Russ Lidman

Interviewed by Elaine Vradenburgh

The Evergreen State College oral history project

July 7, 2020

FINAL

Vradenburgh: I'm going to start by saying this is the Evergreen State College oral history project. I'm Elaine Vradenburgh and I'm here with Russ Lidman. It is Tuesday, July 7, 2020. We are doing this interview by Zoom. Let's start by you just telling me your full name, age, date of birth, where you were born.

Lidman: Russell Martin Lidman. I'm 75 and I was born on March 8, 1945 in Rochester, NY.

Vradenburgh: Let's start with your growing-up years. I wanted to hear a little bit about your parents, about who they were, what they did in the world, how they influenced you.

Lidman: My dad was a manager corner grocery store for a local company. These were very common when I was young, these little corner stores. Then for the same organization, he became a manager of one of the early supermarkets, which wouldn't count as a supermarket now, but it was then. Then he became an executive at the company and supervised 12 supermarkets around western New York State.

My mom worked only part-time in a number of different jobs. On Saturdays she sold women's clothes in Bonds. This is when I was maybe under ten. She worked for a handful of years as a cashier in my dad's supermarket. She mostly did volunteer work. She suffered from Crohn's disease, so that really limited what she could do. She managed to live to 83, so she died of everything else, but not Crohn's disease.

I grew up in Rochester, New York. I went through high school there. I lived in the city and went to a city high school. I was not a contact sport athlete. I was drawn to racket sports generally. My sport was doubles badminton. My partner and I were county champions, but in the region, we finished I recall third. There were some really good players. We were not in the same league with them. I decided it was a good thing to be humbled, but that wouldn't have been my first choice.

Vradenburgh: What was the social climate like when you were coming of age in Rochester? What was going on at that time?

Lidman: I lived in a mixed neighborhood, but white. I'd say Italians were maybe the majority. The grade school I went to was all white, but the high school was one-third black. I would say probably

Italian and then Eastern European—Polish, Ukrainian—were the largest groups of people. I'm Jewish and the high school was at most 10 percent Jewish. It was mixed. There was everybody there. It was a typical slice of the pie in an urban area. At a high school reunion one of the Ukrainians (who had become a professional soccer player and later a coach) said we didn't know how lucky we were to have experienced diversity before it was a 'thing.'

Vradenburgh: Other than badminton, what were some of your interests growing up as a kid in Rochester?

Lidman: As a kid, I'm not sure. In high school, I was the editor of the high school yearbook and I was on the school newspaper. For the last two years, I was sort of a sports reporter for the local Gannet newspaper. I covered football.

Vradenburgh: Sounds like sports were a part of you.

Lidman: Yeah, I would say coverage. I was a good racquet player, so I played racquetball quite a bit as a kid, starting with my dad and then other people. Played squash, but always for recreation. I wasn't one of the top, but I enjoyed it.

Vradenburgh: You mentioned you have a sister.

Lidman: Yes, I have a sister. She's three years older than me. She went to college in Rhode Island, and then she worked mostly part-time. She was an administrative assistant at the Nursing School of the University of Rochester. She's been retired for years. She was and still is three years older than me.

Vradenburgh: What were some ways that your family was engaged in your community in Rochester?

Lidman: My mother was a big volunteer in the Jewish community. She'd gotten acknowledgments. She'd gone to those programs to train leaders, but it was too much for her. She had to restrict her activities. The medication for Crohn's disease at that time was very inadequate. She was misdiagnosed for many years. It wasn't until the early '60s that she was diagnosed properly. She was a very smart person. Completed high school, but at the time—the Depression—you couldn't go further, so she got as far as she could go. She was very smart. People at that point learned things in high school. Now I wonder what people learn. She was in the generation that memorized poetry and could recite it decades later.

It was very interesting. Among her friends who were able to go to college, there was a distinction between college-educated and college graduate. College-educated meant that you went to

college for a year or two. College graduate meant you finished, which was very rare at that time, among women especially.

Vradenburgh: What kind of volunteer work was she doing in the Jewish community?

Lidman: A variety of things. Helping to put on plays—theatrical productions—and involvement with organizations that raised money, probably for Israel at that time because it was so close to the founding. I have it written down somewhere, but I can't recall all the details. She she was active [with] the Jewish Community Services that does social work, not just for Jewish people but for immigrants generally. She was, I think, on the board of that for some period of time.

Vradenburgh: What do you feel like are some of the things that you got from your parents growing up, in terms of values, or worldviews, or things that you carried forth into your own life?

Lidman: I would say values about the need to give back to your community was very big from my mom. My dad had very little to do with us because he worked all the time, so I would say his impact was minimal. My mom was a good spirit, and she had a wonderful sense of humor, and I think I certainly got some of my humor from her, my orientation toward that kind of thing, and this appreciation of the opportunities you had, not to just assume. They didn't have a lot of money. They had what people had in the '50s and early '60s, so it was a stretch for them to provide the kind of things that I took advantage of, went to college and all that.

Vradenburgh: Let's talk about your process of going to college. What was that like for you? When you thought about education at that time, what were you thinking?

Lidman: I was thinking that I had an uncle who was an engineer, so I went to Engineering School at Cornell and I completed my undergraduate's degree in electrical engineering. I did meet my wife there in college. That's the best place for meeting a spouse, I think, is in class. Comparative literature.

I got more interested in world affairs, economic development and poverty, those kinds of issues. I was a good test-taker, and I got way high scores in the Graduate Record Exam and I got into Princeton's Woodrow Wilson School—now called Princeton School of Public and International Affairs—because Woodrow Wilson was clearly a racist and time caught up with that ugly aspect of his policies toward Blacks. I did graduate study there in economic development.

I continued my PhD at Madison at the University of Wisconsin in economics. My real interest was in anti-poverty programs. I did my post-doc there in Madison at the Institute for Research on Poverty. That was what I was really interested in.

Vradenburgh: What sparked that interest specifically in anti-poverty?

Lidman: Just what we were talking about before, the idea of not assuming that you could get things. We didn't have a lot of money. A principle of Judaism is what they call Tikkun Olam, the repair of the world. I just always felt like it was a responsibility to be a good public-oriented person. That was never a big issue for me. I just inherited it and embraced it—from my mom.

Vradenburgh: The schools you went to were pretty fancy schools to get into—Cornell and Princeton—in terms of the expense of them, too.

Lidman: Sure. Princeton was free. They gave me money. At Wisconsin, I was a research assistant and I didn't have to pay for anything there either. I was a good test-taker. I was a hard worker, so I passed off as a smart person. I still am smart enough to ask good questions. Whether I want to do the work to answer them is another matter., to some degree. I got good grades in college and did tests very well, so that was about it.

