

**Tom Rainey**  
**Interviewed by Stephen Beck**  
**The Evergreen State College oral history project**  
**August 7, 2017**  
**FINAL**

**Begin Part 1 of 2 of Tom Rainey on 8-7-17**

**Beck:** This is Stephen Beck. It is August 7, and we're sitting out his deck on what passes for a hot day in the Puget Sound. But, Tom, last time we talked, there were a couple of things that you mentioned that I'd like to pursue a little bit more.

**Rainey:** Okay.

**Beck:** One was the statement of interest that you had about Evergreen.

**Rainey:** Right.

**Beck:** You said you were going to find that, and I see you've got it here. Tom, I'm wondering if you could read that to me.

**Rainey:** Sure. This is the statement I wrote in response to the material that I got from Evergreen, part of my application for the faculty here, and a follow-up of a conversation that I had with Merv Cadwallader, who was the dean who interviewed me. So, here it goes: my impressions of Evergreen State College:

A founder of Black Mountain College once noted that the ideal teaching situation was the lively mind on one end of the log, facing a lively mind on the other, with no barriers in between. I fully endorse this vision, and for the last six years, I've tried to translate it into my teaching, so far with only moderate success. The sorts of barriers that I've encountered are the usual: lockstep curricula that force both teacher and taught into predetermined little boxes of knowledge; rigid departmental territoriality, with quote "specialists" unquote jealously guarding the boundaries of their fields; competitive grading systems that encourage students to wipe out the tracks of their fellows, and thereby make cooperative learning impossible; and cautious administrators, whose major concern has been satisfying conservative boards of trustees, rather than education, however defined.

For me, academia has been a world red in tooth and claw, not at all the genteel community of scholars and teachers that I had been trained to expect. I have found solace and intellectual stimulation only among my students—the enemy camp, as many of my elite colleagues would have me believe. Somehow, some of them have managed to survive the Catch-22-esque madness of the American educational system.

I felt for a while that I had found a haven in the experimental colleges, founded at the State University of New York at Buffalo by its former President, Martin Meyerson. Meyerson established, or allowed students and faculty to establish, a series of colleges that were to set their own courses of study, their own systems of evaluation, and so on.

One college, College A, could engage exclusively in community action programs, while others like Tolstoy, Rachel Carson and Vico College would try to develop bold new methods of teaching and cross-discipline communication. The entire experimental system was to exist side by side with traditional departments, and was to be autonomous.

For two years, I have taught gratis in various of these experimental colleges while carrying the normal load of an assistant professor in the Department of History. During this time, I have experienced the sweet, but mostly the bitter, in experimental learning. It is impossible, I now believe, to carve out a durable intellectual sanctuary in the middle of a competitive, hidebound, autocratically run system.

The experimental colleges at SUNY at Buffalo exist on the tolerance of the university administration and senior faculty members, who hold the commanding heights of the university. A more conservative President than Meyerson, a man less willing to run the risk of educational experimentation, has so strictly interpreted the rules as essentially to kill the spirit of the interdisciplinary colleges. The combination of administrative pressure and withdrawal of funds will probably destroy the colleges within the next five years.

**A postscript on this: that is indeed what happened after I came to Evergreen.**

External economic conditions moreover have seriously undermined the colleges. When job opportunities were more plentiful, students were more willing to experiment with their programs, more resistant to parental pressure that pushes them towards job-oriented curricula. Now, they are beginning to leave the colleges for bread-and-butter programs, or to use the looseness of the college structure to lighten their course loads.

I've had the bitter experience of having students vote to trash the grading system by assigning everyone As, and then compete like hell for grades in the departmental courses. It is not their fault, after all. For 12 years, they have been taught to compete, and now they feel that they must do so to eat. All this is not to say that the experimental colleges themselves will not be partially responsible for their eventual demise. Frequently, faculty members involved have encouraged intellectual laziness, by allowing students to drift without any direction. Nor have there been any consistent demands in the colleges for qualitative performance.

Direction must not be so obtrusive as to discourage native initiative and creativity, but there must be some guidance. It is utopian to think that students, who have had their every scholastic move planned by someone else, can suddenly set for themselves intellectually defensibly goals, and then pursue them, without genteel prompting.

**Correction: gentle prompting. Genteel, of course, as well. I come from the South, and would always be genteel. [laughing]**

Finally, students and faculty of the experimental colleges at Buffalo have often engaged in community work, without sufficient preparation or empathy for the life experiences of working-class people in Buffalo. We must bridge the gap between the university and the real world. Certainly, no educator with any sense of social responsibility, can deny this. But when students and faculty descend on a community as missionaries of social change, they only increase the tension between town and university. The misunderstandings thus generated only aid the enemies of experimental education. Here in Buffalo,

Meyerson's successor has manipulated tension and misunderstanding to place further restrictions on the experimental colleges.

These then are some reflections based on my experience in the experimental colleges created inside the SUNY at Buffalo system. With these thoughts as background, I am now prepared to give my response to the materials from Evergreen.

For the most part, Evergreen would seem to be the answer to my dreams. However, I do have one or two specific questions about Evergreen's program. It could be that these questions arise out of ignorance. The materials that I have received only tell about the Evergreen program quote "once over lightly" unquote. So, perhaps it would be useful for me to go through what I understand to be some of the salient features of the program, and comment on them in some detail, both favorably and with reservations, as the spirit moves.

I certainly agree that the best way to prepare students for society is through a "flexible program that stimulates their own lifetimes of learning." The major impediments to such a program is, in my opinion, the departmental structure of most colleges. Departments have a tendency to calcify curricula, to institutionalize what seemed right and relevant 20 or 30 years ago. Many history departments, for example, are controlled by men who still think that the only legitimate fields of study are American and European history. It took the pressure of the Cold War, and the consequential stimulation of government money, to expand their vision beyond the limits of Western civilization. They ignored not only the Third World, but also the pockets of traditional culture within the United States. As one of the powerbrokers in my department once noted, in arguing for another line in French, rather than a new one in African history, "When Africa has a history, we shall teach it."

Some men rarely recognize the validity of cross-discipline approaches. It would seem intuitively obvious that only cross-discipline study can provide the brainstorming techniques necessary just to understand the complex problems that the future holds. Ideally, departments should encourage this study.

Neatly labeled departments, however, usually breed intellectual parochialism and isolation. Evergreen's apparent determination to break down this isolation by dispensing with departments is thereby laudable. The idea of cooperative learning communities, which embody "a schedule of related academic work," is another attractive feature of Evergreen's program. I take it that the aim is for faculty and students to immerse themselves in a broad category of problems, rather than chew off a few little hunks at a time. That seems like the only rational way to learn. Configuration is, after all, more than the sum of its parts.

In the descriptions of the coordinated studies, however, there is no mention of foreign language skills. Computer science and mathematics doubtless provide the tools for understanding "causality, chance and freedom," but how is one to understand Human Development, or some Contemporary American Minorities—two programs advertised in the catalog—without knowledge of languages other than English? Knowledge of Russian and other Slavic languages has certainly enhanced my understanding of Slavic peoples. And I never really understood the subtleties of the Native American cosmology, and what it has to offer a society that has stumbled into eco-catastrophe, until I began to learn Seneca.

What attracts me most about Evergreen, however, is the fact that the whole school seems bent on reasoned experimentation. All students are apparently subject to the same method of qualitative evaluation. As I noted above, I have serious reservations about the possibility of developing islands of educational experimentation in a university that is dominated by traditional curricula, with competition grading. When no one in school competes for grades, can anyone afford not to compete?

I should conclude then by suggesting some of the ways in which I might contribute to the further development of The Evergreen State College. In general, I have extreme distaste for calcified, highly departmentalized systems of education that

exist in our present institutions of higher learning, and a firm commitment to flexibility in curriculum and pedagogical experimentation. I already have some experience in the experimental colleges at the University of New York at Buffalo. I've emerged from the experience a little grayer, but essentially unbowed.

In addition, I have specific skills in teaching experiences in history and languages that might prove useful in such specific coordinated studies as Contemporary American Minorities and Human Development. At the same time, I feel that the learning process is only just beginning for me. In the past six years, as a matter of fact, I have learned so much from my students that I have often been confused as to which end of the log I belong.

