

Priscilla (Pris) Bowerman
Interviewed by Susan Fiksdal
The Evergreen State College oral history project
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FINAL

Fiksdal: This is Susan Fiksdal with Pris Bowerman on May 11, 2023. Pris, I wanted to talk to you a little bit to start your oral history interview about how you grew up, where you grew up, about your family. If you could talk to us a little bit about that.

Bowerman: I was born in New York and lived in Queens, New York for nine years. Then my parents moved out on Long Island to Centerport, which is part of the township of Huntington.

I have two sisters. They're both older than I am, so I'm the baby. We all went to Catholic school when we were in New York, the local parish school.

My father was an electrical engineer. He went to NYU. He also had a professional license, so he could approve electric systems. My mom was a legal secretary until she had her first child, and then she was a mom.

My parents always brought all of us up as though, of course, we were going to go to college, which was really interesting. In fact, my surviving sister and I still wonder how my father went to college in the sense of paying for it and so on, because NYU is a private university, and both his parents were immigrants.

In fact, they were from northern Italy. My grandfather came first. Once he felt comfortable financially, he went back to Italy, and he brought Grandma over. My other relatives are from Belgium, and my mother was born in Belgium. She was about two and a half when she came with her mother three months after her father came.

Very different backgrounds. They all came through Ellis Island, so the records are available now, and I got them all. [chuckles] The manifest will show you what occupation people had before they came. My grandfather, Valesio, on my father's side was a chef, although he was put down as a cook. He eventually became the chef at a well-known French restaurant in Manhattan.

A family story about that is that he was asked not to show up in the dining room because he looked Italian, and they would know that the chef was not French. My parents would always say, "Northern Italian cooking and French cooking are very similar."

Fiksdal: Plus, the people look the same.

Bowerman: For both of them, education for their daughters was extremely important, so that was just understood.

Fiksdal: Did your mother go to college for her secretarial work?

Bowerman: No, she went to a secretarial school. She was a legal secretary, which she was quite proud of.

Fiksdal: That's what I was wondering how you get trained in legal. But maybe there, you have a track.

Bowerman: She got trained in that. She used to tell us about carbon copies, and you can't make a mistake and correct it on a legal document. It has to be correct all the way through, and you had four carbon copies. [laughing]

Fiksdal: It sounds like the evaluations at the beginning of Evergreen where you couldn't make a typo. And I remember different colors of correcting ink.

Bowerman: She just remembers having to start all over.

Fiksdal: Oh, yes awful!

Bowerman: It was very precise work in any case. I guess my father had always, always wanted to have his own house with some land just so he could have a garden. We looked for years for a place on Long Island and went farther and farther out on the island to find what they were looking for.

My father finally found a house he really liked, but he didn't like the quality of the construction. Then he found a builder he really liked, and the builder was planning a new development. He showed my father his plans. My father didn't like them, and he showed him his plans. The builder agreed to build that one on the corner, even though he didn't want to give up the corner to a new design.

My parents' house got built first. They allowed it to be shown by the builder, and all the other houses down the street were copies of that house because that's what people wanted.

Fiksdal: Oh, that's fabulous! He was an excellent designer.

Bowerman: I should back up a little because he did win an award from the architectural organization for his designs of the lights of either the Hudson Tunnel or the Lincoln Tunnel, I don't remember which. But he did the electric work for the lighting of the tunnels, and the award was not just for the effectiveness of the lighting, but for the aesthetic design. He was into very, very simple, almost minimalist-type design. The lights have been changed in both tunnels since then, but we did see them before I left New York.

When we went to Long Island, we all had our choice of what type of school we wanted to go to. We all chose public school. My oldest sister, because the Catholic school was starting in February, well,

it's September. She had to catch up six months' work because she didn't want to go back six months to get into the public school as a junior. My other sister was starting high school, and I was in fourth grade.

There were embarrassing times because you had these habits from Catholic school that didn't apply in public school. [laughing]

Fiksdal: Like what?

Bowerman: The one I remember most was every time you raised your hand and were called on in Catholic school, you stood up and you answered standing. At the public school, people giggled, and I didn't know at first why, but it didn't take me long. It took me about two weeks to learn to stay in my seat. [laughing]

Fiksdal: Yeah, because it's ingrained in you, and the kind of respect you showed, too, probably.

Bowerman: Yes, probably. I don't know about that difference because it's more subtle.

Fiksdal: You don't remember parochial school as well?

Bowerman: No.

Fiksdal: Like how much it might have affected you.

Bowerman: No. I do remember the sisters were strict. My oldest sister went through more than eight years of it, and the other went through eight years. They had their sisters who were terrible, and the sisters who were softer.

I do remember the first day of school. I remember there were about 60 kids in our classroom. Talking about ratios of 30 to one being too high. Well, some people could manage it. [laughter] What you need is a good ruler.

So, it was actually a really nervous, nervous time, and I think I carried that over a lot. You couldn't make mistakes. At a spelling bee, when you did stand around the room because, first, your hand was slapped, and then you sat down.

Fiksdal: Oh, my goodness.

Bowerman: Yeah, it wasn't hard, but it was very strict. But I loved public school. The first year, I walked to school. It was half a mile away. The following years, we went to different schools in the district, so we were always bused. My sisters were off to different schools, senior high, so that was different, too.

We lived half a mile in any direction, once we were out on the island, from swimming. It was all downhill, so it was only tiring when you came home. [laughter]

Fiksdal: When you were already tired.

Bowerman: My father had taught me how to swim in New York. That's a real strong memory for me, too. But all the kids went to swimming lessons at the Yacht Club In Centerport. You didn't have to

belong to the Yacht Club. It was a Red Cross class. I did that for several summers, and then we were off swimming whenever we wanted to.

I had a great, fun time growing up because there were a lot of kids my age—exactly my age—in my grade who lived in the area we were in. The woman across the way from us came over to introduce herself to my mom, and she said, “Oh! You have a nine-year-old! I have a nine-year old! She must meet Martha,” who was two houses away.

Martha lived on an old Vanderbilt estate, which was now a museum site. Her father was the curator. That Vanderbilt not only had his house, but he had a marine museum, so they needed a curator to maintain the exhibits as well as the buildings.

His four kids—one was my age—had the run of the property, including down to the hangar where we would swim. In the winter, the golf course was where we would sled. We were out all the time. I used to say to my mom, “How did we know when to come home for lunch?” She said, “I don’t know. You just came home when it was about the right time, and you went back.” That was how we played until well into our teens.

Fiksdal: That sounds idyllic.

Bowerman: It was so much fun.

Fiksdal: What about language? Did your mother teach you any?

Bowerman: No.

Fiksdal: What did she speak?

Bowerman: She spoke English. My parents both spoke very good English.

Fiksdal: She came at such an early age.

Bowerman: Yes, and her parents spoke English. I remember both of them, but my grandfather most because he lived till the 1960s.

They learned it when they came here. My grandfather on my mother’s side came and he only waited three months to call his wife and daughter over. Partly because he had two brothers-in-law in New Jersey, his wife’s brothers. When he came, they had the sponsorship money, and he had saved it up, too. They said, “No, no, no, you keep that.”

