

**Charlie Teske**  
**Interviewed by Susan Fiksdal**  
**The Evergreen State College oral history project**  
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**FINAL**

**Begin Part 1 of 2 of Charlie Teske on 12-6-16**

**Fiksdal:** Okay, Charlie. We may have several more sessions, so we agreed to answer a couple questions that are burning in my mind right now. One is, in the planning year, and in those first few years—and maybe the whole time you were teaching, I'm not sure—what was it that gave you the belief, the idea and the belief, that coordinated studies programs could serve students for at least three years of their time at Evergreen? Because, obviously, you had the individual contracts, you had group contracts, but what made you feel that that would be the way a student could get a strong liberal arts education?

**Teske:** This is something that we talked about before, but we did not touch upon it in this particular way. What Mervin Cadwallader—the founder, in effect, of what became coordinated studies—had in mind was a five-faculty, 100-student program, interdisciplinary, team-taught, full-time, which would last for two years, so that a student's whole lower-division freshman and sophomore year would be taken up by this program. And his hope was that he would be allowed to organize one, or perhaps at most two, such programs for our first thousand students.

And then, of course, Don Humphrey and I got hold of it. Merv's idea had been the work on Athens, especially the Peloponnesian Wars, by contrast to our current involvement in Vietnam. It was to be a study of democracy . . .

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**End Part 1 of 2 of Charlie Teske on 12-6-16**

**Begin Part 2 Of 2 of Charlie Teske on 12-6-16**

**Teske:** . . . a study of democracy and tyranny. It would be very much, I would think of as soft-data, social science, going over into humanities. Relatively little hard data—and by that I mean statistical sociology and so forth—but areas covered by political science, history, philosophy, literature. Perhaps, I guess, because of the Athenian connection, there would have been some concern with drama. But, at any rate, it would be very definitely—it would not have hands-on work in the sciences or in the arts.

And so, Merv had the idea of this particular subject matter, and he—following Joseph Tussman, who, in turn, was following Alexander Meiklejohn—had devised the pedagogy to be a delivery system for

this particular kind of program. That's what we were after. That was Merv's ideal.

So, what was happening, Susan, is that we were starting at perhaps the most rigorous ideal point. And then, we were moving away from that—lightening up, varying, adding more things. So already, in that all-important conference of February 8-9, 1970—after Merv had said his piece, and I'd said mine, and Don was talking about how the sciences—he received a lot of questions. “How could you possibly do science under this?” We found, during the rest of that day and the next day, that we were talking more in terms of one year rather than two years, but we still were talking about five faculty members and 100 students as the sort of package that we would be dealing with in the program.

Now, there was another issue, too. Some people—I don't recall it occurring at the planning conference, but before it—had been suggesting, “Well, maybe, yeah, we want to be different, but maybe we should be cautious. We'll start with a few things, and then try to use our opportunity to begin new, to add more things.”

Well, especially after we had that conference, the realization was if we want to make a real break with the departmental system, and the premature specialization, and the recent past of American higher education, we've got to do it decidedly and drastically at the start. Because we'll always be able to move backward to compromise, but if we start by compromising, we're not going to achieve that. So, I guess, in phrasing your question, it would be looked at it the other way, and assume that we're starting with two-year programs, and five faculty members and 100 students, and then we're modifying and compromising from there.

So, okay, we're going to have one-year programs. Well, our initial programs, if you look at the catalog, I think most of them were five faculty members. There were a couple even with six faculty members. And the one that was not thought of at the beginning was the one we called Man and Art. Okay? And I staffed that by recruiting Jose Arguelles and Don Chan and Cruz Esquivel. That had three faculty members and 60 students. But we then found, with the interest in that program, and also how active they were being, that we were able to add Ainara Wilder part-time, for the winter and spring quarters, and for the spring, Miriam Arguelles for the big art project, the dragons in the stairwell. So, even there, the program became more than three.

Okay. I think another important part of this—and, of course, there was one thing I found as dean to be looking over and trying to nurture these programs [laughing] but quite another to be teaching in it. Right? I really—well, that's why I think it's so important to be drawing deans out of the faculty, who already have been teaching, you know, in the, in the programs, and understand what it's like. And initially, by the way, in the planning year, the planning faculty, we were talking about the idea

that any future President of the school should come and teach in a coordinated studies program for a quarter before becoming President, and if the person didn't want that, then we didn't want that person.

But anyway, we felt, you know, very strongly about that. And, of course, by working . . . let's see . . . I think Eric Larson was first-year faculty? Pris Bowerman was second year. David Marr had been first-year faculty. But I fell into an advanced program that had people who already knew what they were doing. Okay.

Now, one of the things, I think, is we were conceiving very large problems, so that a year would not be really enough to be studying them. And so all we could hope to do is to make a good start. And I think, well, David Marr certainly is the intellectual center of the CISCA program. He certainly had more than enough to do. [chuckles] And the next year, I was coordinator of the Roots of Our Romanticism, and there, had the additional chore—Bill Winden was supposed to be handling music history. He was put into the dean's office, so I got Brother Ronald Hurst from St. Martin's College to fill in there. And Hiro Kawasaki, who was a first-year faculty member in the history of art, came and filled in there. Luckily, the grant gave us time from mid-August to be preparing for that.

Okay, so I guess it was the size of the program, I mean, just to deal with something like Romanticism. And, so far as length of the program was concerned, I, at least, was able to follow straight through there.

One of the most important programs I was in at Evergreen, 1993-94, was a Great Stories program, with Don Finkel, Al Leisenring, Tom Grissom, Setsuko Tsutsumi and me. A year-long program, with five faculty members.

**Fiksdal:** Were you able to retain your students? I mean, did they stay in, the same number as began?

**Teske:** Only if they were graduating did we lose them. Where there might have been some cases where students—now, it is true that Setsuko left the program in the spring quarter—is that if you had a three- or four-person program—now, yours and my program, the Making of Meaning program, there, the deans were going to cut us back, so that when you left to finish your doctorate in the spring, we'd go to three faculty members. And they just took for granted that the program would lose. I told them, "No," and I insisted that Betty Estes join us, and she did, and we kept the students.

**Fiksdal:** Thank heavens, yeah.

**Teske:** Yeah. Because in a way, Susan, that's a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy . . .

**Fiksdal:** Yeah.

**Teske:** . . . if you tell the students, "We will lose people in the spring." There were several programs that

the deans figured could go for only two quarters, and in both of those programs—Sig Kutter’s and my Stories of Creation, and Bud Johansen, Craig Carlson and I in the Perceptions program—we gained in the second quarter, but we were already planning to leave in the third quarter. So, okay.

Now, there is the problem that you know only too well. It’s like writing a three-act play, where a part of the audience can leave, if it has to, at the end of act one, and will have gotten something. And a lot of them will at least stay for act two, but you will let people in for act two. And, of course, typically—at least in my experience—the students who would join us for act two, for the winter quarter, were people who had been friends with folks in the first—who had been in the program the first quarter, so they already knew quite a bit about what we were doing. More difficult to allow any students in for the third quarter, you know.