**Rainey:** That's it.

**Beck:** Great. You said at one point that Evergreen would seem to be the answer to your dreams. How has that worked out?

**Rainey:** Uh . . . 80 percent so, I would say. [sighs] I'm convinced by my experience at Evergreen, which is now 45 years old—this was certainly true when I was teaching in the full-time curricula—that somehow—and I'm not quite sure how this happened, perhaps self-selection on the part of people that have come here, who wanted to engage in interdisciplinary, and were willing to experiment—that Evergreen, at least in my experience, has contained the largest concentration of good teachers of any place I've ever been before.

I reflect on my undergraduate career and my graduate career, and I had some excellent teachers—at the University of Florida, and then at University of Illinois at Champagne-Urbana, but also, some people that were experts in their field, and good scholars and so on, that were terrible teachers that were not interested in teaching. So, enthusiasm for teaching as teaching, and how it's done, and interdisciplinary teaching, at least in the early years, I think, brought the best and brightest, not always in their particular field, but in terms of how they taught. And I've had one or two bad experiences early on.

At the same time, I would say that it took me about five or six years to sort through the faculty—I guess I would put it bluntly that way [laughing]—sort through the faculty and decide who I would teach with and who I would not teach with. But primarily, it's been successful—and in some ways, I think I'm an Evergreen success story—because I've learned so much from my colleagues. That was true for the 35 years or so I was a full-time teacher here. Less than that, I guess, about 28 years. So, once I figured out who it was that I wanted to learn from—and I learned so much from my colleagues, I would say the first 30 years I was here—that expanded not only my intellectual agenda, but expanded my knowledge of history. So, in a sense, teaching with other people has made me a better historian, because everything is a grist for a historian's mill.

So, I would say my dreams have been mostly—my concerns sneak in from time to time—but my experience has made me very happy with my teaching experience here, and I've learned so very much. I must say that by the time I was here 20 years that there were about 25 or 30 people that I wanted to teach with, and I never stopped wanting to learn something from somebody else. I've taught very little by myself.

On the other hand, I would say that another part of it, and then my anticipation in coming to Evergreen is that I've had the best students I've ever had and the worst students I've ever had. I won't talk about the worst students, but students that sort of took advantage, I think, and sort of drifted along. But what I learned is you set the bar high, and you teach with people that have the same philosophy of what you could expect, or should expect, from students, that in the process of self-selection over the years, you don't get somebody that wants to build a spaceship on a \$6,000 budget, or things of that sort.

**Beck:** Word gets around.

**Rainey:** Word gets around. And word gets around within the faculty, and so I'm not saying necessarily that . . . well, in some ways [laughing] I can say . . . the faculty members that I liked, and that I thought were good with students, but what they were teaching, and their method of teaching, was not interesting to me. And I did not want to teach with them, not because they weren't good intellects, but because I didn't think I could learn anything from it. And I carried that philosophy over, really, into teaching in the Evening and Weekend Studies. I tried to teach with people from whom I can learn something.

Reflecting on the full 45 years, if I thought that I could not learn something from somebody I could teach with, I did not agree to teach just because I thought it was good for the institution. I thought it was good, as long as I was intellectually active and learning and curious, and teaching with people that could teach me something, and learn from students—advanced students and group contracts—then I was happy. So, I certainly realized my expectations, and hopes and dreams. Absolutely.

**Beck:** The last time we spoke, you mentioned an intellectual circle that included . . .

**Rainey:** Yeah.

**Beck:** . . . I think you talked a fair bit about Byron Youtz, but also you mentioned Bob Sluss.

**Rainey:** Yeah, Bob Sluss.

**Beck:** And Dave Marr. Jeanne Hahn. Alan Nasser.

**Rainey:** Alan Nasser.

**Beck:** Mark Levensky.

**Rainey:** Mark Levensky. I never taught with Mark, but Mark was the person, if I had something—a paper that I'd written, or an application for leave—I would always ask Mark to look through it.

**Beck:** What were you expecting to get from Mark?

**Rainey:** Whether what I had written, or the application I had made, was good or a piece of shit. And he would tell you. [laughing] My experience with Mark is—and I think students had the same experience that the faculty had—is you'd go into Mark's office, and Mark would take your paper. I remember he had Scotch Tape here, and he had a pair of scissors here—a very orderly desk—and he would take the paper, and if he didn't like a section of it, he would take the scissors and cut it off into the trashcan sort of ceremoniously. [laughter]

Every time that—sabbaticals, when I first came, were actually competitive, there were just so many people that were allotted sabbatical leave, and it was competitive. It wasn't just because you'd had it before, you hadn't had it before, your time and grade, that sort of thing. I got three sabbaticals in that system, largely, I think, with the help of Mark Levensky. [laughter]

The other thing that I've experienced—and I'll talk about this maybe later, when we talk about some of the institutional barriers, and some of the encouragement, at the same time, to engage in continuous scholarship in my field—Mark was one of the seven or eight people that I would always show if I was giving a presentation at a conference, or I'd written something for a journal, or even larger than that. Ken Dolbeare was another one I'd never taught with, but that I had great respect for as an intellectual.

I must say that in many respects the faculty that I ended up respecting most, and wanting to teach with, were people not just—I would say the criteria for me is that they—David Marr was a good example—that did not think that what we taught necessarily had to have immediate application, and were people that were interested in the life of the mind. And I've never been, as a result of teaching with people like Marr and Levensky's encouragement, and John Perkins—I've never felt that I was anything but what I've always wanted to be, and that's an intellectual. In an anti-intellectual society, right? [laughter]

**Beck:** Yeah!

**Rainey:** I just recently read Hofstadter's *Intellectualism and Anti-Intellectualism in America*, and a comparative study that was made with German universities and American universities, and the importance of theory, and the importance of intellectual sophistication and intellectual exploration. So,

I haven't been dissatisfied with that, the intellectual tenor of my colleagues here. But it was very selective. That's what I mean.

**Beck:** Yes. But you did teach with David. Although you didn't teach with Mark, you did teach with David at least one program. Right?

**Rainey:** I taught two programs. David Marr, right?

**Beck:** Yeah.

**Rainey:** David Marr, I came to—along with—there were about five or six people, I would say, were pure intellectuals, and they made no compromises on that, and David was one of them. And I found it very strange [laughing] in a farm boy from Iowa, in some ways. And it carried over into faculty affairs, and into discussions about discussions about the curriculum, that I ended up, I think, respecting most those faculty.

Now, there are exceptions to that. I'm not saying that, let's say, a faculty member that was engaged in community action or that sort of thing. Because we've had several, I think, that have made a huge contribution to the intellectual life, in some ways, or to the curriculum as well.

**Beck:** Russ Fox comes to mind.

**Rainey:** That was the man I just had in my mind. And great respect for him. But, as far as my own academic life, I have insatiable intellectual curiosity. And I lean towards history, and I lean towards philosophy, and liberal arts in general. And I would include the best of our scientists in that. Byron Youtz, Burt Guttman, and so many other faculty that I was always sort of, I would say, somewhat envious of the ability of the hard scientists to organize their curriculum, and stick to it, and work out prerequisites.

I must say, in retrospect, that I think one of the major mistakes that we made was not having a required humanities sequence, which I experienced at the University of Florida, of all places. At the University of Florida, everybody in liberal arts, the college of arts and sciences—the biologists, the mathematicians—everybody in the college was required to take a humanities sequence sophomore year. And it gave the students in that college a common language, and a common experience. And it even led to a very select senior seminar, which was one of the best experiences I've ever had intellectually with a group of students, where two representatives from every department, and the college of arts and sciences, were in a senior seminar together. And David was—I've had probably the most, I'd say by far, the most interesting discussions about literature and history amongst the colleagues that I taught with at this time, with David. And David is not a flashy intellectual at all. I mean, he's not

flashy, he's not supercilious about his profound knowledge [chuckles], of literature in particular. We had great conversations.

We taught a program—which was, in retrospect, one of my favorite programs that I've taught—called Literature, Values and Social Change. We did a full-year program—Nineteenth Century Russia, Nineteenth Century America, Nineteenth Century Britain. It was dynamite. It was the best program, I think, of that sort that I've ever taught.