And they had a job for him. He got placed very, very quickly. But he learned English very fast—he was a very smart man—so then he felt ready for them to come over very quickly. My mother said she understood Flemish, but she couldn’t really speak it. She’d heard enough of it that she could do that.

My father's parents were Italian. His mother would always say to my mother, "Julietta, I no speak-a the English." Then she would turn around and continue reading *The New York Times*. [laughing] They did not have the best relationship. My mother loved her father-in-law, who I never met because he died of cancer before I was born. But I guess he had to have some English to hold his job and so on.

Fiksdal: That was a time when generations lived together, I guess.

Bowerman: Yes, that's right, and they continued to live in Manhattan when my parents moved out to the island. But by then, my father's father was dead. My mother's mother was dead, and my father's mother wouldn't move. She was real happy where she was. And grandpa on the other side, he was happy where he was, too in Queens. He would come out quite often to visit and spend weekends and things like that.

My sisters went to different schools because there was a township called Huntington that our little community was part of. But they had warned several small communities two decades ahead, that they would drop our students because the school will be too big at that point.

Centerport knew that was coming and the neighboring Greenlawn knew that was coming, so they planned a new high school together. They already had their own elementary schools, but they planned a new high school and junior high. My class was the first one to go all the way through, sixth grade to senior year. There were obviously graduates before because kids came in in later years.

It was called Harborfields High School because the old name of Greenlawn was Oldfields, and the old name of Centerport was Cow Harbor, and they didn't choose to call it the Old Cow School.

We were kind of a brand-new school, proving itself, and did real well in sports and academics, so it was nice. I think it was different because it was a new school and faculty were new to each other.

Fiksdal: And you were well supported. You had a lot of friends.

Bowerman: Oh, yeah. I had a huge cohort of friends. Where we lived in Centerport, you had to go up a hill, and then there was this plateau that lasted quite a while, and then it went down to the beach. I swear there were 30 kids in my grade who were there. The others were Greenlawn kids, pretty much.

We would play in gangs, and the dogs ran as gangs, too. [laughter] I remember they were always happy. "Oh, there's Nicky and Frisky!"

Fiksdal: What year were you born, just to situate you in time?

Bowerman: '44, December.

Fiksdal: It was expected for you to go to college. You did well in school. Where did you go to college?

Bowerman: I went to Vassar, which is just upstate New York in Poughkeepsie.

Fiksdal: Wasn't it kind of expensive to go to Vassar?

Bowerman: Yeah, it was then. But not like today!

Fiksdal: A private women's college.

Bowerman: Yes, it was a private women's college, part of the Seven Sisters. I guess it was. I had a small New York State scholarship. You got it based on need. You got it because you passed the exam well enough, and then it was based on need.

My parents were into saving. That was part of their background, I think. Also, my mother's father was. He played the stock market a lot, and so did my father. They did really well. So, my father paid for all three of us to go to college. My oldest sister went to Barnard in New York City. My other sister is an artist, and she went to Pratt Institute in Brooklyn. None of them were cheap.

Fiksdal: No, but they're well-known places.

Bowerman: Yeah, but my parents paid our way through. We didn't have any worry about that, which was really nice.

Fiksdal: What was it like to be at Vassar? Suddenly, you were plunged into an all-women's school.

Bowerman: Exactly. It was fun, actually. I had applied to a lot because back then, you applied to a lot of schools to be sure you got one you really liked. I think it was the only all-women's college I applied to. One was Radcliffe, but they shared classes already with Harvard.

But it was very comfortable. It was a very warm, caring environment. I don't know that co-eds wouldn't be also, but that's the way it was. It was small. It didn't feel that small, but it was 1,500 students, total.

Fiksdal: Yeah, that's small.

Bowerman: The entry class was 400 and then there would be some attrition. It's a beautiful, beautiful campus. Just gorgeous. I was back a couple of years ago. They've built a lot more buildings but it's still a beautiful campus.

I didn't find any trouble acclimating to it. They had lots of things organized for the weekend. There were buses every weekend to Yale, to Princeton, to Boston, and to New York City. They cost you something, but it was nominal. They would come back on Sunday evening or late afternoon, so you could easily spend the weekend if you had a place to stay. I did that fairly often, and I had mixers with those schools, either there or on campus.

We knew the routine by senior year. On that campus, all the underclassmen were in different dormitories, and you stayed in that dormitory for three years, unless you had a special reason, so you got to know the women in that dormitory really well as well as some others you saw in class a lot.

Senior year, everyone moved to the oldest main building, so then you hooked up with your good, old friends close there, whether they were from classes or from the old dorm. I thought, we have a whole week of sitting around before classes start with nothing to do. And it's a lovely time of year.

I got five friends together and I said, "Let's go to New York and just have a good time for two days." They were all up for it, so we went to the Dean of Students, who arranged the buses, and she goes, "Really? You have hardly been here three days." "Yeah, but we want to go." She said, "I'll see what I can do."

She came back and said, "I couldn't get you a bus because there are so few of you, but I got you a limo, and he'll be with you all day. You'll like it because he'll drop you off and then pick you up when you say." [laughter]

Fiksdal: Yes, I think I would like that.

Bowerman: We had a wonderful time. That was really fun.

Fiksdal: That's quite a memory.

Bowerman: That's how we started senior year.

Fiksdal: The infinite resources of Vassar. What did you study there?

Bowerman: I had applied for a program where I took two minors and one major. It doesn't leave you much room for spreading out. But it turns out that the minor requirements were very minor, so I was able to take most of what wanted anyway. Actually, it was very lax, because if they knew you were in that program, they didn't stick you with every requirement for the major either.

I did econ as my major, and then philosophy, which I loved, as a minor, and math as a minor, which went along with the econ.

Fiksdal: You must have been really good in math.

Bowerman: I loved the philosophy most, so I spent a lot of time thinking . . . well . . . what do you do with those two things? And I thought all I can do with philosophy is teach it, and I'm not sure I want to teach.

That's how I made econ my major and stuck with it. I could have gone either way for graduate school, but philosophy then in the graduate schools was very analytical, and I was not interested in that kind of philosophy.

Fiksdal: When you were thinking, all I can do is teach, you were thinking of a career.

Bowerman: Oh, yes.

Fiksdal: And you were around all these career-minded women.

Bowerman: Mainly. There were a few who were just going to go home and marry an old friend, but most people were going on to something.

Fiksdal: All these mixers and all this, this wasn't just to get married. You were beyond that period of women going to college to get married?

Bowerman: It was to have a date, have a boyfriend. [laughing] Maybe get married.

Fiksdal: That was still there.

Bowerman: Yeah, but the ones who were hooked up and going to get married after college early in the four years, they were in a different group. They were all attached to the idea of their marriage and that's it.

Fiksdal: You clearly just weren't around them.

Bowerman: Yeah. My closest friends were all heading for some kind of graduate work, maybe not necessarily PhDs but some kind of graduate work. I guess you just sort yourselves out that way over time.