Vradenburgh: It sounds like your direction was more of an institutional systems direction, with the anti-poverty, as opposed to maybe working at a shelter.

Lidman: I was a policy person. I studied public policy. I have an economics PhD, but the places that I went were more institutional-oriented. There's this distinction between populists who distrust government and progressives who see government as an ability to solve things. read the progressive literature, I read the muckrakers. I had a sense of the world. I wasn't a corporate type. I wasn't an organization man. I worked in organizations and so on, but my interest was in policy, or at least being part of a group that addressed problems. My view is individuals don't count for much. You have to work with other people.

Vradenburgh: And it sounds like addressing the larger systemic issues and coming at them from that perspective.

Lidman: I think so, that's right.

Vradenburgh: In terms of the context of when you were in school—I imagine it's been a decade—

Lidman: Yeah, just a decade. I entered Cornell in 1962 and Completed my PhD in 1972.

Vradenburgh: Were there any big events or influences from that time that you feel like impacted the course of your studies, or the direction of your career path?

Lidman: Hmm. The Vietnam War, of course. It wasn't something I had to face because I was 4F, physically unfit. It wasn't bone spurs—it wasn't like Trump—but I did have a problem that was

subsequently correctable, but it required attention. That had a big impact, just that whole idea about understanding people's movements, mass movements, that kind of thing.

Vradenburgh: Were you involved in any of the antiwar or any of the other [unintelligible 00:15:41]?

Lidman: Active, but not a leader, just a participant. Demonstrations and strikes, that kind of thing. My wife had been a volunteer in the grape strike in Delano, so she knew all of the leaders in the United Farm Workers. She was very active in that. We weren't married at the time. She organized the grape boycott in Toronto and then was involved in the grape boycott in New York. She was an activist, more so than I. She went to law school and was very involved in a lot of progressive activity.

Vradenburgh: Did her work or her orientation influence your path at all?

Lidman: Not specially, no. We were just companionable and in sync. She was the first lawyer to be representing this lesbian couple that was adopting one of their children, an open lesbian adoption. It was the first one in the state and maybe the first one in the country. They won that in the court, so her briefing materials circulated nationally. She was responsible for hundreds of lesbian adoptions or gay adoptions. She had a real visibility. I was a supporter of everything she did, of course. We were alike in that respect; we just did different things.

Vradenburgh: Sounds like you had similar interests, approaching it in different ways.

Lidman: It was a good marriage. She died a couple years ago.

Vradenburgh: Tell me a little bit about some of the first jobs that you had in college, within the [unintelligible 00:18:28] that you were wanting to work in.

Lidman: Starting in high school, for five summers I unloaded boxcars in a warehouse. I was a Teamster. Since no one knew how to lift at that time, it's a miracle that I can walk at this age. I worked one summer as an engineer at a firm, and I decided that it was not for me at all. That was between my junior and senior year. After my senior year, I went to Guadalajara, Mexico to learn Spanish. For graduate school at that point, you had to know a language. The language I studied in high school was Latin, so that wasn't going to do much good for me.

Then I went to Princeton, and after that first year at Princeton, I did my master's research in Peru. I studied an economic development issue about the choice that small potato farmers made in Peru between going with oxen to plow and tractors.

[Takes a three-minute break at 00:19:47]

Vradenburgh: We were talking about work. You were a stock person at a store.

Lidman: I did work in grocery stores when I was 14, then worked in a warehouse, and I did engineering once. My first job during graduate school, I was involved in the Rural Negative Income Tax Experiment. That was my research assistant job, and I continued on that in my post-doc. I left the post-doc a little early and went traveling for a year with my wife.

Vradenburgh: Where did you go?

Lidman: We started in East Africa. A guy I had taught with at Oberlin College—I taught at Oberlin from '70 to '71—he went to work in Tanzania, so I visited him with my wife. We were there for three months and then went into Kenya, Ethiopia, Israel, and Holland, then returned home.

Vradenburgh: That was a big trip.

Lidman: Big trip, but after graduate school and post-doc—the decade you were talking about in terms of study—I didn't have words to describe what I needed then, but I would say I was depressed. I needed a boost in my life.

Vradenburgh: What do you feel like the cause of that was?

Lidman: A decade of studying. There was anxiety about doing your dissertation and exams and all that stuff. I don't know. Probably not everybody is affected the same way. A lot of people quit graduate school for a variety of reasons. I was a finisher, but at a price. I just needed space and time.

Vradenburgh: How long was that trip?

Lidman: Nine months, I'd say.

Vradenburgh: Traveling internationally can have such a big impact. What are some of the things that you feel like you took away from that experience?

Lidman: Things can go very wrong very quickly. You have to prepared for reversals. That would be the main thing I would say the takeaway was. We were swimming someplace on a beach in Tanzania, and suddenly we were way out. There was an undertow that we didn't realize. We could barely see the beach! [laughing] We were just talking to one another. So, you had to figure out things, how to survive.

Vradenburgh: Did you swim back?

Lidman: Yeah, we just swam back. It was an effort. My wife starting panicking and I said, "Stand up." The water was about four feet high by the time she started panicking. [laughing]

Just strange things. I got arrested once. We were walking by a steam engine in the Tanzanian Railroad yard, and I asked the conductor to take a picture of me, and the police arrested me for taking a

picture of a train. They interviewed me for hours. Just awful things happened. Who knows? One time somebody started attacking us with a broken bottle. It was all things I wouldn't be able to tolerate at this age, but in my twenties, it all seemed plausible. [laughter] You just learn how to survive.

Vradenburgh: That was the early '70s when you were doing that traveling?

Lidman: Yeah, between '73 and '74.

Vradenburgh: Was most of your research based in Latin America?

Lidman: No, a lot of stuff I published was about things in the United States, poverty related often. In the last decade, when I was on the Seattle University faculty, a lot of it was just eclectic, things that interested me. I didn't write a lot about poverty or anything like that later. My interests evolved.

Vradenburgh: After your big world travel trip, you came back. What happened next?

Lidman: My major professor in Madison told me about a project in the federal government. Nixon was President, but he wanted to do welfare reform, so I was involved with a small team that was involved in developing welfare reform for that administration. After I was there for six months, all the Watergate stuff broke, and there was no interest anymore in what we were doing. I just got real discouraged about spending all my time on something that had no value whatsoever. I was only there as a project person but decided I would never again work for the federal government.

Vradenburgh: Because?

Lidman: It's just that you start going in one direction—it wasn't like academic research, it was like public policymaking—but once the President's power started eroding, there was never going to be an audience for all the work that we had done, so I just felt like you could waste your whole life doing stuff like that. That wasn't of interest to me personally.