**Beck:** So, it was centered on literature, but presumably—

**Rainey:** No, literature and history. The social change part was the history part. And again, a person like David that had great respect for the life of the mind, would learn in other areas besides his own special American late-nineteenth century philosophy and literature and so on.

I heard probably the best lecture I've ever from any colleague on Tolstoy from David, and almost as good a lecture on Dostoyevsky [laughing] as I could give. It was just . . . and, I wouldn't say it was a take-no-prisoners program, but it was reading-rich, it was lecture-rich. And he stopped lecturing—which I thought was a great pity—and started doing "recitations," he called it, with students, which was more Socratic. He would have students—I'm sorry that he stopped. He lectured a lot in our program and the students were dazzled.

But I watched him also—it reminds me of the professor in *The Paper Chase*; good professors of law use the Socratic Method—he would have a person read a passage out of the book. And every discussion that we had, every lecture, was text-oriented. It was to elucidate the text, and to understand the text. So, he would do something that I've tried—and I never did this as successfully as him—have someone read a passage, and then ask them what it meant. What's its purpose in that particular part of the text? How did that elucidate other parts of the text? What is their understanding of it? At first, it was terrifying to the students, because everybody, at some point—and he would do it in lectures, and he'd do it in seminars.

**Beck:** Tell me more about that. What did that look like? Did he conduct questions with that one student for 15-20 minutes?

**Rainey:** Yes, it was about 15 or 20 minutes, and it was "Well, what exactly do you mean by that?" David, you know, [in] that soft-spoken way of taking a statement and "Well, what do you mean by justice? I mean, you say that this shows that Tolstoy's concern with universal justice. How do you understand the word justice?"



I would say he did it in a cutting way, but he cut the skin and not the brisket of the argument, and helped people in intellectual conversation, and in seminars, his method was very like Levensky's critique of a paper.

**Beck:** So, he'd find what's good, and emphasize that in some way.

**Rainey:** Yeah, in cut away the dross, I would say, in an argument. I remember when I learned critical reasoning, I learned it in a course that I took at the University of Florida called "Practical Logic." So, our students learned the fallacies, not by reading a text on the fallacies; they learned the fallacies by the way they were inquisitorially [laughing] . . .

**Beck:** . . . committing them.

**Rainey:** Right, exactly. And not every student . . . liked that, or was comfortable with it. But, over the years, as with Pete Sinclair—I never taught with Pete; I wanted to one time. I've got one thing and I'll just throw this in, a dazzling moment with Pete, in Exploration, Discovery and Empire. Bob Sluss and Byron Youtz and I taught this program. It was the boat program, too. We had Pete come in, and read "The Old Wives' Tale" from Chaucer.

**Beck:** "Wife of Bath's Tale."

**Rainey:** "Wife of Bath's Tale." I just recently read that, "Wife of Bath's Tale," from Chaucer in Middle English. And it was a *tour de force*.

**Beck:** Yes.

**Rainey:** To get back to David—and I would say the same with someone like Mark Levensky, and Pete, and another person, and Rudy Martin, and Jeanne Hahn. Over the years, they got the best students, because students understood that that's the way it was going to be. I mean, Jeanne was going to rip their papers to pieces, but they ended up learning to write better.

Or David, they have to use right reason. And what's that Alfred Ayer thing? "A statement is true if, and only if, it's empirically verifiable, or true by definition."

**Beck:** Right.

**Rainey:** But what's the evidence of that? Right? That's the great question of the historian. And Alan is not for everybody, but the students ended up doing as close to advanced work with faculty like that as we've ever been able to reach.

David was not, and Mark was not, and Jeanne was not, and Byron was not for—and Byron did this with such a gentle hand that you didn't know that you were being torn apart in your thinking, and put back together. It was like the first seminar I went to in graduate school, when they just ripped my paper to pieces. But they didn't have to do it a second time.

**Beck:** I certainly experienced that with Mark [laughter] as his student.

**Rainey:** Yeah.

**Beck:** And with Pete, although he had a more gentle hand.

**Rainey:** Yeah, Pete. I'm fascinated sometimes—and just having written a book that's, in part, as all such books, are travels around myself as well—how, for lack of a better term, people that don't come from an intellectual background, whose parents were intellectuals or were professors, or something like that.

The other person I really regret not teaching with that I had great respect for was Beryl Crowe.

**Beck:** Why is that?

**Rainey:** Well, because Beryl had a way of dealing with current issues, and questions like totalitarianism, in a way that enhanced the critical thinking of the students. So, a left-leaning student that had come from some sort of what I would call radical indoctrination—which is what some faculty were engaged in—didn't survive that with Beryl, because he just would not put up with sloppy thinking. And he used Hannah Arendt to the best advantage, I think.

His major concern was totalitarianism, and authoritarian regimes. He was sort of like Eric Hoffer. He was sort of a dockside intellectual. Very muscular mind, in the sense that—but he also was like Pete. He had a kind of gentle handed way of doing that. He never humiliated a student. He never criticized a student in public. It's just he set an example of critical thinking.

One of the reasons why I believe in lectures is that I think we teach as much by example, in the way we deal with ideas, and the way we don't deal with ideas. Beryl had this rapier-like intellect. It's hard to think of an analogy that quite fits, but he was an iron fist in a velvet glove. And students that came out of his program—and the best program, I think, that he did was he taught with David, and he taught with Rudy, and he taught with Betty Estes mostly—I can't remember what it was called, but it was something Society and Social Change.

**Beck:** Individual Society . . . ?

**Rainey:** No, it was more political. Beryl was a political scientist—he wasn't a political scientist, he was a political theorist, that's what Beryl was. You've given the best lectures I've ever heard on Plato, but he gave one incredibly good lecture on Plato's *Republic*, and put Plato in his place [laughter] as a political theorist. But he knew political theory so well. And, like Hoffer, he told me that while he was working as a stevedore [laughing] in San Francisco is when he read Plato [laughter] and Aristotle.

It's just that it's a hard thing to explain that when a program like David and I taught, when you create an intellectual atmosphere somehow, an atmosphere that demands critical thinking, close analysis and empirical investigation. And that's what Beryl was able to do—Beryl and Rudy and David.

The first sort of internal document that I read when I got here in 1972 that I just said, “This is the right place for me,” was the M and M Manifesto.

**Beck:** That was Rudy and David.

**Rainey:** That was Rudy and David, yeah.

**Beck:** I’ve read that, but it’s been some years. What’s your impression of what that document envisioned for Evergreen?

**Rainey:** I see it as a statement about pedagogy and critical thinking mostly, and not allowing sloppy thinking and totally subjective views to go unchallenged by faculty. That’s the way I see the M and M Manifesto, and that we had to put together curriculum that was challenging, demanding. And students—and this is, I think, one of the glories of our curriculum—are free to choose it or not. But you know that if you’re going to do a program with them that this is the way you’re going to have to proceed.

I never came here really with the idea—and I’ve never felt, since I’ve been here—that I’m a co-learner. I’m not. Frankly, I’m a little traditional in that sense, that it’s the teacher teach and the student learn. And if they don’t want to, they don’t have to.

I do think we should have had some prerequisites, but it’s a form of self-selection. If they know if they sign up with me, they’re going to do a lot of reading, they’re going to do a lot of writing, they’re going to do a lot of critical thinking. And if they’re not willing to do that, there’s the door.

**Beck:** At the same time, you have said that you have chosen colleagues largely because those are people from whom you can learn.

**Rainey:** Right.

**Beck:** And you’ve said that you learn from students as well. So, there is—

**Rainey:** I’ve learned from some students. I say that in my statement, but that was true about Buffalo. It’s not been true about Evergreen, frankly. [laughing] I’ve learned from students puzzling through things, and asking questions that I hadn’t thought of. That’s the way I’ve learned from students.

There are some students I’ve learned from because of the way they attacked social problems and political problems and things like that, and I can cite one example. But that was mostly in group contracts. Group contracts used to be the way we did advanced work. I used that term to a new faculty member the other day and they said, “What’s a group contract?”

But I did a year-long group contract called Marx and the Third World. I had the two best students I’ve ever had.

