

Virginia Darney
Interviewed by Nancy Taylor
The Evergreen State College oral history project
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FINAL

Begin Part 1 of 2 of Jin Darney on April 12, 2018

Taylor: This is April 12, 2018 and I'm in Portland with Jin Darney. This is the first interview. Just start by a bit of background. Who are you? Where do you come from? Where did your parents come from? And then with your education.

Darney: I was born in Nebraska. My parents were both from Iowa. My dad was at his first teaching job at Hastings College. He had a master's at that point in speech and rhetoric, and then joined up in the war. I was born in '43 when my sister, Grace, was 2; he joined the Navy soon after that.

Grace, and I went home to mother's parents in Pocahontas, Iowa, for the duration of the war, where we were with our Aunt Virginia, my mother's older sister—for whom I'm named—who were kind of handiwork fiends. They sewed and they knit and they did everything except make shoes, so we had "the" outfits, these two little girls.

Just as the war was ending, my dad was on a troopship coming home, and there was a polio epidemic on the ship. So, they offloaded the ones who had polio, including my father, in Hawaii for about six weeks, until they recovered from the disease itself. And at that point, my parents had to decide where he should be sent to the hospital. They realized that they could not stay in the Midwest; that the houses all had stairs and the ice and the snow and so on.

So he was shipped to Corona in southern California, where there was a country club that had been turned into a naval hospital. My sister and I were ferried out to California by our Aunt Virginia, and we were in Corona for two or three years. During that time, he coached the high school debate team. My mother would take him there. He was paralyzed from the waist down. And he went to Stanford on the G.I. Bill to finish the Ph.D. he had begun at the University of Iowa.

My mother said much, much later that she felt like she had to really push him to do it; that he didn't want to do it, but she really was a force, my mother. She had dropped out of college when they married but to back up, they weren't living together —she was living at home still—but she had to work, so she worked while my dad continued his master's degree. They got married when he went to Hastings.

So, we were in Corona for a few years and then went to Stanford. We lived in Stanford Village, which is not there anymore. It was the VA Hospital and everything had ramps, so it was perfect for my father, who used crutches and sometimes a wheelchair. My sister and I started school—I went to the Stanford Psych Department nursery school and she was at Castella School, where I later joined her.

In 1950, he was ready to look for work. Again, much later, after he died, we found his application folders, and we found these letters that just break your heart saying, "If you would only let me come, you can see that I could do the work." And it was so hard to imagine that. But Julian McPhee, who was the long, long-time President of Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo hired him, and for that my father was forever grateful.

Taylor: This was . . .

Darney: . . . in 1950 in the English Department. We moved to San Luis and our first house was two Quonset huts put together, again, left from the war—for married student housing. I talk about these accommodations that we made because of my father, but it never felt like that as a kid. He drove, he did things, he took us swimming, so we never felt like we were deprived. I realize now how difficult it was for my mother to make everything smooth for him.

Taylor: But there was discrimination against him in hiring.

Darney: Yeah. And it was that time. It wasn't even discrimination, it was just like "Sorry, it would never work."

Taylor: Yeah, but it was discrimination.

Darney: It was discrimination. And when the ADA passed, I realized how much accommodation he could have used that wasn't available to him.

My parents stayed there until they both died in San Luis Obispo. It was a wonderful place to grow up. I had friends who had horses We could walk to where their horses were

stabled and we could ride and climb these mountains that surround the town. It was really quite an idyllic childhood.

When my sister went to college, my mother went back to work. First, she had a job in the men's prison outside of San Luis, where Timothy Leary was incarcerated. She worked for a psychiatrist there; she was a secretary. She wanted to be a parole officer, and in California at that time, the law was that you couldn't be a parole officer unless you had been a prison guard; and you couldn't be a prison guard unless you were male. So my mother organized all the parole office secretaries in the state of California and got that changed, and then decided she should really to go law school.

Well, there's no law school in San Luis. San Luis is very isolated, which is part of why it's so nice. So there were these little fly-by-night places that set up and offer a couple of years of law school. In California, you didn't have to finish law school in order to pass the bar, you just have to take an extra test. So she did that for, I don't know, five or six years in her sixties and passed the California bar, and practiced until she died at 86.

Taylor: This was a correspondence course or something?

Darney: Lots of it was in person. They would come up one night a week and do this class. But then they folded, so she went to several different places and then it was correspondence. So, she did it. She was very determined, and I think bitter at not having had the educational opportunities that my father had, and certainly that they gave to my sister and me. In her eighties, she talked about how she's doing law for old ladies. But it was an inspiration. She was quite something. She was difficult, and I admire her. She was hard.

Taylor: So you have the model of two parents that fought for what they deserved.

Darney: Right. And made things very easy for us. It was a pleasure. I always worked during high school, summers and weekends and Christmas vacation and that sort of thing.

When it was time to go to college, I'd been accepted at Bryn Mawr and this college in Columbia, Missouri, where my mother and my aunt and my sister had gone called, at the time, Christian College. It's Columbia College now, a two-year women's college. They had a fire at Bryn Mawr and lost all the scholarship applications so I didn't get a scholarship, and I couldn't go. So I went to Christian College for two years, and then transferred to Stanford, which is

exactly what my sister had done. And I did it sort of without thinking about it, and that's obviously one of the things about privilege is that these things happen and you don't have to think about them.

But it wasn't that I had a burning desire to go here or there, or to do this or that, in college. I was good—I was good in math, I was good in English, I took languages. I didn't have much of a social life because I had a boyfriend at home at Berkeley. My mother asked me when I went off to college—this college had like an insurance policy in case your daughter dropped out of school, you'd get part of your tuition money back—and my mother said, "Do we need to get that for you?" And I was so offended. [laughter] Like, I'm going to get pregnant and drop out of school.

Taylor: I've never heard of that before.

Darney: Well, I think if you run girls' schools, maybe you thought about that in the early '60s.

Taylor: And the '50s.

Darney: Yeah. So I transferred to Stanford, and the boyfriend was at Berkeley, And I was, I guess, surprised—I don't think shocked, but I was surprised when I got to Stanford to see the kinds of education that other students had had that I hadn't had. It was very easy to be best at San Luis Obispo senior high school without really trying very hard, so I was humbled by that, that these kids—there was a Western Civ class, And I was taking it with freshmen then because I was a junior—these kids had read the works in high school. And I was just stunned. So, I kind of wafted my way through college. I did fine.

Taylor: Did the two years at the Christian college serve you?

Darney: Well, they transferred.

Taylor: But you didn't feel like you were getting an education there?

Darney: Not like I did at Stanford. Right away in the dorm, people were sitting around after dinner talking about things that were going on in class. I thought, oh, I get it now. This is sort of what college should be. And I hadn't felt that before.

I had a scholarship. By then, my father had deigned to talk to the VA and it turns out there was VA money for kids of disabled vets, so I had money from the VA, too. The tuition was \$2,000 a year.

Taylor: This was about 1966?

Darney: I transferred into Stanford in '63. I graduated from high school in '61. And then I had a scholarship from an alum named J. Winter Smith for young women. "For young women who habitually abstained from liquor and tobacco." J. Winter Smith, of course, was a very good Mormon. He had earned an engineering degree at Stanford, and gave this scholarship to one male and one female in every class. I thought, well, you know, I'm not 21, I'm not drinking. That's fine. I don't smoke. Sure. So I accepted the scholarship. And Uncle J, as we were to call him, would invite the recipients of the scholarships to his house once a year for dinner in San Jose, where we had tomato juice. [laughter]

He also sent out a newsletter—I don't think it was every month, but it was like four or five times a year—to all of his current and former scholarship recipients—at Stanford, BYU, and College (now University) of the Pacific. It was called *Wisdograms by Uncle J*. And I'm so sorry I didn't keep one of them, but it was his little aphorisms about how to live your life and how to get along in life. After I graduated, he would send me money for my birthday and for Christmas, so he really kept up with these people. He was a very nice man, but it was so odd. [laughing]

Taylor: Well, he had a principle, and he believed in education, and it was equal for men and women as long as you didn't drink and smoke.

Darney: Exactly. I was fine with that.

Taylor: It's nondiscriminatory. That's good.

Darney: Right. I married Philip Darney the fall after I graduated. My sister married that summer, as well, so my mother was putting on two weddings that year. And I entered the Stanford Teacher Education Program.

Taylor: But your major was English?

Darney: My major was English and my minor was math. I had sort of thought about being a math major, and then I thought, you know, I'd rather be reading novels, so I switched to English.

Taylor: Do you have any memorable faculty that set you on a course?

Darney: No, [but] I had good faculty. I had Wallace Stegner and I had Alfred Appel the Nabokov scholar I had some really good people. I didn't feel like I was pushed to do anything, and so I really didn't take advantage of it as much as I could have, I think. It was an important time for me but I don't think . . . I don't know. Western Civ turned out to be one of my favorite classes, partly because of the interdisciplinary nature of it.

I'd been competitive swimming in high school and at Christian College. Then I got to Stanford and the Stanford swim team had been to the Olympics. You know? [laughing] That was out of my league, so I didn't even try out for the swim team, but I could swim there. And Philip Darney, the person I married, was a swimmer, and played water polo.

Taylor: You knew him from high school?

Darney: I was a senior in high school and he was a freshman at Cal Poly. I did teacher training in a school on the wrong side of the freeway in San Jose that was pretty interesting. There were three of us who then made up one teacher. We allowed the school to release a teacher to be our mentor there, and then we had a mentor from Stanford.

Taylor: Was that kind of an internship program, or were you in the regular step program?

Darney: No, I was in the step program where you were in the classroom. You had a class starting day one, so each of the three of us had a class, which relieved them of three classes. And I got married after like three weeks of school. [laughing] I didn't say anything beforehand because I'm, I guess, superstitious. I thought, well, one of us may get hit by a truck or it may not happen or whatever.

So I walked in the morning after the weekend that we got married—we got married over the weekend and I was back in school Monday morning—and I had changed my name. I said, "This is my name now." And these boys who were almost as old as I was in the back row went like "Ah-h-h! We know where you've"—just har har—and I was humiliated. [laughter]

Taylor: You were 21 or 22?

Darney: Twenty-two when I got married. Yeah, I was young.

Taylor: I remember that.

Darney: Too young. I taught there that year, and then I taught in San Rafael, because by that time Philip Darney was—he was in his last year of in medical. So we were in the Bay Area for

three years, because he did his last year of medical school and then a year of residency in San Francisco. And then we moved around a lot.

One of the things that I think is interesting about these questions, and the way I think of it in my own life is, when did I start to take myself seriously? Because I think up until this point, I hadn't—intellectually or professionally or whatever. We were having a good time. We were ready to move to Canada because he didn't get matched in his internship in 1968, and was immediately 1-A. But then he got an internship at the Public Health Service in San Francisco.

Taylor: So it was like things just happened. You didn't make conscious effort.

Darney: Yeah, we didn't have to make things happen. Then we moved around; we moved every year for a number of years, which makes it very hard to see yourself as a professional.

After the year in San Francisco, he then went into the EIS—the Epidemiological Intelligence Service—at the CDC [then the Communicable Disease Center, then the Centers for Disease Control, not the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] in Atlanta. Part of what they do is to send an epidemiologist to every state. He applied, and he applied for Alaska but we got Alabama instead [laughter] my theory being that it's next in the alphabet! So we were in Montgomery, Alabama for a year and in 1969-70. That was an amazing experience. So part of me says, oh, you should have taken yourself more seriously sooner, and part of me says, yeah, but I had all these interesting experiences by just kind of wafting.

Taylor: Did you work in Montgomery?

Darney: I did.

Taylor: You taught?