Fiksdal: For graduate school, what were you aiming at? Were you aiming at? An MA or a PhD?

Bowerman: I went for a PhD. In the econ departments, at least, a number of them didn't let you apply for their master's. They didn't have a master's program. A master's was along the way to the PhD, so you had to be accepted to the PhD program.

I applied to three schools and only one was not that way, so that's where I was going. By that time, I had decided teaching was fine. I had noticed that a lot of economists—because I spent an internship summer in D.C.—they go back and forth between academia and government. And now, they do business of course.

Fiksdal: In that internship, what were you doing?

Bowerman: I was working with the Joint Economic Committee of Congress, and I was a researcher for them. It was really nice.

Fiksdal: It was fabulous.

Bowerman: I worked with the staff, not the committee members, but they did research for the Congresspeople, whatever they wanted researched. I learned a whole lot about beef exports between Argentina and the United States and Europe.

Fiksdal: But it's a real-world thing. People need to know this.

Bowerman: Oh, yeah, that's right. We wanted to get the trade. The British only ate Argentinian beef and we wanted to sell them hamburgers, but they thought hamburgers were terrible because at that time, Argentinian beef that was exported was low in fat. If you fry a low-in-fat hamburger, it's kind of

tough and chewy. We wanted to show them what an American hamburger tasted like. So, we were reporting on, why is it that the British market is with Argentina and not with us, and what could we do?

We eventually got the British market, but I think, in part, because the Argentinians had some trouble agriculturally as well. Our farmers did a lot of demonstrations in cities of American hamburgers. "Oh, that's pretty good." [laughing]

Fiksdal: That's a whole story there, Pris. Never heard it before. Did you have a mentor as an undergrad? How did you get steered to a PhD, do you think, and which programs to choose?

Bowerman: I guess there was an old woman economist on the faculty at Vassar. Edna McMann, I think. She acted as one, kind of. Then there was a man whose was middle-aged. Marshall was his last name. They both took a light hand in guiding [me].

She was so funny because one spring when I went on the internship program in D.C., she stood over the whole program, but she knew I was an economics major.

She was explaining to somebody sitting next to her on the bus behind me that I had decided I really preferred art history, so I wasn't going to be an economist. I said, "No, I'm still going to major in economics. I'm just going to do the museums here because—

Fiksdal: I just liked museums so I couldn't be an economist. How funny.

Bowerman: She got it straight.

Fiksdal: Where did you go for your PhD?

Bowerman: I went to Yale. I was very familiar with the Yale campus because of the dating between Vassar and Yale, so that part of it was comfortable. I hated Yale academically. I just did not like the econ department. It was a very top department. Probably the only one that was listed higher was MIT, and it was competing with MIT to be the most mathematically inclined econ department. That wasn't really my basic interest, but you had to get it under your belt to go through the program.

I did not enjoy it. A lot of the professors were extremely distant. They could be the opposite. We had James Tobin for theory the third quarter. You had to take three written exams and an oral exam to get past your comps.

One of the written exams was in econ history, which was simple. All you had to do was memorize what the prof thought and repeat it back to him. The theory was the hard part, and I don't think I got enough mathematics in my theory classes as an undergraduate, so I struggled a lot.

But the third quarter was the hardest. It was about capital, and nobody understands capital and time and all that stuff. But it was taught by James Tobin, who, at the time, was on the Council of

Economic Advisers. He'd come in and he'd put all these formulas on the blackboard. Econ theory is nothing but mathematical formulas where each letter stood for something in econ.

One day, somebody dared to ask him if he used any of this when he was in Washington and he goes, "No, of course not." [laughter] He says, "After you practice this long enough, and look at numbers long enough, you get a sense, a feeling in your gut."

Fiksdal: Oh, this is really disappointing.

Bowerman: I thought, great, it does have a human side to it.

Fiksdal: But it seems like, why are you learning this theory? It doesn't give you the inspiration for this hard exam.

Bowerman: My gut tells me.

Fiksdal: "Finally, I'd like to say, my gut says give me an A+ because I sat through this."

Bowerman: Exactly. You had to take two areas of specialization, so I did economic development and trade. The trade was another Washington guy who was very good, but young and distant.

The development people were much more human. They integrated a lot of sociological thinking into their work, and they were people that worked in the field. They also developed theory, or else they wouldn't be at Yale, but they were more interesting. So, that's the area I started to do my dissertation in once I passed the comps. I also got sick at that time with Crohn's, and I was so disenchanted with the school, so I didn't get very far in my research work.

I got married and we both had been at Yale five years, so we started applying for jobs. We decided to take the one that looked like the best job. It was getting very hard to have two people picked up at the same university at that time. And my husband wanted to be on the West Coast because he spent some time in California.

He got an offer from Oregon, and we talked to Oregon. They said, "Oh, people commute all the time up to Portland from Eugene."

Fiksdal: From Eugene? Lies.

Bowerman: And there's lots of schools in Portland. Because we're used to commuting, being from New York, but they don't commute here.

Fiksdal: There are no trains.

Bowerman: Exactly. Every hour on the hour, you can get a train to New York. When we got here, we found out the truth, there was an opening at Oregon State, which was only 40 miles up the freeway, so I applied for it. It was part-time, and I got it.

The first year, I just taught basic econ principles for half-time. The second year, the chair hired me to go full-time, continuing to teach the same stuff, but to do research with him on women's labor force participation. That was interesting at the time.

Then my husband decided not to finish his dissertation, and that was the end of his career in academia because he was a white male in literature. [laughing]

I said, okay, it's my turn, and I went into the job market, and I applied. In the main economics journal, there were some openings that existed. There were only 20 that year—very few listed there—so I wrote to all of them. I wrote a letter saying, "This is my academic background. I've had two years of teaching experience. I understand you have an opening in economics." I just wanted to add, though, that I had a secondary interest in philosophy.

Out of these 20 letters, I got three responses. One is Evergreen, one is Hampshire College, and one is an innovative College at Redlands. It was that one sentence that I put in.

Fiksdal: I recognized that that would be it because I read a lot of applications.

Bowerman: It did show as an undergraduate. My dissertation as an undergraduate had combined philosophy and econ, so if they looked any farther, they could see that. I thought, oh, my.

I always advised my students who were applying, "If there's something you love but you're not going to apply for that, do mention it. It can make a real difference to your future."

Fiksdal: The alternative colleges were the ones that were interested.

Bowerman: Yes, three alternative colleges. That's right.

Fiksdal: What happened? Did you go for interviews to all of them?

Bowerman: I went to interviews at Hampshire. Redlands didn't follow up. I don't have any reason why. I went to Hampshire, which is in Amherst, so, going back to the East Coast. Hampshire, as you probably know, is linked to four other schools in the area.

They were very nice, but after the first day, the guy said, "I have to be honest with you. We are all feeling so bad. We lost a faculty member last year. She was a woman in your class at Yale in economics, and when we saw your application, we thought, Oh! Maybe she's come back! He said, "We have been so unfair to you through this whole day."