**Fiksdal:** Yeah, that’s always really hard.

**Teske:** Yeah. And so, really, I think it was wise. Now, the Irish program, there, the program was conceived of as a year. But the faculty would teach it on campus for only two quarters, and then, Patrick Hill and Sean Williams would take students to Ireland. And I was teaching Irish poetry; and then the second year I was in there—James Joyce. But then, I was out in the spring. But there was a program deliberately planned to have attrition in the spring.

**Fiksdal:** Yeah.

**Teske:** Now, one of the things, though, that I was careful to do as coordinator—and I noticed I still have some of this stuff on my hard drive—was to do a stock-taking at the end of the first quarter. And not just the program description, but something longer than that, which we would give to the students in December. And we would hold this sort of faculty fishbowl seminar, in which the faculty members would talk about where we thought we had gotten to, and then would open it up to the students. But there was always this idea—of course, we deliberately did a bit of this—“Well, in the winter when we ... in the winter when we . . .” and so forth. And so the students, we got them into thinking that way.

**Fiksdal:** Also, what you’re reminding me of is talking with the students about their ideas for winter. I mean, “Here are some of our ideas. What are your ideas?” And then . . .

**Teske:** Exactly.

**Fiksdal:** So there can be a little more interest built up if students have some input. And I think that that’s quite rare now.

**Teske:** Yeah.

**Fiksdal:** Yeah.

**Teske:** One of the things I like best about Roots of Our Romanticism program, the last reading

assignment and lecture was given by one of our students.

**Fiksdal:** Oh, wow.

**Teske:** Yeah, I mean, it was that, you know . . .

**Fiksdal:** Mm-hm.

**Teske:** Yeah. And then, of course, it was a bit more difficult for the spring. But still, these questions. Here is where we're still going. And in one of—I don't know, it might even have been for our program, you'll have to tell me—but there was a *Hagar the Horrible* cartoon in which there is crag, and Hagar is bringing lumber out. And Lucky Eddie is out, and there's a cantilever coming out from the crag. And they're building a bridge, but you don't see the other side. And Lucky Eddie is out there with a hammer and some nails, and Hagar is bringing more timber. And Lucky Eddie says, "What's holding this thing up? And is there anything over there?" And Hagar says, "Shut up and keep hammering." [laughter] And that was our sort of idea with the students, you know. "Is there anything over there on the other side?" "Well, if there is, we're going to reach it." You know?

**Fiksdal:** We're headed towards it, yeah. [laughing]

**Teske:** And one of the things about listening to students in the first—the end-of-first-quarter conference of the Roots of Our Romanticism—I thought that a lot of the students would at least have some idea about what Romanticism was. One of the brightest students [unintelligible 00:13:12], when he came in for the conference, he said, "You know, Charlie," he said, "it was as if we were at a county fair or something. It was one of these things with this big ladder going up, and there's this construction, and at the top is a diving board."

**Fiksdal:** [Laughing]

**Teske:** "And then, there's a round tank at the bottom, and the ladder is so high, you can barely, from the top of it, see the tank. And you tell me 'There's water in the tank. Go up and dive.' And I don't know if there is or not, but you told me, so I went up and dived, and, of course, it was just great." And one of the things, again, that fits with how you learn gradually, by experience.

As coordinator, I took the first couple days of the first week of Roots of Our Romanticism, and talking about the program covenant, and the ground rules, and how credit would be awarded and so forth. And only on Thursday did we start showing them Kenneth Clark's *Civilisation* series on Romanticism, and playing them some music—and here, we're talking about slides—and the students said, "Wait a minute. Is this all we're going to be doing?" We said, "Yeah." "Oh, great. We should have started on Monday already."

**Fiksdal:** Started that way, yeah. Get the hook, yeah.

**Teske:** All right. By the Irish program—we did this in each of the three years—the first day with the students, a great play by Brian Friel that has three characters, one woman and two men—Patrick and Sean and I sat on stools and performed the play for the students. Not talking about ground rules and so forth, but actually doing something together.

So, part of it, yeah, you know, part of it, you have to sort of be tricky; that there's going to be a payoff; there still are these questions. Now, one of the things that I used—and that we've done in ours, because we didn't know sufficiently where we'd be going—but I used it in a program that involved American performance traditions, and certainly used it in Romanticism. That was faculty made out a sort of namedropping list of people and titles—titles of works, and people's names. And we passed them out to the students, and we said, "Okay, we don't want to see these back, but we want you to keep these in your notebooks, in your portfolios. Look at the person's name. If you've never heard it, or heard the work's name before, don't mark anything. If you have heard the name and you could maybe write or speak two sentences about what it is, put a one. If you could write a paragraph about what it is, put a two. If this is something you really know something about, where you could go on for quite a while, put a three. Okay? Do that now. Don't show it to us, and put it in your journal. At the end of the first quarter, go back through it again and renumber. Where are you now? At the end of the second quarter, go back and renumber, and at the end of the third quarter. We're not saying we're going to get to everything." But so that the student had some sort of measurement of getting a hold of an artistic, intellectual—

**Fiksdal:** I think that really is smart. Because I remember just teaching French, how students loved it because they could finish chapter one, and all those subsections, and then they'd get to chapter two. And there's a sense—they have a little quiz; they have a sense "I know this. I can now go on, and it's just further in the book." But in programs, you don't have such a solid sense. Often, as you know, you come up—all of you, faculty and students—with more questions.

**Teske:** Yeah.

**Fiksdal:** And so it can be much harder. So, that aspect of it, I think, is really important; to think about sort of how can you help students realize how much they've learned, so that not only are they willing to continue the work, but that they feel a little more confidence, and they're able to move on. Yeah.

**Teske:** Mm-hm. Well, of course, this wasn't in the winter, but the kind of thing that happens at Evergreen was one of the summers when I was doing a one-faculty individual contract. I had done it with two people twice, but this was the third year, and I was doing it by myself, in Wagner's *Ring* in conjunction with the Seattle Opera August performances of the whole *Ring*. And at that time, I still was

pals with the management, and was able to get reduced-price tickets for my students. Well, what they turned out to be, Susan, was not reduced prices, but they would take unsold seats from around. And one thing I had to tell the students: "Do not tell the people sitting next to you what you paid for these."

**Fiksdal:** Yeah.

**Teske:** You know? Because they were getting—they were paying at that time, 28 bucks or something instead of \$110.

Well, at any rate, so I had the whole thing ready to go. Got a call from—I think Larry Stenberg was still involved with counseling at the time—he said, "Charlie, we've got a problem." He said, "This young woman came up from Texas because she was interested in one of our summer programs, a very specialized summer program, I don't know, marine science or something like that. Well, there hadn't been enough students signing up, and the program was canceled, and here she was. She was interested in the possibility of coming to Evergreen in the fall, but here she was, stuck. And he said, "Could you take her?" And I said, "Send her over." And she said, "Well, he said that you were doing something interesting."

**Fiksdal:** [Laughing]

**Teske:** She had never heard of Wagner. She had never heard of *The Ring*.

**Fiksdal:** Oh, for heaven's sakes!

**Teske:** I had an LP with a 45-minute summary of *The Ring* on it. And I had a syllabus with the books that we were going to be reading, and what the week was going to look like. I said, "Okay, you take this over to the Library to a listening area, and you listen. You'll hear the story, and you'll hear some of the music from this, and you could read through it. And you come back and tell me this afternoon whether you want to join or not. Because if you're willing to take that plunge, I'm certainly willing to have you."