Vradenburgh: You spent a little time in D.C.

Lidman: Then I came to Evergreen. As I mentioned previously, there were a number of people from Oberlin who came to Evergreen. I had a job offer back at Oberlin to go back, but then people said to me, who were already from Oberlin, why don't I look at this place, which was new and novel. At that period of time, Evergreen was unique, so it seemed like the place to go, and it was as far away from Washington, D.C. as I could possibly go [laughter] so that's where I went.

Vradenburgh: That was a motivator.

Lidman: Yeah. I had interviewed at other places. I could have gone to big universities, but I was really done. I didn't want to just spend my life doing that. I thought I could enjoy myself at a teaching institution primarily. I didn't need to be at a big university.

Vradenburgh: When you say, "doing that," what do you mean by that?

Lidman: It's pursuing funding, it's pursuing your name. I would say it's like that whole problem . . . I don't know . . . I just thought, you're treading water. The impact that you could have as a teacher seemed like more interesting to me than just doing research and fitting teaching in on the side. The focus would be articles and publishing. Who cares? It wasn't a big deal for me. I never cared that much.

Vradenburgh: At the time, when you heard about Evergreen at Oberlin, can you remember the way that that school was described?

Lidman: It was described as more seminar based, not lecturing to large numbers of people, not repeating yourself, not grade oriented. There were a lot of "nots" that I liked, things that were different than other places. I didn't feel the need to be grading people all the time at that point. I subsequently taught at Seattle U, where grading was part of the deal. I liked all those things about Evergreen—interdisciplinary, working with other faculty, team stuff. I've always been a team-oriented person anyway. I kind of liked all that stuff. And it just felt energetic. I've often felt like certain places feel healthy, and Evergreen at that time felt healthy to me.

Vradenburgh: In what way? What do you mean by "healthy"?

Lidman: That the people who were there felt energetic, and they felt engaged in what they were doing, and they didn't feel like they were just going through the steps. In my view, it didn't feel like they were just going through the motions.

Vradenburgh: They were innovating, it sounds like.

Lidman: Yeah, and there was constant innovation, I thought, in programs. Not in the pedagogy but in the programs. The place evolved quite a bit since then because the students changed, the world changed. At that time, it was teams of three or four faculty and groups of students like 60 or 70 or 80 even. They were three quarters long. Now it's just maybe teams of two. Maybe the programs last two quarters. There was a whole different structure. It evolved, but at that point, it seemed interesting to me.

Vradenburgh: Can you put it in context of other things that were happening at the time? Why did Evergreen emerge at that moment, and maybe why in Washington? Do you have a sense of any of that?

Lidman: I would say that the people who were hired originally had an opportunity in a planning year, and then the President, Charles McCann, he saw a vision. He had come from Central Washington University. He saw a way of doing things better, I think, in terms of capturing the best of what was going on at different schools, pieces of it, whether it was Reed or San Jose State, Black Mountain College from decades earlier in North Carolina. I think that those people had an opportunity to rethink how you could do education properly for that period; that students just weren't going to be slavish to a particular discipline; that they wanted to have this ability to integrate knowledge, I thought.

Vradenburgh: Do you think that the reason it happened here in Washington is because of Charles McCann being the visionary?

Lidman: Yeah, and the planning faculty. I think there were 10 or 12 people, I can't remember how many. There were a lot of people who were maybe unhappy with kind of where they were before. The first Vice President was actually from Oberlin, somebody I knew there, a biology professor. He became President of a school in Hawaii subsequently. Ed Kormondy was his name. These were people who were committed to education, but they weren't necessarily committed to the single focus on a major, per se. The idea was always that study in depth was a kind of substitute for a major, just being accomplished in something.

Vradenburgh: Being able to think critically about subjects.

Lidman: Yeah, instead of being leashed to a particular discipline to think about, how would you approach problems? I've had students many years later talk about that, how they really learned at Evergreen the importance of just continuing to learn.

There was one guy from out in Shelton who actually figured out how to turn what were forest roads used to haul out trees back into nature, and he made it into a business. Instead of leaving a scar that would ultimately just cause some erosion or even landslides, how to do that. It was a combination of botany, biology, geohydrology. He figured it all out. At some point, I asked him, "How did you learn how to do all of that stuff?" He said, "Well, I learned how to read critically." [laughing] People did wonderful things. In my experience, I had students do all kinds of interesting things. Political things.

Vradenburgh: What year was it when you came to Olympia?

Lidman: '74.

Vradenburgh: Remind me again, was the first graduating class in ’74?

Lidman: It opened in ’71 and I think there were some people who probably graduated in ’72, just completing one year there. There had been graduating classes before I came. The place opened in ’71, so the first graduating class would have been ’72.

Vradenburgh: Can you describe physically what the campus was like at that time?

Lidman: There was the Library and the CAB Building and the gym. I can’t remember if the Seminar Building was completed then or not, but one of the Lab buildings was done—Lab I, not Lab II. That lecture hall building was done, but it was a terrible building.

Vradenburgh: The one in the middle of campus?

Lidman: Yeah, now it’s the Les Purce Building and beautiful.

Vradenburgh: I think when I was there the lecture hall felt like a gloomy place.

Lidman: It was never good. It had real problems. The seats, everything was kind of broken early on. That was it. I can’t remember if the COM Building was open yet. Anyway, there were a bunch of things that were there. The central part of the campus was there. But not Lab II, that was built later. No Seminar phase II.

Vradenburgh: Tell me a little bit about the first teaching experiences that you had, or some of your early programs.

Lidman: I taught with Oscar Soule and Carolyn Dobbs. Oscar’s still around and still a good buddy. Carolyn passed away some years ago. She had a brain tumor. We taught Applied Environmental Studies. That was three quarters. Great group of students. The last quarter was real project based. It was interesting. I was an economist, Oscar was an ecologist, and Carolyn was a planner. We taught that together.

I’m having trouble remembering all these things I taught. I taught in a Health something or other. I don’t even know what. I taught . . . it’s more than 40 years ago.

Vradenburgh: Rather than the specifics, are there things that you remember about those early years that you feel like were particularly inspiring, or really annoying? What do you remember about that time?

Lidman: Nothing was especially annoying. I really liked working with other people. I probably at one point had one of those portfolios with all my teaching in it. I liked the students. I liked generally the passion of the students for whatever it was they were interested in. I tried helping. I tried just being a

resource for them. Some students wanted to learn something, so I taught classes that I got no "credit" for. I just taught things that people wanted to learn, even if they weren't my own students. I had the energy at that point in time.

