

Lucia Harrison
Interviewed by Susan Fiksdal
The Evergreen State College oral history project
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FINAL

Fiksdal: I'm Susan Fiksdal and I'm here today with Lucia Harrison on Tuesday, September 14, 2021, for an oral history interview. Lucia, I've known you for a long time, so it's a real pleasure to be able to interview you.

Harrison: Thank you.

Fiksdal: The first question is about your childhood and growing up, and the orientation your family had towards education, especially yours, furthering it in college and that sort of thing. We'd like to know a little bit about your parents, whether they were college educated and that sort of thing as well.

Harrison: Okay. I was born in Pasadena, California. My father had a master's degree in public administration, and he was working on civil service reform. Eventually, that brought him to the state of Washington where he transformed the civil service system in the state. Before, it was on the patronage system, so the different departments would shut down during election time, and all the employees had to work for a party, and if their party lost, they lost their jobs.

Fiksdal: About what time was this?

Harrison: The year was 1955? '54?

Fiksdal: That's just amazing.

Harrison: Yeah, so he was the Director of State Personnel, charged with bringing civil service reform. Having equal pay across different departments and standardizing jobs. It was a pretty big movement in the country at the time.

My mother was a housewife. She graduated from UCLA with a BA degree, I think, in sociology. Then she eventually went on to get a master's degree in social work, but not till later. She was active in the League of Women Voters. They used to play bridge. I think that's maybe how she knew your mother.

Fiksdal: The League was the answer to that, the League and the AAUW.

Harrison: AAUW, right. She was active in those sorts of organizations. I grew up in Olympia. First, we lived by the Capitol, and then about a year later, we moved out to Cooper Point, where very few people lived, the Reeves being one family.

Fiksdal: And I will interject here that I was a Reeves.

Harrison: I grew up on Cooper Point, and we stayed until I went to Garfield Elementary, and then Jefferson Junior High. Then in eighth grade, my father lost his job with the State because he wouldn't pay patronage to Rosellini. That was the story we heard, anyway. He went to California and got a job in Sacramento, so we moved to Davis, California, and I was heartbroken to leave Olympia and the bay and just the whole way of life.

Fiksdal: That must have been so hard. Such a different climate there, and moving is hard. You lose your friends.

Harrison: Right, so that was in middle school. But we lived in Davis. There's a university there, and so a lot of my friends' parents were faculty at UC-Davis in the Art Department. I had a strong interest in art, so I was able to take classes at the university as a high school student in art. I remember doing some kinds of bronze casting and all kinds of interesting things.

Fiksdal: Do you think you were alone in that, or were there groups of high school students that were able to do that?

Harrison: No, I think it was more because my best friend's mother worked there or something like that.

Fiksdal: Wow.

Harrison: I kept coming back to Washington to visit your sister and other friends. We also went to Washington State University. They had a music camp, so when we were growing up—I don't know if you remember this—in Olympia, there was a family called the Schlichting's.

Fiksdal: Of course. They're still here.

Harrison: They were really promoting music, and so we all played musical instruments. I played the flute. Washington State University's strategy for recruiting students was to have these summer music camps. You could go to WSU to go to music camp, and live in the dorms, and pretend you were a college student. I think I went two summers, so by the time I graduated from high school in 1967, although I could have gone to the University of California—I didn't know the difference between the University of California and Washington State University in terms of the quality of the education.

In my high school, I was an average student, As and Bs. They did tracking then, so you could either do the blue-collar track or you could do the college prep track.

Fiksdal: Do you mean you were told, and you could choose?

Harrison: Yeah.

Fiksdal: Interesting. We were not told. We were just tracked. [laughter]

Harrison: I objected, so I did both tracks.

Fiksdal: I see.

Harrison: Because I wanted to take shop, and I wanted to learn to be a full-charge bookkeeper. I wanted to learn typing. I wanted to learn some skills. So, I had internships in high school in a fabric store and I learned how to type, how to run a 10-key adding machine, all those sorts of things, so I had both that and the college prep. My high school—my birthday is in August. I don't know if this happened to you, but I went right to school then, so I was the youngest in all my classes.

Fiksdal: Yeah, me, too.

Harrison: I always felt like I was not as smart as the other people because of that. Most of the kids in my college prep classes, their parents were all university professors, so they were like way off the chart.

So, when I was looking at colleges, my parents didn't take me to colleges. My mother thought the reason you go to college is because you want to meet a husband, and you want to be able to have something to do. Because I was an artist, I'd have something to do while my husband was at work. You were supposed to meet a husband, and then you were supposed to be smart enough to carry on with the conversations at whatever parties there would be and you were to manage your husband's career.

Fiksdal: She actually told you that?

Harrison: Yes. Oh, yeah.

Fiksdal: This was in the era, of course, but our parents never said anything like that to us. I wonder if that's why you were interested in also getting some practical information. I did take typing in summer school because my father insisted that I have a skill. But that was the only thing.

Harrison: Yeah. I don't know why I did that. But anyway, I went to Washington State University because I'd been to music camp there, and because it was the '60s and I wanted to get away from my parents.

Fiksdal: So, the system worked. They attracted you.

Harrison: They did. [laughter] I went to Pullman and I was there for two years. I was an art major, and also, I studied psychology. I had a job on campus. I worked in the dining halls. I wasn't a top student in high school but when I went to Pullman, I was in the honors program, because it was a different group of people at the school. I was immediately an honor student after my first semester because I got straight As, which was like, oh, this is interesting. [laughing]

I was in the Art Department at Washington State University, and then in psychology. I worked in the dining halls because the dining halls had a rule that the honor students had to sit at a special table, and I didn't want to do that, so I worked instead.

Rules were really strict. Girls were not allowed to wear pants on campus, except from 2:00 to 4:00 on Saturday. They couldn't be cutoffs. We had a dorm mother who would check us in and out if we were late. We had to clean the bathrooms if we got in trouble. We had little tags you had to turn over when you were in and out. It was very, very strict.

Fiksdal: I don't remember punishments like that, but there must have been.

Harrison: Yeah. I had trouble at Washington State University with sexual harassment from my faculty.

Fiksdal: In art, or in psychology?

Harrison: Both. I can remember it happened right away. It was freshman faculty weekend, so you're there the first time, and I don't know, some old guy wanted me to go out in the woods with him, like a faculty member. Because I had bleached blonde hair. I weighed 114 pounds. I was from California.

Fiksdal: You were targeted.

Harrison: It was terrible. It continued in my classes as well. I always rejected it, but people were not interested in girls' advancement.

I had a job working in psychology, because I didn't know if I wanted to do art or psychology. My job was to do imprinting of chickens. I worked for this professor, and I had to go in with see-in-the-dark glasses, infrared glasses.

Fiksdal: Oh, night vision?