She came back, and said, "Wow! I didn't even realize anything like this existed. Yeah, I'd like to do this." "All right." She took the program. A very serious student. I think the program went on for about four or five weeks, and then came the couple-week period—because it was given, *The Ring* was given twice—the couple-week period when our students would be going.

She got a seat next to a bunch of people who had bought their seats at about four times what she had paid. And they were talking. "Well, I wonder what this is?" And my student was saying, "Excuse me. That's pronounced Don-ner, the god of thunder" "Oh." And they started asking her questions. [chuckles] And she just was bathed in glory coming back, coming back in our van.

**Fiksdal:** I bet!

**Teske:** She said, "I'm an expert!" You know? And, okay, but that's, that's when something like this really

works.

But the irony is, I know there are people who talked about having problems. Now, one of the things that I'm very much concerned with—I don't want to make this about the old [voice trembles] days, you know, and how much better they were, but one of the things that I am concerned about is, when you mentioned the fact, in conversation, that faculty seminars have fallen out of disfavor. Because one of the reasons that, you know, I was attracted so much to this idea was the faculty seminar. That should not just be a glorified business meeting—how should we deal with these particular students? Or, how are you going to be teaching this? But rather, I'm sorry, Susan, you're a social scientist and I'm a humanist, and I don't understand your kind of linguistics. You know? I probably wouldn't put it that bluntly.

**Fiksdal:** Yeah, no.

**Teske:** But I need to find out, from you, the kind of thing that you do. And I think you need to find out, from me, the kind of thing that I do, and we'll be all the stronger. And the German administrator professor who visited us in '94, in February, it was a week in our program, Great Stories, was dealing with Platonic dialogs, and he sat in on our faculty seminar. Now, he didn't know that Al Leisenring had been a classics major. He thought of him as being—his doctorate was in mathematics.

He said, "A person from English literature, from mathematics, from physics, from Japanese studies, and from educational psychology are sitting around discussing Socrates like human beings." You know? "And then I went into the student seminar," and he said, "the students were talking about Socrates as if it was somebody living now who was having these problems and bringing these questions." He was amazed, because in Germany, you don't touch that unless you know your way around the classics, and if you don't know the teacher's job is to fill your head with things.

So, the program, I don't want to go quite so far as saying that there's a direct connection between the strength of the faculty seminar and the strength of the program. But it's in there somewhere.

**Fiksdal:** Well, but I think it does have something to do with the strength of the seminar, because if you're going in as a novice, or really less than a novice on Marx, for example, and that's what you're discussing, it's really hard to help move the discussion along, or to help students understand a few things by turning to this page or that page. So, I think it does matter a lot for how you teach your own seminars.

But I think the other thing that I've been trying to figure out, I remember those early years, and not—I don't remember it being so burdensome somehow. And I think part of that was because there



were so many faculty in the programs that you didn't—you weren't on every week. You know?

**Teske:** Right.

**Fiksdal:** There would be one, two, even sometimes three weeks when you didn't have to give a lecture, so you had time to do the reading, you had time to get started on your lecture, or whatever you were going to do.

**Teske:** Yeah.

**Fiksdal:** And so there's that; I think it's a timesaver to have more faculty teaching. And then, I think, you know, the college has just grown a lot in a number of different ways, and so there's a lot more governance than there used to be. And I think that I might be wrong about that, but there seems to be an awful lot. So, we have two afternoons a week, and there's still not enough time—free time—for people to get together and work out problems.

**Teske:** Yeah. But, see, that—but, see, we were strong enough on that, and I'm trying to recall if it was our program that Barbara came to, and asked us if we could take Richard Jones in, in the seminar.

**Fiksdal:** Yes, that—I remember those years, too, where, if we were teaching alone somehow—because I remember I was teaching French, so I needed a faculty seminar. So, I talked to Sandra Simon and Eric Larson—they were teaching together—and I said, "It sort of fits. I want to come and read your books." And I had to read their books. Of course, I had read most of the ones I was—I think I'd read everything I was going to teach. But anyway, had to read their books, and then go to their seminars. But—and my students came to a number of their lectures because they just—I thought it would be enriching, you know.

**Teske:** Sure.

**Fiksdal:** So that, yeah, that used to happen, and I don't remember when it fell off. Yeah.

**Teske:** The early '90s, I was doing group contracts—several different cluster contracts—but I needed a seminar.

**Fiksdal:** Yeah.

**Teske:** And my office was on the same floor with Marianne Bailey and Paul Sparks, the photographer . . . and then Terry Setter. And there was a visitor. Marianne was doing Africa through the Arts. And, since I was on the same floor, and I had to be in a seminar, I decided to do that. And I read most—I didn't—wasn't able to read all of their readings, but I read most of them, and I think I gave two lectures to the Africa program. And then, in the spring quarter, Terry was leaving, but there were still a bunch of students who wanted to do things in music. So, I came in and did that, and I was, you know, attached in that fashion.

At any rate, so that was one program in the beginning of the '90s. Then, the next year, I was on sabbatical, and so I taught group contract. The next year after that, I was with this five-faculty program, Great Stories. And, by the way, we did not just *The Odyssey* and Greek drama and so forth—with Setsuko, we did some big Japanese works. But, we also did the history of science, the big stories there—the development of mathematical notation and so forth. That was really great. All those seminars, I looked forward so much to them.

And Setsuko, at one point, said, “Oh, Charlie, I just feel so much behind in reading this that I can’t really contribute all that much to seminars.” I said, “Setsuko, there would be a big temptation for the four of us to try to play ‘King of the Hill,’ and with you there, you know, really”—but I looked forward so much because I learned so much.

**Fisksdal:** Yeah.

**Teske:** I mean, let’s face it, Susan, we’re not getting paid that much.

Fisksdal: Right.

**Teske:** It’s important that the students learn that it’s more important that we learn. I mean, let’s keep our priorities straight. Another big thing that I found was, when people asked me again, “Is Evergreen a great books place like St. John’s? We all agreed these were great books.” I said, “Yeah, except that it might be a great book that was published last year.”

And I don’t know if you have given this thought. I was just thinking about this in this past week. There are at least five programs I was in that depended upon one of us having read and found a great book in the interim, which we then all worked with.

**Fisksdal:** Yeah, yeah, of course.

**Teske:** And if you ask other people how many books that I was reading and they were assigning were books that had just been published. And, of course, they were real books, not surveys or, you know, pre-chewed things like that. And this was exciting. And I know it’s a topic that you wanted to talk a little bit about, and that is, faculty members developing expertise in new fields to them.

**Fisksdal:** Yeah.

**Teske:** Okay. Now, I am blessed to say now, I do not have a credit in music to my name.

**Fisksdal:** [Laughing] I do find that a little surprising.

**Teske:** I took 10 years of trumpet lessons, but I did not, in high school—grade school or high school—have anything that was labeled music. In college, I was the lead trumpet player in the marching band and the concert band, but Lafayette did not offer courses in music appreciation or anything like that. So, I, you know, I knew quite a bit about it.