Darney: My pattern was we'd move, I'd hit town, I'd look for a job. I applied to the high school, to the public schools, and they had just been ordered by the Federal court to integrate the teaching staff—not the students but the teaching staff. I went to the head office and this guy [was] sitting behind a desk who really did have a red neck—he was this huge white guy with this huge red neck—and he said, "I just want to know what your answer is to the question on page four." So I leafed through the application and it said, "Would you be willing to teach with someone of another race?" And I said, "Well, of course." He said, "You're hired." He didn't

look at my resume, he didn't do anything. So I went to the school, which was Booker T. Washington and there was nothing in the classroom. There were chairs and that was it.

Taylor: This is high school?

Darney: High school. And I just thought, ah, I don't know, can I do this? There's a black college in Montgomery—Alabama State—which, if you have a dual school system, you have to train black teachers, so this was the black teacher training college, right in downtown Montgomery. And I'd applied there in the English Department and I got a job, so that was a relief. I didn't have to decide about the poor kids at Booker T. Washington.

I taught in the English Department at Alabama State for a year, and it was a revelation. There were people there who had been in the marches, there were people there who knew Dr. King. People in the faculty were connected. There was another white woman in the department, and her husband was at the Air Force base, so only white people "from away" taught at this college.

Taylor: You had a B.A. from Stanford?

Darney: I had an M.A. in English Education. I was the first white teacher that these kids had had, and it was so interesting. I taught them about Stokely Carmichael. I taught about what the Panthers were doing, what was going on in the world. Because these were farm kids, mostly. That was '69. By then the really talented black kids has been whisked off to schools in the North, so the really sharp kids weren't there, or maybe they just weren't at Alabama State. It wasn't a prestigious college.

But it was just such a good experience. So interesting. I think we had the only 10-speed bicycles in town, and I rode my bike in my miniskirt [laughing] through the black neighborhoods.

Taylor: And you were treated well.

Darney: Very well.

Taylor: They appreciated you.

Darney: Yeah. And during that year, Philip Darney was sent twice to Nigeria for the Nigerian civil war, because the CDC sent health workers to those places, so I was alone in Montgomery,

Alabama. It was kind of a challenge, but I made friends. I had these moments where you realize that you just don't understand a thing.

A friend of mine—a young black woman—and I decided to go to the *Messiah*, because I'd seen in the paper that this church was putting it on. So we went down and they said at the door, "Oh, you have to have a ticket." And I said, "Gosh, it said in the paper that everybody was invited." And then he said, "Well, it's full." And I said, "Really?" And she said, "C'mon, get out of here." And, of course, duh, she's black. She's not welcome in that church. But it never occurred to me, so it was, again, humbling to realize that I didn't think about that because I didn't have to.

After that year, then we moved to Atlanta, where he was at the mother ship of the CDC. I looked for jobs again, and I got a job at this junior high. And now they had integrated the schools in Atlanta, but they tracked them. So the school that had been—I guess it had been a middle school—now was like all seventh grade. It wasn't Atlanta, it was Decatur, which is the next little town. All the seventh-graders were there, and then they tracked the kids. So, guess what happens.

I go into this classroom and there was nothing there. [laughing] And this had been a white school. It had black kids in it now, but it was a white school. This was a week before school started. The other teachers had kind of raided the room. So I went down to the Coca-Cola Company and said, "Can I have a clock for my wall? Can I have this?" And they gave me stuff. So the first week of school—

Taylor: Did you have white students or black students?

Darney: Both. Mostly white, but both. The first week of school, it became clear to me that I had no time away from those kids. I'd taught seventh grade before. That was okay. I had to eat with them, I had to be on the playground with them. I couldn't go to the bathroom.

Taylor: Because that was just the way it was?

Darney: That was the way it was. On Friday of the first week of school, I went down to personnel office and I said, "In my contract it says that somebody's going to come and teach either art or P.E. I don't care which it is, but somebody needs to come and teach one of these

classes so that I'm not there the whole time." This guy said, "Well, you know, that's not going to happen." And I quit. That was a really good experience.

Taylor: In seventh grade, you were to teach everything from science to P.E.?

Darney: Yeah, it was a self-contained classroom, and I was to teach everything. It wasn't that I didn't think I could teach science or math or art. I could have done it, but not every single one. And the contract said that somebody was going to come in, so I felt like I was within my rights, and so I quit.

I looked around for other things. I subbed for a while. One of the schools I subbed at was a Summerhill-like School that parents had put together, and that was interesting. In the middle of the year, I got a job teaching English in a mostly black high school, because Atlanta realtors had red lined, so the neighborhood had gone from white to black in four years. I did the yearbook and I taught English. There were black teachers there still. There were some white teachers there, but the black teachers were new.

Then we went to London. So, again, it's like I didn't feel like I needed . . . I didn't feel committed to either a particular job or a particular kind of work.

Taylor: Were you developing a theory or a support for some educational belief?

Darney: Not at that point. You just go in and you teach those kids. I tried to bring in things that weren't in their curriculum. And, of course, as a sub, you have to have all your own lesson plans because they don't always leave you one. So I had a lot of things I could do with them with writing exercises, or activities, or things that they could do.

In 1971 we went to London where Philip Darney was at the School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. The CDC sent him, so he had his regular salary and we lived in student housing. We were in good shape. And I looked at teaching, but, because his program had lots of long vacations, I didn't want to be tied to a desk job. The point was to travel, so I thought, I'm not going to do that, so I did a master's in United States Studies, which was out of the University of London, but it was interdisciplinary. I think that's what really then started me thinking about interdisciplinary work. And it wasn't very interdisciplinary, it was kind of half-assed interdisciplinary. I could sort of see that, but that was okay because it was an interesting

program with interesting faculty and students. I did my thesis on Black Mountain and that kind of experimental college.

Taylor: So somehow experimental education was in your background and you had questions about it?

Darney: Yeah, I was interested in that. It had come up in a class and I was interested in it. So when we went back to Atlanta—because he had to pay back the time— I went to Emory in American Studies. There's this thing at Emory called the Graduate Institute of the Liberal Arts that's just a kind of collection of interdisciplinary stuff. You can do religion and literature or you can do all kinds of combinations that you want to do. I did a pretty traditional American Studies, but that was okay. And had a baby, (Blair, in 1972) and got all the coursework finished before we moved again. We were there for two years. [laughing]

Taylor: I didn't realize you were so peripatetic.

Darney: Yeah. My mother, again, was really afraid I wouldn't finish because I was—it wasn't that she didn't think I was taking it seriously, because I don't know that she noticed that, but I was doing all this other stuff, like having a baby and moving and doing these things. I said, "Well, if you're really worried about that, you could pay for daycare." And she did.

Taylor: So she did to you what she'd done to your father. "You do it!"

Darney: She pushed me, yeah. [laughter] But I had no intention of not doing it. She just thought I would waver.

Then we moved to Boston, and I would take trips to sites of American World's Fairs because I was working on women's activities in the four 19th Century Fairs that had separate Women's Buildings. We went to St. Louis so I could do the research for that fair; we went to New Orleans to do that fair; and Chicago, I did that one on my way home to see my parents—so I could go to all the places that these fairs were and get the original documents.

Then we moved to Portland in '78. I had gone to graduate school with Lynn Foa. After we moved to Boston, they moved to Boston, and we found them this fabulous house that a friend of ours' great uncle was going to sell, but wanted somebody to live in it until they sold it. It was a "stockbroker Tudor" house—enormous—out by Great Blue Hill. They paid \$100 a month, and so they were very grateful.

They moved to Portland and—she got a job at Evergreen—and so then she said, “You should apply.”

Taylor: The Evergreen job for Vancouver?

Darney: Yeah. And I don’t know if she was there the first year or the second year, but she was there way before I was. Then we moved to Portland, but it wasn’t particularly because of that job, although it was the first time I ever moved someplace where there was a possibility of a job that I knew before I moved there.

Taylor: This was ’78?

Darney: Yeah. And then right after I got here, there was a budget crisis and so there was no job. So I kind of hung on, and I taught a class. That first year, I taught one course, because the Vancouver program is designed as a whole, but it separates because the students were working adults and some were part-time. There was a 16-credit program, but students could take four credits or eight credits or 12 credits or 16. The students could pick the level of their involvement.

Taylor: Can you back up a bit and give some context for when that program started?

Darney: It started in ’76, so it hadn’t been going very long. My understanding is it was formed at the same time that Port Angeles was because of declining enrollments in Olympia. The program was on the Clark College campus and it was upper-division only. It was designed for students who dropped out of school for whatever reason and wanted to finish their B.A. It was, as you might expect, mostly older women.

Taylor: Mostly older women, and it was an interdisciplinary program without any promise for a certain disciplinary—

Darney: At that point it was like, this is it. There’s this one thing. Later on, we did a little bit more so they could choose tracks, but right away, it was this one thing.

Taylor: And like 100 students?

Darney: No, I bet there were 60, maybe. I don’t know. Lynn was there the first year and I taught a course—I can’t remember any of these folks, I can’t remember when they were there. I remember people who were there, like Richard Alexander.

Taylor: There was another woman.

Darney: Gayle Rothrock wasn't there then.

Taylor: No, she came later.

Darney: It was designed so that there would be people commuting from Olympia, and they'd put them up in a motel, and then there would be some local people.

Taylor: But there were two stable ones. There was somebody besides you. I can't remember who.

Darney: Later on, yes, but not that first [year]. It was Duke Kuehn who taught social sciences was there with Lynn those first years, I think.

That was '78, and then I taught there '79-'80. Ronna Lowen taught communication. The last year that she was there, they said, "There's this one visiting job," so we said, "Okay, we're going to split it, and we'll each have a quarter off, and then we'll both teach one quarter." So they got four quarters out of us instead of three, but it gave each of us a break. Because I thought, I've got to get this dissertation done and be finished. [laughing] So I really used that as a push to get it all finished.

Then there was a full-time job that year, so in the spring in '81, I was hired on a permanent—well, at that point, it was those three-year contracts, but permanently.

Taylor: How long were you at Vancouver all together?

Darney: Till 1990, '78 till '90.

Taylor: So from '81—

Darney: Well, from '78, but from '81 until '90, I was full-time.

Taylor: And there was somebody coming from Olympia?

Darney: Right. And then there was somebody there—Bill Bruner came a little bit later, but then he was there full-time. At the end, Justino Balderrama was there full-time, and Bill and I were the three. Then we would hire a few adjuncts, but not very many.

Taylor: So it was 60 or 75 students max usually?

Darney: Yeah. Well, the way we ran it, I have no idea what the numbers were. Then when the three of us were there, we'd have a theme, and there would be an eight-credit thing that everybody took and we'd run different lectures and do different things. Then there would be a four-credit sort of disciplinary thing—Justino did social services, Bill did business and I did

humanities. Then each of us would teach one other thing. So we were really teaching a lot, and it was at night. We ran a few daytime classes, but not very many.

Taylor: And it was upper division?

Darney: It was upper division only. For each of us, it was two nights a week, the night we were all together and then one other night that we'd have our class.

Taylor: What was its relationship to the community?

Darney: I did a lot. I went to all the "animal clubs." (Elks, Moose, Lions, etc.) I did all that stuff. Vancouver really wanted WSU to be there, and they really wanted a football team, and they never really understood what we were doing. The students did, who came. I think we made some really important contributions to the community, but the community was never very interested.

We had a good relationship with Clark College. We were in their classrooms, and then we got one of the officers' row houses at Fort Vancouver. It was one that's a double house, so we were in one-half of it, and then when we took over the other half, Phil Harding was there. He was there for several years. They had a brick wall down the middle (designed so that you couldn't hear a baby crying from one side to the other). But it made it so that if you wanted to go to the other side, you had to go downstairs, out and around, and come back and go back upstairs to where the offices were. One day we came in and Phil Harding had knocked a hole through the wall so that you could go from one to the other. [laughter] He was absolutely wonderful to teach with.