Fiksdal: That is weird.

Bowerman: I said, "Thank you for telling me." So, that was the end of that. After I was out, they closed the position and didn't hire for I don't know how long. They said, "We're not ready to be objective in hiring."

But Evergreen came through. I came up from Eugene. Met Larry Eickstaedt, Charlie Teske, who was the Dean at the time, Llyn De Danaan.

Fiksdal: What year are we talking about?

Bowerman: We're in '73. I came in September '73, so I came up in the spring of '73.

Fiksdal: At least we had a woman in the deanship. That was major.

Bowerman: That's right. Llyn was there. Oscar Soule was a Dean. Charlie, Oscar,, Llyn, but Larry was the greeter, probably from the hiring committee. Those are the people I remember from the interview.

Fiksdal: Was it a two-day affair?

Bowerman: Yes, it was two days. I stayed over at the Governor House.

Fiksdal: Oh, you did?

Bowerman: Drove up there and gave them a call and said, "I'm here." "Okay, we'll come by tomorrow morning at 9:00."

On the second day, I think I drove right back to Eugene. I'm not sure. It was a long day. I got the acceptance letter, so we came up. The first team I taught in was Matter of Survival, which I thought was a hilarious title for the first course. [laughing]

Fiksdal: It is because you're in a new position you've got to survive. You're in a new place. You're a New Yorker.

Bowerman: [Laughing] That's right. Totally different place. I didn't experience any of the West Coast as totally different. There were differences, but they struck me as fairly subtle. I've had family come out, and I've met other people from the East Coast who thought, oh, it's shocking! And I was like "I don't think it's so different."

Fiksdal: Maybe because you lived a rural lifestyle for your childhood.

Bowerman: Yeah, kind of. It was suburban but it had that rural heart to it.

Fiksdal: That estate is what I'm thinking of as rural.

Bowerman: That's right. Then, in Connecticut, we didn't live in New Haven. We had a car and we lived about five miles out in Bethany. But, like so many Eastern cities, five miles out can be country—and it was country. We lived in what was then a 150-year-old farmhouse that was owned by a math faculty member at Yale.

They rented the one-bedroom apartment upstairs and we rented it. We got to know them real well as friends, and then they introduced us to a visiting faculty member who was more our age. They were almost lifetime friends as it turned out. The landlord went on a sabbatical to California and these

people came in from somewhere else to be on a sabbatical at Yale. That's how we lived in the same house for a year and got to know each other.

Fiksdal: It sounds like you had such a supportive atmosphere.

Bowerman: Yeah. And that was a four-acre property. They didn't do anything with it, but neighbors' cows would get caught in the vegetable garden and we'd have to shoo them out. That was very rural. Across the way was an Italian farming family. Oh, I had to come over and have lunch! The big deal. [laughing] It was very fun that way.

Fiksdal: So now, let's get back to Evergreen. Your first program was Matter of Survival.

Bowerman: Yes. Al Wiedemann was the coordinator. Russ Fox had one experience year ahead of me. Then there was Medardo Delgado, who I think left after that year.

Fiksdal: He was new?

Bowerman: I don't know that he was new. It might have been his second year, like Russ. I'm not sure.

Fiksdal: You were suddenly team teaching. You hadn't done that before.

Bowerman: That's right, and you don't know what your colleagues think is a good workload, a heavy workload, a light workload, so you're always working that out.

They didn't quite know how economics fit but they knew it must fit. But the program's been set up in their minds largely as natural history, living off the land type thing, about which I knew almost nothing. Actually, I pulled on a lot of my interests outside of straight econ.

We each chose to run one seminar on a different topic from everybody else—not a common book—so I did Utopians. I'd read a lot about them in philosophy and some literature classes, so it was no problem for me to do that. It attracted a number of students.

Fiksdal: Plus, it was fun.

Bowerman: Yeah, it was great fun. Teaching writing, at first, the thought of it was daunting, but I didn't have any trouble with it because I think I went at it like an editor would, only maybe on the second version of the manuscript. A lot of detail, and then a long, long note trying to explain what was going on. Students appreciated that, and it worked. It was very time consuming.

Fiksdal: I saw some of your annotations. You really rewrote their papers for them. It was a huge amount of work.

Bowerman: Yes, exactly. But I got to really like to do that.

Fiksdal: Yeah, if it worked.

Bowerman: I didn't do it growling the whole time, although sometimes I thought, how can they not even know that? [laughter]

Fiksdal: But the students at the time were good. They usually had transferred in.

Bowerman: Yes, and they knew what they were achieving, I think.

Sometime during that first year, the college said how old the average student was, and they were my age. That was another thing that I think was different, and I liked it. It didn't make me uncomfortable. If anything, it probably made me comfortable. The give and take you have with students, I wasn't learning a new language generation-wise, so that was good.

Fiksdal: Were you hooked by Evergreen? How did you feel that first year? Did you like the philosophy?

Bowerman: Yeah, I liked it a whole lot. The main thing I remember struggling with, with the colleagues, was workload and how much you ask the students to do. I think I always wanted to ask them to do more.

I developed a rule, which I shared with my faculty team. Whatever you assign the students, they'll do 80 percent of it. So, if you assign them a whole lot, they're still going to do more than if you assign a little bit. They're not going to be much more thorough with a small reading than with a large reading.

Fiksdal: That's a very good insight. I wish that you had told me that.

Bowerman: I don't know if it's true anymore, but that's—

Fiksdal: I'd say they do less, the last year that I was there.

Bowerman: They never quite do it to the depths you want. Right?

Fiksdal: Right.

Bowerman: When we found a middle ground, I was willing to compromise on those things. Then I had control of my own little seminar group, and we did a book a week, which became the standard, I found, in programs I taught in. But they did have other assignments from the program in general.

I learned so much, especially from Al, because he was in natural history, and I was so interested. I had done a lot of gardening before then, but not natural history. I was comfortable with plants and being outdoors and that sort of stuff, but I just learned so much from him. He's a very comfortable person, and funny.

Fiksdal: You had these seminars—yours was Utopia—but did you have lectures that everyone came to?

Bowerman: Yes.

Fiksdal: They did have full program activities.

Bowerman: That's right. I can't even remember right now what I lectured on or what any of them lectured on. We also had field trips. I think that's what's coming through now. And, of course, we had a retreat at the beginning, which was a totally new idea for me.

Fiksdal: That must have been strange.

Bowerman: Yes. And it was a horrible stretch in one sense that because of the Crohn's, my ability to eat was very limited, and we were going to live off the land.

Fiksdal: Oh, no.

Bowerman: That was a death sentence. I had not told anyone I had Crohn's because I thought it might be a great way to get fired.

So, I brought foods that I could eat, but also that didn't need to be cold and kept them in my pockets. [laughing] You know what? The students were eating salal berries, anything and everything they could make out of salal berries.

Fiksdal: They're just terrible, too.

Bowerman: And would have killed my gut.

Fiksdal: Exactly.

Bowerman: So, I survived.

Fiksdal: They're very seedy, and you couldn't take the fiber.