**Beck:** Was that John Bellamy Foster?

**Rainey:** John Bellamy Foster. I learned Hegel from the questions that John asked, and how John learned Hegel. He taught me Hegel. [laughing] And I did have students say sometimes to me, if they see me coming across the quad and they don't have 15 or 20 minutes, like Charlie Teske, that they'd try to find the closest head they can, because I'm going to say, "Okay, you need to read this book," "You need to read that book," "You need to read this book," and "No, I'm not sure that's the way it is, but let's talk about it."

And that was John Bellamy Foster. Even if we were at some sort of drunken student party—there were a lot of those in those days—John would buttonhole me [laughing] in my cups. So, yes, I have learned from students, but I've learned mostly from faculty, and from my own reading and writing. And my own teaching.

Rob Cole made an interesting comment about why I keep teaching. He said, "You have done two things. You teach things that you know very, very well. And you teach what you want to learn."

For example, in the recent thing that I taught on the Pacific Rim, I spent nine months preparing for that. Now, I can do that easier in Evening and Weekend Studies than I could teaching full-time. It's hard to do teaching full-time. But the reason I like Evening and Weekend Studies is that I've got the leisure to prepare for it.

**Beck:** Of course, the other students—

**Rainey:** You want to go into the house, if it's cooler?

**Beck:** We could do that. Let's pause this.

**End Part 1 of 2 of Tom Rainey on 8-7-17**

**Begin Part 2 of 2 of Tom Rainey on 8-7-17**

**Beck:** I'm back with Tom Rainey. We stepped in out of the heat for the rest of today's interview here on August 7, 2017. I'm wondering whether you'd like to talk a little bit about the way your own interests developed over the time you were at Evergreen, specifically related to your own research and scholarship.

**Rainey:** Well, I spent many years after I got out of graduate school, or in graduate school, preparing myself to teach Russian/Eastern European/Balkan history. And I didn't do much of that at all the first five years, six years I was here. But I've had my interest in my specialty area rekindled several times and remind me of why I went into Slavic studies in the first place. I don't have an ounce of Slavic blood. I am a typical Southern American mongrel—you know, Sots-Irish, a dash of Anglo-Saxon, one-fourth Creek Indian.

But I became interested in Slavic and Russian studies, in particular, in undergraduate, and that's what I studied the four years, and focused on European. And I didn't teach much about it at all, and by the fifth year I was here, I was really missing that somehow. That's the area I'm really interested in, and I kept following things that were going on in the Soviet Union, and I kept reading Russian literature and Slavic literature, Balkan literature in particular.

And then I had, I would say, a continuous conversation with Andrew Hanfman about "Where are we going to do something on Russia?" And we did. And meantime, I had taught Political Economy with Jeanne, and enjoyed that. One of the things I did during the '60s, while I was at various universities, is to study much more American economic history, and American labor history, and foreign policy that I had not because of the movement. I was involved in the movement for social change.

That was an area I didn't understand well. So, in some ways, the first five years that I taught was a continuation of my learning about how the American system worked, how capitalism worked. Whenever I would do Political Economy, I would do a lecture series on Marx, and American economic history, and American diplomatic history. I became very interested in American foreign policy during that period, because we were involved in the Vietnam War. And that spilled over into my teaching here, so I taught mostly American History, and Political Economy, and Marx in the Third World, and so on.

But somehow, I began to really miss my specialty field, and not teaching in that. So, Andrew and I decided to create a program, a year-long program on Russia, which we did. That rekindled my interest in my specialty area. It was a very successful program. Andrew was a linguistic genius. I watched Andrew one day. If I write my memoir, there's going to be a chapter just on Andrew Hanfman. I watched him, with a group of students sort of around his office, go from Swedish to Spanish to Italian to French to Russian, and a little bit of Turkish. [laughing] Everybody was suspicious of Andrew, because he was from the CIA. He'd spent his life doing analysis of the Soviet Union in the CIA. He was a real cold warrior.

And I would say, if anything, my study of American foreign policy made me a sort of revisionist, and so the people in my field that I most respected were people like Stephen Cohen at Princeton, and Jerry Hough at Duke, and Moshe Levin at Pennsylvania, who were saying, "Wait a minute," about the totalitarian. The standard way of teaching about it—and the way I got into it—is know your enemy. And after Sputnik and all of that, we had lots of money to do that, and I got a lot of support in graduate school to do that.

But I was a little leery about Andrew, because I was still in the throes of this radical analysis of American foreign policy. But we had a very successful year, and good students. I actually taught Russian then. I trust I didn't do too much damage to the students. My Russian accent is good, but command of grammar is—actually, I learned English grammar by studying Russian. [laughter] But I became very excited again about remastering my specialty area, particularly about the Soviet Union. My special area was Russia before the Revolution—nineteenth century intelligentsia, nineteenth century literature.

So, it rekindled my interest, and then I started sort of reading American foreign policy and Russian foreign policy together. I've been a lifelong subscriber to *Foreign Affairs*, because that's the foreign affairs journal. It may be establishment, but you need to know how the establishment thinks about Russia and the world, if you want to know this field.

Andrew was very encouraging in that, I would say. Again, it's an older, more experienced colleague that I could learn something from. Andrew was one of these people that could carry world wars and revolutions on his back, because he had experienced it directly; had experienced the twentieth century on his back. So, his knowledge of Russia and Eastern Europe, and he ended up living in Lithuania as a child, and that sort of thing was firsthand knowledge. Mine was secondhand; it was from study and scholarship, and some travel.

So, I became gradually much more interested in my original specialty area, and was successful in teaching it here in the way we teach things here. Then, more and more successful in it. I sort of drifted also into local history at the same time, strangely enough, because that was the one area where I could have students do primary research, old documents and letters. So, students that were interested in, and then majoring in history, I would always do family histories with them, and local history and that sort of thing, and publish three or four things. I guess that would include that in my scholarship. I published something on the Manifest Destiny and the Territory of Washington.

So, did some of that, but did it the way I've always done research, or have been taught since I was at the University of Florida—primary research—back to reading diaries and letters and journals and that sort of thing. And doing the same thing with Russia.

I did teach a labor history called *Working in America*. But I ended up thinking about American affairs and American history in much the same way that I did when I decided to specialize in Russian and European. American history, by comparison, seems so parochial to me, and so short-lived. And I'm like Billy Pilgrim; I go back and forth in time and space. I guess, in some ways, it's a form of escapism. If I

don't like what's happening now, I just read Rome, and I read Tacitus. [laughing] Or, I read Epictetus now.

So, bit by bit, I got back into my specialty area, and by this time, I'm into the '80s, and we're teaching the Russia program every third year, and then, every second year. But I've always been interested in—no, I haven't always. This comes out of the '60s as well. I was increasingly interested in environmental history, environmental issues, environmental problems, and so I was teaching American environmental history, and I was teaching Russian political, social and economic history. Then, almost all of a sudden—with the encouragement of John Perkins, I would say—I said to myself about 1985, I guess it was, why don't I blend the two? Why don't I do something in Russian environmental history, Russian environmental affairs?

At that point—I think it was '86, '87—John talked me into not only going to the annual meeting of something that he was a charter member of, which was the American Society of Environmental History. There, I met Donald Wooster, and there I met Doug Weiner, who was the only person then, in that association, that had written anything on Russian environmental history. And there I met Richard White, and what's the other guy? Alfred Crosby, and people that had formed this group in this interest, and started then reading sort of the methodology of environmental history—*Nature's Economy* by Wooster, and so on.

I read a book that was important in kind of helping me focus my interest in Russian stuff called *Witnesses to a Vanishing America*. The book itself was not so good, but it was about George Perkins Marsh and David Thoreau, and the Hudson River School of painting, and Albert Bierstadt, and the development of anthropology at the time. I read a book on beavers, and I read Crosby's book, *The Columbian Exchange*, and that sort of thing.

And I said, that can be applied to Russia; what I've learned about how to do this could be applied to Russia. And John encouraged that. So, I began giving papers at the American Society of Environmental Historians on mostly areas that I knew of. Joined the Association of Environmental Education, and gave papers at their meetings—and increasingly, it was on areas under stress, and Lake Baikal. Because, in 1990, I took two trips to Russia, which is also very important in sort of rekindling my interest in not only environmental history, which I was already doing, but also in my area; and how to use what I had learned about American environmental history from White and other people, and John, and applying that to Russia.