Taylor: What was the relationship between Vancouver and Olympia?

Darney: I would say we always felt like a stepchild. One of the hazards is that we were a line item in the budget. Now, when you look at a program like the one that you and I taught, the cost of that program is really minimal because the faculty salaries come from someplace else. There's no staff, there's no electricity. In Vancouver, everything was in that line item [except] salaries—the electricity, the rent—so it's very easy. If you're looking for a way to save money, you just lop off that one line item instead of digging in all the other budgets.

Taylor: And Clark College wasn't paying for it at all.

Darney: No.

Taylor: They weren't even giving you a break on the rent.

Darney: Well, it wasn't theirs. We were paying, I think, the National Park, Fort Vancouver. We were paying somebody else.

Taylor: Oh, okay.

Darney: Two or three years before we left, we did this arrangement with Clark College, and they put in most of the money for this building, but it was our building with the understanding that it wasn't really theirs. I mean, we were in the building. So we got to design this building, which was fun, because Phil took us through wonderful exercises to do it.

Taylor: I didn't realize that.

Darney: We wanted to do things that made the GSA in the state just kind of roll their eyes.

[laughing] Because in this old house there's one bathroom, and everybody shares the bathroom. Our offices were in bedrooms, and so we were all mixed up and we were always all together, and we all went out to lunch every Thursday. Not the faculty seminar, but the house meeting. The staff would come, and it was really a tight group, I'd say.

So when they were building this building, we said, "We don't want to have a men's and women's bathroom. We just want to have a bathroom with privacy." They just kind of went "Oh, no, no, no." [laughing]

Taylor: We've come full circle on that, haven't we?

Darney: Yeah. But we got to design this quite nice, new building. My contract said that once every three years, I had to teach on the main campus. I was by then a single parent with two kids, and I couldn't just go away for a quarter, and I couldn't commute for a quarter, so we went up for a whole year. I was in the 1984 program and we just moved.

Taylor: I remember that.

Darney: That was a big struggle. And after all those years of paying the motel bills for people who came down and stayed with us, they wouldn't pay my moving bills.

Taylor: But you were going to be there a year?

Darney: I was going to be there a year, and if I had gone up each week and stayed up there until the weekend, I guess they would have paid for lodging during the week. I just felt like they never really appreciated what we were doing.

I always went up for faculty meetings, and I would always stand up and say something. "I'm from Vancouver." And I could see people going "Who the hell is this woman who keeps yammering?" But I just felt like the assumption was that we all really wanted to be on the main campus; that we applied to be in Vancouver just doing this as a way to sneak up on the main campus. And that was part of the resistance to hiring somebody permanently down here; that we would just use it as a way to weasel into the college. So that kind of attitude hurt. It obviously still makes me get my back up.

Taylor: But in contrast to Port Angeles, which folded because there was no commitment, and they never had any local people there, you managed to . . .

Darney: . . . to hold on. And I think we did a very innovative way to do part-time studies. So when the main campus was thinking about part-time studies, did they ask us about it? No.

Taylor: Were you responsible for recruiting students?

Darney: Mm-hm.

Taylor: So you did that.

Darney: We did that. Yeah, we did everything. I paid the electric bill when they turned off the lights, that sort of thing. And really interesting students, some quite wacky. Their student activities fees were going to the main campus. Well, one of our students was a labor organizer, and he went up and they did a presentation before the Board that just knocked their socks off. And, of course, then we got our own money. We got to keep that money. I think that now, with e-mail and everything so much easier, I think it would have been easier to maintain that campus.

Taylor: It makes sense as a satellite campus.

Darney: Yes.

Taylor: There was talk about putting one in Port Townsend, Port Angeles. Vancouver lasted the longest.

Darney: It's the biggest population center, too. And at that time, there was tuition reciprocity with Oregon, so we had some Portland students who could get in-state tuition, which made a difference to them.

Taylor: What do you think caused its demise? Was it a downturn in the economy? Was it a budget saving that just was convenient to the college?

Darney: There was one person, who was a mover and shaker—who was in Vancouver --- Denny Heck. He was a Vancouver boy, and he was very supportive of us. It was before he was in the Legislature and moved to Olympia. So we had some good support, but the community didn't do it. My theory, which is simply paranoia, is that Olander got something from the other state colleges for trading. It happened when Olander was there, and he kind of traded us away for something.

So we said, "We'll close this campus, but we're not going to do it right away," because our students would have had trouble transferring. We said, "Here's how we're going to pull out." Justino went to the main campus first because his kids were grown. Bill went second, after his second daughter graduated from high school. I was there the last year, and that was Blair's senior year in high school.

Taylor: And you were taking care of everybody.

Darney: Well, they were dwindling because we weren't accepting new students by then. But I was doing everything, a lot of contracts.

Taylor: When did Washington State University come in? Because I always thought it had something to do with that.

Darney: They came in as we were leaving. They came in with such a huge budget for 20 students. They had like four times the budget for 20 students that we had for 80.

Taylor: And they had this whole campus.

Darney: So they took over that building that we were in, and then they got money for a whole new building. That's why Evergreen's system is so cost effective, because you don't have commitments to a major. That means you have to have all these particular teachers, so we could do it much cheaper than they did. But it didn't make any difference.

Taylor: But you didn't have political support from the community, or enough.

Darney: Right.

Taylor: And I wonder what was going on with Tacoma. Because there might have been competition there, too.

Darney: With Tacoma?

Taylor: Yes.

Darney: Yeah. If the college sees, oh, these are the two off-campus programs and are they competing for the same money?

Taylor: Yeah.

Darney: We wouldn't win that.

Taylor: You wouldn't win that, and I don't even know if that was going on. But I sure remember I thought closing Vancouver Had something to do with only supporting one external campus. That might not have been it.

Darney: But it was made so that "We'll pull out and WSU will come in." That was all part of the deal.

Taylor: And it was '90?

Darney: Yeah, we shut the door in the spring of 1990.

Taylor: I'm trying to think of what was going on with the college budget at that time. Was that one of the downturns about budget?

Darney: Well, every year was, it seems to me.

Taylor: No, Barbara talks about times when there was money—I mean, relatively.

Darney: I don't know.

Taylor: It was mostly when Barbara was Dean and a little bit later.

Darney: Right.

Taylor: When Barbara first came in there was a money crisis. But later on there was more money. I don't know what was going on in 1990.

Darney: I think in some ways it's hard for the college, because structurally, we're not used to dealing with faculty in a program, with budget things or with anything like that. So here are these two programs where you have to deal with them with the budget, you have to deal with them with personnel, you have to do all these things that you don't have to do on the main campus. I think that makes it sometimes seem like it was too much work. And it's a hundred miles away.

Taylor: Yes, and it's a discrete item on the budget that you can just lop off, where that wouldn't be as possible if you were doing the Native American population or the African-American population in Tacoma. This is another community, this is Vancouver.

Darney: What else was going on was that Pullman was really down in enrollment, and they were looking for a new source. Really, who wants to go to Pullman? So having it be on the West side was very attractive to them. And they poured so much money into flying people back and forth and doing all this stuff, and here we are with our lunchboxes.

Taylor: But there was a commitment to the faculty, I mean, the three of you; that you had contracts, and if you were willing to move to Olympia, you had a job.

Darney: Right. The good news is you have a job; the bad news is it's in Olympia.

Taylor: Did you move there before Barton was out of school?

Darney: Yeah, but she stayed here. I knew I was moving in the summer. I sold my house here and was buying a house in Olympia, and that's when I got together with Craig. So Barton, who was in seventh grade, I guess—we pulled all the Portland Public Schools contacts we knew so she could stay at her same school—stayed here, and I came back and forth weekends.

Taylor: When was that?

Darney: '90.

Taylor: That's earlier than I thought. Okay. In the long run, do you have good feelings about Vancouver?

Darney: Oh, yeah. Very good feelings about Vancouver.

Taylor: Are there students that you remember?

Darney: Yes, there are students I remember [and] I see occasionally, people I felt close to. Bill was one of my closest friends in Olympia because of that. We really worked together well. We used to go hiking up in Indian Heaven, which is on the Washington side of the Gorge, to do program planning. We had a good time. And he's such a gifted teacher.

He said to me, "You think everybody should know how to read a novel before they graduate from college, and I think they should know how to read a pie chart." And I said, "You're right." So we taught statistics to everybody. That year, everybody had to take it. Well, there was weeping and wailing from the students and we said, "We're going to get you through

this.” And it was wonderful. He’s a brilliant lecturer. And also, they would call him up after the third glass of wine when they were getting together and they couldn’t figure out the problem, and he’d walk them through it. And they all did it. That was very gratifying. And that was Bill.

Taylor: Your educational philosophy, or whatever you want to call it, how was it impacted by that Vancouver experience? Or, how does it stay with you?

Darney: Well, I think a respect for students who don’t look like typical students, and a respect for their experience and the things they can do. It may have been the first class I taught, I did this little upfront thing about “You’re going to learn what you get out of it, and you’ve got to put yourself in it, and I’m not going to feed you.” You know, that kind of student. A student came up to me and she said, “Have you been in EST?” [laughter] I said, “No, it’s educational philosophy.”

Because of the age of the students, I felt very comfortable. Many of them were older than I was, but they weren’t 18-year-olds, and so they were wonderful students. One of the types that we had were these women who were used to running the PTA, and doing this and doing that, and being very, very accomplished. So they would turn in things that were fine, and I would say, “That’s really good, but you knew how to do that before you came. What have you learned?” And they were furious, and then they would buckle down and do more.

One of the things that I value most about Evergreen was that you could really push people, and it was expected to really push people to do more than they already knew how to do. So that was something that I really saw happening in Vancouver. Angie Skov, who was the Library secretary, was my student in Vancouver. And I followed her to the parking lot one night when she was going to quit and I said, “You can’t quit. You have to come back in! You have to do this!” [laughing]

Taylor: Were you sort of making it up and dealing with it as you saw it? To what extent did Evergreen, as a place that had a philosophic point of view, impact what you did in Vancouver? Or, did you just create it on your own?

Darney: I think it allowed me to do what I wanted to do because it was an open structure. So I could develop the way I thought teaching ought to happen on my own. I didn’t get anything from the main campus about how to do these things.

Taylor: Except for you got the opportunity to do an interdisciplinary thing because it was compatible.

Darney: Precisely.

Taylor: And that students would be full-time, and they didn't have to be in a structure like at the University of Washington, so it allowed a kind of freedom.

Darney: Right, and so I could do it the way I wanted to do it.

Taylor: And you came to the Olympia campus and saw what people were doing and you'd say, "Well, that would work here," or, "That wouldn't work here." Did you do that kind of thing or not?

Darney: No, I don't think so. In that 1984 program, I think they met once a week all year when they were reading things, and so I would come to some of them. And it's a schlep, right? So I would come up and do that, and I felt like what I was doing—I think they thought me a little, I don't know, prim and prissy maybe.

Taylor: But you were full-time in that program, weren't you?

Darney: I was full-time, yeah, we all were.

Taylor: You and John Cushing?

Darney: And Susie Strasser and Matt Smith.

Taylor: It was a good team.

Darney: It was a really good team, yeah. So I think they thought I wasn't very adventurous. I don't know what they thought, but I felt like they thought I wasn't . . . constantly people would say, "Well, you just don't understand." And I thought, well, I understand perfectly. I'm not interested, or I don't want to do that or whatever. But I felt a lot of . . . in some cases it was arrogance, and in some cases it was just kind of misunderstanding. I mean, nobody was interested in Vancouver. Nobody said, "Gosh, what are you doing there?" It was expected that I was there to learn from all these wonderful people.