Bowerman: Yeah, exactly, and at that time, I couldn't take skin and I couldn't take seeds.

Fiksdal: They don't taste good either.

Bowerman: They liked it. I think they had sugar and flour, so they probably added a lot of sugar.

[laughing]

Fiksdal: A lot of sugar. That would do it. I've had a lot of things from salal.

Bowerman: It was at least two nights.

Fiksdal: They were always long retreats.

Bowerman: Yeah. I liked getting to know your students that way. It wasn't particularly great about learning about your colleagues because I was always trying to eat when they weren't around. [laughing] That was a funny experience.

But I liked the idea, so I wasn't against the idea. But the next year, I taught alone in an individual group contract, so I was in control.

Fiksdal: Was that something that the students organized, like they said, "We want this"?

Bowerman: Yeah, absolutely. I would say in winter quarter, I was approached by an upper classman, Geoff Rothwell.

Fiksdal: I know Geoff really well.

Bowerman: Chuck Nisbet was the only economist on the faculty besides me at the time. The year I was interviewed, he was away, so they actually didn't interview me with any economist.

Fiksdal: Wow.

Bowerman: Yeah. Lyn was probably the closest one topic-wise, as an anthropologist and sociologist, but they didn't have anyone else.

Fiksdal: That's interesting.

Bowerman: Then I met Chuck when he came back, but we weren't teaching together at that time. Anyway, Geoff approached me and said, "What we needed was a really good thorough big group contact with lots of material. I was ready for that, so he and I designed it together. I think mainly he brought me ideas and I'd edit them.

Fiksdal: And translated them into a curriculum.

Bowerman: Exactly. He got a lot of students to come, so we had practically a full 20 students.

Fiksdal: Good for him.

Bowerman: Yeah, and it was two quarters. At the end of that, I went into individual contracts for the spring quarter.

Fiksdal: You know that Geoff worked in Paris for the nuclear power something.

Bowerman: I knew he was working in that area.

Fiksdal: His office looked out at the Eiffel Tower. I go to France every two years, so I think it was pre-Covid, and we got together. We were talking because he's always had French. His French is terrible. [laughter] But I remembered him speaking French. And we were friends. He said, "I never took a class from you," and I was surprised. I remember him coming to my house and helping me cook, preparing some things for students to come over.

Bowerman: In France?

Fiksdal: No, in the States. So, that second year, you got to do economics, that probably helped you ground yourself also.

Bowerman: Probably, I'm not sure it felt that way, but, yeah. We did the history of theory.

Fiksdal: You're teaching stuff you know.

Bowerman: Oh, yeah.

Fiksdal: You're in control, like you said.

Bowerman: You can go right back to stuff you've been doing so much of.

Fiksdal: Exactly. I wanted to ask if you remember what the campus looked like when you were there because it was still getting built.

Bowerman: My office was in Lab I, I think. I certainly was where Al's and Russ's were. I think I was in that building, too. I did have a view. I wasn't in the basement at that time.

There was a Lab I, but there wasn't a Lab II, there wasn't an Arts Annex. There was a library. I think the lecture halls were there, but I don't remember. We didn't use them if they were. Or did we? [laughing] I'm not sure about the lecture halls. The Student Union Building, the first part of it was there. The gym was partly there. It was pretty. It had a lot of trees, but they were young compared to now. Compared to now, it was empty, but back then, I liked it.

The parking lots were still where they are now, so you still had to walk from your car to campus. I liked the idea behind it; that it was a city in the woods. Was it that year? Yes, that year—my second year. I began swearing at the parking lots, how far away they were. It's just not proper. [laughter] It was wrong! Then I found out I was pregnant. That's what's wrong with the parking lots.

Fiksdal: You'd been there two years?

Bowerman: Yeah. I didn't know I was pregnant for five months.

Fiksdal: Wow.

Bowerman: That's why it was really getting onerous. Nobody knew that. That was kind of a tense time. I didn't feel tense like my doctor apparently felt tense, but I'd been on all these medications for Crohn's, and all of a sudden, I wasn't only just getting pregnant, I was very pregnant, and I was still on all these medications. So, he did some research where we found that one of them would have killed the baby by now.

Fiksdal: Wow.

Bowerman: Another one, they didn't know what it would do. They had no research on that one. The one they knew about they had research on rabbits and mice. They wouldn't develop properly in the first months of getting miscarried.

Fiksdal: Were you scared then?

Bowerman: No, I think I was a very happy pregnant woman. I wasn't, but I know he was. He was about our age, so he wasn't terribly experienced either.

The baby came in summer, of course, and he was perfectly fine. My doctor came in very early in the morning and he said, "I'm sorry to wake you up but I'm sure you'll be glad to know that we gave the baby a very thorough examination and he's perfectly all right." And I go, "Yeah, of course he is."

[laughing]

Fiksdal: Who was that baby?

Bowerman: That was Jude.

Fiksdal: That was summer. Did you teach in the fall?

Bowerman: Yes, there was no such thing as maternity leave.

Fiksdal: And you didn't ask for one?

Bowerman: I don't remember if I asked for one then. I know I did the second time, in 1981.

Fiksdal: What year was that?

Bowerman: '75.

Fiksdal: Oh, Pris, I got pregnant the next year, '76, and I said, "I want a relief." I gave birth at the end of fall quarter.

Bowerman: Oh, you were in the middle. Did they give you sick leave?

Fiksdal: They gave me two quarters.

Bowerman: Wow. That's what I got, too, with my second in 1981.

Fiksdal: I did contract students. But still, it was a lighter load, and it was too much. It was better not to do anything. So much work.

Bowerman: With the first one, I went right back as well. He was an early July baby, so I had some time. And I had a great caregiver, who I brought him to. We would have been out here in Lacey by then—not very far—and she was also in Lacey.

That was easier, because when he got a little older, we started putting him in daycare and preschools, and I had to drive him to different places each day. Some days I had to leave campus to move him and then come back to campus for my next appointment or class.

Fiksdal: And trying to find caregivers was really hard and daycare was really hard.

Bowerman: Yeah. My caregiver had done it for a while. She had four school-aged children who came, and she took two babies. He was one. She was really good. She ran her house differently than I ran mine, but I found that my kids, at least, were totally adaptable. Once they could speak, they would say, "Carol does it this way, but Mom does it that way." They just adapted to it, so I thought that was good.

That worked out very well. I was off all the medicines, because at the end of the pregnancy, I was still on one. They wouldn't dare take me off it because they didn't know what would happen. He had four doctors at the delivery. I thought, my gawd, I'm meeting all the doctors at Group Health. Why are they all here? Then I go, oh, I know why they're all here. He didn't know which of us was going to be in trouble. But it turned out everything was fine.

The one that I was still on, I just said, what the hell? I went off it, and then three months later, I told my doctor, and he looked at me, and he said something my father once said to me. "Well, you're still alive. I guess it's okay." [laughing] I didn't go back on it for years. That was a good thing.