But at Evergreen, it became necessary for me to fill out programs by doing this. And I still recall the great moment when I worked with Bill Winden for a whole year in *Revolutions in Art and Thought*, and then, for another whole year when we were running group contracts, but then joined in a program on American performing arts. And Bill was getting me to do more and more of the lectures on music, including making cassettes of excerpts and things like that.

And at the end of that year, he said, "Okay, Charlie." He said, "You don't need me anymore. You can handle the music on your own."

**Fiksdal:** Wow. Yeah.

**Teske:** And one of the things that I, you know, things that didn't work, with our system of being able to give credit for experience for things that people knew that they had not taken academic work in, I wanted to put myself through there on music.

**Fiksdal:** Yeah.

**Teske:** I wanted some authoritative people to tell me, "You're strong here, strong there," and so forth. "Weak, weak, weak." You know? I really wanted that. But that was something—and, of course, with the Wagner. The first two times I did it, I needed help. The next times I did it, I could do it on my own.

**Fiksdal:** Yeah, yeah.

**Teske:** And, of course, one of the very large things that we've talked about is the main books of that year, five of them published all in the same year by people who did not know each other. And I forget the fifth; that was done by a biologist. But one of them was *The Singer of Tales*, about the South Slavic epic poems. Marshall McLuhan's *Gutenberg Galaxy*. Eric Havelock's *Preface to Plato*. And John Goody's book on—I think his first one was called *The Domestication of the Savage Mind*, but it was about sort of literacy and anthropologists.

**Fiksdal:** Yeah. No, I've read all of them. [laughing] I'm just thinking how these seeped into our culture.

**Teske:** Yeah, and at any rate, these people did not know each other at the time. But they're all laying the groundwork for the idea of oral culture preceding literacy, and what that meant, and opening things up. Then, of course, Walter Ong came along shortly thereafter, and became the sort of—we called ourselves the "Onglish" department. [laughter] At any rate, studying orality and literacy.

All right. Now, I got my doctoral dissertation in '62. I did not know about these books, and so these were not anything that I had ever studied for credit, or had ever been examined on. This was mine. You know? I wasn't doing it because other people had told me I had to do it. And, of course, it fitted in so much with my dad as an improvising preacher; my grandfather as a storyteller and collector of stories and jokes and so forth. It fitted in with my interest in jazz, and, you know, my knowledge of

singing around the campfire telling ghost stories, and things like that that all provided a sort of intellectual home for doing that. And so, that became a very, you know, big thing with me.

**Fiksdal:** Yeah, I think this whole notion of—I think, for you, you already had a lot of background. I think for some people that branched out, they didn't have much background. They were just interested, and they figured by teaching it, they would just try to stay one step ahead of the students. I know that happened with me because I had to start teaching Spanish, there was so much demand.

**Teske:** Oh, boy.

**Fiksdal:** And there wasn't anyone doing it. So, I just went to the UW and took second-year Spanish. I figured, how hard could it be? Well, you know, I did have to study. [laughing] It was different than French. But, yeah, I did that, and then I took students to Mexico and, you know, it was great.

**Teske:** All right, see that—yeah.

**Fiksdal:** So, you push yourself in order to help the curriculum and to help the students, and you learn something new. And I think we still have that. I think that's still a value, and I think that's still there.

**Teske:** Okay, that's great. That's great. Because one of the things, out of all things—this was not an American professor, this was my favorite German professor who said this—he said, “You cannot go into students and demand that they exert themselves to their utmost to stretch their understanding if you're not doing it yourself.” Now, there are different ways of doing this. One way is you publish.

**Fiksdal:** Yeah.

**Teske:** You go out to the frontier and you push the frontier further. Okay, that's fine. But another way is you extend into a new field.

**Fiksdal:** Mm-hm.

**Teske:** That's also very demanding, and very rigorous.

**Fiksdal:** Mm-hm.

**Teske:** And another thing that I kept doing, I tell my students every once in a while, I said, “Look, you may think I sound pretty top-lofty, you know, speaking down to you or something like that, that I know all about this and you don't. But,” I said, “I'm going to go home, and I'm going to practice my brass instruments and thoroughly humiliate myself. But,” I said, “I figure I cannot ask you to be pushing yourself if I'm not pushing myself.”

And this teacher then went on to say, “It's like a dog's instinct if you're showing fear. The dog can smell whether you're showing fear. Your students can tell whether you've retired on the job, or whether, in some way, you are still pushing and moving ahead.”

And another thing that was—what?—my fourth program at Evergreen, working with Bud

Johansen and Craig Carlson. The program was called Perception. It should have, I think, been called Gut-Level Aesthetics. Now, as you know, aesthetics is a fairly lofty field, really a branch of psychology. But what we were doing, people were painting, dancing, making music. You know? And there were a lot of students who came into the program saying, "Well, I want to do music. I'm not going to get interested in anything else." Or, "I want to do drama, and I'm not interested in anything else, but I guess the only way I can get it is if I take the whole program," who then shifted, and found that they were interested in another kind of art.

But, at the very end of the program, one student said, "You know, Charlie, that first day, we were just wondering about this business of faculty members trying to learn with us. And then Bud took us up to room 4000, and you and Craig took your shoes off, and you might have been awkward, you were trying to do the moves that Bud was teaching us that day." He said, "It was then we realized that you were serious."

**Fiksdal:** Yeah.

**Teske:** And [chuckles] it's just—now, I don't know if you've ever done this, Susan. And, of course, it's illegal as all get-out, but there was a student, a first-year student, who was looking at our Perceptions program for the academic year, and he said, "Are you going to do rock music?" I said, "Well, we will if you join us, because you'll—we'll depend upon you to introduce some of the things." "Oh, well, okay."

Well, then he came to the end of the first quarter. And I don't know how much thought you've put into this, but just think about this. If you're a student from a high school, and you've waited until the papers are handed back to find if you're a B+ person this week, or an A- person, or whatever, and hear the faculty members say, "You have to write a self-evaluation." Oh, boy. That's the first time that anybody's ever asked, "What do you think you're learning?"

And there are two obvious extremes. One is the whistling in the dark. I'll say, "It was all very interesting, and I was interested, and it was so interesting, and this was interesting, and that was interesting, and maybe he won't hit me too hard." Okay. The other way is, "I'm going to say I know I was rotten. I was lousy. I didn't really learn." You know. The other, "Don't hit me, don't hit me" kind of thing. You know, those are the two extremes.

There's always the third one. "You better not be too hard on me, because I'm going to leave the program." It usually starts during the conference. A student comes in and says, "Well, I'm thinking of leaving the program." Then afterwards, I also, at one point, Susan, wanted to get some background noises from the dentist's office . . .