Taylor: You were invited to join this team, and aren't you privileged to be able to do that?

Darney: Exactly. Well, not that team really, but just the campus in general, the faculty in general. But Barbara [Leigh Smith] was interested, and Barbara was a tremendous support for nitty-gritty stuff, but also for thinking about what we were doing.

Taylor: Did she come down and visit?

Darney: Yes, she came down, not often but relatively often. And I think the place that I felt most accepted was that whole era when there was a big active women's group that did things together. I went on a few field trips, the overnight stuff. But the baseball game, and there was a community. That was a period when staff and faculty did things together, and that felt really good. But I didn't feel it from the old guys, and I never warmed to the old guys.

Taylor: How were the Vancouver staff treated? When you left, they just lost their jobs, right?

Darney: Well, we just had one. Sometimes we had a student aide, but we had Anne Turner and she, I think, was let go. I know she wasn't there the last year. I don't know if she was there the second to the last year. The last year, I did everything. And we weren't even in that building. They had already taken over that building, and so I just had an office up on the Clark campus. They gave me an office, so that was fine.

I think even after I went up that first year, there were a couple of students still. Because I used to meet somebody in the bowling alley in Kelso on my way up to Olympia at the beginning of the week, and then I'd meet with her and we'd talk about her contract. We got everybody through, which I felt very strongly about.

Taylor: This is a "what if" question. Would you have wanted to teach in Olympia, teach at Evergreen, if you hadn't had this experience in Vancouver? Was there an attraction to teaching at the college? Or was it another one of these things where you sort of fell into it?

Darney: I sort of fell into it, yeah. But I wasn't looking at all the colleges in the Portland area and where would I apply to college to teach. I didn't do that. And so I didn't know anything about Evergreen before Lynn Foa suggested and then I found out. But I would have been interested in that because it felt like, oh, finally, somebody understands what I'm trying to do in interdisciplinary studies.

Because I had taught in Boston at Pine Manor. I was the Director of the first year of their American Studies major, so I kind of put it together. I taught with a woman named Vera, who was also in the English Department, and she'd done a lot of work on motherhood manuals. This was in the years when people were doing that stuff. We taught a class together, and that was the first time I team taught, and it was absolutely wonderful. That really primed me. And

also, Vera was the one who really changed my thinking about my work, because she took herself very seriously, and I always thought that you shouldn't do that, you shouldn't take yourself too seriously. But I realize you're not going to get anything done if you don't. So she was really an inspiration to me. It was the last year I was there, and we taught this class on motherhood, which was English and history and cultural studies and stuff.

That was the first time that I felt like somebody understood sort of what interdisciplinary studies could be; that it wasn't just what I call "peanut butter and jelly." You know, Faculty A gives a lecture and then Faculty B gives a lecture, and the students are supposed to put it together. So, I liked that about Evergreen, that we were part of that.

Taylor: So your values were compatible, but you didn't necessarily seek it out. But when you got there, it turned out you could do what you believed in.

Darney: Right. And my best friend here in Portland is a guy who was my student in the Vancouver program.

Taylor: Before we leave Vancouver, are there any stories or something that epitomizes the place and the experience?

Darney: Well, my best story, which doesn't epitomize it, but it's my best story about Vancouver. We had this student named Maxine who came in one day when I was sitting at the desk and said, "I want to know if I can get credit in psychology." And I said, "Well . . ." and I give her the Evergreen talk. "We can do this, da da da da." Turns out she was a hairdresser, and for some reason she had to have continuing ed credits. I don't know what it was. Anyway, I said, "Sure, we can help you out." She said, "But that's not what I'd really like to do."

And I said, "Oh, what's that?" She said, "Well, I go to the zoo one night a week and I keep track of"—"I keep track of the motions that a pregnant elephant is making, because we're trying to figure out when she's going to birth, and nobody knows. So are there things that they do?" So she stays up all night making little marks in the chart. She said, "But that's not really what I want to do." At this point she was probably in her sixties. She said, "I am a belly dancer."

Taylor: At age 60?

Darney: At age 60, and she and her daughter and her granddaughter all did it. She dances with boa constrictors. So we had a party in December, and I said, “Maxine, would you come and dance?” So she came, and she brought her basket with her snake in it, and she lay on her floor on her back with her knees bent up, and put the snake like this, across her, and then sat up—I mean, she had abs that you could kill for! [laughing]—and then danced. This is Maxine, and she was just a trip.

One night in class, I noticed her poking down her bra, and at the break I said, “Maxine, what are you doing?” And she said that to feed the boa constrictor, she raises mice, and this was a litter that was premature and she was feeding them with eyedroppers!” [laughter] She had them in her bosom and she was feeding them with eyedroppers!

One day I pulled into the little parking lot behind the house, and she was just coming out to her car and she had a Band-Aid on her thumb. I said, “Maxine, what happened?” I feel like that’s always my lead into her. “Maxine, what happened?” [laughing] And she said, “Oh, look.” She opened up the trunk of her station wagon and there was a chimpanzee dressed in a brown polyester dress. And she said, “It scared the snake.” And there was the empty basket. “It scared the snake and the snake got out.” And I thought, great, there is a boa constrictor loose in Clark County! [laughter]

Taylor: You never found it?

Darney: We couldn’t find it, so she went home. Then what turned out what happened was her husband was cleaning out the car and there was snakeskin and stuff. And the next day he came and there was more snakeskin. He said, “That snake is in this car.” And he pulled out below the dash, you know, the part of the car, and the snake had gone up the heating vent and had its nose pressed against the heat, seeking the heat, and so they found the snake. [laughing]
Maxine and her boa constrictor.

Taylor: Did she graduate?

Darney: Oh, sure. They almost all graduated, because we really . . . I really felt like whatever they did, it was really more than they had done before, and it was really good.

Taylor: And it was satisfaction for them.

Darney: It was satisfaction, right, and to accomplish that. We had women who said, “Oh, my husband said I can’t pass basket weaving.” They were really bright, but they had been told they weren’t smart. And we had a fair share of divorces of women who came and thought, oh, I could do this, and I could be somebody other than what he thinks I can be.

Taylor: What percentage of the students were women?

Darney: Hmm . . . 80, 75. We had some young students. The young males didn’t do very well.

Taylor: How did you recruit them?

Darney: We recruited mostly through Clark College because it was right there, and the idea was that it was kind of an easy path, and we made it easy for them.

Taylor: You didn’t promise that they could go do something. They just had to come and do what you did.

Darney: They could do what we did, yeah. But we could try to make it work for them. They did a lot of internships and a lot of independent study and that sort of thing. We were really accommodating, I think, to the students.

That was a change for me when I came to the Olympia campus to see that people said “no” to the students most of the time. And I learned to a little bit, but I thought, you know—because they had nowhere else to go. It’s not like they could go ask a different faculty member, it was one of us, so I think we really went out of our way to help them.

Taylor: Let’s stop.

Darney: Good.

End Part 1 of 2 of Jin Darney on April 12, 2018

Begin Part 2 of 2 of Jin Darney on April 12, 2018

Taylor: We’re back at it. It is still April 12. We finished the story about Vancouver and now you have just arrived permanently at the college in 1990. Do you want to talk about people that influenced what you were thinking, and what you taught?

Darney: Yes. As I think about the programs that I taught, it seemed to me that the ones that were the most challenging—in a really good way—were the ones that seemed the loosest and seemed the least defined. The first year I was on the main campus I taught What’s Cookin’? with Bill Bruner, who did statistics; Carrie Margolin, who did psych; it was Sarah Williams’s first

year, she did cultural studies; and Flora Leisenring did a piece on nutrition for us. I was sort of holding it together, but doing the humanities part of it.

The thing that impressed me the most was, first of all, how rich that topic was. It was before people started doing food history, so I felt like we were right on the cutting edge. But it was also a program that was most students' second choice.

Taylor: Yes I remember the comments. They thought they were taking home ec.

Darney: They thought it was home ec and their parents thought it was home ec. By the end of the year, according to the word in the freshmen dorm, is that it was the hardest freshmen program. That was very gratifying because we worked really hard to bring it together, but also to present them with a lot of the kind of grounding that they need to be in college.

It was a really good program, and I still think about some of those readings now. We started out with something that was very hard, which was something I'd learned in Vancouver, which was to give the students things that were too hard for them, and they will rise; and it will also be a way that they continually come back to it as they learn more and more. They come back to understanding it in a different way.

We began the year with this Mary Douglas article called "What Makes a Dinner?" And we actually ended the year with it, which was another really brilliant idea that was Bill's, I think. It was pretty theoretical anthropology cultural studies. They had a lot of trouble with it, and they really fought at the beginning, but we kept bringing it up, and we kept coming back to it, and we kept pulling it together for them. In working with new faculty later on, I think one of the things that's important for new faculty to learn is that as faculty, we have to help them pull the pieces of the program together, and we have to keep reminding them of the theme, and keep reminding them of how this all fits together, because they're learning to do that, but they can't do it. So to just kind of throw this stuff at them and expect them—what I said before, the peanut butter and jelly—expect the students to do that kind of integration. They can't do that, so we helped them do that.

Taylor: Did the program have a question?

Darney: Well, it was about what does food mean to people? And we were brought up short, as so often happens, with this assignment we had about "Tell us about a meal that's important to

your family.” I can’t tell you how many students said, “We never eat together.” We’d say, “Thanksgiving?” “No, never.” So all of our assumptions about how they could talk about it, we had to throw out, and start over with what the students could say about particular ways of eating, or particular social activities that involve food.

I think the Islands Program is another good example of that; it’s a really loose kind of question, like “What does it mean to live on an island?” Something very basic, but it’s so rich, and there’s so much you can do with it. Again, I did the literature, and we had a film series—started with *South Pacific*, of course.

Taylor: You and Sally Cloninger, just the two of you?

Darney: Just the two of us, yes. What I learned in that program is how brilliant she is at designing projects for student learning. We had them doing amazing things that really put them in good stead for their time on the island when they had to do that stuff on their own. They had to do an ethnography of a place, and they had to do interviews with people, and they had to do all the kinds of things that we wanted them to be able to do for their island. That program was transformative for students. They came back after eight weeks on some island somewhere.

Taylor: Did they know what they were doing when they got into it?

Darney: It sounded fun, I think. They weren’t as surprised about the rigor of the program, but I think they saw that it was a very rigorous program with this slightly frivolous idea—which, of course, isn’t, but it appeared that way, that they would just go off and have a good time. And they didn’t; they did some very good work by the end of the year.

But, not only because she does media stuff—and we taught them a lot of media stuff. Something else I learned to tell new faculty is to go to those workshops. We didn’t send out students to the Computer Science Center to have a workshop on how to do Photoshop, but we were there with them. As a consequence, they love us in the Computer Center because we’re there to help, but also we can kind of see what the students need.

I think by then even—that was ’04, I guess—all students were comfortable on computers except the ones who were phobic, and they were really resistant. And that was an

interesting kind of understanding of where students were with technology, and that they didn't want to learn it. It wasn't that they hadn't had a chance, they refused.

Anyway, in that program— Sally models everything. She does all the assignments the students do so that when they're doing projects, then she and I would do a project, or we'd do it together or we'd do it separately. But we did all the work that they were doing, so they could see that it's an important kind of learning.

Those were two really important programs that I did.

Taylor: And Sally was a very important person in teaching you.

Darney: Right, how to design those kinds of things and how to engage with the students. She's clear that she's very rigorous, and they just love it. We reprised that in a one-quarter version in one of my post-retirements on museums. Again, they all went off and worked in a museum for Thanksgiving break and another week, so I think they were gone two weeks out of that quarter to go to a museum. Then she and I did that. She went back to Huahine in French Polynesia at the Fare Pote'e, which is the cultural museum there, and did some work for them. We both came back and did our presentations with them. So, she was really important.