Fiksdal: Okay, Pris, we've had a little break. As we were chatting during the break, and one thing that you and I shared was being a mother, and especially in those early years, there were very few of us who

were mothers. It was a lot of work to be a mother, to run a household, to do all the work Evergreen requires of you, even to just be in class that much. Let's talk about that a little bit. What was your experience?

Bowerman: Busy. Busy, busy, busy. I'm glad I was young then. There was no way you could do it if you were very much older. You were physically moving back and forth a lot. I don't think any of the mothers—when I was pregnant, Carolyn Dobbs was pregnant. You were shortly after.

Fiksdal: I was after. Barbara Smith perhaps?

Bowerman: Should be right because Chris is the same age as Jude. I wasn't close to Barbara at that time, but there was Russ Lidman's wife, Raven. We were all in the same corridor, by that time, in the basement of the library. The dark hole. But that's when we were pregnant, not when my babies were born. The really hard time was when they were young—when they were infants, and till they went to school, when we had some other place to put them most of the day. [laughing]

In the last few months of the first pregnancy, I was doing individual contracts, and it was really good because I gave myself a two-hour lunch and I took a nap after I ate. That was very helpful. Because I was—and I think most women are—very tired, or sleepy anyway, the last trimester.

Busy would be the main thing. I think back now, at my age, and ask, how could I keep all of that in my head at once? But that part didn't seem so hard. I was able to say, "Okay, class is done. Now I get in the car. Now I drive home, and I pick up the kid, and I play with him because he's so cute." [laughing]

Fiksdal: What was your husband doing while you were teaching?

Bowerman: At that time, he was teaching at Capitol Business College downtown. When he decided not to go ahead with his doctorate in literature, he had also been good at math, so he started taking all the courses he could in accounting at the community college, and he got hired right away by them to teach business math and business English, which was no problem. At that immediate time, that's where he was. But he was taking courses as well as working.

Fiksdal: So, he was super busy.

Bowerman: He was busy as well. That's right. After he finished all that coursework, he had enough to get into the State government because you had to write essays on your application and he could explain that he didn't have a degree in accounting, he had all this work and study. He got in, and once you get in, your prior job was another State job, so you qualified.

Then he got his CPA, and I think he was the second in the state that year, so he got taken on by the Auditor's Office. But there were months and months and months of studying for the CPA, so he was also busy with that.

All along, we both worked the whole time. His job was one where you couldn't take time off. My job was flexible, so I did most of the childcare—during the week, certainly. But, as I was trying to say earlier, mentally, I could keep my attention focused on whatever I was doing at that time. The hardest part, of course, was when you were trying to either look at student papers or read the text and have it in your head, and the baby was awake. [laughing] That was the hardest part.

I remember the third year—Jude is now an infant—and my parents were visiting, and we had the faculty seminar at my house, which was for my convenience because of the baby. Charlie Teske was one of the faculty members. He met my parents. It was kind of embarrassing because he was trying to communicate with them like he was their peer, and I was the child. He says, "It's so wonderful. She's had this baby, and when she teaches with us, you wouldn't know she had him." I thought, well, I don't know, Charlie!

Fiksdal: Never out of my mind.

Bowerman: The highest compliment he could share with my parents.

Fiksdal: It was such a different world for men.

Bowerman: It really was.

Fiksdal: They couldn't even conceive of what we were doing. Women's work was women's work. It allowed them to come to campus, read the paper, have a cup of coffee. Are you kidding? I came to campus moments before I had to be there. I was dropping my kids off, or dealing with them and their breakfast habits, and all that stuff.

Bowerman: That's right, and sometimes they're sick. And sometimes you'd have to make excuses, and that was nice when you had a team. I always had teams who understood, so I could say, "My baby's very sick and I can't come in this morning. Could you do something with my seminar group?" And they would manage.

Fiksdal: And what about—I admit that I did not go to faculty meetings because they were from 3:00 to 5:00 on a Wednesday.

Bowerman: I don't think I did either.

Fiksdal: There was just no way, so I missed a bunch of talk about ways the college could go, a lot of planning for the future. I just missed it.

Bowerman: I don't remember any important ones. [laughing] I don't think I thought they were terrible important. When we began to divide the curriculum into specialty areas, I did go to specialty areas meetings, but they were earlier. They would end by 3:00 or 3:30, and that was okay with me.

Not only the fact of having to pick up the child, but your own exhaustion. You needed a down [time] before dinner or whatever you were going to eat. Later afternoon didn't work.

I began teaching with Alan Nasser, who liked to get to campus at noon. But he was very flexible, so we presented it as an option to students. Lectures started at noon and went to 2:00, which was fine with both of us. But if you wanted a morning seminar, you'd better sign up for mine. By that time, my children were older, so we did have late afternoon faculty seminars. That was usually over a dinner or something, so that worked out.

Fiksdal: What was it like teaching with Alan Nasser?

Bowerman: You want me to go there already?

Fiksdal: Well, you mentioned him.

Bowerman: That's fine. It was great. I know a lot of colleagues couldn't believe that that could be possible. Alan was mainly a philosopher, but he had a lot of economics background, and I was the reverse of him. So, I think in terms of our interests, that was a good coordination. We were both New Yorkers, so there was something of that background thing that you get the same jokes, you make the same jokes. I admired his logical mind and the way he could use it, and I think that was mutual. We'd planned lectures to coordinate with each other, it usually worked very smoothly, so that was good, too.

He had a following. He had some students who really wanted to be in his seminar, and he had some students who really didn't want to be in his seminar. Some students wanted to be in mine. Some just came over because they didn't want to be in his. But lots of times, we would teach more than one quarter, so we would shuffle students. And I think students were often surprised at the quality of his work. He could be sharp, and students could really resent some of the ways—and my colleagues were more sensitive to it than I was, I suppose.

Fiksdal: His office was next to mine for years in Lab II. For years, he was next to me. Never talked to me.

Bowerman: I think that some of the students felt that way.

Fiksdal: I didn't really talk to him either.

Bowerman: I had an office next to him for a couple years in Lab II. His office got so crowded with stuff, he would meet in the hallway outside. He would bring out two chairs when he met with his students,

and I had to shut my door because I couldn't hear anything. So, mine was pretty neat and his was floor-to-ceiling books, papers and everything else. We were quite a contrast that way.

I learned a lot from teaching with him, and he claimed he learned a lot from teaching with me, so that was good. I knew a lot about Marx, which was his initial strong point, I think. Because when I was at Vassar, in my junior year, a philosophy prof invited me into his senior-year seminar. What he did with that seminar was he had one student study Marx, one student study Freud, and one student study existentialism for about six weeks. We had a semester system. He taught during those six weeks, and then we each had two weeks to teach the class about what we'd studied.

I, of course, was assigned Marx because he knew I was an economist. I think I read everything that was available at the time. It just made sense to me. I could see the logical system. It's a matter of philosophy. If you like it, and you can pick out the logic, then eventually, you know you have it because you can extend it. I did that way back in college, so no problem for me doing it when I got to Evergreen.