Part of the reason that it's vague is I had young kids at that time, so I was balancing everything. My wife was going to law school. It's amazing that I remember anything from that period.

Vradenburgh: That you were able to do all that. Both of you were busy.

Lidman: Yeah, I taught for years. I really taught between '74 and '83 pretty much. In '83, I was a Fulbright professor at Peru. I came back for a year, but I did relatively little teaching after 1985. I mostly taught with other people, one or two other people for all that period. I taught with Betty Kutter.

Vradenburgh: Tell me a little bit about what that process was like. Normally, if you're on your own, you can just be really focused in planning your curriculum. What's the process like of creating curriculum with three or more faculty?

Lidman: You start early in the previous year. The deans, in my case, often asked me if I would work with So-and-So, would I work with So-and-So? I was always interested in working with new people. I had an interest in trying new things.

You'd just spend time brainstorming. What would you teach? What would the program be? The problem was, from my perspective, that there was no continuity for the students. They were starting to go in one direction, and then there might be another program for them to do that. I always tried figuring out if I had students who were interested in X, what would be the next thing? I always tried figuring out what would work for the students.

Vradenburgh: I imagine that's maybe why it seems like at Evergreen, students can tend to stick with a faculty as opposed to a subject area.

Lidman: I think that makes perfect sense, actually. Then they developed specialty areas or something like that. They're called something else now. The idea would be that within your own specialty area—it might be political economy or science or something—you'd develop a pathway. That took years to actually move in that direction. It was more just happenstance. Whatever was, was.

Vradenburgh: Initially they didn't have the different categories of expressive arts or…?

Lidman: They kind of did. No, expressive arts and political economy and so on. But initially, there wasn't anything like that. They just thought if people got together in groups, they'd develop something that would be appropriate, which I thought was naïve in my view. I didn't think it worked for the

students because they'd often hit a dead end. That's one of the reasons that I think Evergreen had such a high rate of attrition. They'd get a lot of transfers, who were looking to finish their work at Evergreen, but there was a high rate of attrition of Evergreen students because they couldn't get what they wanted. That was a real problem. It's always been a problem.

Vradenburgh: It's always been a problem, even from the very beginning it sounds like.

Lidman: I think so. In the early years, I think there was retention because people were just interested in the novelty of it. But after a while, people start thinking about other things. If I'm interested in X, there's no more of it.

Vradenburgh: Demographically, what was the school like during that time in terms of diversity?

Lidman: Pretty white demographically. An older student, on average. I'd say the average was maybe five years over typical undergraduate school, because a lot of people had come as transfers or something from other places, or they'd been out for a while. I had students in their forties, for sure. I didn't have as many high-school-directs. I don't think Evergreen had a lot. It had some, but it had a mix, transfers and everything.

Vradenburgh: Did you get a sense of what was attracting students to Evergreen at that time?

Lidman: A lot of students were unhappy with Brand X, wherever it might be, some big university. They heard about Evergreen. They knew somebody who went there and had a wonderful time. A lot of word of mouth, I would say. Then other faculty, if someone was a little unusual, they'd say, "There's a school for you." [laughter]

I remember one student who came from Ecuador. Her parents came up and they checked it out, and they knew somebody from there who was married to a faculty member who they'd known—they were both from Ecuador, but they'd met this person at Stanford where one went to graduate school and one was an undergraduate—and she vouched for it, so they sent their daughter there. She never went back to Ecuador. She married a Mexican guy. Lives up in Seattle now.

People came from all over, for whatever reason. Now Evergreen is suffering from this enrollment decline because of the certain craziness that happened not long ago. I wasn't there. I think it may have been 2017. I was in Mexico when all this stuff was happening. I didn't follow it closely, but I know it had an impact on the school and enrollment.

Vradenburgh: Can you describe what Olympia was at that time, and how it interfaced with Evergreen?

Lidman: Olympia was much smaller. It had been small, mostly retail. Some restaurants, not many. Things came later that were bigger. It just struck me as a pretty small town. Oberlin was small, too, and Olympia was bigger than Oberlin. It was just small retail, a lot of small businesspeople. That was what it was. It was kind of in decline. There were stores that were closing. Where the Starbucks is now, across from Sylvester Park, was a department store called Miller's. Had very few things in it. [laughing] Penney's was downtown in a building that was by the corner of Legion Way and Capitol Way. There were furniture stores, office supply stores. It was pretty small. There was a guy named Dick Nichols, who was kind of involved in public relations at Evergreen—communications, they called it—but he used to say, "In Tumwater, you couldn't buy a pair of socks." There was no place to buy a pair of socks. There was nothing out there. Where the Fred Meyer is, there was a hotel called the Tyee. There were a handful of restaurants in the area. It was smaller. The population of the county was under half of what it is now.

Vradenburgh: It sounds like the employment here was State?

Lidman: State, and actually, a lot of the State employment not too many years previously was up in Seattle. It was a State Supreme Court decision that required that all the departments be located in Olympia because it was in the Constitution.

Vradenburgh: I imagine that impacted the town.

Lidman: Yeah, a little bit more. But then, there was all kinds of growth that took place. There's a lot of reasons for it. The brewery was here. It isn't anymore. The biggest employer, I think, may have been St. Peter Hospital. Then it became a medical center, and huge number of doctors were there. State government expanded, of course, commensurate with the growth in the state's population. I think when I came, the state's population was almost half of what it is now, maybe a little over half. Everything—particularly in the Puget Sound area, this is the relief valve for the more active areas north.

Vradenburgh: When you were teaching, what was Raven doing? You said she was in law school.

Lidman: She went to law school and then she worked for Legal Services in Olympia for a number of years. She graduated from law school in '77, and we had kids who were born in '75 and '78, and she was home for a little while. She was in Legal Services until 1983, when we went to Peru. Then she had to leave. She did private practice for a while when she came back, and then she got a job on the faculty of UPS Law School. UPS Law School was sold to Seattle U, and then she ended up on the Seattle U campus when they opened the law building, Sullivan Hall, up there.

Vradenburgh: I guess we didn't talk about this when you were at Evergreen. I want to hear about your experiences as the Provost and also with the Institute. When you were teaching, what other kinds of engagement did you have in the community? How were you integrated outside of Evergreen?

Lidman: From the time I came here, I joined Temple Beth Hatfiloh. I did volunteer work for different things. I'm trying to remember. I tried to be active. I know I did a lot of political work. I did a lot of doorbelling and leafletting, getting together with people running for office and talking about policy issues. I did that. I'm trying to remember what else I did. I had such young kids. Between two of us working and kids, I don't think I did a lot.