I think Bill was really important to me, too, I never could do it, but I just admired so much the way he lectured about statistics but also other kinds of stuff. He would introduce something very generically so they got this big picture, and then they'd read about it, and they would be able to put it into the big picture that he'd given them. His statistics lectures were always about his truck. The students loved it. But then they'd read the text and understand how it fit in with the big picture, rather than just going to the numbers, which, I think, for people who aren't naturally drawn to numbers, you can't just start with the numbers. You have to start with this big picture.

Then I did some film classes. I did another film class—I guess I taught with Sally more than anybody except Bill. We did a sort of history of American film.

Taylor: How did you learn about how to read a film? Did you teach yourself that? Because that was something that developed. You didn't start that in 1968 when you were in college.

Darney: No, I always like film and I always kept up with film. I took a class in graduate school that was not helpful. But I taught with Caryn Cline and it's all from Cayn. She has this "How to

Read a Film” talk, and I’ve adapted it in different programs. But I come at it from literature, so my reading of films is quite literary, as opposed to other people’s, who are much more technical or media kind of focused. Which is fine. It’s a hard sell for students to say, “This is something serious, and you can take it seriously. You’re not just watching movies.”

Taylor: But I found current students are much more capable of reading film than they are of reading books.

Darney: So you have to go the other way.

Taylor: So when Fritz [Levy] and I taught Shakespeare together we did a lot of film, and the students taught us, because they could pay attention to all that was going on, and I just was watching the film. They had been taught that. I think current students do see it as a skill, and have learned it somewhere.

Darney: Yes. You do the same with reading when you read it the second time. When you read it the second time, Wallace Stegner talked about the “acquisitive reader.” The acquisitive reader reads for plot. Then you go back and you look at it and you see other things in it. And they’re kind of coming at it the other direction. They’re seeing all the other things, but they’re not seeing the whole. So, you have to help them do both, I think, to put both together.

Caryn and I did a couple of times one-quarter film things. We took students to the Seattle Film Festival, because we taught spring quarter. They all bought a weeklong ticket, and we went up there and we got a room at Seattle Central so we could have two seminars while we were there. It was very successful. It’s a good way to run a program, to let them see new stuff. What we did in that program was we said, “Here are two films that everybody has to see,” so we could have seminars on them. After that, they had to see at least two films a day, but it was their choice. At the Seattle Film Festival, they have these things at midnight, you know, the weird stuff. We’re not going to see those, but they could see them. It’s all right. [laughing] And they had to find a place to stay. It really expected a lot of them. They had to find someplace to stay, and they had to manage their own food. All they had to do was show up at these seminars. And they were writing journals. They had stuff they turned in later, but that week, they were kind of on their own. It was fine. We never lost a student in all of those things with students, which is a relief! [laughing]

Taylor: Right.

Darney: Well, we had a little trouble in the Islands program, but it was easy to solve.

Taylor: What about teaching writing?

Darney: Oh, man.

Taylor: You took a big responsibility for that in every program, I think.

Darney: Yes, I did a lot with Writing Across the Curriculum. I have friends here who are in the kind of curriculum-writing business, and so we would talk about ways to help students with writing. I'm not sure I know how to do it well, but I think getting them to write is the most important thing, and getting them to understand that you write differently in different situations.

Taylor: But that Writing Across the Curriculum, or whatever you want to call it, was established quite early as a fundamental value of the college. You bought into it, I bought into it. It's not there now.

Darney: Well, because you have to keep doing it. I think one of the problems at Evergreen is when somebody says, "Let's do this," somebody else says, "Oh, we tried that," or, "We already did that." And you can't be that way. You have to keep doing those things that you care most about because there are new faculty and there are new students and things change, and you have to be able to adapt and not just do what you always did—which, my understanding was, was the primary value at Evergreen; that faculty don't do things the way they always did them. They try new things. They don't get out yellowed notes. And I have taught in programs where there were people who were doing things exactly the same way they did it forever.

Taylor: But the other thing is that writing particularly, or certain kinds of critical thinking skills, because we didn't have requirements, and because you were doing something full-time, every program needed to do it.

Darney: Right.

Taylor: Because it wasn't going to be done somewhere else, and it was part of general education. That was an obligation. Now I think that obligation seems gone.

Darney: But if you want your students to be able to write about political science, you'd better teach them how to write about political science, because it's different than writing about

novels. It makes sense that those are the experts in it, but those are also people who don't want to teach it necessarily.

Taylor: Yes, and it's not just writing teachers that teach it.

Darney: Exactly. And that's kind of the complaint that English teachers everywhere have is that we're supposed to be teaching them to write, and we're doing these services rather than being able to really teach things that we want to teach.

Taylor: Right. But you ended up teaching by being a part of teams teaching a lot of other faculty how to teach writing, just by modeling it.

Darney: I did. And then that, combined with teaching with Don Finkel in the Finkel workshops, which also really changed my own teaching. The year that he was a Danforth Fellow, I had long talks with him about it, because I could not figure out how to apply it to something where you didn't have a particular answer, where it's about exploration and about thinking about it. So in the Shakespeare program, watching him do those workshops was just amazing. I never did them near as well as he did, but I did versions of them that really got people engaged and working together, and trying to figure these things out and not just slapping something up. I think the thing about his were that they were so intellectually complex that there was really a lot for students to think about and worry over and work through.

Taylor: But they weren't open-ended because he knew what he wanted them to learn, and he set it out so that they'd learn it.

Darney: Right.

Taylor: I remember one that was so good. It was Understanding Plato's *Meno*, and he had students talking about it, but there were very leading questions. It was two hours' worth. But what you were wanting was much more open-ended; could you make that system work?

Darney: I did. It just didn't look like his, but that was okay. But it really changed my thinking about teaching, which was great to have this new way of engaging students in the material.

Taylor: And it worked with literature.

Darney: It did. It just was different than his was.

Taylor: Other memorable programs or people?

Darney: Unfortunately, my very worst teaching experience was my last. It's not that I quit after that, it's that I had already stopped and I was asked to come in. It was a program that was etched in stone and there was no place for me in the program.

Taylor: And was one of those yellow notes ones?

Darney: It was absolutely a yellow notes one, and it was very disappointing. And it was disappointing to see the students were shocked when I asked them to talk about the books. Finally, it took me two or three weeks to get the seminar kind of whipped into shape [laughing] where they would talk about the books, and not just blather. You know?

Taylor: I wonder if that was just the case that those faculty were tired? Did they do it that way their whole careers?

Darney: They did it that way for like five or eight years. That's too bad.

Taylor: That's too bad.

Darney: It left a bad taste in my mouth and gave me a migraine, which I'd never had in my life!
[laughter]

Taylor: And you were doing a service.

Darney: I was doing a service. And some of the students made it worth it, so that was okay. But it was a struggle.

Taylor: How about talking about some memorable students? Or challenges?

Darney: [In the Islands Program], when they all went off to an island, they had to do a proposal, and it was a very elaborate thing. But the only requirement we had was that they had to have Internet access. This was when blogs were first starting, and so we were the first program at Evergreen to use blogs. We trained them all how to do this, and we divided them—it was very elaborate—we divided them into "geo groups" so that students who were within 10,000 miles of each other were in a group. They had to talk to each other on blogs twice a week and they had to post something once a week. It was all set up. So, they had to have Internet access, and it was the era of Internet cafes.

So the student who, you know, didn't fit with other people and was kind of a loner and kind of an odd duck, he wanted to go to an island in the Hawaiian Islands that was unpopulated. We said, "Does it have Internet?" And he said, "Well, no. There's no one there."

We said, "Then you can't go there." [laughing] So he went to one of the other islands and he fell in with a group of folks who, I guess, live on the beach, and found a community. He came back transformed. He was social, he chatted, he did this presentation. It changed his life. And it was so seemingly stupid. It was just falling in with these people, and then kind of coming into himself in a very interesting way. That was very memorable to me.

Some of my Vancouver students I still think about quite a bit, and adored. I just thought they were wonderful people. I hung out with Angie when she came up and worked for Bill. I'd visit with her. You remember Hilary Seidel? Her mother was one of my students down there, and I would see her occasionally. That was nice.

Taylor: Of the Five Foci . . .

Darney: Oh my god.

Taylor: . . . which ones are essential in your mind, or really make the difference between being able to do good teaching and not?

Darney: Let's name them so I'm sure I don't forget any. Interdisciplinary teaching and learning.

Taylor: [Teaching] across significant difference. Theory and practice. We ought to be able to come up with them. Full-time.

Darney: We can go with those.

Taylor: We'll come up with the fifth.

Darney: I think full-time is not essential. I think it's important, but not essential. I think they're all important, but we did it part-time, and we built community and did all the things that you want the education to do.

Teaching across significant difference is really important, but it's really hard. For me, the kinds of differences that, once I kind of understood them, I worked at teaching that way was class in Vancouver; respecting students for whatever kind of background they had, and respecting them for knowing. Phil Harding really helped me understand that. Students really gravitated toward Phil. Particularly working-class students gravitated toward Phil. He helped them understand the value of the education without losing their backgrounds in ways that were really important.

One of the things we'd get about literature is "Why do we have to talk about all these things in this book? It just is what it is." And he said to this young man, "Now, you know a lot about cars. So do you not want to learn more about cars? Does it not help you to learn more about this particular kind of engine and that particular kind of engine?" He really helped the young man understand what it is we were trying to do over here, based on his own experience. That kind of difference, I think, is really important.

I'm not sure . . . I know there's a big diversity campaign or project at the college now, and I think it's a really good thing to do.

Taylor: Equity they're now calling it.

Darney: And I think it's really hard. I was completely baffled by those basketball players in the Friendship program because I couldn't figure out a way to bring them into the conversations we were having.

Taylor: That was our loss as well as theirs. We just couldn't meet them.

Darney: Yeah. So I think it's really hard, and I admire folks for trying to do it. I think it's a challenge. Interdisciplinary, I think, is the foundation of the college, and we lose it at our peril.

Taylor: What's your definition of interdisciplinary?

Darney: I do not think that organic plus inorganic chemistry is interdisciplinary.

Taylor: But how about physics, math and chemistry?

Darney: I know it's interdisciplinary to them because it's a big deal, but it doesn't do it for me. Leaping ahead to being a dean, I was constantly told, "You just don't understand."

Taylor: But then when you do Shakespeare, which might be literature, religion, philosophy and history but no science, does that count?

Darney: Well, that's it. I don't think it has to be necessarily interdivisional. But I think some of our most wonderful programs have been art and science.

Taylor: Yes.

Darney: With Ruth [Hayes] and the animating [of] whatever those underwater things that they were—you know, Ruth working with Gerardo [Chin-Leo], or Dharshi [Bopegedera] working with somebody—maybe Lisa Sweet—about light. Those are just fabulous programs.

Taylor: Yes, the art and science ones work better than the—

Darney: And science and political science works well. I mean, it's environmental studies in various ways. But I don't know that . . . I mean, but it could. I think that's the thing that was so important about the retreats, which I want to talk a little bit about, because I think it's a big loss to not do those.

Taylor: So do I.

Darney: The "how to design a program in an hour," which people groaned about. Everybody always loved it.

Taylor: Absolutely.

Darney: You put a scientist together with somebody in literature and they can find something to teach, if one or both of them are not so concerned with coverage that they feel like they're giving something up to do this, that they're letting something go that they need to do.

Taylor: But from the earliest days of the college, there were scientists that were willing to do that—the Larry Eickstaedts and the Bob Slusses of the world who worked perfectly fine—and there were other ones that said, "We're not teaching science. We're teaching history of science, or we're teaching dabbling in science, but we're not really teaching science." So that was a problem.