I went to an Environmental Education Association meeting in Rocky Mountain National Park. And there, I met this fellow by the name of Navach Havi Buloff who was a sort of international representative for Kazan State University, and it turns out, had been a student of a person who is now still a very much a part of my life, Tatiana Rogova, who is a professor of ecology and botany at Kazan State.

So, Havi Buloff and I arranged a trip, and an exchange program, with Kazan State University. And I took a group of students, in June of 1990, to the Volga, and fell in love with the area, and Kazan. Kazan was the last successor state of the Mongols—Mongols are Tartars—so it's really a multi-culture, a very diverse place, with mosques and Orthodox churches. It's mostly Tartar and Russian, but it's kind of the gateway to the East—Russia's gateway, once Ivan the Terrible reconquered all of the Volga from the Mongols. We had really great sort of ecological fieldtrip. For me, a monograph came out of that.

And then, I knew I was going to do this before, but I was back in the United States three weeks, and then I went back to Russia with a group called Expertisa 90. It was a group of American environmentalists mostly, in association with Moscow environmentalists, that went to Lake Baikal to do a study of the area, about how the area could be preserved and make some recommendations, and we went to a place called Severobaykalsk, in the northern part of Lake Baikal. And these two trips really confirmed my interest directly in doing environmental history of these two areas, and not only that, but being involved in—we formed a group called Baikal Watch that still exists.

So then, in '92, I took a group again to Kazan and Baikal. And then, in '93, I took a group just to Kazan. In '96, I went on my own to Kazan State University. And meantime, I'm getting involved with Tatiana and her family. In '93, when the reverse coup—when Yeltsin crushed the opposition, and the Russian Duma with tanks, and the first Chechen War was going on—she asked me to take her son for a couple of years. She was afraid he was going to be drafted and sent into the Chechen War, which was a horrible affair. And I did, and so he came here. And so, that strengthened the tie between me and Kazan State University, and strengthened my interest in the environmental history of the middle basin of the Volga.

And all this time, here's John, with his quiet way, saying, "Well, if it's worth doing, it's worth writing about, and it's worth publishing." So, under his encouragement, I started publishing things on environmental history, environmental problems. I became interested in reservoir problems particularly, and I began to see some way to do comparative studies with reservoir problems in the Columbia, and reservoir problems in the Volga. I wrote a number of things, and then Tatiana and I coauthored a couple



of things, published mostly in Russian. And I began to teach something like Environmental History. And the question about MES Master of Environmental Studies, I can get to this way.

John's not that much older than I am—just a couple of years older—actually, he might be a year or two younger—but John was really my mentor on this. It led both of us, I think, to a kind of dilemma, that teaching at Evergreen, as you well know, is all-inclusively demanding.

I think by '98, I was beginning to think, well, you know, where am I going to find the time to follow these intellectual interests? I've got this huge intellectual agenda now that includes environmental history of Russia, and keeping up with Russia, and that sort of thing, and teaching Russia. But I want to do research and publishing. [laughter]

So, John then became the person also—there were about six people, if I wrote a paper, I gave it to Mark Levensky to look at; Ken Dolbeare to look at; Jeanne was not interested in it, so not Jeanne; John Perkins. About this time, John and [sighs] . . . Ralph Murphy and I co-authored an article on teaching Political Ecology, on teaching a program that we were teaching in the MES program called PEEP then—Political, Economic and Environmental Processes.

This was when I became the director, and that came from a conversation with John in the parking lot, when he had just come back from a discussion with some people about how to replace Oscar Soule. Oscar had created the program, but Oscar did not want to be director anymore. John and some of the people involved in it—I'm not quite sure who—were a kind of ad hoc committee to decide on—not decide, but to recommend another director.

So, I commiserated with him. He didn't like a couple of people that had been suggested. He liked them, but he didn't want them as the director. I guess I looked interested, and he said, "Well, Tom, why don't you do it?" I said, "Well, I'll do it only if I can keep teaching. I don't want to stop teaching."

I didn't like being director, by the way. I didn't like it because I ended up, like every dean, dealing with personality questions, and personnel and budget, and I'm not interested in that sort of thing. I didn't like that part, but I liked teaching with John and Ralph, and that sort of reaffirmed my interest in environmental policy, environmental politics, environmental issues and history.

**Beck:** When was this? Was this the early '90s?

**Rainey:** Yeah, that was early '90s. Actually, it was 1989. It was even before I went to Russia. So, as you know, everything sort of gets mixed up, and it becomes a kind of academic soup. And sometimes it's

nourishing, and sometimes it's not. This was extremely nourishing in terms of my intellectual interests and my scholarship.

So, we published—in the journal called *Environmental Practice*—an article on how we did it at Evergreen—environmental education—at John's suggestion.

**Beck:** That's the journal that John later was the editor of.

**Rainey:** Yeah, he was, later, and I was a contributing editor, and I furnished not only a couple of articles, and Tatiana got an article from Turkel, but I solicited several articles from mostly Russian colleagues that I had met over the years in Moscow and in Kazan.

All of this confirmed my interest in environmental history, and in what's happening in Russia. And then, the current events of the '80s drew me back into the field. I actually did a series of opinion articles in the *Daily O* on the Gorbachev reforms, what was going on and who opposed it and that sort of thing. Brad Shannon asked me to do that. And again became extremely interested in scholarship and publication, scholarship and presentation. I was the international lecturer for the Association of Environmental Education one year. I gave lectures on Baikal, in particular, all around the country—at Bowling Green University, at Boston College, at Bowdoin College, at the University of New Jersey at Newark—six or seven places.

All of this interest heightened the tension of wanting to fulfill this agenda that gets larger and larger, and demands—not demands, but requests – to publish something here, or do something on this, or edit this within the journal, or that sort of thing, and teaching. So, I came out of being the MES director, glad that I was not, and I was determined not to be—they asked the year after to be the head of the faculty meeting. I said, “No, I won't do it. I'm interested just in teaching and my scholarship.” But that's been a tension for me ever since.

In the meantime, I have an experience in Florida that further confuses and thickens the plot of the personal narrative. [chuckles] My aunt dies, and leaves my grandfather's house to me and my sisters, and we decide to sell it. I go down, and my sisters and I meet in our hometown, and we clean out the house. And I find a picture that's right over there. This woman here was my grandmother, who was never a grandmother. She died at 26 of typhus, leaving my father and my aunt, as young children, just as you see them there. It's this picture over here of my grandmother—no, this is my grandmother, this little one over on the . . .

And I'm cleaning out my grandfather's, I would call it not an Augean stable, but an Augean closet full of stuff. And I always liked to do that sort of thing for my grandfather's house, because it's sitting at

the lap of my grandfather, listening to the stories about old Florida that made me a historian, I think. And I find this picture, like this, down—no, I find it up, and I said, “I wonder who that woman is? That’s the most beautiful woman I’ve ever seen in my life.” And I turn it over and it’s my grandmother at 18! [laughter] And that sent me on this quest, I guess—I refer to her as my muse now—to write a family history. I have researched and written a family history that’s 750 pages long. [laughter] I’m having trouble finding somebody that will publish it a giant monster like that.

And still, teaching as best I can, and I don’t think my scholarship took anything from my teaching. If anything, it’s the other way around. But always sort of feeling that tension. As you know, I retired—“retired”—in 2000, and most of the writing and research I’ve done on the family history has been since 2000.

**Beck:** I know that maybe teaching takes away from time that you had for scholarship.

**Rainey:** Yeah.

**Beck:** But in what way would you say that your scholarship has enhanced your teaching?

**Rainey:** Well, I was going to get to that. It has led me to the conclusion that that old shibboleth about scholarship improving teaching, and teaching improving scholarship, is true. The work I’ve done in Russian environmental history has made me a better teacher of Russian studies. In fact, my scholarship has made me a better historian. I think my scholarship has certainly enhanced my teaching.