**Fiksdal:** [Laughing]

**Teske:** . . . and play them, so that somebody sitting in the waiting room could hear that “Arghhhh!” You know? Okay.

So, he tried this on me. And he said, “Well, I guess I’m thinking of leaving the program.” I said, “No, you’re not.” And he said, “Well, what?” And I said, “Rusty, look, you have been our person for rock, and distinguishing poor, meretricious rock from valuable rock and so forth. You know your stuff, and you’re the one who’s been suggesting things, and bringing in records for listening sessions and so forth. And if you leave the program, that’s going to be gone, and we need you.” “Oh.” “So, you know, you might not need us, but we need you.”

**Fiksdal:** Yeah. That’s very interesting, yeah.

**Teske:** Okay. Three years later, when the students—student-engineering, student-producing, student-performing—made their first Evergreen LP record, he had a jazz/rock/fusion group, and he asked me to play with the group on the recording.

And then, graduation time. Here—he must have been the child of fairly elderly parents—here, his father came up to see me from New York, and looked at me. He said, “You know, you’re the first people who, outside of his family, ever told him that he had value; that he was necessary, and was helping. And you saw the results from it, but I just want you to know that we saw the results, too, and, you know, we are very, very glad about this.”

Sometimes, Susan, I think we ought to be allowed to meet the parents with the students right at the beginning.

**Fiksdal:** Yeah, really. [chuckles]

**Teske:** You know, it would help us so much.

**Fiksdal:** It would, yeah.

**Teske:** But it’s things like that. The observation of the students learning. And, I don’t know, I found it particularly heartwarming when you would have—well, two different sorts of boundary situations. One would be—and this is in several programs dealing with music—that you would have an 18-year-old, who maybe knew three chords on the guitar, sitting next to a 35-year-old, who had been out on the summer fair circuit, with his wife, doing bluegrass and so forth. Under normal circumstances, that 18-year-old would be scared to death . . .

**Fiksdal:** Yeah.

**Teske:** . . . of having that 35-year-old as a competitor. And, unbeknownst to the 18-year-old, the 35-year-old would be scared about, can I get back into this? Can I do this again? And it would take, I found, three or four weeks for them to realize that they were not in competition. And out of that comes my

mantra that you are here to collaborate with others, and compete against yourself.

**Fiksdal:** Yeah, and there's something about that notion of trust, also, that's underlying what you're saying, that you've got to trust that you do have something to offer, and trust that another student has something to offer you. That's always something that, I mean, students come in expecting to learn only from the professor, and I think when they realize that in workshops, and small collaborative group, and project groups, and seminar that, in fact, they're learning from other students, that that's a huge step forward. And I think that's pretty unusual, and something that we've got at Evergreen that's—

**Teske:** Well, and Hiro, you see—Hiro Kawasaki—one of the big things was if I would say to the students, “Help me because I don't understand this,” I tried to be honest about it, but they're “Aw, he really does, he's just playing with us.” You know. But when Hiro, a native Japanese, would come in and say, “I do not understand this,” the students were helping him. [laughing]

**Fiksdal:** Oh, that's great.

**Teske:** And so he was doing just a great job with this. But now, one other question I would have for you—because, as I think back over it, back to the planning year, some of the—a couple of the smartest policies that we made—now, who's “we”? Frankly, Joe Shoben, Executive Vice President, although he was the big educational psychologist, he rarely came to our interminable planning faculty meetings, unless we were touching upon the social contract, and something that had to do with students and governance. Okay.

David Barry, when he delegated, he delegated. And he trusted that Don and Merv and I, who were going to have to keep running the things as middle managers, that we were doing that, and we would talk to him about the results, and ask him to come in.

Charlie McCann, the President, came in more often than either of the Vice Presidents came. But—and usually only when we'd arrived at a point that we were trying something out on him as policy. But we did get these policies going, one of them being, Susan, is the business of you didn't get paid more or less for being a man or a woman, or being a minority or a majority.

**Fiksdal:** I'm still sort of in awe of that decision. You know, I still think that's quite spectacular.

**Teske:** Yeah. And it just saved so many problems.

**Fiksdal:** Yeah.

**Teske:** And, as I've said a while ago, yes, it causes difficulties, but causes fewer difficulties than almost any other system you can think of. And, of course, a huge benefit was this decision not to be looking at only academic credentials and teaching time, but looking at things that the person knew, and could contribute from—a bunch of other specialties and experiences.

**Fiksdal:** By the time I was dean, though, of what was then part-time studies, I was told to calculate salaries for the adjuncts at one-half of their workload. So, if they'd done something for 20 years, they'd get 10 years' credit only; they wouldn't get credited for the 20. So, I don't know when that changed. I have a feeling that might have changed with Barbara Smith, when she became Provost, but I'm not really sure about that. Because, I mean, she was the only Provost I really worked with, you know, I mean, as a dean, and knowing really well. But I don't know when it—it could have changed with Byron [Youtz], because he was right before her, I think.

**Teske:** And I don't know.

**Fiksdal:** Or Patrick.

**Teske:** Again, it's amazing what—how the world is different when you move out of administration, and you cancel your *Daily Olympian* subscription, you know, and you're worried about how your program is doing.

**Fiksdal:** Yeah.

**Teske:** And—but it really—that was one of the things that I sort of hoped for, and that is, that if we did—of course, I'm thinking, again, of the three-, four-, five-faculty member programs that last for a whole year—that they would, in effect, become little colleges within the college . . .

**Fiksdal:** Yeah, and I can see that they would.

**Teske:** . . . and develop their own momentum.

**Fiksdal:** Yeah.

**Teske:** But, at any rate, I think I got just a marvelous education on the backs of the taxpayers of the State of Washington.

**Fiksdal:** Yeah. Well, me, too. I mean, that's one thing you can say about having taught there is that you've learned more than you ever thought you would. And that's what kept you going, because, as you say, I mean, it certainly wasn't the salary. [chuckles]

**Teske:** Yeah.

**Fiksdal:** And it was a lot of work. A lot of work. But we did keep learning. I just, on the back of this—I don't know if you're quite done with what you were talking about, but just thinking about—mentioning Barbara Smith. She came in as an outside dean, like John Perkins did, and I think we have had no others like that.

**Teske:** How about Jose Gomez? I think he came as an—

**Fiksdal:** Oh, you're right. Yeah, he came as half-dean, half-staff or something. He had a strange appointment. But, yeah, he did also come from the outside. But Barbara was brought—Barbara and



John were brought in as budget deans, so that was like [chuckles] really important stuff, where they controlled money, and you would go and talk to them.

The one thing, though, about at least Barbara's experience, she got to know everyone really fast because she needed to, because she had this money, and had to allocate it correctly, and she had to get to know people pretty fast. And when she became Provost, she continued that. But one of the ways—I recalled the other day—the way she was able to do that is she was still, you know, evaluating faculty every three years, and so she knew the faculty. She knew them because she—I wonder if she was Budget Dean, now that I'm talking about it. I can remember her working with curriculum.

**Teske:** Hmm. No, I think she was mainly curriculum, at the beginning.

**Fiksdal:** But anyway, she—I think it was curriculum, yeah.

**Teske:** And John was budget.

**Fiksdal:** So sorry, that was a mistake. So, she was curriculum. Well, so she had to know people for that reason. And then, when she became Provost—oh, no, as Curriculum Dean, she came in and evaluated me. She knew all of us. She could make suggestions about who we might want to teach with. She could see a trajectory for us in the college, if we wanted to hear it. You know? And I think we just have lost that now, with the change to, really, tenure now we have, where we're not, you know, we don't have this close connection to any dean. The deans are there, but you don't really need to talk to them unless you need money, or you need, I don't know, something happening within your program. So, you're not in connection with them like we used to be at all.

