

Susan Perry
Interviewed by Nancy Taylor
The Evergreen State College oral history project
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FINAL

Taylor: Today is July 15, 2021. I'm talking with Susan Perry in South Hadley, Massachusetts. This is Nancy Taylor. We'll hope everything goes well. Welcome.

Perry: So far, we have managed to master the technology

Taylor: You're the one that knows all about this, so I'm not at all surprised that you can do it, but I am pleased that I can.

Perry: I didn't realize that my computer was old enough that it wasn't supporting some of the stuff that needed to be supported, so I had to upgrade my computer.

Taylor: Now you've done it. I don't know if you know about this project, but it was started by Sam Schragar about five or six years ago, kind of in preparation of 50 years of the college. Now, it's gotten a big boost because Nancy Koppelman and a current faculty member whose name is Eirik [Steinhoff] are working on a book that's based on these transcripts, so it's even more important that you're included. The more we can have the better, and the more perspectives and the more stories we have the better.

Usually, we start with just a little background of who you are, and where your educational values came from, something about your upbringing, and your schooling. Are you willing to start there?

Perry: We shall start there. I was born in 1942 in southeastern North Carolina on a farm that has been in my family since 1703. My mother was a teacher, and my father was an accountant, and then a farmer. When I was eight years old, I learned to drive a tractor, seven forward gears and eight reverses. [laughing]

But I think that probably my educational values came from my mother and my grandfather, who was a minister and who had graduated from Duke when it was called Trinity. Wa-a-a -y back. I was always a reader, and my mother was always a reader. One of the things I remember about reading was that there was a bookmobile that came to our house every two weeks. I was friends with a little African-American girl who lived down the road from me, and they wouldn't let her borrow books, so I borrowed books for her, and walked up the road, and she and I sat on her front porch and read. I think most of my educational values came from teaching myself things through reading.

I graduated from Wake Forest University, and then went to the University of North Carolina and got a master's degree in library science and worked for a number of years before I came to Evergreen. I can tell you about that if you want me to, but we don't have to go through all of that if you don't want me to.

Taylor: Whatever you think is relevant and useful to what you brought to the college. Because what they're trying to do is get a picture of who was there, and what they believed in, and how they got there. Maybe a little bit more about your education is useful.

Perry: Why don't I start with the other thing that is important. I grew up in the '60s and was very much involved in the antiwar movement. In fact, when I lived in San Francisco, I moved from San Francisco, where I worked at the University of San Francisco, to Portland where my husband at the time, Matt Smith, who was also a faculty member at Evergreen—when I came, he got a job as a faculty member.

He was getting an MAT at Reed, and we left Reed to move to the West Coast of Vancouver Island as draft dodgers. I was really heavily involved in antiwar things, and I guess I was a bit of a shit disturber in some ways. [laughing]

Taylor: What year was this?

Perry: 1967. Then we went back to Chapel Hill, and he got a PhD. I worked at the VA Hospital as a librarian, and then at the University of North Carolina as a librarian and spent a lot of time helping people learn how to find information, which is what I think is the heart of being a librarian. How to find and evaluate the information you found.

At the end of three years, I guess, in Chapel Hill, I said to Matthew, "I would really like to get back to the Northwest," because I liked the Northwest a lot better than the South. I went to ALA—the American Library Association—and I met Jim Holley, who was at the time the Director of the Library at Evergreen and fell in love with Jim Holley. I just really liked his philosophy of what librarians should do, and he evidently liked me enough that he hired me.

In the fall of 1972, I started working at Evergreen as the head of Circulation, Media Loan, Inter-Library Loan, and Exhibits and Displays. The college had been open for a while, but they didn't have any system for checking out books, and they didn't have any system for checking out media things, so part of what I did early on was to set up the systems that you need to keep track of both of those things, and the kind of training that was needed in media for the more sophisticated pieces of media equipment. We needed to make sure that people knew how to use them before they could check them out.

Taylor: Was this the first year of the college teaching or was it the second? I don't know when we actually opened the library to students.