Darney: That's the story about the very first planning retreat. [Byron] Youtz took all the scientists off and said, "Okay, here's what we're going to do."

Taylor: Yes. And one of the earliest papers that he wrote was "Can We Do Upper-Division Science at Evergreen?" And Bob Sluss and Larry Eickstaedt refused to go to the meeting, because that wasn't what they wanted.

Darney: Tom Grissom said, "When I got to graduate school, and I'd been a physics major, there was a lot I didn't know." There's no way we can teach them everything they need to know, but you have to have that mindset to be able to let go of coverage.

Taylor: But he was also a poet.

Darney: Yes, and he was a poet, and he could see beyond the bench, the lab. But I think as long as people keep trying to do that, then I'm happy. I just would hate to see that let go and people kind of hunker down in their bunkers.

Taylor: The fifth [Foci]—team teaching.

Darney: Oh, yeah, of course. [laughter]

Taylor: Can you do interdisciplinary study alone?

Darney: I don't think so. I can do American Studies, because I can do history and literature, but that's not nearly as rich as it would be with somebody in science or whatever in the program. I think it has to be. After I left the deans' area, looking at the curriculum, there were more and more people teaching alone. I just think that's a shame, because it doesn't take advantage of what is so rich. To be in a place where it's okay to say, "I don't know." When you come out of graduate school, when you've spent your whole time in graduate school defending yourself against things you don't know and never admitting it, but to be able to say, "Gosh, I don't know about that. I'd love to know more." Or, "Let's teach so I can learn that from you." That was just a revelation to me, and it was wonderful. And I never looked back. Just like the first quarter I taught, I had grades in my head, and after that I never thought about grades.

Taylor: Narrative evaluation—so we've got six rather than Five [Foci] because I think that's another one.

Darney: Right, and I think narrative evaluations are crucial. And it's hell. That weekend before evaluation week is just horrible, but I don't know any other way to do it well. People who have charts, where there's a graph and you get this, which means you have this statement and that statement, I mean, it's lazy. Yeah, it's a lot of work.

Taylor: Yes, but I don't think anybody does it our way anymore.

Darney: Well. And I think one of the changes in the college—two things that sort of came together and made for that—one of them is that early founding faculty that's all male. They all had wives at home doing things for them, so they could just work and they didn't have to think about the rest of their lives. They could just focus on their work. So they could have meetings that went on for six hours, that kind of thing.

But the second thing that happened 10 years later is people started saying, "I need to be with my family. I'm not going to put in that kind of time." You and I did things that nobody else would have done to do that commuting. And people aren't willing to do that.

Taylor: Partly [it was] the novelty of the college. The first few years, the college was people's whole life. It didn't matter if you were faculty, staff, whatever, the college was 24 hours a day. That was unsustainable.

Darney: Right.

Taylor: I think even by the time you got there, that was just unsustainable. And for women with children . . . I remember Carolyn Dobbs was one of the first ones that said—and Carolyn had the value that she wanted to give to community as well as the college, so she had family, community and college—there was no way.

Darney: But the fact that when I went to a retreat up at Fort Worden, there was no daycare. So I put that in. If we want people to come and spend the night, then . . . I mean, I didn't have anybody to leave my kids with. I had to bring them or not come. And I wanted to come, so what do you do? You make it possible for people to come.

Taylor: You know who started the first daycare at the college?

Darney: No.

Taylor: Larry Stenberg.

Darney: Really?

Taylor: Before the college opened he recognized the need, so it wasn't from a mother or a woman.

Darney: He recognized that the people needed it.

Taylor: He recognized [the need]. That's when the Driftwood House or whatever was started. I think he wanted it for students.

Darney: I think those—now six—Foci are all really important. The only one I would bend on is full-time.

Taylor: So, theory and practice?

Darney: Absolutely. You want people to apply what they're learning, and you want them to think about applying it.

Taylor: That might not be every program, but over the course of a student's career . . .

Darney: . . . they should have some sense of that. I saw that when I would supervise internships, to get the students to talk about not just what they did—that's the practice—but

what they were learning from it, what the theory was that they were applying to it, and to help them get out of just doing the work, but to step back and think about how this fit in with what else they were doing and other things that they knew.

Taylor: Self-evaluation is part of that, too, and reflection.

Darney: Right.

Taylor: That kind of leads us into deaning. How did you become a dean? What's the whole background?

Darney: It was pretty quick. I only taught maybe four years on the main campus before I became a dean—'94, '96? But part of it was I had run the Vancouver campus, and so I had administrative experience. And I think I was ready for a break. I came in at a really good time. The year Barbara Leigh Smith became Provost, I became Curriculum Dean.

Taylor: So you were following her?

Darney: I was following her, but she now was Provost. There was a few difficulties with the fact that I was doing the job she had just done, but I kind of figured out how to make it my own. And I liked working with the staff in the deans' area. I adored Debbie [Waldorf]. It was a good team. John [Cushing] came the next year, because he encouraged me to run and I said I would do it if he would do it, so then he was freed up the next year to do it.

Taylor: Who was the team when you came?

Darney: LesWong, Brian Price, Mike Beug, Sara Pederson

Darney: . I think one of the difficulties deans have is that there's so much work that you just kind of put your head down and do the work, and Barbara could really see a bigger picture. She had a national reputation at that point, and a national engagement, but she could see beyond the stuff we had to do that day. I never got there, but I really admired that in her.

Taylor: What did you conceive of as your job as Curriculum Dean?

Darney: To get the curriculum out for the next year. You know it's done when you've got the catalog out. So, everything that it took to get the catalog out, and the kind of persuasion that we had to do to make things happen.

Taylor: The formation of teams.

Darney: Exactly, and making suggestions. Then that was still that big faculty evaluation process, where before we had the group meeting but it was just one on one, and so I did those. Yeah, that was it.

Taylor: The challenges, it seems to me, in the deans' area was that you had no authority but you had tremendous responsibility.

Darney: Right, lots of responsibility. [laughing]

Taylor: Because if you didn't produce this catalog with this good curriculum that was responsible to what needed to be done, it was your fault.

Darney: Right. I followed Pris [Bowerman] Pris was really good at kind of keeping track of things, but she didn't go out and she didn't answer her own phone. So, just because of my personality, I did a lot more of that. And I did a lot of building bridges with Advising, with Financial Aid, with all the departments.

Taylor: Admissions.

Darney: Yes, and I think that really helped.

Taylor: But you also cajoled people. You had an idea and you cajoled people into doing it, and felt it was essential. I mean, people couldn't go off and say, well, they're just going to teach on their own.

Darney: Right. And then once we got the Planning Units—I can't remember when that happened but it happened not right away, but soon—

Taylor: That was when Barbara was Provost.

Darney: Yes. And then there was a way to say, "Here, in this Planning Unit, you need more of that, or you need some of this, or you need that." But it's the same headaches every year. We don't have enough people teaching psychology, we don't have enough people . . .

Taylor: We don't have enough people teaching core.

Darney: Yes, exactly. But then I applied numbers, and I would say, "You've got this percentage of the faculty, you need this percentage of the seats in core." It worked for everybody except my own dear area, which then made everything all level and was not helpful to those students. And I think that those Coordinators of the Planning Units really got it, and they were really working to—so it felt like it was a team working on the curriculum.

Taylor: Except for humanities, or whatever you might have called it.

Darney: Exactly. And to help people kind of see the whole. I think the problem is that people could see either their own teaching or maybe the teaching of their colleagues, but they can't see the whole curriculum.

Taylor: But the deans never really had the authority to make the curriculum, except for by cajoling.

Darney: I think that's right.

Taylor: But since you left there's been nobody that was capable of the cajoling.

Darney: Exactly. But I think if you give deans that kind of authority, they can't go back and teach.

Taylor: Well, and you can't do it. It won't work.

Darney: Right.

Taylor: But the culture of the college of team teaching has got to be so embedded, and that's what I think we're losing.

Darney: Here's a disappointment, which is way down on your list. After I stopped teaching with that one bad experience, I spent a lot of time thinking about what makes a good team and what makes a good team-teaching experience. I spent a lot of time writing it and passing it around. I sent it to the deans and the Provost and said, "Here's some thoughts about that." And it just sank.

Taylor: It just disappeared, yeah.

Darney: I said I'd be glad to come up and talk to people about it or whatever, but it just sank. So if they're not interested in helping faculty team teach, it's not going to happen. It takes nurturing faculty, I think. It takes, I don't want to say training, but you need to set up situations where they learn to team teach. And it's not intuitive for most people.

Taylor: And getting teams together is a real science, because it isn't like, well, you know X and you know Y and we need to put these together.

Darney: Right.

Taylor: It's about personalities.

Darney: As well, yes.

Taylor: Just because you know something doesn't mean that you'll teach well together.

Darney: Well, and that you can blend it to be with something else.

Taylor: There was a time in teaching where the effort was to put at least one woman on each team, or to make the teams diverse. But they didn't make teams that were compatible. I think you taught with lots of women. I taught with lots of women. Early on, I taught with men. That's just self-selection, and that's going to happen, I think.

Darney: Well, I don't think it has to happen. I think if you have enough ways that people interact with each other and learn to get to know each other . . . I taught with quite a few men, and taught with them easily, except for that thing at the end. But they were interested in what I had to say. Of course, that's a problem with some men, you know.

Taylor: But there have to be opportunities for people to get to know each other.

Darney: Exactly.

Taylor: That's part of faculty development, and that was part of your job as dean, even though you weren't Faculty Development [Dean], but just getting people in the same room together and considering what they might do.

Darney: Right. And I think the retreats for the new faculty that you did I think are really important, because then they see themselves in some way as kind of a group, and at least they come on campus in September and they know X number of people besides the current faculty who are there participating in it.

Taylor: But even not just new faculty.

Darney: Oh, I know.

Taylor: The whole business of retreats is gone. And that was not just for new faculty but we used to go off, and you'd play poker in the middle of the night or whatever, but you met with people about curriculum planning.

Darney: Among other things.

Taylor: Among other things, yes. I remember going to Pack Forest, I remember going to Fort Worden.

Darney: And the Latvian Center, all those places. But Barbara was insistent on that. Barbara was also behind the ski trip and the trip to Harrison Hot Springs. Barbara really understood skits and drama.

Taylor: And being together, making it the right thing to do and paying for it. And as soon as there become budget crunches, those things go, which is very, very sad . . .

Darney: It's counterproductive, yeah.

Taylor: . . . because those things are not incidental and they're not extraneous.

Darney: Right.

Taylor: The same way with the deans, the deans' team. We've talked about that in the past [that] when you and I were deans, there was a camaraderie among the team. That meant that things hummed along.

Darney: Right. But I think all of those things are acknowledgment that there's something beyond just the work that's in front of you. And if you do all those things, it makes the work go better, but it's not about the work.

For example, every week I toured the Library Building. I would go visit. I'd go chat with people in Financial Aid. Kitty [Parker] in Advising and Andrea [Coker-Anderson] in Registration and Records and I had weekly meetings to talk about, what programs do you hear are having trouble? So you keep track of that. I did all of that.

Taylor: But when you started, you said your responsibility was to get the catalog out. But your other responsibility was maintenance, it was making it work during the year.

Darney: But I see the ultimate goal is getting the catalog out, but these are all things that lead to that.

Taylor: They lead to it, but then after you've got it, you still saw your role as making it work.

Darney: Well, and doing it for next year, yes.

Taylor: Making what you designed work, constantly.

Darney: Right. Well, you nurture it. You pay attention to it all.

Taylor: Pampering it, nurturing it, and paying attention to teams.

Darney: And you go to the CAB so people see you for lunch. And somebody asks you a question on how it takes a half hour to get across Red Square, that's all important. And it's not

wasting time. But I think for the deans, there's so much work that it's easy to say, "I can't do that stuff. I just have to stay here and write these memos."