Harrison: Night vision glasses. The chicks would be all hatched, and then I'd mark when they were born, and then I'd put them in this machine that was a cylinder, and there was a ruler, and the ruler had a microphone, and it was the heartbeat of the mother. They would see how close it would get based on the rhythm of the mechanical heart beat.

One time I went in there, and I'd forgotten to turn on the incubators and all the chickens were dead. The faculty member knew they were dead but sent me in there anyway so I would realize what I did. After you raised the chickens, then you had to put the kill sign on them. It was just awful, and I decided I could not be an experimental psychologist.

Also, I wanted to get into upper-division psychology, and I went to see one of my professors and he catcalled down the hall. He said, "Oh, look at this cute, young thing. She wants to be in advanced courses in psychology. Isn't this a riot?" So, these other male faculty came in to see the cute, young thing.

Fiksdal: Oh, my goodness!

Harrison: Then I said to him, “Why don’t you look at your gradebook?” Because I had straight As in psychology. So, I embarrassed him in front of his colleagues. I got to be in the advanced class, but it was stuff like that that would happen all the time.

Fiksdal: It sounds like your faculty were all male.

Harrison: All male except one professor. She was an English professor, and she was also a nun, a former nun, I think, but she was a nun. We had to keep a journal, and she would ask me questions about my journal. I wonder why she’s asking me questions like that? We figured out she was a nun. It was when they no longer wore their habits.

I was involved with the YWCA there. We did sensitivity training and sensitivity retreats. Then we got involved with the farmworkers’ movement at Washington State. Then Martin Luther King was assassinated when I was there. There were 80 black students among 15,000 on campus.

I started having doubts about being there because my professors were not interested in my future. In the Art Department, they wanted me to be the model for the graduate students.

Fiksdal: A live model?

Harrison: Yeah.

Fiksdal: Oh, for heaven’s sake.

Harrison: I became the live model for the graduate students. I think I just became an object rather than a student who was interested in art. I went to the counseling center and the counselor said, “You need to go to a small liberal arts college because they actually know you and care about you. This is a really bad environment for you.”

Fiksdal: That’s very interesting.

Harrison: Yeah, he said, “Get out of here. This is a terrible school”. I had no idea. My parents didn’t know. Even though my mom went to UCLA and my father went to USC, you would think they would know what schools were good, but they really didn’t know.

Fiksdal: No, I don’t think people at the time knew how to share that information, quite frankly.

Harrison: Right. I had a friend who’d gone to Antioch College, so I applied to Antioch and was accepted.

Fiksdal: This was in Ohio?

Harrison: Yes. But then I didn’t send in my \$100 on time, so they said I could go to Antioch Columbia, which was a brand-new experimental college. They recruited 80 students and six faculty. Morris Keaton was in charge of it. He was a famous educator and experimental education person.

Fiksdal: Is that in New York City?

Harrison: No, it was at Columbia, Maryland. At the time, the Rouse Company—they're the company that started the shopping malls all over the country—wanted to create a new town. This town was supposed to solve economic and racial problems.

They created this new town called Columbia, Maryland. It's between D.C. and Baltimore. The idea was to have this utopian town. They wanted to have a university in the town, so they contracted with Antioch College. We were in this old house that used to be on the Underground Railroad, actually, and they recruited 80 students.

From Antioch's point of view, it was the '60s, and liberal arts colleges were trying to recruit minority students to their campuses, but the idea was, why should you make students who live in urban areas come to rural Ohio? Why not take education to the people? So, this was a good fit. They had satellite programs in D.C. and Baltimore, too, like little cluster things. We were 80 students, and we sat in a room for a year, and we built a college. We got a lot of credit in institution-building and governance.

Fiksdal: What do you mean exactly? You helped decide what courses were going to be taught?

Harrison: We did. We all had jobs. Antioch, I don't know if you're familiar with it, but it's a five-year program. You go to school for five years and you do six months a year in class, every other quarter, and six months a year, you're in a co-op job. You get a lot of job experience so you can figure out what you want to do with your life. It's a lot of work/study programs, alternating work/study.

This program was called concurrent work/study, so we all had jobs. My job was to be the editorial administrative assistant to Judson Jerome, who's a poet. He was in charge of designing the Art Department for this new college.

Fiksdal: A poet in charge of the arts.

Harrison: Yes.

Fiksdal: This sounds very typical. At Evergreen, lots of things happened like this. This was 1969 then?

Harrison: This was fall of 1969, about the time Evergreen was starting.

Fiksdal: It was.

Harrison: Judson Jerome was kind of a hippie guy. I can remember him—I'd be on the floor working on something and he would do leapfrogs over the top of me and stuff like that. He was just a weirdo. It was strange.

When we first got there, I think some of the students started the summer before, and they actually lived with the faculty. That's where I met Harry Harrison, who I eventually married. He was

living with the Morris Keaton family. He was the Director of Housing, so he had to find housing for all the students in the community.

Fiksdal: As a student?

Harrison: As a student. We all had these jobs. Then we got together, and we designed the curriculum. It was the '60s, and at another campus of Antioch—that's where Harry was a student—they had had a black dorm. All the black students rejected white people and they created their own dormitory, and then Antioch got sued by the federal government for discrimination against white people not being able to live in the black dorm, or something like that. I'm not sure of the details.

Fiksdal: Wow! [laughing]

Harrison: It was like a revolution on campus, so he was a revolutionary. He was studying economics. He had a big afro, and he was going to start the Center for the Study of Basic Human Problems in D.C. You either had to be a person of color or a poor person—like first-generation college student coming from a poor family—to be involved in the program he was in. The way we met was I was in charge of writing the catalog for the college, so I had to interview him about what he was doing. That's how we met.

Fiksdal: That's an extraordinary story.

Harrison: Yeah. We had to hire the faculty. We had to plan everything. After a year of institution building and governance, I think I was ready to go back to school. Plus, my parents had disowned me because I was living with Harry Harrison, who is African American.

I didn't have any money to pay tuition, so the college, they were really good about it. I think they helped me get student loans or whatever. We did co-op jobs, so Harry had one in Los Angeles. I decided that I wanted to go into arts administration. We moved to Yellow Springs, and we lived on campus in the married student housing.

Fiksdal: This was where Antioch was?

Harrison: Yeah. Because I had done arts administration in institution building and governance, I thought I needed more management skills, so I studied accounting and management—business administration—at Antioch. I decided, well, I could become an accountant. I had to find things to do to make money, so I worked parttime as a fulltime, full charge bookkeeper for an accounting firm. That was one of my co-op jobs. One summer we went to Mexico for the summer. They allowed you to do international travel. We went to Europe for one of the summers.

Fiksdal: But somehow, you had money to do all of that. It's because you were always working.