**Teske:** Yeah, and I used to visit the programs.

**Fiksdal:** Yeah, you would know.

**Teske:** And, yeah, and I was, I guess, the first port of call if there were grievances or something like that.

**Fiksdal:** Mm-hm.

**Teske:** And, with some of the programs, I actually, if they were reading something new, or if I was going to be visiting them, I wanted to make sure that I was visiting something. [chuckles]

A little story, but kind of thing that can go wrong. When Tom Foote and I were doing America's Music in Cultural Context—okay?—Tom had us reading a really good bibliography for the popular music and bluegrass and even rock and so forth. He'd been keeping up, and I, for American classical music and jazz and theater music. We had a marvelous book called *Great Day Coming*, the connection of, well, which was falsely called folk music and even rock music, and the American left. Okay.

**Fiksdal:** Yeah, very important.

**Teske:** And we were working on that very good book [unintelligible 00:52:46]. And, again, a real book,

not somebody's survey. And, at any rate, our dean was York Wong, a very strong political scientist, and we gave him a copy of the book. And the book ended with the Beatles's John Lennon being quoted, "I don't want to make a revolution," you know, and so forth. And we had given York a copy of the book. Well, he didn't have time to read it, but he still came. And he said, "I can come only for about the first hour of your seminar."

He heard whoever was lecturing—I guess it was Tom lecturing that morning—but then he came into my seminar. And some of the students were saying, "Well, but, you know, Lennon says in this book"—and York said, "No, no, no. Lenin did not say that, or if he did, what Lenin meant was thus and such." [laughter] And the students were beginning to get glassy-eyed, and their jaws were sort of dropping. And the students said, "But, but Lennon's quoted here as saying it." "No, no! Lenin did not. This was not his way!"

And so York left, and the students looked after him, and they looked at me. "What was that all about?"

**Fiksdal:** There's an I-N and an O-N. [laughing]

**Teske:** I said, "He was talking about Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov!—Lenin—not John Lennon!" [laughter] But that, to me, was one of the high points . . .

**Fiksdal:** That's pretty funny.

**Teske:** . . . of the kind of thing that went on.

**Fiksdal:** Yeah, that's great.

**Teske:** But, oh, no, I certainly—I thought I knew what it was like teaching coordinated studies. I did not, until I actually got into it.

**Fiksdal:** Yeah, and so that was—you were already at the college the year before the planning year—the planning year, and then four more years as dean, did you say?

**Teske:** Yeah.

**Fiksdal:** Yeah, because you had to stay; they made you stay another year.

**Teske:** '75, yeah.

**Fiksdal:** So, that's really interesting, yeah. And then, you went into it with gusto. [laughing]

**Teske:** Oh, yeah. Oh, I was just—in so many ways, I just could not wait to—and, you know, later on, Susan, I mean, I know I got nibbles from other places. And there was one in those days when—frankly, it was not until the early 1980s that I did not, at some point in the winter or spring, worry about where I was going to be to feed my family the next year, because really, it was either an official or unofficial attempt to close us down, or to turn us into a standard school. And I would have left.

**Fiksdal:** Yeah.

**Teske:** I mean, if I'm going to go to a standard school, I'm going to go to a standard school.

**Fiksdal:** A really good one, yeah. [laughing]

**Teske:** Not something that has, not something that has, you know, slipped into it or something like that.

**Fiksdal:** Right.

**Teske:** But I thought, oh my god, you know, you've got your main field of Romanticism, you've got the subsidiary field of oral tradition—balladry and so forth—and now, you have this new field of orality and literacy. But really, I was—as you well know, you cannot really keep in touch reading the scholarship and so forth in your field, and be doing our kind of thing.

**Fiksdal:** No.

**Teske:** And I was worried. You know, your skills have gotten . . .

**Fiksdal:** Yeah.

**Teske:** . . . you might have to go someplace where they need somebody who's been a dean. What I didn't know, and I found out only when the man who had asked me to replace him as humanities coordinator for the Great Lakes Colleges—he was a teacher at Kalamazoo College—and I was able—he sort of felt in some ways having important connection with Evergreen, right? And so he and his wife came out here for a whole quarter. He took a quarter of sabbatical. They came out here, and he did not teach, but he sat in on various programs. He gave some readings of his poetry. I think he did some lectures. And when he was there, he said, "You know, Charlie," he said, "we at Kalamazoo—I and these other guys you've worked with there—we are trying to figure out how to get you away to come and teach with us."

**Fiksdal:** [Laughing]

**Teske:** And ironically, Susan, he would have been one of the first people—if I would have wanted to leave Evergreen—that I would have called up. And here he would have been saying, "You have a job with us." And I didn't know then. I, I just told him . . .

**Fiksdal:** Very interesting, yeah.

**Teske:** . . . I said, "You know, life would have been a lot easier for me [chuckles] if I'd known that there was that safety net."

**Fiksdal:** Yeah. Thinking that the college would close down, yeah. The other thing I was thinking about was, you know, the rank thing that you brought up that I asked about. You know, there's no rank, there's just member of the faculty. And I remember when Rudy [Martin] got a job in New York—at NYU? I can't quite remember which.

**Teske:** Either that or Columbia.

**Fiksdal:** Yeah.

**Teske:** Gail [Martin] was at Columbia, I think, but Rudy got—yeah.

**Fiksdal:** So, he went somewhere. Anyway, they asked his faculty rank, and he said, “Well, I’m a member of the faculty. That’s just what I am.” And so they looked at his years of experience—got his resume, of course—and he was a professor. And he came back and said, “I was a professor!” [laughing] I think that made us all sort of—I mean, we didn’t think about it too much, but knowing that he could go somewhere else and be a professor was inspiring, I think, to all of us. I think it really impacted us a lot. It’s funny, you live in this kind of other alternate universe at Evergreen, where none of that matters.

**Teske:** Mm-hm.

**Fiksdal:** But it kind of does. I mean, if you go out, you do kind of want to know where you are, just like you. It’s nice to know that someone would have hired you in a flash, you know.

**Teske:** Yeah, and, well, that’s one of the reasons—now, I don’t know how legitimate it is, but I asked Byron—Byron Youtz—at our tenth anniversary celebration. I think it was tenth of the founding of the school. And I got a nice little certificate that called me “Founding Dean of Humanities and Arts.” And so I said, “Byron, could I use this as a title?”

**Fiksdal:** [Laughing]

**Teske:** He said, “Oh, I don’t see why not.” Because my problem was writing letters of recommendation for my students to graduate schools.

**Fiksdal:** Yeah.

**Teske:** If I just say “member of the faculty,” it sounds like somebody who comes in on Tuesday nights, you know?

**Fiksdal:** [Laughing]

**Teske:** And I didn’t want to say “professor,” because I’m not.

**Fiksdal:** Yeah.

**Teske:** But this way, I could say “Founding Dean of”—but I think I told you about this anecdotally before that writing a letter to Senator Howard Baker. Did I tell you that story?