No problem criticizing it either. As part of my undergraduate thesis, usually you present it, but you say what's bad or weak about it. That was good. It was a more conservative approach to what's wrong with it than Alan's was. It's okay. They're both interesting.

We had a lot of things where we had similar interests. We enjoyed teaching together.

Fiksdal: You respected each other.

Bowerman: Yeah. We were good lecturers. He was a great lecturer. As long as I talked up loudly enough, I was good lecturer.

Fiksdal: You have a softer voice. Did you teach with him once, or many times?

Bowerman: Many times. The first time we taught was in the standard Political Economy and Social Change program. I think we did that twice. Then we did Paradox of Progress. I think that was two-quarter coordinated studies. This is probably out of order, but we did The New Insecurity, which was another two-quarter piece.

We did Philosophy of Religion, which was another two quarters. That was the biggest leap for me. It was all philosophy, and he knew I'd done a lot of study of religion, but not philosophy of religion—religious figures, spirituality, Catholicism, Protestantism, that kind of thing. But I'd not done philosophy of religion, and he knew that. Half the first quarter would be Wittgenstein, who I had not read, but he didn't mind that I was a student along with him.

I would read ahead, and then my lectures would be about, okay, this is what Wittgenstein is saying about this religious concept or set of concepts, and this is what Christianity generally teaches. Where are they the same? Where are they different? What perspective does he lend on that?

We had some really good students and really enthusiastic students. They were enthusiastic both for his work and my work. I had them coming in my office all the time. One of them had been raised by a Protestant minister and he was still caught up with his faith beliefs, and his father's relationship with him. Two of the students went off and did a Buddhist 10-day meditation seminar.

Fiksdal: He and his dad?

Bowerman: No, his close friend, who was also in the program. I saw them when they came back. They nearly broke my office down. [laughing] "You can't believe the experience!" It was amazing for them, because it was not only intellectual engagement, but a deeply personal engagement as well. That was very fun, and I learned so much from reading Wittgenstein. That was great.

Then Alan and I did two years' worth of Rights and Wrongs with José Gómez. There were a lot of programs with Allen, probably more than with anybody else. But we did span both econ and social sciences and then the religion part. Rights and Wrongs was a great deal of fun, too.

This was one of José's first teaching experiences. We had been deans together, so we knew each other, but we hadn't taught together. He's an attorney, so I'd never taught with an attorney, and he has a certain mind, too. So, you've got this philosopher over here and this attorney over here and a social scientist in between them. [laughing]

At first, he did not get the philosophical approach that Alan uses, and understandably, with a lawyer's background. It's very different, because instead of talking about what rights you're guaranteed in the Constitution and how they apply in cases, which was Jose's strong point initially, Alan and I were trying to deal with, whoever started talking about rights? That's way back in the beginning of the Enlightenment period. Before that, rights were not part of the Medieval mindset.

Fiksdal: Oh, I can hear echoes of what you taught him because I taught with him, and he talked about rights. Okay.

Bowerman: He did not get it when we said, "Where did rights emerge from?" It was like there's no answer to a question like that. But, of course, there is one historically. I would go into it historically; Alan would go into it on a philosophical plain. And poor José would be raising objections, and Alan very politely and nicely would try to show him what he was getting at. Well, the second year he had it, or pretty much had it. He was still thrown sometimes. But they very often had great disagreements and I was just sitting there going, "Ok, each of you to your own corners. Let's start again on the topic here." [laughing]

Fiksdal: Alan had you do the Philosophy of Religion where he already knew quite a bit.

Bowerman: Yes, exactly.

Fiksdal: Did you teach with him, where he had to grow and learn?

Bowerman: Yeah, because in the beginning, he had a whole lot of questions about, what is it that standard orthodox economics has to say about some of these topics? He was thrown by the more complicated contemporary views. He'd studied the standard theory as an undergraduate or maybe as a graduate. But there had been a lot of developments since we were in graduate school, and they were complicating ones. A lot of the introduction of the idea of risk and what that does to your predictions and things like that, so he was very interested in that kind of stuff. In the classroom, you didn't go into it too much because it's pretty advanced stuff, but we would talk about it a lot.

Yeah, we did a lot of back and forth, and oftentimes, when he wrote a paper, I would say, "This does not follow that." He'd see what I meant and get to a better step-by-step procedure.

Fiksdal: He was writing academic papers?

Bowerman: Yeah, he wrote a lot, and he also presented. Once he went to Scotland to St. Andrews and that really thrilled him.

Fiksdal: That's prestigious, yeah.

Bowerman: He was a regular contributor to professional journals.

Fiksdal: We have a little time left. I wanted to go back to my first experience with you, so you'll have to try to remember back. I was hired in '74 but I was there previously teaching, teaching French language, with whatever money they could find and throw at me. It was never regular. Every year, I quit, and they'd give me a little better deal the next year.

Bowerman: That's why you went on maternity leave.

Fiksdal: It was ridiculous. Anyway, '74, maybe the summer of '75—I don't remember when this might have happened, but we had a Danforth grant, where a bunch of faculty came who were interested in working over the summer, and you'd get paid. We would pair up, and you and I paired up. The goal was to learn about each other's discipline so that we would be better prepared for teaching.

Bowerman: I remember this vaguely.

Fiksdal: I just remember so clearly because you had me reading all these things, actually things that I read later again when I taught with you. Adam Smith and all these people.

Bowerman: John Locke.

Susan: John Locke. I'm reading these big treatises, and I get pretty interested. I didn't like economics when I was in college. I had one course and I found it quite hard. I asked for help. I didn't get help. The TA just took me for a beer, and I thought, this is great. [laughing]

Bowerman: If I loosen up, maybe I'll get it.

Fiksdal: I got through it, but I was not happy with it. I thought it would be a good challenge. Each of us would read, and then we'd get together, and we'd talk about it. At the end, we talked to each other, evaluating our own experience doing this work.

I remember that you said to me, "I don't know what I'm doing in economics. Literature has all the answers." I looked at you and I started laughing and I said, "Oh, my gawd! I'm in literature, and it seems to me that economics has all the answers." [laughter] I just remember that so well because we had fallen in love with each other's field—for me, at a low level, and a long time ago when people wrote well and I could understand it, not like a textbook.

Meanwhile, you were reading all these French novels in translation, because little did you know that English literature was not my thing. But you did enjoy it.

Bowerman: Right. That's interesting because over the years, I did very little history in college. I think the only course I took was History of Science. It was more like a philosophy course, so even that course was not a history course. Remember, I had no requirements other than to make the two minors, so I didn't have to have distribution requirements.

In graduate school, econ history was a joke. I don't think the field is a joke, but my particular course's full prof was. Because he had the right history and you just had to memorize it, so that wasn't history.

Fiksdal: No questioning.

Bowerman: So, history was not interesting particularly. I got my load of it in Political Economy—Jeanne Hahn and Tom Rainey and some of the other teachings—and it was fine. Then I did broader courses, to some extent, like with Dave Marr and Charlie Teske—I guess that was earlier on—and I got more interested. I began to think, yeah, you've got to bring this perspective into whatever you're going to say about policy and so on, so I began to really appreciate history and start reading more history.