Harrison: I was always working, yeah. Eventually, there was an uprising on campus. I think I graduated, and Jesse Jackson was our keynote speaker for our graduation. [laughing] It was really crazy.

But the students had a protest because they felt that poor students were being saddled with debt, and only promised one year of college, so they did a protest to be able to say, "You need to guarantee financial aid for all four years. It's not fair."

Then they shut down the college, and the college was closed for 13 weeks. Because of this uprising, and because Antioch started creating these satellite campuses everywhere, they got into financial trouble.

Fiksdal: They had gotten too big.

Harrison: They had gotten too dispersed, so that's why they got into trouble financially. Then the student protests. Nobody wants to send their kids to a college that's closed for 13 weeks.

Fiksdal: No.

Harrison: The state police had to come and open the college. At that time, I had graduated. Harry was a year behind me, so he still had another year. I worked in the bursar's department. Then, when the accounting faculty got sick, I think I taught accounting. [laughter]

Then we moved to Madison, Wisconsin, because Harry got accepted to medical school there. I had to find a job. At that time, there were no careers in computer science. It was like some obscure thing in the math department. The university was hiring programmer analysts that they said they would train, and because I had this background in business, they hired me. It's got a design element, which fit into my art idea.

Fiksdal: Mathematics.

Harrison: Yeah.

Fiksdal: Let me ask, were most of the people there women that they hired?

Harrison: Yes, they hired all women. Programmer analysts were women. Then the middle management was all male and the upper management was all male. That's changed now. I think it's all male now.

Fiksdal: Programming has changed, too.

Harrison: Yeah. It was all women, so they sent me to IBM school, and we learned how to program in COBOL. The university had, I think, 10 different colleges, and each college had their own registrar and all their own rules about everything. All the grade reporting was done by hand. If they had to change a grade, they had these erasers, where they'd have to go in and physically erase the grade.

Fiksdal: It's hard to imagine now, isn't it?

Harrison: Yeah. My job was to work on a team that designed the system to put it all online, and to get all those departments—the School of Nursing, School of Medicine, School of Architecture—all on the same page, and all integrated. I was on a design team that did that while Harry was in medical school, so I worked.

Medical school is really time consuming, so I had the opportunity to go to graduate school. I thought I would go into public administration. It was in my family. By then, my mom had become a social worker, and she then became an administrator for the State of California for Medicare programs. She was in charge of Medicare and Medicaid for LA County distributing those funds.

Fiksdal: Isn't that amazing that someone who went to school later and got a master's degree could rise to that occasion?

Harrison: After my father left Washington State, he got a job working for the state of California. At that time, because of civil rights, they were rewriting all the exams, because the exams discriminated against people of color. My dad's job was to figure out how to match an exam to the requirements of a job and rewrite all exams. Later on, he recruited psychiatrists for state mental institutions. He did that while I was in high school.

Fiksdal: Meanwhile, all this time that you're working and in Madison and going to graduate school, your parents are still unhappy with you because you're not married?

Harrison: We reconciled before I went to Madison. My siblings ganged up on them. Harry had a co-op job in Los Angeles, which is where my grandmother lived.

I worked at a candy store and as a waitress, just trying to make ends meet, and I decided I would apply to the arts management master's program at UCLA, because I was taking some extension courses there in arts management, but I didn't have a BA degree. I said, "Look, I have all this experience." Blah. Blah. Blah. "It's good enough. Let me in." And they said, "You need to finish your BA degree and come in through the front door instead of waving a flag." That's what they told me.

Fiksdal: You had a lot of chutzpah. [laughing]

Harrison: I had tried to get around getting the BA degree, but that didn't work. I eventually finished the BA degree at Antioch.

In Madison, Wisconsin, I was a med student's wife, and we had a group that were African American medical students who faced a lot of discrimination. Harry was one of the first 10 to ever graduate in medical school from the University of Wisconsin.

Fiksdal: What year do you think that was?

Harrison: That was 1974. They would think he was the orderly. The African-American med students faced a lot of problems, so they had us like a support group that I was part of.

At the University of Wisconsin-Madison, I had a job as a computer programmer analyst. Then, for some reason, there was an effort to organize a union, or there were problems in the organization, so I started organizing lunches with the employees saying, "Okay, everybody, what's right with this organization? What's wrong with this organization? Let's try to fix it."

Then I got recognized by the management as someone who should be promoted [laughing] before she got into big trouble. I got promoted and eventually became the associate director of the data processing center, or the administrative data processing. The reason I got that job was because they changed who the department reported to, and the director had to report to a woman, and he quit rather than to work for a woman. The associate director got his job, and then I was brought in as the interim associate director.

I thought I wanted to be in educational administration because my idea was—this was my career plan—that since I had done this institution building and governance and all that, I should run a college, because colleges are the social mobility engine for poor people. At that time also, being an artist was called navel gazing. If you were an artist, then you were privileged, and that was not a way to spend your time, so I went towards the social justice part of becoming an administrator.

But being an administrator in a computer facility, means you are working for other people. You're the servants to the different departments. You're not creating special programs for needy students.

Fiksdal: You're doing things that they require.

Harrison: Yeah. I wanted to be in a leadership position, so I set my sites on becoming a college president. I thought the way to get there was to get a degree in higher education administration. To get into that program, I had to get my master's degree first. To get that, I had to do another year of political science. I finished a year of political science, and then I was admitted to the master's and eventually the PhD program, while I was working at the computer facility.

Fiksdal: My gawd. You were working fulltime or parttime?

Harrison: Fulltime. I was in school at night. Because all those programs that are for professionals who all work during the day . . .

Fiksdal: . . . they had them then.

Harrison: Yeah, so all educational administrators—they had K-12, and then they had the higher ed, so I was in the higher ed program.

Fiksdal: Probably other students already had jobs in higher ed.

Harrison: They did. These were people who wanted to become—I found at later—presidents of community colleges, and vice presidents for administration. I didn't realize that you had to be a faculty member, and then a dean, and move up that way. I didn't have that knowledge.

To get the doctorate, my dissertation was about divesting in corporations doing business in South Africa, because apartheid was a big deal then. The University of Wisconsin decided to divest. That was controversial because it's public funds, and you're not supposed to get involved in politics with the retirement money of all the state employees and all of the money of the university. It needs to be invested in the thing that will get the highest return, so how are they able to divest? That was my dissertation question.

I interviewed the trustees and found out that there was some law in the state that stated they were not allowed to invest in organizations that discriminate based on race, so they were able to get around the law.

Fiksdal: You were studying how they were going to do it?

Harrison: Yeah, how they did it.

Fiksdal: It's almost a little historical study, except it had just happened.

Harrison: Right. It was all about South African divestiture and organizational theory and behavior, which became my interest. How do organizations do human resources, how do they recruit people, how do they motivate employees?