Vradenburgh: It would be hard to do anything other than that. [laughing]

Lidman: That was plenty for me, really. Gawd. I look back and I think, how did I ever do all those things? I have no idea. It's a mystery.

Vradenburgh: Pretty amazing.

Lidman: Amazing! And now my daughter does it. My daughter and her husband are working at home in this period, and they have two kids at home who aren't in school. Every time I go over there, I think, oh my gawd, I would have gone crazy at this point.

Vradenburgh: In terms of your programs, I remember Evergreen as being very much like community based, project based, where your program is you're out doing things in the community. Did your programs have that aspect?

Lidman: Yes, always.

Vradenburgh: Can you share some of that, some of the kinds of things that your programs were doing?

Lidman: We always tried to engage the community, that kind of outreach kind of thing, with internships or whatever it might be. In the first one, for example, we had one group of students who was studying the flow of currents in Budd Inlet. The issue had to do with the safety of shellfish harvesting. We had another group that was studying, what would happen if Mount Rainier erupted? I can't remember what the third one was.

I taught a class about tax reform in Washington, and the students were writing monographs about the State's taxes and how they could be reformed. That was really interesting. One of the students who came out of that founded People for Fair Taxes, which was an interest group. He became the research director for the State Labor Council, and then he became head of the State's Department of Labor and Industries. Went to Washington, D.C. and became Assistant Secretary of Labor for OSHA,

Occupational Safety and Health. Came back and was a Chief of Staff for Governor [Gary] Locke. He had a remarkable career. Ultimately got involved in finance and became the head of CALPERS, California's Public Employees Retirement System. Huge. Biggest one in the country. He died young, unfortunately, but a remarkable person.

Vradenburgh: In thinking about the different students that you worked with, what do you think it takes for a student to have that kind of path?

Lidman: I don't know. If I knew what the magic bullet was, I would have used it. I just tried being a supportive person for students, whatever they might be interested in. I tried helping. That's all. Not everybody is motivated the same way. Not everybody has the same opportunities to go around and do a variety of different things, but I'm always amazed at what people end up doing.

It's funny. Interdisciplinary stuff used to be kind of rare, in a way. But the big growth in graduate programs is all interdisciplinary. Like energy systems, environmental studies, those are all interdisciplinary graduate degrees. There's more of those now than there are people who go in for a doctorate in English or something like that, or American Studies.

Vradenburgh: Yeah, grown in that direction.

Lidman: I had students who became academics. One guy went and got a PhD in economics at Penn and taught at Williams College. Now he's at one of the SUNY schools in New York. Another woman teaches at Prescott College. But mostly, they're not academics. That's the rare person.

Vradenburgh: They're working more in the public sector.

Lidman: Yeah, more in the public sector. But also the private or small business world. I had somebody who went through my program and started an antique store in downtown Olympia. [laughing] It's now a woman's store. People run a store, and then they get a little tired of it.

Vradenburgh: Tell me a little bit about your decision to leave Evergreen. You came to an exciting new place to teach, and these different values. How did you transition more into government and later Seattle University?

Lidman: All my work was in public policy. I did that Fulbright in Peru for a year, full of policy kinds of stuff. Then I came back, and I just figured, I'm really torn. I just needed expertise. I needed to do something. I had taught at Oberlin first, and then I taught at Evergreen for the better part of 10 years, and I just thought, I'm done. I need to do something else.

This opportunity came up at the Washington State Institute for Public Policy. I got the job and I did it for five years as Director. I taught several modular courses during that period. We did hire some students. We were right in the Seminar Building on the second floor.

Vradenburgh: Is the Institute still housed at Evergreen, or is it downtown?

Lidman: It's still, I think, linked to Evergreen in terms of budget, but it's housed downtown. Evergreen was expanding and there wasn't room for everybody there. Like the Council of Presidents office that served all the Presidents of the public universities used to be out at Evergreen, and that got moved, too. They all got moved. A lot of the things that weren't directly involved with teaching got moved off campus.

Vradenburgh: Why do think those weren't prioritized, and what impact do you feel like that had on the college?

Lidman: Because the faculty grew, and they needed office space. It's a teaching institution primarily, and once they had the space, then those other activities that were more outward looking, there was no way to accommodate them at that point in time.

Vradenburgh: How do you think that impacted Evergreen, not having those kinds of things there?

Lidman: I think it impacted both—the Institute—because then students weren't part of it like they were before. It affected the Institute because it became more professionalized. It affected Evergreen students. There were never a lot, but there were opportunities for students there.

Vradenburgh: Let's back up a little bit. Could you describe what the Institute is?

Lidman: The Institute is run by a board that included primarily legislators, nonpartisan, I think a couple from each chamber, maybe three from each chamber, or maybe two. Then a representative from the Governor's office, then four of the six public universities had a representative. Evergreen was one, and one from another of the smaller state schools, then one each from UW and WSU. That was from the beginning. It was a nonpartisan board.

The money came from the State directly to the Institute. All of the work was approved by the board, so certain legislative things that were done, they required attention to. And it wasn't like evaluating programs. There's this group called JLARC—Joint Legislative Audit & Review Committee—who look at things that were done in the past and evaluate whether they met legislative intent.

But our purpose was to look forward. If you were interested in doing X, how might you do it? Or, the Legislature got a lot of money—millions of dollars—to study the high-level nuclear waste

repository issue—the State was a target in the Tri-Cities area a candidate for nuclear storage that's from all of the nuclear plants all around the country. We had a group of six people who were experts in one or another area, or they could hire experts, to study, what were the implications in the State for being the underground repository for high-level nuclear waste? That research consumed millions of dollars, so the Legislature wanted the Institute to oversee it. They were looking at how to do a welfare reform, so we had a group that was doing a survey of 3,000 Washington families who were low income to get a sense of what this welfare reform was doing, and how to improve it.

Vradenburgh: When you came on as Director, the Institute was there for only a few years, right?

Lidman: A couple of years. There were two different Directors and neither one knew much about public policy, frankly.

Vradenburgh: You've mentioned that when you're in D.C. the frustration of doing all this work, and then something comes up politically that kind of derails everything. Did you feel that that also happened within this Institute, or is it different?

Lidman: No, because it was directly connected with the Legislature primarily. We didn't do anything that no one was interested in. And it was nonpartisan, so it didn't matter. We had Republicans and Democrats, generally smart people from both. I don't know about Republicans now, frankly, whether they are of that same caliber. These people on the Institute board read books! [laughing] They were smart people, in my experience anyway.

Vradenburgh: It sounds like your interest in this—last time we talked, you talked about how you really value the expertise in certain fields. You didn't necessarily focus on that at a research institution, but that you felt like that was an important part of who you were, delving into an area.