**Beck:** In what ways, would you say?

**Rainey:** My scholarship has had the same effect on my teaching as teaching with other colleagues. What I’ve learned from my scholarship, I’ve been able to apply in my teaching. And, as trite as it may seem, it’s made me a better historian; and the better historian I am, the better teacher I am. I’ve always felt that.

And it’s made me see questions of causality in a different way; it’s made me see questions of context of historical events in different ways. For example, the whole question of diseases in history actually helps me discern any kind of deterministic, teleological theory of history that I ever may have entertained, and believe essentially on the contingent and the unforeseen; that history is made by human beings, and not by eternal forces, or by God. It also has helped me understand that virtually any history that does not have an environmental component is incomplete. So, I’ve taught that way. When I teach American studies, or I teach Russian studies, I always include history.

It's helped me understand, too, the whole question of human conquest. We're going to talk about that in our program—we didn't quite get around to it—is the biological sort of what we might call evil and good in the biological—you know, what we are as creatures that are just this side of the agricultural revolution, and just this side of the industrial revolution, and how, in some ways, we're Stone Age creatures with a thin veneer of civilization. [laughing] And that evolution matters. [laughter] And fight or flight, biologically understood, is something that needs to be part of virtually every study of war, or conquest, or immigration, populations that reach their carrying capacity with the technology at the time.

So, I'm always sensitive to that in my teaching, and I've taught programs and issues and problems that are enhanced by this interest, it seems to me, that is ongoing. At the not-too-tender age of 81, I'm still curious, and still enthusiastic about learning these things, and it helps me teach. I think probably that I'm going to taper off in the teaching, because I still have that huge agenda.

**Beck:** Right. Let me go back to your time working in the MES program.

**Rainey:** Yeah, sure.

**Beck:** You talked a little bit about some of the features of being a director in the MES program. But what about teaching in it? What was your experience in teaching?

**Rainey:** I taught Environmental Ethics, and I taught, for a while, Environmental Education, which I don't like teaching about education. I really don't like talking about process. I'm not interested in that question. I respect people that are, but I'm interested in something that has content to it. And I've always been interested, as you know, in teaching content and not process. I understand process is important and it matters, but I didn't like teaching about education. I want something I can get my intellectual teeth into, and environmental ethics, I could.

So, I taught Environmental Ethics, and when I taught with John and with Ralph, we each sort of taught our special interest. John and I taught environmental history. Ralph taught political economy as it applies to the environment.

I guess the other area that I've always been interested in that I apply in everything is questions of power and politics. I come from a political family, the only Republican family in Hardy County for a while. [chuckles] My aunt Bonita and my grandfather, who were both postmasters, in turn, were very political. First thing they did in the morning is the first thing I do in the morning, and that was the read the paper and see what's going on in the world—and now, go online to *The New York Times* or the *Washington Post*. [laughing]

But I've always been interested in politics, and the older I get, the more I look at it as the most interesting game in town. I was interested in environmental politics, so I encouraged the teaching of environmental politics and policy, and we did more of that while I was director. I wouldn't say we did more of it, but the intellectual pull of our universe, while I was in the MES program, was not Tom Rainey or Ralph Murphy, it was John Perkins.

John is amazing. I ended up thinking John was one of the most underappreciated people on this campus. He was able to teach well, teach new things, keep current in several fields, and still publish. He's just published another book, on energy, at the University of California Press.

**Beck:** That's right. I think I saw a notice of that.

**Rainey:** John is, by the way, on the way to the University of Kazan. He got a Fulbright, and he's going to be teaching American Environmental History at Kazan State University. It's Kazan Federal now, under the sponsorship of Tatiana. She just told me she was trying to get an apartment for him close to the university.

**Beck:** Now, he came about 1980.

**Rainey:** About 1980, yeah.

**Beck:** As a dean.

**Rainey:** As a dean. He was a dean first. I don't know what kind of dean John was. I met John for the first time at Miami University at a conference. I think it was the conference of the American Society of Environmental Historians, but it may have been the Environmental Education Association. But John was charter member of several environmental education programs. He was a charter member, so he was on a first-name basis with all of these people, and facilitated my entrance into that world.

What I'd be interested in doing, as much as we could, if we ever did the ancient world again, is the environmental issues.

**Beck:** Right.

**Rainey:** I don't think the Roman Empire fell because of lead in their water system, but nobody has written—a guy by the name of Hughes at the University of Denver has written a fairly good book on ancient ecology, but it's too deterministic for my taste. [laughing] It's how the Greeks stripped the peninsula.

**Beck:** Right. There's that, but one of the hypotheses I've heard that obviously didn't cause, but perhaps contributed to the fall of Rome in the West, was the environmental stresses in Central Asia that led to a cascading effect of peoples moving westward.

**Rainey:** Yes, carrying capacities were reached, but they were not reached necessarily in the Roman Empire. They were reached in Central Asia. Right.

I thought, too, it might be interesting to try to apply to the ancient world Alfred Crosby's approach of ecological imperialism, the push-pull of it, of both immigration and conquest. Because, in a sense, immigration to the New World was conquest—in a very large sense. I did a program with John Baldrige called Conquest East, Conquest West. We did a comparative study of the Euro-American conquests of North America—and the Russian conquest of Siberia. But just came into my hands a very good environmental history of China, which I'm very much interested in. Again, lots of things that we thought were European actually originated either in Mongolia [laughing] or China. What is it that pushed them off?

**Beck:** Right. So, maybe shift gears a little bit. You mentioned that you retired in 2000, but “retired” as having “scare quotes” around it, because it's really—

**Rainey:** Well, I'd style myself up to this point as a failed retiree, and I'm thinking maybe that it's time that I—because there's still a lot of stuff I want to do in my publication and scholarship. Again, John's the example of this.

In some ways, I think of Chekov and Modern Dramas as my Swan Song, but I trust that won't be so in most ways. But I've managed to publish enough, and satisfy my drive. [chuckles]

**Beck:** But, since then, you've been teaching quite a lot in Evening and Weekend Studies.

**Rainey:** I have. Oh, yeah, I really like that. I've liked it for a number of reasons. Most importantly for me is that I have been able to learn from my colleagues—you, Susan Preciso.

**Beck:** You taught with Mark Harrison a couple of times.

**Rainey:** Yeah, I'm very interested in film as sort of cultural items, and I've taught American cinema, and I've taught something on Westerns as conquest narratives. And I taught Russian film, Eastern European film.

So, I have a lot of interests that could, I suppose, lead to sort of superficiality. [laughing] What happens is I have a lot of intellectual interests, and a lot of cultural interests that sort of drives me to dig

deeper and deeper in each of these, so I'm not just a . . . I'm looking for that word that we use for someone that's sort of amateurish.

**Beck:** A dilettante?

**Rainey:** A dilettante. I'd like to transcend that, but in some areas I am a dilettante, but in some areas I'm not. Those areas that I teach helps me not to be a dilettante, because I learn about it; I teach with people that teach me about it. I've learned all I can.

**Beck:** You said that there's some things that you'd like to teach on your own, some Russian short fiction?

**Rainey:** Russian short fiction, I would like to do something, and I'm just not sure. One of the problems in me continuing to teach is I'm fairly expensive, and they are very, very budgetary—the only thing I worry about for Chekov is they might just decide that I'm too expensive for an under-enrolled program. And my sense of what's happening now is that they are extremely—because of the plummeting—I don't know if it's plummeting, but the declining enrollment, extremely sensitive about that, and they're going to cut people where they can.

**Beck:** Well, they did have to re-base the budget at a lower target FTE. That's a pretty big thing.

**Rainey:** I think increasingly that if I wanted to teach, I wouldn't be able to teach, because I'm too expensive. There are things I want to teach. You know, I want to teach. I would like to teach something on Russian-Chinese relations. I'd like to teach more on China. I'd like to do a comparative of Russian and Chinese environmental history. I've got this wonderful book on environmental history, and it would require at least an eight quarter-hour program. I could teach that on my own, or with somebody that was interested in doing it. So, there's a lot of Russian stuff now that I would like to teach.

Because, again—and this is a habit of a lifetime that I don't seem to be able to escape—is that if I'm intensively researching or reading something, I feel like I ought to be able to teach it, or I want to teach it. And I have a certain compulsion right now of what I can add to what I see to be a great crisis that we're involved in now is I can help people understand the Russian side of it; that that would be my contribution.