Fiksdal: Your PhD was in?

Harrison: Higher education administration with an emphasis in the human resource organizational aspect.

Fiksdal: Oh, I didn't know that.

Harrison: That's what my PhD was in, so when I get out, I realized, that's a PhD to be a school superintendent. That's not what I want to do.

Here I am. I haven't graduated yet. Harry graduates from medical school, so then we have to move to go to his internship. I've done all my coursework except for the dissertation, so I moved with him to San Diego, where he did his internship and residency and post-doctoral fellowship.

I moved to San Diego, and we decided, because he was going to get paid for the first time in 13 years that I could have a baby. We decided to get pregnant. Here I am with this brand-new job, associate director of the administrative data processing and pregnant, and I had to move with my husband to California. We moved to California, and I'm thinking, well, I'll just get a job. I'll work on my

dissertation, and then I'll get a job to be the administrative assistant to a dean or something like that. We moved there, and I think I was eight months pregnant. Big pregnant. I went to the University of California.

Fiksdal: You tried to get a job when you were super pregnant? [laughing]

Harrison: Yes, it didn't occur to me that they wouldn't want to hire someone. Because my idea was you had the baby, you're home for six weeks, and then you're a professional. I walk into this interview. I think it was associate dean—I don't know, some kind of administrative job—at the University of California-San Diego. They just almost passed out. [laughter] Needless to say, I didn't get the job.

Fiksdal: And they were men probably also.

Harrison: Oh, they were. I thought, oh, shit, you're not supposed to do that. [laughter] The way I earned money throughout my career was to do temporary employment—temp agencies—because I was a full charge bookkeeper, and I could type, those jobs paid the highest wages. I was pregnant, and I went to a temp agency, and I got a job for this collegiate publishing company.

They published—you know when professors write up their notes, and then they sell their notes through Kinko's or whatever? Anyway, they published professor's notes and supplemental materials. That's what they did. So, I went to work. I told them I was a secretary, because they never would have wanted me. They eventually hired me, and I helped them with some of their computing issues.

Fiksdal: That was work you could do at home?

Harrison: No, I went to work. Then I had the baby. Then I was home. Since it was temporary, I could quit. I think after a while, I think I went back to work for them. I don't remember.

Fiksdal: Maybe we should take a little break here.

[recording stopped]

Okay, so we had a pause. We're coming back. This is still Lucia Harrison and Susan Fiksdal. I want to pick up where you left off in San Diego. You were pregnant. You had quit your temp job, and you had a baby.

Harrison: I started saying, "I've had a baby. I've been home for a few months, and it's time to get an academic job teaching," so I set about applying for academic jobs. I got an interview at Stanford. At that time, I was still writing my dissertation. My idea for the dissertation was to create kind of a higher education interactive computer game, where you could learn. You could play different roles in a college. It would be simulated. And you could play different roles in the college, and then there would come the decisions. It was all about decision-making.

I applied for this job at Stanford, and I thought it was a job about decision-making in organizations, and organizational theory and behavior, which is what my background was. Well, it wasn't. It was on decision theory and statistics and all of that.

I go for the interview. I find out my advisor wrote a letter of recommendation saying, "You'd better talk to her husband to find out what her husband is going to do, because that would affect whether or not she could come to your school."

Fiksdal: Oh, gosh.

Harrison: Those were those days. I go to the job interview. I give my lecture on South Africa divestiture. Then I go to the Statistics Department because that's where decision theory is. I really didn't know anything about this, so it was obvious that I was not the candidate they thought I was. I didn't get the job, and they said if they had one in the future in this area, they would love to have me come back. The students were all upset because I was doing socially relevant work, and they wanted to hire me. Anyway, so I didn't get the job.

Somehow, I got connected to San Diego State University. I went there and I applied for a job in their Business Department. I didn't get that job, but in the Public Administration Department, there was a guy there who studied the development of information systems in organizations, and he was really interested in me, so I got a job as a temporary faculty member. Like if somebody goes on sabbatical—what do you call them? Replacements?

Fiksdal: I don't know. We don't have it at Evergreen. Visitor?

Harrison: Visiting. I was a visitor. I was a visitor in the Public Administration Department for two years while Harry was an intern and resident. I did have a baby and her name is Aisha Harrison.

I taught public administration. I did the human resources part of public administration. Then I got involved with this group that studied information systems in government and how they developed in different countries and different places. So, I developed that connection.

I was teaching public administration. Aisha was in daycare. I had a bout with hepatitis at that time. We went to Mexico on vacation, and I got hepatitis, so I was really sick, and I had to go for a reduced time for one quarter because of it. I was jaundiced. It was not the bad kind that stays with you throughout your life, but a temporary kind, so I had this baby nursing, with hepatitis, teaching. Like a nightmare. [chuckles] I think it was my first quarter teaching. I just got the job and then I came down with hepatitis. They were very nice about it, and I eventually got the job.

I won all kinds of awards for teaching excellence there. But because I was temporary, there was no support. I wanted to take our students to the Public Administration Conference by train. They wouldn't even pay for my ticket to go to Los Angeles.

Fiksdal: It was such a short distance.

Harrison: The department chair, he had his chair on a platform, so when you went in his office, his chair was raised on a platform, and you were down below. I was just a peon.

Fiksdal: Was he a short man?

Harrison: I don't know.

Fiksdal: What an odd thing.

Harrison: I know. I had five 8:00 a.m. classes. They could really get to you. Another interesting thing is I did special projects with students and one student had his senior thesis. It was about decision-making in universities. There was some ruckus on campus. He got involved in all of that. At that time, I was really interested in kind of like what we're doing now [the oral history project], qualitative research, rather than the quantitative research approach to questions, so I was teaching him how to do interviews—the President agreed to be interviewed by him—and confidentiality and all of those things.

This student sent the transcript of the interviews to all the Board of Trustees, to the entire University of California system. Oh, I got in big trouble, but I still kept my job. Harry was about to graduate, and it was going to be my turn, so I saw this job at The Evergreen State College and applied for the job. At that time, there was an opening in Vancouver, Washington. Evergreen had a satellite campus there. They had a little program in management. They had Bill Bruner, who was the economist, and they needed someone to do the human resources part, so I got hired.

Fiksdal: What year was that?

Harrison: 1981. They had a program called Management in the Public Interest. It was at night. It was in an old house on Officers' Row in Vancouver. We would have our faculty seminars around the kitchen table.

Fiksdal: Officer's Row. You mean it was at a fort?

Harrison: It was at a fort.

Fiksdal: Fort Vancouver?

Harrison: Fort Vancouver, with officers' housing. It was an old house with multiple stories. Once a week or every two weeks, Barbara Smith would come down.

Fiksdal: She was, at the time, a dean or the provost?