Lidman: Yeah. Obviously, it was unresolved in my own life, whether I was going to be a teacher or a researcher of some kind. You never know, you just have to think about it at any point in time, things change for you. I never felt like being at Evergreen was a sentence. [laughing] It wasn't a punishment, it was just an opportunity, and I liked it, and I liked many of the people who taught there. Not all of them, I'll be honest, but many of them.

Vradenburgh: In some ways, it's similar to the way Evergreen grads are, where I feel like there's a very nonlinear pathway that a lot of people take.

Lidman: I'm nonlinear! [laughter] You don't have to just do one thing. That was my view.

Vradenburgh: What are some of the things you feel proudest of with your work with the Institute? You were there for four years?

Lidman: Five years. I think I'm just proudest of the people I worked with—the people who were hired—that they produced work that was useful to the State. I set out to produce valuable work, and I think we accomplished that. Some things lasted just a brief period of time. There was a community that was concerned about electromagnetic radiation from high-voltage lines. We had a person who did the research to determine, if you're in a neighborhood that has high-voltage, high-tension wires, does it have a health effect? Does it produce cancers or anything like that? The answer was no, there's evidence. It was those kinds of things that just came up that we would be able to do a piece of work, and then address the Legislature's needs.

The Institute evolved after I left. The Legislature funding became a little thinner, and the Institute became known for the work that they did on looking at cost-benefit analyses of different kinds of public programs. Then they got money from foundations, and they became known throughout the country, and other organizations tried to emulate it in other states. Then those people who were there—this was after I was there—they were traveling around the world providing insight into how to do this kind of work.

I think I mentioned that after [Dan] Evans became President, I started trying to lobby him to create the Institute. He knew how to do it. I was just talking about it, but he knew how to do it because he had been Governor of the State for three terms. He just generated the kind of political will to get it done. Then we developed this whole approach to making sure that it was not partisan or overly academic. We had people doing all kinds of interesting things.

Vradenburgh: How do you feel like the Institute tied into Evergreen's mission?

Lidman: Evergreen is in the State capital. It would be like if you had a university in Detroit and you weren't interested in automobiles. Evergreen needed to be more closely connected with State government. You had to develop that kind of link with the State government. Evergreen needed to provide resources for the State. That was my view. How could you be in the State capital and not be interested in the State? Because a lot of the faculty and a lot of the students didn't even know they were living in Olympia, a state capital. They were totally inward looking, which never made sense to me. It's a state capital city. When I was even teaching, I tried involving students in that kind of thing, public policy. I don't know. I just felt like you needed to be part of the action. Maybe people don't think of government as interesting, but it sure is the main game in town.

Vradenburgh: Right. Is there any connection between the Institute and the development of the MPA program?

Lidman: Just me. I was involved in the development of the MPA program.

Vradenburgh: What was your role?

Lidman: Just part of the planning group to create it. The first Director was a guy named Guy Adams. He was a good guy. He was the main Director during that period. I taught in it. I taught in that program for a few years in the '80s.

Vradenburgh: What year was the MPA program established?

Lidman: I would say '81, something like that.

Vradenburgh: It's been around for a while.

Lidman: Yeah, it's been around now for 40 years. I had great students there, too. I'm glad you reminded me of it. I did spend several years involved with that. [laughter]

Vradenburgh: You taught, you went to Peru, you came back, and then you got the job at the Institute. After that, were you the Provost?

Lidman: I was the Provost from '90 to '94.

Vradenburgh: What interested you in that position?

Lidman: I was long a part of Evergreen, it seemed like. How many years was that already? That was 16 years. [Henry] Luce, the guy who founded *Time* and *Life* and *Fortune*, talked about the ages of 35 to 50 as the "command years." Those were the years that people wanted to have an involvement in leadership —those were his words, but there's a certain period when you just want to have a hand in things that you're involved with. That's was me.

And I had been frustrated about certain things at Evergreen, like the lack of planning, the lack of a long-term vision about, where do you go? The problem with Evergreen is that everything was so unique there at the outset, like internships and everything, and now they're common. Things that were big at Evergreen, like they had distributed computing. There were dumb terminals everywhere so that you could work with the mainframe. That got undone by PCs and then laptops and smartphones. So, things that were unique at Evergreen that were selling points were no longer that unique. To my mind, Evergreen needed to reinvent itself in some way, and I thought I wanted to help with that.

I succeeded with very few things. It's like institutions get set in concrete very early in their histories. They become these institutional histories that drive things. It becomes very difficult to undo them. I underestimated the inertia at the institution. I was able to do some things, but not everything.

Vradenburgh: This was the early '90s?

Lidman: Right.

Vradenburgh: And you felt like that was a time that the college could really use some reinventing?

Lidman: I thought that the things that were unique for the school in the 1970s had run its course. I was really worried about the continuing high rate of attrition. And I just thought students were different. You needed to rethink that whole thing.

Vradenburgh: How were they different?

Lidman: They weren't products of the 1960s. [laughing] They were brought up in a different kind of [world]. Don't forget, Nixon was President through the early '70s. Carter was President for just '76 to '80, and then Reagan was there. [laughing] Many of the students had grown up in a different period of time entirely. They weren't antiwar protesters. They were products of this, I don't know, whatever that period was.

Vradenburgh: That's when I grew up, so, yeah. [laughter]

Lidman: When did you go to Evergreen?

Vradenburgh: I was 20 when I got there, and I was there in '98.

Lidman: It was totally different. Of course, when you were there, Clinton was President. It was already feeling a little bit more hopeful.

Anyway, I just felt like you had to recognize the students were different. They weren't reacting to Brand X University. They weren't all transfers. It just had to be rethought in some ways. I led a strategic planning effort, but it takes a long time to change an institution. I overestimated what I'd be able to accomplish.

I was succeeded by a woman named Barbara Smith, who was really a capable person, but I don't think she a lot of ambition to change things either. I think she just wanted to make what was there better. She was probably more successful than I was because her ambitions were a little narrower. She was really big in diversity, which I wasn't. I didn't even think in those terms. I just looked around and there was a lot of white people there. She really expanded it with the Native American emphasis. She

was there longer than I was. Her idea was to keep Evergreen the way it was but just expand more diversity. I think she was successful in that regard.

Vradenburgh: I want to hear a little bit more about your impression. I know you said these students who were coming in during your time as Provost were different, and the historical context was different, and they weren't activating and protesting. What do you think their interests were? What were they like? Can you describe that?