**Fiksdal:** No, I don’t think so.

**Teske:** Okay, it went like this. For about four or five years, colleges were supposed to have Fulbright advisors. And, since I’d had one, I was made Fulbright advisor for Evergreen. And here, it would have been, I guess—what?—late ‘70s. There was a kind of crisis of taking funding away. And Howard Baker, Senator of Tennessee—at any rate, Baker was in the upper echelons of Republicans. There was even talk

about him running for President, and he would have made a very good candidate. His wife had psychiatric problems, and had been in a psychiatric hospital. And he already knew, though it wasn't as bad then as it is now, about how people would pick up something like that and just make life miserable. So, he decided he was not going to run for President.

But he was in charge of the committee that, in effect, oversaw the budget for the Fulbright program. And so we Fulbright advisors on the campuses got this rocket. "Please, please do what you can. If nothing else, write to Senator Baker and tell him how important the program is," and so forth. And so I tried very hard, Susan, to write a letter that would be no longer than one page, telling about what my experience had been, and about where it had led me, and then, coming up with a peroration. And it struck me, you've got to give him something that would work as a soundbite.

So, I said, "Okay. President Theodore Roosevelt said that we should speak softly and carry a big stick. Now, with our tremendous defense budget, we most certainly have a big stick, but it is also necessary that we speak softly, and the Fulbright program is one of the main ways of doing this."

**Fiksdal:** Nice, yeah.

**Teske:** You know, wrote it to him. Dan—Slade Gorton, as Senator—I think it was before Dan [Evans] became Senator . . .

**Fiksdal:** Oh, yeah. Yeah, he was.

**Teske:** But Slade was Senator, and he arranged it so that Howard Baker came and visited Evergreen, gave a speech and so forth. And Baker asked to see me. He just wanted to say hello. Okay, so that was nice. But then, I started getting communications, of all things, for prayer breakfasts—Founding Dean of Humanities and Arts—even though I—you know, where did they get that?

**Fiksdal:** Oh, so . . . yeah, from . . .

**Teske:** They got that from my letter to Baker, and that got me on the list, and for about 10 years, I was getting invitations to the prayer breakfast because of that. [laughing]

**Fiksdal:** For heavens' sakes.

**Teske:** But, okay, now, one of the things that probably is different—and here's my problem, my question to you. I did not see a copy of the recent *U.S. News & World Report*, but I noticed that we are in there as number one for schools having learning communities, at least schools west of the Mississippi, you know, in our particular regional university category. Okay.

Now, one of the things—and I'm wrestling with this right at the moment, because I'm trying to write some comments on the piece that I did for *Puget Soundings* before the college opened—what I was interested in, Susan, for my own writings is, could I somehow duplicate what my stump speech was,

you know, about Evergreen?

**Fiksdal:** Yeah.

**Teske:** And I realized, you've already written this, and it's that article for *Puget Soundings*. But I wanted to go through it and . . . now, I've got it somewhere . . . I wanted to go through it, and make comments from our point of view now.

**Fiksdal:** Oh, nice, yeah.

**Teske:** And the—at any rate, one of the things that was in there—this was not my title, but the editor—my title would have been “A New College for Washington State,” or something. The editor called it “Today's Alternative, Tomorrow's Prototype.”

Well, that's further out than I would have gone. And then, the issue is, I guess, to what extent have we been a prototype? Now, apparently there are a whole bunch of people who now offer something . . .

**Fiksdal:** Yeah, we have—

**Teske:** . . . that they call learning communities.

**Fiksdal:** But, you know, it's not exactly Evergreen, it's the Washington Center for Improving Undergraduate Education . . .

**Teske:** Exactly.

**Fiksdal:** . . . that Barbara [Leigh Smith] founded. And when she was a—I think that was her big insight when she became Provost was that all kinds of people knew about us, everywhere she went. The same for me. I was at an international conference at the end of my Fulbright in Hong Kong, and people came from all over, and lots from the U.S. And I happened to sit next to a group from Kentucky or someplace, and I said my home institution was the Evergreen State College, and wouldn't you know it, one of them said, “Oh, my son goes there.” You know? I mean, it's no matter where you are, academics know something about Evergreen.

Well, anyway, they know something about Evergreen, but they don't know very much about it. And what Barbara thought we should be doing is exporting our philosophy to people in whatever form they could manage it—so, doing linked courses or whatever. And she started, as you probably remember, with the community colleges nearby and things like that.

**Teske:** Yeah.

**Fiksdal:** But now, it's there—well, this last summer was the first time to have two national conferences at Evergreen, hosted by the Washington Center; that for years they've had one on learning communities—helping people see how they work, working with them for a very intensive week.

**Teske:** Great!

**Fiksdal:** And some faculty members are invited to come in and lead various things. But what's interesting about it is that now, there are lots of other people that know all about it who are coming from other places.

So, there are these linked courses, and then there are first-year seminars, which have been traced back to this idea, too, of a learning community, where—I don't know too much about the first-year seminars, but they have them at the UW and lots of different places—where students come together in a sort of first-year experience; that it's the same group every week, and they talk about the university, sort of the things that it can offer you. People come in and talk, and tell them about internships or tell them about whatever there is. And so, they might have a little bit of reading, but it's mostly about how the university or the college functions. And that has gone out as a kind of learning community that comes from . . .

And then, there are some universities—now, I can't remember too many of the names, but one in Florida—yeah, okay, so I can't remember any of them, I don't remember the name of the one in Florida—but where one part of the university is—runs like Evergreen does.

**Teske:** Mm-hm.

**Fiksdal:** And so, and that's a later experience. Instead of having, you know, the people that were revolutionizing the education at the same time you were, at the beginning of Evergreen, very few of those kept going . . .

**Teske:** Right.

**Fiksdal:** . . . with any sort of, you know, alternativeness to them. Santa Cruz, no. I mean, they went back to grades. Hampshire, whatever they did. But they're connected to all these other colleges or universities that are very well known, so, I mean, they have no issues with whatever they want to do.

But here, there are these other instances of people who have started these things. And they think the Mecca is Evergreen, and we just sit and criticize ourselves. [laughter] And worry about, really, do we know what we're doing?

**Teske:** Yeah. Well, but again, one really from left field. In 1998 was our sort of big trip to celebrate retirement from full-time teaching, Lilo and I went back northeast for, oh, about three weeks. And the two things we wanted to do, she wanted to get me to Newfoundland, where she had lived for about three years with her late husband, and I wanted her to see the places on the Maine coast where I'd waited on table at two small summer hotels. Okay.

So, we went to Newfoundland. It was a great trip. We went to Newfoundland first, and then

came down to the Maine coast to Ogunquit. And the place where I had waited previously had been a full American plan, but it had shifted to bed and breakfast, but it had been repainted and it looked just great, you know.