Harrison: I think she was a dean. Actually, my interview to get hired was in Olympia, and I think she met me—I don't know how I got there, flight or whatever—in a Dashiki. I remember that. [laughter] They were really interested because I'd been involved in this Antioch experiment.

Fiksdal: Well, yeah.

Harrison: I could do management, and she was all about professional programs at Evergreen.

Fiksdal: Her degree was in management.

Harrison: Yeah, and so she thought I'd just be a really great fit.

Fiksdal: Do you remember that interview very much? I know we did two days.

Harrison: I do remember the interview.

Fiksdal: I came to at least your public talk, I remember.

Harrison: Oh, you do?

Fiksdal: Yeah.

Harrison: Was it on South Africa? What was it on?

Fiksdal: I don't remember what it was on. I was just stunned that you had applied and that you were a viable candidate, because I just knew you from my youth. You were my sister's best friend.

Harrison: Right. All I remember is that Phil Harding was on the committee, and he asked a question about preparation for the future, what we needed to do as a liberal arts institution. All I could think about was space travel, and how people were going to be—I was thinking way in the future, they're going to be living in these space stations and close quarters. And how are we going to foster human development and interpersonal relationships and cross-cultural communication in these closed, confined spaces? I don't know, but it wasn't what they were expecting. [laughter]

Fiksdal: I think there was a television show, *The Jetsons*, which probably none of us watched, but it was around.

Harrison: I did watch. [laughing] I loved that program. Anyway, we all thought that we were going to be like them.

Fiksdal: Absolutely. We all believed that.

Harrison: And we had the World's Fair in Seattle. We all thought this was going to be our sci-fi future.

Then I came to Evergreen in Vancouver. At that time, Harry still was working in San Diego. He had another year to finish, so we were working in different locations.

Fiksdal: That must have been just extremely difficult.

Harrison: It was very difficult.

Fiksdal: You were trying to adjust. Aisha was a child.

Harrison: She was three.

Fiksdal: And she didn't understand why her father wasn't around.

Harrison: Yeah, so it was difficult.

Fiksdal: And you weren't making that much money. Could you see each other that often?

Harrison: Once a month. Eventually, he got a job at the University of Oregon. He did a post-doctorate in neonatology. He was trained by this world-famous neonatologist, so he was in high demand. The University of Oregon hired him in their neonatal area to work with them. He eventually moved to Vancouver.

Vancouver was also a very white community, so then we started house sitting in Portland for faculty at Lewis and Clark, who would go away for a year. We moved into the city, which was a little bit better. But at the University of Oregon, they wanted him to do some surgeries. He's not a neonatal surgeon. He was a neonatal physician, and they asked him to do some things he thought was unethical to do, so he quit and got a job in Alaska. Working with another guy, they designed the neonatal system for the state of Alaska, and he worked up there.

Fiksdal: There couldn't have been very many African American physicians there.

Harrison: No. It's such a big place. I don't know if you've ever been to Alaska, but it's just vast. They would have women in little villages all around having preemies. They're so tiny. How do you take care of a preemie? So, he went around and educated people. They would identify the high-risk mothers and then fly them into Anchorage so they could have their babies there. They developed this whole network.

So, for the rest of our marriage, he was in Alaska. He would work two weeks and then he was off 10 days. I had Aisha in Portland, and then he would come home for 10 days and then go back.

Fiksdal: At the time, did you feel that this was a good solution?

Harrison: It was difficult, and eventually, the marriage failed because of the distance. There may be other reasons, too.

Fiksdal: But each of you wanted your jobs where you were apart.

Harrison: Right. He loved what he was doing. I loved what I was doing. I would go up in the summer, because I didn't teach in the summer. Evergreen is such an intense place that it's hard to teach in the summer, too, and have any energy for the fall, so I just said, no. By then, he was earning money, so I didn't need to teach in the summer. Things just fell apart. He developed another life up there, other interests, and it just couldn't sustain itself. We ended up getting a divorce when Aisha was eight.

What did I teach in Vancouver? That's what you wanted to talk about.

Fiksdal: Yeah.

Harrison: I taught Management in the Public Interest. It was a night program for working adults. I taught with Bill Bruner. David Paulsen came down. We taught together. Then Charles McCann came.

Fiksdal: Oh, I didn't know he came.

Harrison: Yeah, he came down for a quarter and we taught together.

Fiksdal: That must have been just extraordinary.

Harrison: It was extraordinary.

Fiksdal: Charles McCann, of course, for those of you who are listening, was the first President of the college.

Harrison: Yeah. It was very funny because at that time, I was really into intercultural communication, as you can imagine. Marrying Harry, being in the Baltimore and D.C., I just had my eyes opened to racial discrimination. We would go to a restaurant, and they wouldn't serve us. He was constantly being stopped by the police. People thought I was being kidnapped. They would check the back of our car to make sure whatever we had in the backseat we hadn't stolen.

I was introduced to the kind of humiliation that African American people experience, and still experience, but it was worse then, so I was really into the question, how does this work? I went to some workshops on intercultural communication, so I was really trying to understand.

There was this game called BAFA BAFA. In this game—I don't know if you're familiar with it—it's a simulation in the classroom, so you divide the class randomly in half. Half are alphas and the other ones are betas or something like that. One culture likes to acquire things, and they play this game, and they want to win. The other culture is one where there's a certain greeting, like you have to hug each other and say, "How's your grandfather?" You go through all of these human relations.

Then they send anthropologists to study each other, and then report back about how terrible the other group is. These are students in the same classroom, and it shows how quickly prejudices can develop. They end up hating each other.

Fiksdal: How long did this game last?

Harrison: It was a day's simulation.

Fiksdal: One day simulation?

Harrison: Yeah, it was fast.

Fiksdal: Wow. What happened after that? Did you have to repair?

Harrison: No. They got the message that we quickly judge people based on our own standards.

Fiksdal: That's really fast.

Harrison: It's a very fun game. Charles McCann, he's very, I don't know, kind of proper. I didn't know him at all. We're going to start the quarter by playing this BAFA BAFA game. I'd sent him the rules. There's a lot of hugging, so I just didn't know what was going to happen.

Fiksdal: He was an extreme introvert.

Harrison: He was an extreme introvert, yes. He walks in the room and I say, "We're going to start out with this thing," and he just puts his arms around me and he goes, "How's your grandfather?" He works through the whole routine on what he's going to have to do to play this game. That was really cool.

Fiksdal: That's amazing. I'm just so surprised he could even do it. I'll just tell you a brief story about him. As President, he would have parties at his house—not very often—for faculty. I went to one and Allen went, too. At the end of the party, we were leaving, and Allen said, "I met this guy who was hiding behind this potted plant, and we talked." I turned around and I said, "Just point him out," and it was Charles. [laughter]

Harrison: Yeah, he was very shy, but we bonded. We really bonded. He was a real help. At that time, I was teaching Human Resource Management, but at Evergreen, you need to teach a lot of things.