Lidman: There were always some counterculture people. There has always been. I would say 20 percent are like that. Evergreen's reputation is often based on that 20 percent, but 80 percent of them were just people who wanted to go to a university and get a degree, and for whatever reason, they liked Evergreen, or they were from the geographical area or whatever.

Some of the diversity came from opening the school up to intercollegiate sports. People would come to do sports. I suddenly started seeing Hispanics. Evergreen just needed to be a little bit more open to different kinds of students. I didn't get the sports stuff going. That wasn't my thing at all.

I took over at a time when the school was in crisis because there had been a President who was wildly unpopular named Joe Olander. It took a year or two to just calm things down. I mentioned that there were problem faculty. There faculty who predated upon female students. There were conflicts between faculty. Maybe some of these things went on all the time and I was just unaware of them, in a way.

Vradenburgh: That was part of your role was dealing with all of that?

Lidman: All the conflict and all that stuff. Faculty behavioral problems. I tried dealing with that kind of thing. I brought in the Dispute Resolution Center to tach their 40-hour training on mediation.

The biggest part of a provost's job is developing the curriculum with the deans, hiring faculty. In terms of faculty candidates, I probably interviewed 80 a year. We were still growing, so spending an hour more with different people, that's a big job. And talking about who to be hiring. Then working with the deans on developing the curriculum. The group that you work most closely with is the deans.

The school survived me. I think that was an accomplishment. I think it was stronger. Les Purce had been acting President for a couple years, and then Jane Jervis came in. After a couple years, it was time for me to leave. I actually went and did a Fulbright in Ecuador. I felt they were good people, each for their own period of time, and I supported them. I did whatever I needed to do to support them.

Vradenburgh: You mentioned you led a strategic planning process. What kinds of things came out of that in terms of information you gathered about needs, or goals?

Lidman: I think a large focus was this problem of how to deal with the retention issue. It's been a chronic problem. I think it persists. I think that was it, designing programs, more of an emphasis on a planning perspective at the school. I think those were all big deals for me, just trying to solve these problems. Frankly, it still always bothers me that people come all the way out to Evergreen, and Evergreen doesn't necessarily have what they want. Maybe it's better now. Maybe there are pathways. Supposedly there are pathways.

When I was there it bothered me that we weren't able to provide students the pathway they wanted to do whatever it was they wanted to do. It was too much faculty driven, I thought. This isn't everybody, but some of the faculty thought that what they had to teach was more interesting than what the students needed to learn. I wasn't popular. I was popular when I was a faculty member, I just wasn't popular when I was a Provost.

Vradenburgh: It sounds like you came in at a tumultuous time anyway.

Lidman: I did come into that job at a difficult time. Evergreen's been generally anti-administration. There are faculty who think that they should run the institution and the administrators should be servants to them. But you don't run an organization for tens of millions of state dollars in a haphazard way. It's State money. You've got to be responsible.

I remember one time there was a giveback period. I can't remember but it was '92, something like that. Anyway, there was a period of economic decline and the Governor wanted five percent of the budget back from all these institutions. [laughing] So, I went to the faculty meeting and told them that we needed to make cuts in some things. I can't remember what the specifics were, but it wasn't faculty positions or anything like that. Then at a faculty meeting, somebody said, "Don't take the cut. Don't accept the cut." It's like some thought that we had a bundle of money—the state gave us a bag of money—and that we spent it, and now they wanted the money back.

It was that naivete. They didn't know that it was a State school that the Legislature doled out the money through the Office of Financial Management. The money was doled out to us. We never had a bank account. They didn't give us two years' worth of money on July 1 of the beginning of the fiscal biennium. I just thought that some faculty had been kept from reality somehow. I don't know. I didn't realize how naïve some people were. I don't think people were necessarily public policy experts, but

some things they should have known. An adult would figure it out. I just think some people were overly protected or something.

Vradenburgh: You've been talking a long time. I don't want to wear you out too much.

Lidman: I'm a yacker.

Vradenburgh: Let's see . . .

Lidman: Let me just finish. I came back from Ecuador and I had a sabbatical from Evergreen for part of that year. Then I taught one year in a business program with a woman named Ginny Ingersoll, which was great. That was '95-'96, I think. Then I just took a leave from Evergreen and I went to work in the Governor's office. I'd been known for the work that I did, so I got to work for Governor Lowry on a project to study the Children's Administration of the State. I stayed under Governor Locke and was responsible for the Human Services policy area.

I had to quit Evergreen in '98. I'd had a two-year leave and I wasn't going to go back. I was there over 20 years and that was enough for me. I could have driven home blindfolded from Evergreen I'd been there so long. I just felt it was long enough. I didn't plan to spend my career at one place.

I was in State government for five years. My wife was already teaching in Seattle, so I was able to get a job at Seattle U. I was there 11 years.

Vradenburgh: What did you teach there? Public policy?

Lidman: Yeah, mostly. I was Director of this thing called Institute of Public Service. That had a graduate program in public administration and a non-profit leadership master's program, and it had an undergraduate program in public affairs and an undergraduate program in environmental studies. That was what I was responsible for.

I did that, and then I got to be 67, so in 2011, I retired. Then I became President of the local synagogue, Temple Beth Hatfiloh, for three years. Then the opportunity came back to teach a quarter at a time at Evergreen. I did that for several years.

Vradenburgh: Did you teach in the MPA program?

Lidman: No, I taught with Joe Tougas in a business-oriented program. I taught that for one quarter. Then I taught in an environmental policy program with a natural scientist. I did that for two quarters. That was 2014 fall, 2015 fall and winter I taught. In 2016, I taught a class on the economy and the election. Trump won, oops. Of my 19 students, two supported Trump. I did that one quarter. That was

crazy. Then I did a Fulbright in Mexico from June to December of 2017. That was actually the last time I taught. I taught at a private university there.

Then my wife got sick. I would have maybe gone back to Evergreen to teach one more time, but my wife got lung cancer and died shortly after I got back. She got sick in May. She was for several months earlier going back because to Rochester, NY because her dad was ill. Her dad died in April 2018. Raven got lung cancer in May and died in November. Then I lost interest in teaching and everything. I was gone, so that was that.

Vradenburgh: One question I had was you talked about the beginning of Evergreen as these coordinated studies, where there was three or four faculty and it was over the course of three quarters. What I teach at Evergreen is a quarter of just an elective, two or four credits. Because I don't remember them even having that as an option when I was there. Maybe they did. How do you feel like that's maybe responded to students, or changed the college? How do you think about that shifting?

Lidman: This is just my view. Evergreen faculty were not as responsive to a changing world as it might have been. It took years – too many – for the institution to see that students weren't lasting in programs three quarters, often even two. Evergreen has shifted some in response to students voting with their feet. Students just wanted more options. They wanted to do more things. They wanted to take modules from somebody who's an expert in something. They just didn't want to study with one group of people. It was too annoying or something, I'm not sure what it was.