Then I got hooked on literature again because I think a lot of the questions that interest me, they go as far as, what's the impact on the individual? Of course, novels are always addressing the conflict between society and the person, and they got to the—pun--heart of things. You need to bring that into policy if you're going to have one that's appealing and might work. I still feel that way.

Same thing with philosophy. You have to pay attention to that side of life. Wittgenstein, I think that was part of what he did and what fascinated me so much. On language, it's not what the dictionary tells you, it's how people use the language that matters in terms of what it means. And that has everything to do with the circumstances you're in, the understanding between the people who are

talking. I might use the same sentence with you and a child, but they mean different things to each of you, I hope.

Fiksdal: You are a sociolinguist at heart. That's what I used to teach. So far, Pris, you've given me this trajectory of your own intellectual history. It's really very interesting. I think for all of us at Evergreen—well, I'm pretty sure; I really don't know; I've never done a survey—teaching interdisciplinarily just awakens you all the time to this new area where, oh, this matters, because. If you can make a connection through your own study and what you already know, all the better.

Bowerman: I like that phrase, "this matters." That's right. It's pretty much the impact of suddenly waking up to a new area or a new way of thinking.

Fiksdal: Going back to Charlie for just a second, do you remember what you taught together?

Bowerman: Yes, it was the third year. He had a grant, or the college had a grant. Culture, Ideology, and Social Change in America. He invited me and Dave Marr to teach with him. One quarter, we had a visiting prof from California who was a scholar. His name is slipping right now. He was more or less a political philosopher. Anyway, that's what I taught with Charlie. A lot of lectures.

Fiksdal: There were a lot of lectures. He's known for talking a lot.

Bowerman: Oh, gawd, yes. Sometimes you could just sit back and say, oh, go ahead, Charlie. [laughing] I knew he was already a big talker because he had been my dean my first year. He would come check on me, and he would ask me a question, and I'd start answering it, and then he'd fill it all in.

Fiksdal: That's really true. He would just talk over you and then take over. But he was entertaining, and you learn a lot, and he was funny.

Bowerman: He was very entertaining, but he gave room. He definitely gave room to the rest of us, as I recall. Every now and then he'd bring up the grant or something we had to do to stay within the lines of it. Doing a group faculty evaluation of the program was extremely important for the grant, so we had extra time to do that. I remember that it was helpful, but I don't remember what we concluded. I'll get you the title for the next time.

Fiksdal: That's interesting, because it might have been one of the first programs he taught after coming out of the deanship.

Bowerman: Yes, I think it was.

Fiksdal: He made a certain calculation in asking certain people to teach with him.

Bowerman: Yeah, it's interesting. Of course, everyone was new. David, I think, had been there a year before me, but no one was not new.

Fiksdal: That's a good point.

Bowerman: I must have been quite a cipher still. I don't know about David. That's when I met David, too. I also appreciated the way his mind worked. It was certainly more literary than Alan's, but it was disciplined. I was used to literary people because my husband was a literary person, and my roommates in college were English majors, so I had a lot of that around, and I really liked to read fiction, but I didn't know much about how you analyzed fiction. I'd hear things about textual analysis and critical analysis.

Fiksdal: What is that? [laughter]

Bowerman: I had an oral background in that for quite a time. My older sister, when she was at Barnard, majored in Medieval history, so there's a history. Right? She was married quickly after leaving college to a physical chemist, who was just out of Princeton. But he was a lot older. He had left the Soviet Union in 1944 with his mother. His story was they had to get out because he was such a rebel. He was also Ukrainian and very angry at the Soviet Union.

They went to Greece for a year, and then they got a sponsor in New York, where there's a big Russian community just on the Hudson River. Came here, and he learned English quickly. Went to Columbia. He said he read books in German and Russian and took his exams in English. Then he got accepted at Princeton for a PhD. He was very good. Very smart. By then, his English was accented, but it was good.

He had just finished his PhD and he had a post-doc at Cambridge in England, so they went to England, which she loved. She wanted to travel all the time. Then he got appointed to Toronto. He was starting to teach chemistry, so she started taking courses in Russian, and she became a PhD candidate in Russian language and literature. So, there's another literature person. They spoke both languages at home. So, there was that part of the family as well. We used to write about what I was reading and things like that.

Fiksdal: You had an intellectual relationship with a sister.

Bowerman: Yeah.

Fiksdal: That is, in my view, unusual.

Bowerman: Yeah, I think so. My first sister died when she was 52. She was six years older than me, but she became very ill at 42. She had a cancerous brain tumor. They eventually couldn't find it anymore, but the radiation treatment has long-term consequences. She got better, where we could understand her clearly. She had lost language from the tumor and the surgery, but she got it back. She got quite fluent again, and then I began noticing on telephone calls that she seemed to be slipping. I asked my mother and she said, "Yes, she is." She eventually lost most of her language, and then was in a nursing

home till she died. That was quite a trajectory. She finished her doctorate and self-published it. Her daughter wrote the introduction. We still have a copy of that.

Fiksdal: She accomplished a lot.

Bowerman: Yeah. It's very hard. Very hard.

Fiksdal: You were close to your sisters.

Bowerman: Yeah, and especially her. Growing up, she played a big sister role to me. My other sister, we were kind of antagonistic to each other. We had great fun having fights. [laughing] But she's an artist. She went to Pratt in fine arts. She married before she left college. She tried to get commercial contracts, if you will. She was designing children's books. The publishers would tell her that it was a beautiful book, but it would cost \$40 per copy to produce this book. The work is too fine.

She would not reduce it to what is printable, so she went her own way. She did a lot of odd jobs, but she continued painting. Eventually, she said, "I asked myself, what do I really like to do?" She was widowed twice. No children. "What do I really like to do?" She thought, I really like to paint animals, dogs and cats.

So, she got a Webpage and she said, "You send me a photograph of your pet and I will paint it, and it will be your pet, not just the breed of the pet." There were various formats—canvases, oil paintings, or on slates. Now, at 82, she's down to just "If you want it, it's going to be a slate."

Fiksdal: But she's still doing that?

Bowerman: Yeah, she does. She got picked up by Orvis Company, which is across the country, but they started as East Coast sportsmen catalog. They branched out. Dogs are really important to them, but they branched out, offering a few artist's renditions of your animal and they picked her up for that.

Recently, they stopped that whole line, but now, she has a following. They find her through the web even if she doesn't tell them.

Fiksdal: At 82 years old.

Bowerman: Yeah. She still does that, and now, we're extremely close. We talk almost every day. She's in New Jersey.

Fiksdal: Now, there's no long-distance charges.

Bowerman: Yeah, it's so different.

Fiksdal: The world has changed.

Bowerman: She's still working away, and full of energy. Skinny as can be. [laughing] She uses her maiden name, which is Valesio, because her first husband said, "Don't change your name. When you're an artist, you should have an Italian name." She just always kept it.

Fiksdal: Now we've got your maiden name out of that. I'm going to stop.