Fiksdal: Yes.

Harrison: You're going to teach writing, you have to teach all these things, so Barbara Smith—the deans were really active at that time in developing the faculty.

Fiksdal: Well, Barbara was.

Harrison: Barbara was.

Fiksdal: That was her major focus. Faculty development. It was wonderful.

Harrison: There are certain things in the culture. You have to have a faculty seminar. There were certain things you did as a team to develop yourself intellectually.

Fiksdal: And faculty evaluations.

Harrison: You did faculty evaluations and all those things. She got a grant for Writing Across the Curriculum, and she sent Thad Curtz down to Vancouver to help me learn how to teach writing. Thad would sit in on my classes. I would evaluate the papers and write all over them, and he would interview the students to see, when you read her feedback, what did you learn?

Fiksdal: Oh, I needed that my whole life there. [laughing]

Harrison: He said, "What you're doing isn't effective. Correcting everything and all that, you just aren't getting it," and he showed me better ways to teach writing. Less time consuming on my part, but also, having more face-to-face discussions.

Fiksdal: Less worry about grammar.

Harrison: Yeah. Just focus on the bigger issues first and things like that. He helped me a lot. But Barbara Smith would come every week, every two weeks, she came down there to visit us and to try to help us feel like we were part of the college.

Fiksdal: Did you go to Evergreen at the Olympia Campus for events?

Harrison: We went to the faculty retreat.

Fiksdal: But that was just once a year.

Harrison: Then we used to have these women's retreats, too. Remember them?

Fiksdal: Yeah, of course. I went to those.

Harrison: They would have the women faculty and staff go on those.

Fiksdal: But those were actual retreats. You didn't go to weekly meetings or anything like that?

Harrison: No. We had no contact. Since I had a background in information systems, I wanted the students in management to have some understanding of the parts of a computer, or how files were stored. They had these big machines. What were they called? They were big and heavy.

John Cushing had developed this computerized program for Introduction to Computers or something like that. I thought this would be perfect for students in Vancouver, so I talked the department into bringing those big, old machines that they were getting rid of down to Vancouver and set up a computer lab—I think they were called Deck Writers. So we could set up some kind of system to communicate and talk online to see this class.

Fiksdal: My gosh, that was so advanced.

Harrison: Yes, it was.

Fiksdal: Yes.

Harrison: One would always fail, so one day, I don't know whether it was Bill or Virginia Darney decided—I said, "The hell with them! If they're not going to support us, I'm driving this thing up to Olympia myself and get them to fix it." We carried this machine down the stairs and that's when I had a back injury. I had a ruptured disc, so I was the first faculty industrial accident. [laughing] I was out for three months, I think, and then I eventually had surgery. Then I came back, and I was fine, but it was terrible.

Fiksdal: Was the discussion then about what you felt you had to do, and how you needed to be better supported? Or did that just go away?

Harrison: That just went away.

Fiksdal: Because you were just in Vancouver, they could ignore you.

Harrison: Right.

Fiksdal: At the time, John Cushing was in charge of computing at Evergreen.

Harrison: Right.

Fiksdal: He wasn't a faculty member.

Harrison: Oh, that's right.

Fiksdal: That was about what year?

Harrison: That was 1982, I think.

Fiksdal: That's so early. I don't remember when personal computers . . .

Harrison: We didn't have personal computers.

Fiksdal: No, they weren't until—I got a Kaypro personal computer to write my dissertation, and it was one of the earliest ones. That wasn't until '84 or '85. I don't remember when I got it.

Harrison: This was early.

Fiksdal: Yes, that's really early.

Harrison: Yeah. I taught Management in the Public Interest with Bill Bruner, David Paulsen, and Charles McCann. The way they were going to get us integrated is to send an Olympia faculty member down, and then they had the library support, which was Frank . . .

Fiksdal: I can't think of his last name either right now.

Harrison: But he would drive books back and forth, trying to help us feel like we were part of the college. We were part of the culture of the college because we went to retreats, we learned, we read all the founding father books. [chuckles] We were really inculcated into the culture of the college and all the rituals that we needed to do. However, we were sort of the stepchild to the main campus.

Fiksdal: The reason that Barbara wanted to start that satellite campus in Vancouver was because she was afraid that WSU was going to do it, and they did.

Harrison: Eventually.

Fiksdal: How many years were you there?

Harrison: I was there . . . let's see . . . I was there two years. The other class I taught there was with Virginia Darney, and it was on utopian communities. It was really fun.

Fiksdal: Especially since you had experience with one. [laughter]

Harrison: We went to Rajneeshpuram and we took the students on a tour.

Fiksdal: You need to explain that a little bit.

Harrison: Rajneeshpuram. Okay. There was this Rajneesh guy and he convinced—

Fiksdal: He's a cult leader.

Harrison: He's a cult leader, and he convinced a lot of people—thousands of people—to join his cult. He purchased land in eastern Oregon and was going to set up this utopian community. We studied utopias, and Washington State has a number of utopian communities that were started here along Puget Sound.

We were reading *Utopian Communities of Puget Sound*. What are the issues involved? What kinds of skills do people need to have? Etcetera. Because it's Evergreen, you can get the vans and take the students on fieldtrips. I don't even know if we took the vans or whether we all went in private cars. I'm not sure how we got there, but we made an appointment to go to Rajneeshpuram. We were just flabbergasted. In Vancouver, the students are quite conservative. There were people wearing crosses and holding up crosses.

Fiksdal: Wait a minute. There?

Harrison: Our students.

Fiksdal: They were worried!

Harrison: They were worried because the people who lived there—

Fiksdal: These were older students who are working.

Harrison: Yes.

Fiksdal: You must have gone on a weekend.

Harrison: We probably did.

Fiksdal: This is just so interesting. They took their crosses to protect themselves. Amazing.

Harrison: Yeah, to protect themselves. In Rajneeshpuram, everyone wears the colors of the sun, so they all wore red and yellow and orange.

We're going in thinking it's going to be some kind of a hippie commune. We go in and there are guards at the gate, and we go past the runway where the jets airplanes were parked, and we get a tour of this amazing place. It was amazing. They had huge buildings where people ate communally. They lived in these houses that they built. Nobody did housework. They had different chores you did, so there was someone who did housekeeping for a time.

Fiksdal: Sounds like Antioch. [laughing]

Harrison: They had all these really interesting, sophisticated—they had electricity and running water. It was in a desert, but they had this huge irrigation system. They were vegetarians growing great vegetables. We ate a meal there. It was unbelievable.

Fiksdal: How many people were there?