Taylor: That's right.

Darney: And I think it's important to see the breadth of the job, some part of it that other people don't see that are out there maybe on the edge.

Taylor: I'm thinking back on your comment about the building that you had in Vancouver. Since you and I left the deans' area, they've remodeled, and they've put barriers up.

Darney: Interesting.

Taylor: And so nobody wanders into the deans' area.

Darney: Because you have to go through a door.

Taylor: You have to go through a door, you have to go by a desk. We used to have people coming through all the time. It was Grand Central.

Darney: With whatever they wanted to say to you, yes.

Taylor: So the connection that you had with the faculty was constant.

Darney: Yeah, and I think that there's a danger in trying for efficiency. I think it's important to have some things be inefficient.

Taylor: Yeah, but it's also having designers and architects or whatever that haven't walked with the working, yes.

Darney: The client, right. But that's because they didn't ask people.

Taylor: They didn't ask people. And Admissions used to be totally chaotic, and people didn't value that. So now they have it all orderly, and it's cold and antiseptic and it's hospital green. I mean, that makes a difference.

Darney: I remember when a candidate came on campus—I don't even know who it was—who said, "Boy, your President must not want anybody to come see him." And I thought, yep, that's it, way off in the corner of the third floor. Not on anybody's way to anything.

Taylor: That's what I told Jen Drake. I said, "You've got to go down and have lunch with people." She said, "I don't have time." "You've got to be part of a team." "I don't have time. There's so many crises."

Well, that's somewhat true, although she is part of a team. It's an evening-weekend team that's she and somebody, so it's a good team and she's spending time, so I rewarded her for that. But those things are more important than they seem.

Darney: Yep.

Taylor: You were dean for six years?

Darney: I think eight. Because everybody has three in the Budget and the Curriculum Dean are four—'96 to '04, I think—I don't know—'94 to '02? I don't know.

Taylor: I don't know, but I think you and I left together and it was '02.

Darney: We did, '02. Right.

Taylor: Because it was after 9/11.

Darney: Right, and then I had a sabbatical, and then I taught the Islands program. That was my first program back. So '94 to '02, yeah.

Taylor: And I started in '99. So you were there five years before I came.

Darney: I was there with Rob [Knapp], yeah.

Taylor: Looking back on there, what's the legacy that you leave behind as far as being Dean?

Darney: Well, I don't know if it's a legacy. I feel like things worked pretty well while I was Curriculum Dean, and I think we did important things in the curriculum, but I don't know that that lasted. For example, when we were thinking about the catalog, we involved people in Admissions in those discussions. I really fought to have that release time for the Planning Unit Coordinators. Some took too much advantage of it, but mostly—I mean, there was a lot of work for them to do. And it was a recognition that in the spring, you've had a lot of work fall and winter. We can't give you release time then, but we can give it to you now when there's a lot of work. But I know people didn't like it, and it's gone now, and that's fine. But I think it worked, and I think the curriculum worked.

Taylor: I think people liked it. It's just now one of those budget things that they've lopped off.

Darney: It's because they cut their release time? I don't know. And I don't know how I would have fared if I had been Curriculum Dean when the union came in because it changes the way we work with faculty, and their work life and those sorts of things. So I was glad to avoid that. I don't know how it would have been.

Taylor: Yes.

Darney: And I think it's there for a very understandable and important reasons, but it would have made—it's kind of antithetical to the college.

Taylor: Do you think it mattered that while you were dean and Barbara was Provost, the college was dominated by women?

Darney: Oh, yes, I think it mattered a lot. And Jane [Jervis] was there, you know.

Taylor: Jane was there. Rita Cooper was there. Ruta Fanning was there. Barbara, you, me, Susan Fiksdal. I mean, almost up and down the ladder it was women. And do you think that mattered?

Darney: Yes, I think that makes a difference.

Taylor: How did it matter?

Darney: Well, I think that for me personally, it mattered because of my relationship with Barbara. I felt like she really wanted to help me do a good job. And there may be men who think that, but not many. So I think that made the biggest difference for me.

Taylor: And she worked well with Jane.

Darney: She and Jane worked very well together, yeah. But the deans really don't interact with the President much.

Taylor: No. And it happened that Andrea and Kitty, and in a way, you worked better with them than—well, maybe a man could have done it, but you chose . . . I think maybe—maybe—women would have different relationship with staff.

Darney: Yes, that may be. I think I was probably known as the person who liked gossip, so we would laugh about, well, we're here, what's the gossip that you have? And Bill is really good at that. Bill knew everybody, because people would come to the Library and tell him things. And I think that it's underrated as an important kind of glue that holds things together if you're just kind of keeping up with everybody, you're keeping track. And it's not mean, it's just talking about the college, and talking about where we are with that.

Steve Hunter, for example—not the gossip part—I think he really understood the college well, and was very helpful in the kinds of things that we wanted to do, and figuring out ways to do them. And Dee [Van Brunt]—I mean, my god.

Taylor: Dee was just an angel.

Darney: And Karen, when Karen was here. So it was Dee and Karen.

Taylor: Karen Wynkoop?

Darney: Yes. They were on top of everything, and they understood.

Taylor: They understood when they could bend the rules and when they couldn't.

Darney: Exactly. And when you just have to say, "This is it." I mean, I quote Karen all the time when she'd say—you know, all these people who wanted to teach in Seattle—"Could you please have the students come to Seattle?"—and Karen would say, "The job is here."

[laughing]

Taylor: Yeah, and then they left and lived in Seattle and didn't do the job, or some of them.

Darney: Yeah, exactly. Then the other thing that she said that was so good was when somebody said, "You never call me, you never tell me." And she said, "The phone works both ways." [laughing]

Taylor: What about the rotation of deans as a value?

Darney: I think it's really important. I wouldn't have done it, if it hadn't been a rotation, that is, if I didn't know that I could go back to teaching. I wasn't looking for a career change. So I think it's really important.

I think it also has this very unfortunate unintended consequence, which is that after you've been in the deans' area and you see all the kind of scams that people try, if you're of a certain mindset when you go back to teaching, you've learned new ways to be obnoxious!

[laughing]

Taylor: You taught me some of that, when we used to go to conferences.

Darney: But I knew that before I was a dean! [laughing]

Taylor: You knew that, but I didn't know that.

Darney: Right. You thought you had to go to everything.

Taylor: Yes, and I was super-conscientious. But not only you won't get deans that want to be deans, but the idea that you become a dean and then you go back changes the way you function as a dean.

Darney: Absolutely. And I think the primary value of the dean is “I’m here to help you do a good job teaching.” And if you keep that in mind, I think that’s the important thing.

Taylor: And I don’t see myself as lording it over you, and I don’t see myself as moving up a ladder leaving you behind.

Darney: Exactly.

Taylor: I’m coming back.

Darney: Right. Because, you know, the scorn on the faculty of people who do go on to administrative jobs in northern South Dakota or wherever he went.

Taylor: Yes, use it as a steppingstone.

Darney: It’s like, well, they’ve gone to the other side. I went to one of those institutes for new deans after the first year—not before, but after the first year—and these people were talking about how their faculty friends wouldn’t talk to them and how horrible. And I thought, oh my god, I would never be a dean if that’s what it took. But they were people who are on a kind of trajectory.

Taylor: Yes. And I’m afraid that the union ambience is making that the distance between deans and faculty greater.

Darney: Well, and it must make the deans feel schizophrenic, because now I’m them and then I’m us.

Taylor: And they’re not allowed to be members, I think, because that’s the way unions operate, so it has to be adversarial.

Darney: Right.

Taylor: I never felt it was adversarial.

Darney: No.

Taylor: And you didn’t either.

Darney: No. I mean, the old guys at the table—I always ate lunch with the old guys—and they would carp about, oh, the deans this and the deans that. But half of them had been deans.

[laughing] So it wasn’t real carping.

Taylor: You know who is credited with that rotation of deans idea?

Darney: No.

Taylor: Chuck Nisbet.

Darney: Really? Good for him.

Taylor: Yes, the second year. And it was because of people that came to the college that had been somewhere else were so anti-authority. They had had such bad experiences with administrators that that was their way of solving that problem. It was a healthy solution. It wasn't based on anger at the current deans, it was "We've got to set up a situation here that doesn't make us them."

Darney: Because some people were hired to be deans at the beginning, right?

Taylor: Oh, at the very, very beginning.

Darney: And then what did they do? Did they go back to the faculty then?

Taylor: Oh, yes.

Darney: They all did? They didn't leave?

Taylor: They all went back. Charlie Teske, Merv Cadwallader and Don Humphrey, they all went back . . .

Darney: . . . to the faculty.

Taylor: And Ed Kormondy was hired as a faculty and became a dean, then he became Provost. And Rudy [Martin] was one of the early transfers in.

Darney: But then John Perkins and Barbara were hired as deans from the outside.

Taylor: And when they were hired, it was scandalous. I don't know if you were there yet.

Darney: No, that was the year I was hired.

Taylor: But the idea that we didn't have the talent within. Barbara told me that one of the reasons that the outside deans were hired was dictated by the Trustees. I don't know if that's true.

Darney: Interesting. So it wasn't that they'd had an internal search and they didn't find anybody?

Taylor: They did, and they declared it failed. The Trustees or Dan Evans said, "We've got to get some new blood in here." There was resistance.

Darney: They were both good hires, though.

Taylor: They were excellent hires. And once they came, it's like so many things at Evergreen . .

Darney: . . . it's the idea of it.

Taylor: . . . it's the idea and the process they don't like, but the result. It's like when Dan Evans got hired, people were horrified. "How could they do this on a Christmas weekend? All of a sudden, we've got this new President, and we didn't have any process."

Darney: And Charlie's out. [laughing]

Taylor: Charlie had said he was leaving, but then there was Dan, who had just stopped being Governor and all of a sudden . . .

Darney: He wanted a job. He wanted something to do. And he was good.

Taylor: Well, he was better than good.

Darney: He saved the college.

Taylor: He saved the college, not just because of the timing, because we needed a PR person.

Darney: I don't know. I think the college has to think about—and it does, obviously—how it's going to change. Because it has to change. I think toward the end, when we were in the deans' area, we said, "What are the things that we do that are absolutely crucial that we're not going to give up?" I think that's a useful exercise to do every five years. Do we still really care about this? Do we still really care about that? Because if people don't care about it, it's not going to happen.

Taylor: Right. That's why I said about the Five Foci, because that, to me, if you compromise that—and then the expectations that are layered on top of it. But then you have to do acculturation.

Darney: Yes, exactly.

Taylor: That was . . .

Darney: . . . indoctrination. [laughing]

Taylor: And you have to spend time and money, and you have to hold people to it. That business of when a new faculty comes—I still don't know in hiring if they do their dream team—but during those hiring committees when people presented their dream team, very often the second year they got to do it. And the expectation was three or four faculty. That's not the expectation now. A three-person team is rare. Sixty percent of the people are teaching alone is what I heard.

Darney: Oh my god.

Taylor: They not only have to do that if they want students, but if they want to have a college that has any integrity.

Darney: Right.

Taylor: Or, they need to start over. I'm not so nostalgic about what we did. We did it at a time when it was good and was done. Maybe there should be a new beginning. Maybe they want to do something for—I mean, one of the things that's really obvious is that a huge, huge percent of the students at Evergreen are first-generation [college attendees]. They have very different needs and very different backgrounds. Have we designed a college for them? I don't think so.

Darney: No.

Taylor: They could start by that and create something.

Darney: But my sense is that even the original college wasn't designed for particular kinds of students. It was designed for what faculty wanted to do.

Taylor: But it had an assumption that's false. It had an assumption that all students were going to be full-time, they were going to be 18-to-22 years old, and they were going to want to get generally educated.