I can sign petitions, I can contribute money, but I'm not of the marching kind anymore, and I'm not of the demonstrating kind anymore. So, I'm interested, once again—and I'm doing a program for seniors called Putin's Russia, Russia's Putin in the winter quarter, in addition to if I'm teaching the Chekhov program. So, I have a lot of things in my specialty area again that I'm interested in. And I'm

always interested in ancient and medieval and Renaissance history. I'd really like to teach something on the Renaissance and Reformation, but I don't think it's going to happen. And if it doesn't, it won't be the end of my life. I've got lots of other things to do.

I've got seven invitations now to do this—I won't say it's a canned lecture, because it's in the can, but I'm constantly revising it—called "Putin's Plan to Make Russia Great Again." So, that satisfies my performance drive. [laughing] You know, I'm a frustrated actor.

**Beck:** Getting back to Evening and Weekend Studies, how would you compare your experience teaching in Evening and Weekend and days?

**Rainey:** That's a good question. Let me talk a little bit about the content, and some concerns I have, and why those concerns are better satisfied. I think we're doing a better job of teaching the humanities in Evening and Weekend Studies than they are in the full-time curriculum. Part of it's because people haven't been hired. To me, the fact that we only have one or two—we only have two, really—professionally trained historians in the full-time curriculum means that I don't see that much history is taught.

This is something that David Hitchens and I talked about a lot, as he lay dying, really. I spent Thursday afternoons with David the whole time he was on hospice. We talked about this. In fact, his wife turned the recorder on for some of these conversations. I just don't buy it that someone that's not trained in philosophy or literature or history can teach at the college level history, literature or philosophy. I hear people say, "I'm teaching this, and all I have to do is a little bit of history on it." But I don't buy that.

I have several concerns that I've talked about before, but the major one is the decline of liberal arts at this school. This was the liberal arts school. It is no longer a liberal arts school. It threatens—and I fervently believe this—it threatens to become, as Kirk Thompson said, the best community college in the country. It's hard to do advanced work now here of any sort. So far, the deans that have been in charge of our end of it have been equally concerned.

**Beck:** Is that in Evening and Weekend Studies?

**Rainey:** Evening and Weekend Studies. What you and I have done, or what I've done with other faculty—with Mark and so on—just convinces me that we are carrying the flag in Evening and Weekend Studies for liberal arts.

**Beck:** Yeah.



**Rainey:** Consciously doing it, but actually doing it by the teaching we've done, and will do. And I'm glad Andrew Reece is back teaching what he knows in the European program that your dad used to do, and I send students to that all the time that are full-time students.

But the way I perceive our students, in a sense, we get a lot of students that don't find what they want or need, even for teaching. They can get it in Evening and Weekend Studies, because we offer it in Evening and Weekend Studies. So, most of them can fulfill the endorsements. I'm not one that believes the endorsements drive the curriculum. They don't. But we have a lot of students that want to be teachers, and there are going to be more jobs for teachers in this state because of the McCleary decision. And we're not doing our part in providing the kind of endorsements that they need in order to teach social studies, literature, writing, and those things that we do best in the humanities.

We are literally, I think, the Dutch boy with the finger in the dike, the dike of rank, contemporary utilitarianism that we need to provide background for people to get technical jobs, essentially, and not do critical thinking. I see that as the major threat to our education.

**Beck:** Yes, nationwide.

**Rainey:** Right, nationwide.

**Beck:** What do you suppose it is about Evening and Weekend Studies that allows that?

**Rainey:** I think, first of all, the people that are actually in it. And I think structurally, we're more like a humanities, we're more like a liberal arts college than the rest of the curriculum has become. It's become, as far as I can see it, and talking to Patricia Krafcik about this a lot recently—someone else I've really enjoyed teaching with—as far as I can make out—now, I understand that my understanding of what's going on in the rest of the curriculum is not near as good as yours, or Susan's, or anybody in Evening and Weekend Studies—most people in Weekend Studies.

But I don't know whether it's the faculty that's involved or what it is, but there's more planning along specialty-area lines. And, I think, frankly, that in culture, language and text, it's the biggest bunch of anarchists on the campus, and they have not been able to assert themselves in the hiring process to replace people that have retired or died or so on. We could cite that for every area of the liberal arts, it seems to me. They're doing better in the sciences. They may be doing better mathematics, I'm not sure. But the people in Evening and Weekend Studies already are interested and concerned about the decline of liberal arts, much more so, it seems to me, than what I've seen in the rest of the college.

I mean, that's my perception. But my perception, I understand, is skewed, as it is in some ways on the current crisis, because I haven't attended these horrendous faculty meetings, and I haven't read all of these ad hominem attacks. I tried, and I just couldn't stomach it. And, because I don't have to, I don't. [laughing]

I guess the way I would style Evening and Weekend Studies is that it's the rear guard for the humanities. It's the rear guard.

**Beck:** Yeah. There's some questions that I'd like to talk about, some other areas.

**Rainey:** Sure.

**Beck:** One thing that we've touched on a little bit that I'd like to talk about—and maybe we can end with this today, and then open up some new cans of worms next time—but you've talked about pedagogy, and anybody who's taught with you knows that you are a lecturer par excellence, and that you're a strong believer in lecture. Now, I know you've already said a little bit about that, but I'm wondering if you could say more about what you see as the central value of lecture, particularly in an Evergreen interdisciplinary team-taught program.

**Rainey:** I believe this comes from my experience, as much as anything else, in team teaching. My perception—and I don't believe it's subjective, I believe it's as accurate as any—my perception is that the programs that have worked best for me, and worked best for the students, have been programs in which you have three or four people that are responding to the readings, and responding to whatever the level is of the students, and they're teaching their content, their subject, and using the lecture then to integrate the themes of the program. I have never taught in a program—and would not teach with somebody—that does only workshops. Frankly, there have been experiences that I've had that have led me not to want to teach with somebody, because that's all they want to do.

I think there is a place for workshops, but I think that workshops have been oversold at this institution. And, in some ways, I see it, when there is not a lecture series, as faculty irresponsibility to do only workshops. In fact, I am on the verge of thinking that it's a form of laziness. I don't mean that for people that I have a lot of respect for, but when I'm in a program when a person wants to do that, I urge them to lecture on their topic. The students want to know what I think about history. They want to know. They want a narrative that helps them integrate the reading and the seminar discussions. And some of my favorite colleagues in Evening and Weekend Studies think I'm an old fogey, because I keep insisting on lecturing. But I do it because I think it's something the students need. If they don't need lecturing, why do they need a book?

So, my lectures, I always taper to the reading, and taper what I think to be the level of understanding of the students. Every lecture I give is a new lecture. Every lecture I gave in the Pacific Rim Rivals—eight lectures—are the result of the latest scholarship, the latest analysis of China and the twentieth century, of Russia in the twentieth century, and so on. So that's where my scholarship—continuous scholarship—comes into play. So, I'm not giving yellowed lectures. They are changing, like I'm constantly changing this presentation. I think those that think all we should do is workshops because that gets the students involved in their own learning, yes, it does. But I think the combination that works best is a modest amount of workshops around certain kinds of puzzles that they encounter in the text; seminars in which I say virtually nothing; and lectures that highlight certain things in the book, and tries to give them a narrative of—mostly, I'm a storyteller. I come from a long line of storytellers, and mostly the stories that I tell are true and non-fictional—some are imaginative non-fiction.

And I think the proof is in the evaluations we get from our students. Virtually every program I've been in with Evening and Weekend Studies—particularly with students that are a little older than those in the full-time faculty—have complained that there's not enough lecturing. Now, it would be immodest for me to say how positive mine are. They are. My evaluations have been uniformly positive.

The other thing, it seems to me, that's important about lecturing—and I see this in your lectures, and I see this in the lectures of other people I've worked with—Byron and so on—I haven't seen all that much in other colleagues in Evening and Weekend Studies—is, as much as anything else, it's the enthusiasm for the topic that is demonstrated by a good lecturer that sparks the interest of the students. So, I guess what I would do to prove my point, and the reason I think lecturing is important, is read the evaluations that I get from students.