Vradenburgh: It was a big commitment for a whole year.

Lidman: But students changed, and then Evergreen evolved. It wasn't like Evergreen responded in advance of recognizing what students were going to be like. It was market driven, I would say, in some respects. There's nothing wrong with that. [laughing] I liked it. At least Evergreen was flexible enough to change. Some institutions can't change. They've got the faculty, they're going to teach their classes, and that's going to be it. Evergreen faculty —you've got to say it— they were maybe a bit slow but generally pretty good about changing.

Vradenburgh: Talk a little bit more about that because you did say that it's hard to change institutions. There is a beginning of who you are as an institution and it's hard to push back, which I've noticed in other places I've worked. How is it compared to some of the other [jobs you've had]? Working for big State agencies. We're kind of an institution town, I guess, in a lot of ways. Large institutions with lots of bureaucracy. How would you compare Evergreen's responsiveness and the ability to shift?

Lidman: I taught at Seattle U for 11 years. I liked the faculty. I thought it was a very serious place. I like the Jesuit perspective; I like Jesuit pedagogy. To me, it was very interesting. Seattle U did some things that Evergreen aspired to do, which is public service, social justice, Catholic social teaching from that perspective.

Evergreen wanted to be progressive and do good things and so on, but a lot of faculty never left the campus, a lot of faculty had this academic understanding or the world, but they don't have a practical side necessarily. Many of them had just been academics and they were still academics. There's no shame in that at all—that's true of most universities—but I think Evergreen has aspirations but had neither the money nor the time. Evergreen faculty – many, certainly not all, don't actually practice what they preach in some respects. There were standout faculty. I think of Steve Herman who was a champion of field work. But maybe 10 or 20 percent of the Evergreen faculty found a way to follow their passion off the campus with their students.

Seattle U puts money into things to do social justice-oriented things. Every year, they send groups of faculty to Nicaragua to get a sense of, how does a country like that survive with that kind of poverty? At Seattle U, I did project work for Catholic Relief Services in Honduras about how to take better advantage of donated medical care. At Seattle U, there were a lot of faculty who went to Colombia to study Spanish. SU put their money where their values were. When I was early on in my years at Evergreen, people were in the field. They were doing all kinds of things. I just think there's less of that now. Honestly, I just have that sense. In the early days, it was full of energy. Then things settle down and it becomes an institution, and institutions are hard to change.

Vradenburgh: Did you notice a time when that shift happened? Was it just a gradual shift? Was there a moment?

Lidman: I would say the period of the late '80s and early '90s were pretty different from 15, 20 years before. That's just the way it is. I'm not critical. The world changed. Evergreen was slower to change than it could have been, I think. That was my experience. It's hard to criticize that school.

There are wonderful people there, and I hired a lot of good people when I was the Provost. It's complicated. There's no utopia in higher ed. There isn't anywhere. It's an institution. You have to then figure out how to manage an institution. I was less successful than I would have liked to have been. I didn't accomplish nothing; I just didn't accomplish as much as I would have liked. Some stuff persisted. As they used to say about Rome. A subsequent ruler would erase the face of the previous user and put

their own face on the coinage. Okay, that's what happens in every institution. When you're gone, you're gone. You're not going to find your face on the coins anymore.

Vradenburgh: From your perspective, what do you think the future holds for Evergreen in this moment?

Lidman: I think Evergreen needs to have a President who comes in—they're doing a search now—who is an expert on enrollment policy and can lead the institution back to the numbers that will sustain it. You have small numbers, you don't hire new faculty, everything gets stale. New blood is what revives institutions, I think. You've got to have somebody who can lead them into the Promised Land again. They need somebody who's got that kind of vision.

Vradenburgh: Can you think from those founding years that you feel like are really important now, principles or energies?

Lidman: Just recapturing the energy. That would be the main thing. Bringing faculty in who are open to new ways of doing things. You've got to expand the student numbers because it's a tuition-driven institution. There's no endowment to speak of.

Vradenburgh: It sounds like there's this missing piece, like you said at Seattle University, of not necessarily providing the institutional support for the goals and values around social justice work. That seems like Evergreen really prides itself on, but it's interesting that you bring that up.

Lidman: There's an old saying: no money, no mission. You can talk about values, but you can't do practice them without resources, so the resources have to be there to do the things that you value. No money, no mission. That's the way it is.

Vradenburgh: Do you think there's any connection between that and some of the stuff that happened a couple years with everything around Bret Weinstein?

Lidman: Yeah. As I said, I was in Mexico, or headed to Mexico. I wasn't associated with Evergreen at all at that point. I did look at the Web sites. I did look at all the right-wing crap. But there used to be this social contract that faculty disagreed, but they disagreed agreeably. Something terrible happened in I 2017 or before that people would just take out after one another.

Now, the main protagonists are gone. The faculty member who called Bret Weinstein a racist at a faculty meeting, she's gone, and they're gone. It had a terrible effect on the institution. I only learned about it when I came back. I heard about something happening, I think in May, but I was preparing to

go to Mexico. I wasn't part of it at all. But I would say that the faculty lost respect for one another. You can't run an institution like that where people are at one another's throats.

So, I would say the deans failed, the Provost failed, the faculty failed, the President failed. It was an institutional breakdown, as far as I look at it. But I wasn't here. I don't know how terrible things were. [laughing] I was on my way out of the country. This wasn't a priority for me. I heard about it. I read it in *The Olympian*. And most of the people I worked with are retired, so they knew less than I did maybe. I don't know. As impossible as it seems, yeah.

Vradenburgh: I feel like we've talked a long time. It's almost 3:00.

Lidman: Yeah, I know. I'm shocked.

Vradenburgh: Is there anything that you feel like we didn't touch on that you want to talk about? If there are other things that come up later, we can always talk more at another time.

Lidman: I would say that for a school that was in a small city and a state capital, there's still opportunities for Evergreen to be closer to the community in some ways. I just hope they get faculty that are open to community services, things like that; that there's enough of that history from the earlier period, I just think it should always be a very exciting, cutting-edge place. It still contributes a lot; I just think it could be more innovative again; that it should reinvent itself in some way. That would make me happy. I don't know if it will happen in my lifetime, but I would like Evergreen to be as exciting in the future as it was for me in the past. Anyway, it's been a pleasure talking to you and getting to know you a little bit.

Vradenburgh: I appreciate your time. If anything else comes up that you feel like you want to put down on the record, let me know.

[01:50:36 to end 01:51:36 not transcribed.]