And we went in when there wasn't anybody around, in the afternoon, and I was saying to Lilo, "Well, the piano used to be there, and they've taken the drapes out here." And a man and his wife came in and very nicely said, "Can we help you?" I said, "Oh, I'm just reliving the old days. The summer of 1950, I was right out of high school, and I was waiting table here. It was called the Chapman House." "Oh, where are you from now?" "Well, Olympia, Washington. Have you ever heard of The Evergreen State College?" And the woman said, "Oh, my son goes there." [laughter] You know, it's one of those things.

And the—well, one of the guys that I'd worked very closely with in the mid-'70s—it was a five-year plan, and I was chairman of one of the component committees—he was from Skagit Valley Community College, Walter Coole. And he endeared me right away, because when we were on the committee and we were talking, he said, "Look." He said, "I'm fascinated with what you're doing at Evergreen." He said, "But I promise you, I will never ask you for a job, because I'm at a community college." He said, "They have let me—I have devised new ways of self-paced teaching of math and of logic. And they've let me do that, and I am very pleased. And I'm a hunter and a fisherman, and I love it there. So, don't worry, you know. But otherwise, I'm on your side."

**Fiksdal:** Yeah, yeah. [laughing]

**Teske:** And we got some things going, where he would send me students—send students to Evergreen. Or, after they finished their work with him, they would do individual contract internships and so forth. In other words, he was a big friend.

**Fiksdal:** Very nice, yeah.

**Teske:** Late '70s, he started doing some publications that caught people's eyes about these techniques. He was invited to a conference at University of Amsterdam to give a paper—of course, in English, because that's the way European conferences are run now—to give a paper on his methods of self-paced teaching of logic and math.

When he finished, question period. "We see that you're from the State of Washington. Do you know anything about Evergreen?" No questions about his techniques [chuckles], or about Skagit Valley. "What can you tell us about Evergreen?" And then afterwards, he asked one of the organizers, he said, "What was going on?" "Oh," he said, "we here at the University of Amsterdam, we're studying Evergreen. Now, what's happening now with their budget fight?" And so forth.



They were using the Freedom of Information Act and they were getting—they had copies of our budget justifications and so forth. And he finally said, “Look, why don’t you send somebody over?” He said, “Nah.” He said, “They’d give us a dog-and-pony show. You know, we’re not interested in that. We can find out what’s happening here.”

But he said the real kicker was he was walking around the campus of the University of Amsterdam, and here came a student in an Evergreen sweatshirt. [laughing] You know? And so, I don’t know, Susan.

**Fiksdal:** Huh. Yeah, word gets out. What are you going to do?

**Teske:** Yeah.

**Fiksdal:** It’s very exciting. It really is.

**Teske:** So, but I still—I think what I’m going to say about this use of the term “prototype,” I think, okay, we could do what we’re doing—and I believe I said this before in an earlier time—we were one of the last of the innovative alternative institutions to be founded in the 1960s. By being last, we risked the fact that we might not be open at all. There was a very real possibility that we would have been postponed, and if we would have been postponed, they would have paid us off and used the buildings for State offices and so forth. But that way, we could take advantage of what had gone wrong at the other schools.

**Fiksdal:** Yeah, that’s what I think the benefits were, because you hired people from these other schools. Yeah.

**Teske:** Yeah. And then, there was this—yeah, and they were blooded, they had the scars to show.

**Fiksdal:** Yeah.

**Teske:** Okay. Then there was this. I don’t know if you would have been aware of this, but, one by one—there was Prescott and there was Grand Valley and Thomas Jefferson—schools—New College—schools either closed down, or else became conventional, and the students were cast adrift. And Evergreen, not having distribution or major requirements, was one of the few places who would accept their credit. And all I could think of was something like Paris after the Russian Revolution, where you had these little bands of emigres, who had been forced out of Moscow, out of Leningrad and so forth, and they would be meeting in Paris. So, you’d have your cluster of former Prescott students, your cluster of this kind of student, you know. We were one of the few places, you know, that they could go to.

**Fiksdal:** Yeah, that’s very interesting.

**Teske:** And so we had that luxury. Then, there was the other thing, too, and that is, we could hire people to do what we wanted to do. Whereas in other places, people are hired as members of

departments, and their homes and their reward system will be within the department. And it's all very well what you're doing over there, with those bunch of people doing Kumbaya, and hugging each other, and fighting, and seminar-ing and so forth. But your real—your bread and butter, your promotion, your possibility of tenure and so forth depends upon what you do in the department, and especially about how much you've written for publication.

Okay. So, again, I've run into several places—one of them, our friends at Drew University in New Jersey. They do have graduate doctoral interdisciplinary programs. But when I was talking to the dean at the graduate school, he said, "A lot of our faculty members, who are really—belong to departments in the undergraduate college, they want to turn this place into a little Berkeley. You know?" So, he was trying to get interdisciplinary work done top down. It doesn't work unless you can hire people . . .

**Fiksdal:** Yeah, it really doesn't.

**Teske:** . . . from, you know, bottom up.

**Fiksdal:** Yeah.

**Teske:** And so I don't think you can call us a prototype, but it sort of got me. I don't—you probably don't know anything about this, but Mervin—even though he didn't quite like what Don and I were doing in extending his program idea into arts and sciences, Mervin still felt that we had hold of something so exciting that I recall, let's see, Neils Skov, because of his business and accounting background and somebody else—maybe Richard Jones—as a psychologist and so forth—Merv was actually thinking of founding a little consulting group, which would go around the country . . .

**Fiksdal:** Oh, that would have been great.

**Teske:** . . . and would be in hard demand to get things started. Would have been great, but here, as it turned out, by 1973—spring—we were fighting for our lives.

**Fiksdal:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Teske:** So it wasn't a question of—but one of your questions—your written questions—to me was, was I surprised at the versatility of our faculty members? Well, not really, Susan, because we were hiring for that. You know, it was something that we were continually looking at, you know. All very well, but can she do thus and such?

And, you know, and also, well, just take us two shining examples from the late '80s and '90s, Ratna Roy being able—did she exploit Evergreen? Well, not really, but making this a center for Orissi dance?

**Fiksdal:** Yeah.

**Teske:** And producing students who will then go out to teach Orissi dance? And then, of course, our

friend, Nalini Nadkarni, you know. Okay, you're a specialist in this. But, of course, one of the keys, unfortunately, is we dared not commit ourselves to a specific kind of equivalent of a major, so that students would assume, oh, because they had an Orissi dancer, even though she's retired, we can come to study Orissi dance. No, you can't do that.

See, there the irony is, for example, at Oberlin, one of my close friends, his predecessor was in the Spanish Department, but also taught comparative linguistics. So, when he retired, they look for a guy who could teach Spanish and comparative linguistics.

**Fiksdal:** That doesn't exist. [laughing] Yeah.

**Teske:** In other words, they had to keep fulfilling—what would you call it?—the inertial momentum that the school had established. And, of course, I'm sure you've lived through this; that somebody will come to you, and may actually visit a program you're teaching in now and say, "Oh, that's great. I want to take it next year." And you say, "Sorry, it isn't going to be here."

**Fiksdal:** Yeah, and that's a big problem, actually. Maybe we can talk a little bit about that next time, too, the changing curriculum.

**End Part 2 of 2 of Charlie Teske on 12-6-16**