**Beck:** Because there's a lot of current thinking these days that goes the other way . . .

**Rainey:** Yeah.

**Beck:** . . . what would you say to those who say that lectures are essentially passive learning for students; that they encourage students simply to think of themselves as empty vessels that are receiving knowledge from faculty, rather than active learners who can actually engage with and work with the material? What's your response to that line of thinking?

**Rainey:** I think it's nonsense. I think it's like saying, "Don't read a book, because the book is written by somebody who knows something about this topic." I think it's utter nonsense, and that categorizes me as an old fogey. [laughter] And I certainly have not experienced that in any program that I've been in, that I've got a bunch of nudniks in front of me that are just listening to what I say, and that I'm sort of—

but, in part, it is true. In part, listen, I'm a Lockean on this. It's a blank sheet of paper. And I think it's, in some ways, irresponsible to expect students to struggle on their own to understand a complicated issue, a complicated idea, or a complicated subject. I think it's irresponsible. So, I don't buy that. I just don't buy that philosophy.

**Beck:** Yeah.

**Rainey:** And, again, ask the students who have worked with me on that, that I encourage discussion; I sometimes pose some questions in seminars; I encourage students to challenge my ideas. I'm not just saying, "Sit there and listen to what I have to say, and write it down on a test," or anything of the sort.

**Beck:** It sounds as though you're saying that the lectures are paired with, perhaps, questions-and-answers sessions after, but even more with seminar, where the students engage in interactive questioning.

**Rainey:** Right.

**Beck:** So really, it's about having a lecture series along with seminar questions.

**Rainey:** Seminar and, I would say, a modest number of workshops. But never as a substitute.

**Beck:** Good.

**Rainey:** And, you know, I've had students complain to me about faculty that I know to be very intelligent, very dedicated faculty that did nothing but do workshops. I've had students—particularly older students, but younger students as well—that complained in a couple of programs in Evening and Weekend Studies.

**Beck:** One of the things I've heard is that by not lecturing, one of the things the faculty do is protect the answer. That is, they have a particular answer on a particular problem or issue . . .

**Rainey:** Right.

**Beck:** . . . and if they were to lecture about it, then it would be out there in the open to be discussed.

**Rainey:** Right.

**Beck:** By not lecturing on it, they're protecting their answer from open challenges.

**Rainey:** I would agree entirely with that. I agree. And I still firmly believe that in a program with two or three faculty—well, I've had recent experience. And I won't name names or anything of the sort, but I have recent experience where students have complained to me about my fellow colleague—about my

fellow teacher, who does workshops—that it does not help them integrate the themes of the program as well as a lecture does.

Now, that means a different kind of lecturing, it seems to me, than I would do—that I did somewhere else. But I don't see how two things can happen. How students can understand complicated political, economic or social issues, and what the current thinking is on that of people that have studied those issues, and written things based on empirical investigation, and interviews and sorts of things, and synthesized them. It's the synthesis of the themes. I don't see how it can be done with workshops alone. I see how it can be done, because I've seen how it's been done in programs when you have all three faculty members lecturing on their topic, constantly integrating the themes, constantly voicing an opinion, or giving another view on something that I've lectured on. I'm not talking about just one lecture. I'm talking about two or three lecturing in a program from their expertise. To me, the workshop thing is another attack on expertise.

**Beck:** So, it's really a weaving together of several different lecture series. Right?

**Rainey:** Exactly.

**Beck:** In a coordinated studies

**Rainey:** And also for an individual, I don't see how students can learn anything important about, let's say, Russia—Russian culture, Russian literature and so on—without a lecture series, and just do workshops, and just do readings, and just do seminar-ing. They flounder around, I think. This is the feedback I get. Now, maybe people are telling me this because they think I'm a good lecturer, and they think that somebody else ought to be lecturing about their particular topic. But I would say this. The more experienced you are—the more you've had experience, the more you've read and the more you've written and the more you've done and the more you've researched—all of this goes into a good lecturer.

**Beck:** Good. That's the main thing I wanted to talk about with respect to pedagogy. I guess there is a question I have about—now, you said that you've learned a lot of substance from your colleagues.

**Rainey:** Yeah.

**Beck:** A lot about their specialty areas.

**Rainey:** Right.

**Beck:** Have you learned anything about teaching from other colleagues that you'd like to talk about?

**Rainey:** [Chuckles] Yeah, sure. I've learned from you, and I've learned from other colleagues, including Bret Weinstein, the power of PowerPoints. [laughter] And the concern I have about PowerPoints I've overcome, and that was that we pander to students that are pelted—and part of this is self-inflicted—pelted continuously with images without content, images without narrative, images that don't require reflection, don't require contemplation, don't require critical thinking. And a good PowerPoint will do that. It won't depend only on visuals.

And yours, I always use as an example. It has a lot of content. And philosophy is hard to teach. [laughing] It requires a lot of content, and it requires a lot of analytical—you have to know this before you know that, and this helps you understand this, and this context will help you understand this better. And I've seen PowerPoints that don't do that, but a good PowerPoint, I think, can bridge that lack of reflection, close analysis, narrative development that a lot of students are lacking because of the culture they're in. Does that make any sense?

**Beck:** Yeah, it does.

**Rainey:** So, I've tried the workshops thing. I've seen people do it well, and I've seen people do it in a way that allows students just to not engage in very deep thinking about a particular topic.

**Beck:** Yeah.

**Rainey:** The other part of that is that I think a good lecture—again, we talked about this—a good lecture from a faculty member not only shows content, but it shows critical thinking. How they deal with evidence, how they deal with narrative, how they critique a point, how they critique an idea. And a good lecture, it seems to be, is the best model for a good paper.

**Beck:** I've seen that in your lectures, thinking about the lectures that you've given in the Classical World regarding different theories of explanation as to why the Western Roman Empire fell. Or, why Sparta had such a different course of development from other Greek *poleis*.

**Rainey:** Right.

**Beck:** And what I recall from those lectures is that you offer forward several different explanations that are current in the literature and that have presented in the literature, and then offer critiques of those. So, that does seem to model a particular way of doing good critical thinking about history. And, in support of your ultimate conclusion, as I recall, was never one grand theory to explain everything, but drew upon several of the different elements that had been proposed.

**Rainey:** Right. Just one other example of this in a recent experience, where a colleague did a number of workshops on this, that and the other that were helpful in terms of skills—writing and so on. Gave two lectures. What the students remembered about what this person said—the other part of this, Stephen, is people invite me to talk about Putin because they want to know what somebody who has studied Putin all of their life, and Russia all of their academic life, understands and thinks about the situation now as they would read a book, as I said. And this is the shortcut to reading that book. [chuckles] I always end with book suggestions. And in this one particular case, several of the students that were in this person’s seminar said what they remembered most about this faculty member is the excellent two lectures that he gave, and some things that he had said in seminar.

But the students want to know what we think about this. Why are they taking Russian history if they don’t want to understand what a Russian historian thinks about it, and says about it, and how he analyzes Stalin, or a particular issue? Again, I think it’s a way of teaching by example.

**Beck:** Yeah, that makes sense. Maybe what we could do is stop for today.

**Rainey:** Sure.

**Beck:** And then, there’s some topics that I’d like to talk about next time. Just to mention a few, I’d like to talk a little bit more about the union hard card campaign that you were involved in in the ‘70s.

**Rainey:** Sure.

**Beck:** And then, maybe connect that with the formation of the current union.

**Rainey:** Yeah.

**Beck:** I’d also like to talk about just some involvement—

**Rainey:** I will say this about the union now. We need a union now more than ever, because the administration is in total disarray now.

**Beck:** Also, I’d like to talk about some of the major political events at the college over the years.

**Rainey:** Oh, sure.

**Beck:** Maybe something about the efforts to close the college, Olander’s administration.

**Rainey:** Sure.

**Beck:** And then just some reflections on Evergreen in the past, looking back on your whole career. Is there anything else that you were hoping to talk about, and your concerns? I want to be sure we have a chance to—

**Rainey:** Right. So, do we need two more sessions, Stephen?

**Beck:** Let's see how it goes. I think we might need two more. It really depends. But certainly, we should meet Wednesday.

**End Part 2 of 2 of Tom Rainey on 8-7-17**