Harrison: Probably 1,000. It was big. It was big. They had their own fleet of airplanes. It was not a small operation.

Fiksdal: Well-funded.

Harrison: It was well-funded. At 2:00 every afternoon, I guess the Rajneesh gets in his Rolls Royce, and he drives through, and then everybody pays homage to him, so we got to witness that. Oh, it was really amazing. We were like, oh, my goodness.

Because we saw all this egalitarianism. Women and men's work wasn't divided the same way. They did childcare differently. We were thinking, wow, this is pretty cool. Until this guy drives through.

Fiksdal: Until he sets himself up as a god, kind of like your department chair. It was a podium chair.
[laughter]

Harrison: That was really probably the highlight of teaching in Vancouver.

Fiksdal: Fabulous.

Harrison: It was really fun teaching with Virginia.

Fiksdal: Then we must have closed the campus?

Harrison: No. The campus was closed two years later, I think. The master's in public administration has always had a staffing problem, so they needed someone to teach Organizational Theory and Behavior in Olympia, so they opened a position and I applied for it. Because I grew up in Olympia, the idea of living in Olympia was a dream to me. I thought that would be wonderful. I applied and I got the job.

For 10 years—1983 to 1993—I taught in the MPA program. I taught with Ken Dolbeare, Dan Leahy, Peter Bohmer, Cam Stivers, Bill Arney, Zahid Shariff, Cheryl King.

The MPA program was at night. At that time, in my personal life, Harry was still doing his regular thing. He'd be in Alaska for two weeks, home for 10 days. We were divorced by then and he bought another house in Olympia, and Aisha would move houses. That's how we did it.

It worked out pretty well because 10 days a month, I could really concentrate on my work. The other two weeks, I had to hire babysitters at night, so I hired Evergreen students to get her dinner and I'd be home late at night. But I had time during the day when she was in school. I tried, as a single parent, to keep things together.

One of the things that happened early on, though, when we moved to Olympia, there was a person who was robbing jewelry stores up and down I-5 called "the I-5 bandit." There was an alert put out for this I-5 bandit, and the person was African American, and Harry happened to be the first African American man to walk into the Capital Mall after this alert goes out. Here he is, a doctor, a neonatologist. He's surrounded by police and accused of being the I-5 diamond bandit.

Fiksdal: Oh, my gawd.

Harrison: It was really terrible. We had to call the Chief of Police.

Fiksdal: It's extreme prejudice. It's unbelievable.

Harrison: Yeah, it was bad.

Fiksdal: That they just accused him.

Harrison: Yes. He's innocently in the mall.

Fiksdal: Of course. Did he sue the mall?

Harrison: No, he didn't sue them. We talked to the President of the college—I can't remember who the President was at the time—and they expressed their sympathy for the kinds of things we were facing. So, he didn't feel very welcome in Olympia.

Fiksdal: No.

Harrison: He wanted to move to Hawaii, but I couldn't get a teaching job in Hawaii, so that never happened. From '83 to '93, I taught in the MPA program. It's divided up into different quarters, so I taught the foundations program. Then I'd do the human resources, and in the spring, we would do student theses or something like that.

I got to teach with a lot of really interesting people. Because Evergreen was in the state capital, the MPA program was designed to help state employees with social mobility. We took people who were secretaries and we turned them into high-level managers in state government. We took a guy who worked on a fishing boat in Alaska, whose back gave out. He became the director of recruiting personnel for the State of Washington. The directors of the emergency alert program, they all went through this MPA program. It was really a great program.

Fiksdal: That was another thing Barbara Smith talked about was how to improve the image of Evergreen. In the '80s, that was when we still had legislators who wanted to close us down because it cost them money for this crazy college to exist. I think getting people in high places—in the Legislature, in State government—that really helped us.

Harrison: Right. In the MPA program, we would bring in—Ken was a wonderful professor. He knew all the heads of all the agencies. We had special four-credit classes, and he would convince them to come and teach. So, they were teaching in the MPA program, and I think one of our Congressmen—

Fiksdal: Karen Fraser.

Harrison: Karen Fraser went through the MPA program and so did Denny Heck. Eventually, Denny Heck taught in the MPA program.

Fiksdal: So did Karen Fraser.

Harrison: It's a really good community outreach. We had a lot of internships. And because I'd done all those internships with Antioch, I was really familiar with cooperative education. On the main campus, there used to be a department—I think Barbara Cooley worked there.

Fiksdal: Yes, that's right.

Harrison: There was an Office of Cooperative Education, and we really pushed internships, which I think are a real way to help students get practical experience and figure out what they want to do. It's a very important thing, which has been lost.

Fiksdal: Oh, it's lost?

Harrison: Oh, yeah. We don't have that anymore.

Fiksdal: I didn't know that. I'm very surprised, because since the very beginning, we had that idea, probably borrowed from Antioch.

Harrison: It went out with some budget cut. I don't know. Anyway, I taught in the MPA program. I was also on the Kobe exchange faculty. You did that, too, right?

Fiksdal: Yeah, I was also the dean in charge of it for quite a while.

Harrison: Oh, that's right. I went to Kobe in 1986 and taught American Culture and Management there, which was really a wonderful experience. Because at that time, Japanese management was all the rage, but Japanese companies were getting in trouble for discrimination against women and people who were not Japanese.

Fiksdal: I think even Koreans living in Japan could not work.

Harrison: Oh, yeah.

Fiksdal: Or could not rise in a company.

Harrison: Right. They had no concept of equal rights or civil rights, so that's what my class focused on, the culture, and how to run a business in this culture.

Fiksdal: Did Aisha go with you?

Harrison: She did.

Fiksdal: What was that like living there for a semester?

Harrison: Japan is a very racist country.

Fiksdal: And Aisha is mixed race.

Harrison: She's mixed race, and at that time, I was still married to Harry, so we decided before we applied for it, we would go for the summer. I don't know how Harry did this, but we enrolled at the Jesuit University in Tokyo. The name escapes me. They were trying to recover from their bad reputation in World War II, so they had the summer program where they took leaders—young leaders

from every country they had tried to take over during World War II—to come to this university in Tokyo and take classes in Japanese language, in Japanese management, and all these different things to try to improve their reputation.

Fiksdal: Was it free to go?

Harrison: It was free. They housed the people. They fed them. Sophia University, that's the name of it. Somehow, Harry and I got accepted to Sophia University. [laughing] We alternated who took a class when. We lived in this little room in Tokyo.

We loved it there. He didn't have any problems, so we decided, okay, let's do it for the Kobe exchange, so we went on the Kobe exchange, and that was really great. We lived on campus in the faculty housing. This was the old campus.

They didn't allow kids in the buildings. Aisha was four or five years old. She couldn't go to kindergarten there because they didn't want foreign children in the school, so she went to a special kindergarten for foreign children, and children of diplomats. She was the only native English speaker in that school, so she could pronounce everything and nobody else could.