Darney: Right.

Taylor: And that they were going to want relevance. That was where it started, and they had 10 programs, 100 students each. It was much easier to conceive of it than now, where you're doing 100 programs and they're all over the place and there's no coverage. It's very, very different.

Darney: And I think all college students are very different today. They have different expectations.

Taylor: And the idea that the students are 18 to 22 is [wrong]. It was pretty wrong pretty fast. But there was that assumption. And you could go off on retreats because there weren't going to be students that were working.

Darney: Right, or with kids.

Taylor: Or with kids, yeah. And that everybody was going to be willing to do whatever was presented. Well, that was sort of it, but the other thing that was early on from the students, not from the faculty, is that “I can do what I want.”

Darney: Oh, yeah. Man, we fought about that.

Taylor: I still meet people who say, “Well, my daughter came to Evergreen, but left after a quarter because she didn’t have the discipline to do the work.”

Darney: That’s what I tell people.

Taylor: I always felt that that was not necessary, but it’s about luck of the draw whether you get into a program, because the programs that you and I taught had a lot of discipline.

Darney: Right. But they still have to be disciplined to do it.

Taylor: They have to buy into it.

Darney: And they have to not want to be told what to do all the time. That’s a lot of what we see.

Taylor: Right. Okay, where do we go from here?

Darney: I think I cannot leave my Evergreen days without talking about my tennis prowess. [laughing] When I became dean, before I started, Sally Cloninger said to me, “You need to have something to run around and hit. Why don’t you come play tennis with us?” So I took it up after 20, 30 years. We trained, and we were on a team and we went to the nationals.

Taylor: I never knew you went to the nationals. I knew you played hard.

Darney: Yeah, we played, and it’s ability grouping, so we were the bottom ranking. We got fourth in the nation. We went to New Orleans and played tennis and it was great. It was really fun.

Taylor: In that line, talk about life at the college, partly social life—what you did—but what was going on in the world, and how you were involved in it as part of Evergreen.

Darney: Well, because I commuted when I was teaching, I wasn’t really part of Olympia. I would see people during the week while I was there, and I did a lot, but I wasn’t part of the Olympia scene until I became a dean, when I then was up there more often. I still would come here some weekends, but I was up there and the kids were gone, so that was easier.

Taylor: But you developed friendships.

Darney: Yes, I developed quite a few friendships. And it's mostly—which is the pattern at Evergreen—people you've taught with. Those are the people you know the best, so those were the people I saw and played tennis with and whatever. But I never met anybody else. I mean, I met some people outside the college, but I didn't have friends outside the college.

Taylor: No, neither did I.

Darney: It's one of the disadvantages of having done that commute, which is, now that I'm retired, I'm not there. I don't see those people unless I make an effort, or Kitty and Jeannie [Chandler] come down and we have lunch or whatever. And that's too bad.

On the other hand, I found it very nice to be able to get away from the college and be down here where people didn't ask me except what I wanted to say. It was like my version of the college is the one that everybody here knew, and they didn't have their own. [laughing] So it goes both ways. I wouldn't have done it any other way.

Taylor: The other thing you did at the college, you were very instrumental in getting the women together.

Darney: Yeah, we got the women together.

Taylor: And that mattered.

Darney: Also there was one year when I hosted all the Provost dinners at my house. We did a lot at that house because it was big and easy to entertain in.

Taylor: And it became sort of a social center, and that was necessary. It was important.

Darney: Right. That's why I have service for 30 of everything, because people came to the house.

Taylor: Caryn was living there and she was cook and dishwasher and everything else.

Darney: Oh, man, yeah. We did a lot of stuff together, and both enjoyed it.

Taylor: That was important.

Darney: I think that's important, and I think that if people feel like they're too busy to do that stuff, then they're really missing the social things.

Taylor: Are there any crises that come to mind that ought to be recorded?

Darney: No, I don't think so. I mean, 9/11 was horrifying.

Taylor: I mean college crises.

Darney: I know. No. I mean, we went through them all, but I don't think they were particular to me or to what I was trying to do. It was just the whole college. The Olander and other kind of . . .

Taylor: Admissions crises of various sorts.

Darney: Yeah.

Taylor: But your time isn't defined by those.

Darney: No. And I didn't have to deal with really problematic faculty—Barbara always did that—and so that was good. I know when she was a dean, she did a lot of that, but I didn't want to do that—you know, the alcoholics and the whatever. So she did that, which is good.

I told Tom [Womeldorff] this, and then I tell other people in administration, that the important thing I learned about administration when I was a dean was that I had a very difficult conversation with a long-time faculty member who just made me so mad that I stomped out of my office. And he stayed in my office and I couldn't get back. [laughter] So I went down to the library and I said, "Bill, you have to call Debbie and see if he's gone!" And she said after about 20 minutes, he wandered into her office and said, "I don't know what happened to Jin, but she seemed kind of upset." [laughter] So my management skill now is don't ever stomp out of your office. Make them leave! [laughing]

Taylor: Because you'll never get back in! [laughter] One thing we haven't talked about at all is, what happened to your scholarship and your sabbaticals and what you did of intellectual interest? Was it completely confined by what you were teaching and what you were developing?

Darney: Yeah, it was, pretty much. I maintained an interest in autobiography, as it was then, and then memoir as it became. That was the focus of my sabbatical, but I also did a bit of teaching in it, but then that was always my reading.

I tried to be on teams and do reading with a team. Sometimes it worked and sometimes it didn't. I remember asking David Marr in the fall of my first year, "What do you do for intellectual stimulation?" He said, "Oh, you figured that out really fast, didn't you?" That's the problem with the deans' area, you have to create your own. So I did some reading projects, people I've always wanted to read a lot more of. But you don't go home with any work. You

leave the office and you're done. I put in long hours, but I didn't work weekends and those kinds of things.

Taylor: But I was always so impressed with you when we did the Victorian program because you read all that stuff. And it was essential to the program, actually. It was very helpful.

Darney: Yeah, it was good stuff. Barbara would call me up at night about something and I finally said, "Barbara, don't call me at night. I'll talk to you in the day." She said, "Okay."

Taylor: Did you only have one sabbatical?

Darney: No, I had two. I went to London in '85-'86. That was before I came to Olympia. It was when I was in Vancouver.

Taylor: But how did I know you?

Darney: Well, from the campus.

Taylor: That must have been after you taught in 1984.

Darney: Yes, it was.

Taylor: Because I remember I got your towels from your flat in Highgate.

Darney: Right, you came the next year.

Taylor: What did you do in sabbatical that year?

Darney: I went to SOAS, the School of Oriental and African Studies, (part of the London University) and I sat in on a South African literature class with this wonderful woman the whole year. So I did all that reading, and then I did all my own reading in English-language African literature. Because I had read [James] Olney—who was famous in autobiography studies in the '80s—who said that there are no African autobiographies. And I said, well, that can't be true. And so that was my project.

It was fun. It was a great year. I took French at the Alliance Francaise. The kids were in school, and then we traveled. Blair was taking a medieval history class as a 13-year-old. It changed her life. So on weekends, we'd rent a car and go look at something she'd just studied, so it was really fun. And people came to visit us, and that was great.

Taylor: And your second sabbatical?

Darney: The second one, I was here.

Taylor: After you were dean.

Darney: After I was dean. Craig was working.

Taylor: What was your center for that year?

Darney: Oh, I don't know. [laughing]

Taylor: You didn't have a project?

Darney: Oh, yes, I had a project. I was teaching the Islands Program the next year, so I just read. I can't tell you how many people went off in a boat to live on an island alone. [laughing] I've read their memoirs. I did all that, and Sally and I planned. That's the part I miss. I don't miss the students, I have to say, but I miss planning because it is so fun to do all that reading and kind of go down rabbit holes.

Taylor: I always thought the best faculty development—people kept saying, “Well, you've got to do faculty development”—the best faculty development was being in a team.

Darney: And planning, and doing something new.

Taylor: Doing something new, planning it, and then the faculty seminars. That's another one of those values that's gone.

Darney: I think it's crucial.

Taylor: It's not when you learned how to teach, it's when you learned the intellectual content of what you were teaching.

Darney: That's really important.

Taylor: That's why teams, two is not enough. Three is okay.

Darney: Two can do it, but three is better.

Taylor: But one can't.

Darney: Right.

Taylor: And we never figured out a way . . . people that were teaching alone were supposed to link up with somebody, but it didn't ever work.

Darney: No, because then it's extra work. They're doing something that they wouldn't do otherwise.

Taylor: Right. But it's pretty easy to get nostalgic about, well, that's what we used to do and it's not there anymore. It's not there, I guess, for a reason. And I'm not sure we can return to that.

Darney: Right. But there ought to be some way to keep that engaged. Because accreditors and all kinds of people that came to the campus said that they had never seen a faculty that was so engaged. And it's because you're always doing new stuff.

Taylor: Yes. But there's also a criticism. You can do new stuff that's still within the range of providing the curriculum that needs to be done.

Darney: Right.

Taylor: The chemist will say, "Well, they've still got to do chemistry," and the math people would say, "They still have to do math." Which is true, but you have to do it in a different context.

Darney: Right. And I think there are people who do, but . . . there are people who don't. So, there you go.

Taylor: Yeah. [laughing] New topic: life after Evergreen. What have you done since?

Darney: One of the things I did as a dean was to talk to these old guys who were getting ready to retire. They all got mad, and I understood that because that was how my mother was. Whenever she came to visit, in order to leave, she had to be mad, so it justifies leaving or something. So I saw all these old guys and I thought, oh my god, those guys, because this is their life and they don't have a life outside the college.

I found it much more difficult than I thought I would to retire, that first year. So I decided that you treat it the way you do a divorce, which is you don't make any major decisions, and you just kind of go along and see how things are going to be for a year. And then you kind of think about it. It might have been the year that I was on sabbatical, I saw a thing in the local neighborhood newspaper about a farmer's market that was starting. So I went along to the board meetings, and anybody who showed up was on the board. [laughing] That was so satisfying. The first year, I was the volunteer coordinator—the volunteer coordinator—and the guy who was the chair could not organize his way out of a paper bag, so at the end of that year, I arranged a retreat for the board, and we hired somebody—there's this non-profit association here—to come in and facilitate.

Before that meeting I went to this guy and I said, "I just want to let you know that I'm going to stand for board chair." He said, "What does that mean?" I find this happens to me all

the time. I think, oh, god, is that an Evergreen word? Does nobody else say that? [laughter] Is that like DTFs and nobody knows what they are? I said, "Well, I'm going to run for board." This was after he'd said he really thought they should hire somebody to take care of the scut work on the board, and I said to him, "That's not scut work, that's the important work of the board that you ought to be doing." I said, "I just want to let you know that I'm going to stand for board. And he said, "Oh, thank god." So I became chair of the board then for the next three or four years. And it was just so satisfying.

Taylor: Turns out you had a skill.

Darney: Well, my skill is organizing things. Right? I can organize.

Taylor: You can run a seminar.

Darney: And I can make up a curriculum. That's been very interesting. And I saw then something I didn't know before is that there are people who really like to start things, and there are people who can maintain them. And they're different people. He was an entrepreneur, so once the market started, he was on to something else. So I thought, that can be my role. I can make it work and I can improve it and keep it going. And it's really successful, and it's still going, and I've now stepped off the board after seven years.

The grandkids are in town, so that takes up a fair amount of my time, especially when they were little. I do a lot of knitting. I do a lot of reading. I was in three book groups at once. And now I've just stepped down as the half-time office staff for Eastside Village in Portland—where I once again did everything: dispatching rides, welcoming new members, keeping track of the volunteers. Etc., etc.

End Part 2 of 2 of Jin Darney on April 12, 2018