interesting? I didn't have any women. But the women were actually probably Peta Henderson and Stephanie Coontz. I taught a lot with Peta and Stephanie.

And I was so appalled at myself, how much of a little ideologue I was, when I read my struggles with feminist theory, and my struggles with combining Marxism and feminism, and all of that stuff, which all happened within the first—because I also taught a program with a lot of Marxism, right after the Women in Literature thing. It was called Working in America, and it had Tom Rainey teaching me Marxism.

Taylor: So, it was Tom and Stephanie and Peta and Ron.

Allen: No, not Stephanie. Not yet. Tom and Naomi were the Marxist voices, and Ron was the feminist voice.

Taylor: And Peta and Stephanie, eventually.

Allen: Yeah. But also, Peta and Stephanie got turned—I mean, I noticed that in maybe the last 15 years or so of my time at the college, I was almost always not in a program that I had designed myself, unless I was teaching alone. If I was teaching my Spanish program, I was teaching that either alone, or with Alice Nelson.

And if not, if I was teaching in a coordinated studies, it was usually those people's content. I was filling in as two things: the person who knew the most about teaching writing, and who would handle all the writing workshops, and the person who would have good literature to think of. And you wanted literature because it wasn't the main thing that you were valuing, but it would be necessary to understand the historical period, or it would be kind of a rest for the students to read a less-demanding book.

Taylor: The exception was the one that you and Argentina Dailey and I taught.

Allen: Oh, that's true.

Taylor: Which was all literature, pretty much. We did have to share that forefront of writing with Argentina.

Allen: Oh, god! I completely erased that from my memory bank. [laughing]

Taylor: It wasn't a bad program.

Allen: No, it wasn't.

Taylor: But it was a totally unplanned program, because I don't think we did any planning until we started.

Allen: That was my content.

Taylor: There were two things about that program. There was Argentina. We helped her get through the year. She did some good teaching, actually.

Allen: Yeah.

Taylor: The other thing is that we were given all the basketball players. And that was so bizarre. There's three middle-aged women teaching classics, and we get all these basketball players. [laughter]

Allen: That is very bizarre.

Taylor: I don't know who pulled that string, except for I think Advising had confidence in you and me, in terms of our being able to do it. I guess.

Allen: How funny.

Taylor: Why would they—they certainly didn't choose it.

Allen: What was it called?

Taylor: It was called Classics and Context.

Allen: Oh, yeah.

Taylor: And we were reading *Antigone*.

Allen: No, they wouldn't have chosen it.

Taylor: And we read all of *Don Quixote*.

Allen: No, they wouldn't have chosen that.

Taylor: But we did all right by them.

Allen: Yeah, of course. Everybody should read *Don Quixote*.

Taylor: Anyway, I think we should probably quit for the day.