Fiksdal: Were they teaching in English?

Harrison: They were teaching in English.

Fiksdal: It must have been an international school.

Harrison: It was an international school. She went to the international school. Then Harry would come for the 10 days a month that he was off.

Fiksdal: He was still in Alaska? [laughing]

Harrison: Yeah. Professor Mitsui was our host, and since I was interested in Japanese management and information systems, he got me interviews with all these different types of companies. I got to go to Toyota and walk through the plant and see how their just-in-time management system worked, and then learn about their human resource management practices, so I had interviews and I asked questions.

Then we went to this company. It was an iron chain company in this little town, and they were a cooperative. They made chains, like car chains, chains on boats, things like that. There were these little companies. There may be two or three people and they worked in open vats. The labor conditions were terrible. But they would become one organization if they got a big order. They had a shipping office that they shared, so they could get big orders and all work together.

Fiksdal: That's very interesting.

Harrison: Then we went to a sake factory where the workers hired the management. The workers were farmers, and in the winter, they made sake. We went to all these different organizations. Then I started noticing in the well-touted Japanese management, hired for life, people had different stripes and different markings on their clothing and on their helmets and things like that, so I would ask, "How come you have two stripes, and that person has one?" I'd be asking all these questions.

It turns out that all those companies have regular employees and then they have their temporary employees. Their temporary employees don't have any of the rights. They're just brought in whenever they're needed, so there was this class system within those big companies that nobody ever talked about.

Fiksdal: That is quite revealing.

Harrison: Yeah, it was.

Fiksdal: Were you the first faculty exchange? Because you went quite early on.

Harrison: No, I don't think so.

Fiksdal: I didn't go until something like 1997.

Harrison: Maybe I was one of the first.

Fiksdal: They had changed campuses by then, too.

Harrison: Yeah, I probably was one of the first. I was trying to think of who had gone before me.

Fiksdal: Barbara Smith?

Harrison: No, Barbara went after me.

Fiksdal: Because one of the traditions was that we would always buy something for the apartment, and the last person would give you a lot of information about how to manage.

Harrison: I don't remember.

Fiksdal: You might have been the first.

Harrison: I might have been one of the first.

Fiksdal: You did your own orientation by going to Sophia University.

Harrison: We did.

Fiksdal: That is so interesting.

Harrison: Harry was really famous at the university, because here he is, he's a black traveling doctor, and he's with this woman. I was an honorary man, so I got to go drinking with all the academic parties. I never saw so much drinking in my whole life. [laughing]

Fiksdal: They do drink a lot.

Harrison: But it was a great experience.

Fiksdal: How did it affect your teaching?

Harrison: I got to study information systems in the local governments. I learned things like their first information system was about flush toilets. Even up into the '70s, half the country didn't have a flush toilet. They still had outhouses. Through the information systems, you learned a little bit about the sociology of the organization.

Plus, they don't have specialists. We have people who specialize. You can go into computing. They have the Park Service model where they rotate people into different occupations, so they get a big overview, and their identity is with the company, not with any particular skill. Then they have to hire people with the specialized expertise they need. It's a different model than what we have. I was able to come back and then give lectures.

We had a program called Japan Today. I taught in that program, but before that, in 1990, I became the Director of the graduate program in Public Administration. That's a thankless job. Nobody wants to be the director of the program because it involves recruiting students, and a lot of problems you have to solve. Then you have to be the liaison with the rest of the college.

Evergreen was always plagued with budget cuts. We're going to have a cut. We're going to have a cut. We're going to have a cut. It was always the MPA program that was going to be cut, so it was a constant battle to keep that program from getting cut.

Fiksdal: Not only the MPA program—speaking as a former dean—the graduate programs did cost more.

Harrison: They did.

Fiksdal: You had to have, I think, an administrative assistant or something in order to look at the applications. It's a graduate program.

Harrison: It's a graduate program. It needed extra things, and people would argue that it wasn't part of a liberal arts education.

Fiksdal: That was always a question, I think, for all of us.

Harrison: It was hard to get faculty to teach in the program, they would always have positions open.

Fiksdal: That's right.

Harrison: Then the faculty in the other departments would try to get somebody who was against public administration hired. They got Peter Bohmer hired. Peter Bohmer is hired to teach—

Fiksdal: Oh, he's hired to teach there. That's why he was hired.

Harrison: Yes.

Fiksdal: Then these people would rotate out into the curriculum. This was my big problem with the MPA, because even you left. Everybody left. We would keep hiring for MPA and get way too many people trained in disciplines we just didn't need, in my view.

Harrison: Right, so Peter taught that public administrators were in cahoots with big business, and that they were the bane of existence, and that we were all handmaidens to the corporate world. Dan Leahy started the Labor Center and was a really great teacher. He did a phenomenal job, and I think he recognized the value of public employees. Peter didn't at all. Bill Arney was a sociologist, so he was interested in the sociology of it all, and not particularly interested in . . .

Fiksdal: . . . promoting a program.

Harrison: Yeah, so it was difficult. When I became a director, I liked the part about going out and recruiting students. We went to the malls. We went to state buildings. It was really a good experience.

But the culture of the college towards it made me realize I wasn't cut out for this job emotionally, because you'd be defending the program every time. I had an administrative assistant who was not doing her job, and I had to fire her. Then she sued. The State Attorney General told me that the deans at the time—Mike Beug was the dean—he had just told everyone that these were two women having catfights and couldn't get along.

Fiksdal: Oh, my gosh! No support at all.

Harrison: None.

Fiksdal: Plus, so sexist. I had no idea.

Harrison: Yeah. We got her to report to him eventually before she had to leave, and then he realized that she was horrible to work with.

Fiksdal: Yeah, because it's hard to fire a state employee.

Harrison: It is, but we did it.

We had another problem. I can't remember her name. She had a job at another college. She taught during the day and then she taught in the MPA program at night, so she was double-dipping and we had to fire her. So, you're firing people.

Then, I think, Russ Lidman was the provost. I think he probably started the MPA program. He just didn't think much of me at all, and he would read my memos, and correct them. It was really difficult to be the Director of that program.

Fiksdal: Oh, my gosh.

Harrison: I think at the time—was that '88? No, that was after '88. It was hard being a woman and being the Director of the MPA program. I had a difficult time.

Fiksdal: But I just find it incredible that because you were a woman, you had so many problems.

Harrison: Yeah.

Fiksdal: We had evolved so much, I thought.

Harrison: I don't think they would say so. They might give other excuses. I don't know.

Fiksdal: It's disheartening.

Harrison: Yeah, so I did face problems.

Fiksdal: I wonder if we could stop here.

Harrison: Sure.