Perry: It was the fall of 1972. They had started the year before, but they hadn't done anything about how—they had a great policy for how you checked out things, but they hadn't figured out how to do the system that would allow you to check out things. [laughing]

Taylor: That's funny, because I know we used the library. The students went to the library, but they couldn't check out books at that first year. Is that right?

Perry: I think they could, but when I got there, the whole system was a mess, so you couldn't find what was checked out and what wasn't, when it was due back, and all that kind of stuff.

Taylor: Did you have anything to do with the collection itself, getting the books that were there?

Perry: I came after the major collection was purchased, and I helped from then on. I helped make contributions to what was bought, but they were just minimal contributions. They weren't the first gigantic—

Taylor: Do you know how they got the first collection?

Perry: I think they contracted with somebody to do that. You know who could tell you that is Pat Matheny-White.

Taylor: Okay.

Perry: Because she was there.

Taylor: I'm not sure, but what I remember is that the California State system—places like Irvine—had developed a list of books that all college libraries should have, and Evergreen just used that list. That's what I think, but I don't know.

Perry: I think that's right, and I think that then they contracted with somebody to bring all of those books together for them so that they weren't ordering piecemeal.

Taylor: What gave you the background and the skills to be able to do this? This was an amazing job.

Perry: I had done it before, because I had been the librarian for, I guess, seven or eight years—maybe 10—before I came to Evergreen. As a matter of fact, I had moved around so much that—remember Malcolm [Stilson]?

Taylor: I sure do.

Perry: Malcolm thought they shouldn't hire me because I was too flighty. And my mother always said she thought I just couldn't keep a job. [laughing]

Taylor: One of the odd things about the early hiring is oftentimes, they hired people that had to invent what they were doing; that they didn't really know what they were doing. They had to invent it because they didn't want to be stuck in an old system. But it sounds like you came with the skills to be able to do the job that needed to be done.

Perry: At least in circulation. In media services, I needed to learn it, because I had never checked out cameras and recording equipment and that sort of stuff.

Taylor: Who were you working with, and what were the kinds of issues that you were dealing with?

Perry: The person who was the head of media loan at the time was a guy named Yves Montain. Do you remember Yves?

Taylor: Vaguely, I do, yeah.

Perry: He was Haitian. He and I worked together to figure out how to make it possible for people to check out these very expensive pieces of equipment. Which ones of them needed people to be trained before they checked them out? Which ones you could just check out and walk out with. But the system was very similar to the circulation system.

Taylor: Was Evergreen's idea about access, and about how you should set this up, unique in any way?

Perry: Yes, it was, because the one thing that they had done—and I have a feeling that Jim Holley and Pat Matheny-White did this—was to set up the policies. What was wonderful about it was that you could check out a book for a whole quarter without renewing it, and then at the end of that quarter, you could renew for as long as you needed it, as long as nobody else needed it. If they needed it, you had to return it within, I think, five days. That was very different from the kind of system that I had experienced in other places, which were much more restrictive.

Taylor: Can you talk about the relationship between how the library was developing and what the library was doing and the faculty?

Perry: The one thing that I bring to mind is that the library was trying to teach people both media skills and how to do research. Early on in my time there, we decided that the professional librarians should be considered for faculty membership, so a committee—a Disappearing Task Force—was formed to decide if that were possible, and what it meant.

The way that the task force reported out, first of all, the librarians had to be hired through the Faculty Hiring Committee. They had to teach in a coordinated studies program one quarter out of nine. I was the first of the librarians to go out and teach. It was one of those things, "Let Mikey do it. Mikey's braver than the rest of us, so she'll go out and do this." [laughing] Frankly, Nancy, I was terrified, but I worked in a program called Self-Exploration Through Autobiography.

Taylor: With Marilyn [Frasca]?

Perry: No, Marilyn wasn't there. It was Thad Curtz, Josie Reed, and one other person. I can't remember who the other person was. It was an idea that Peter Elbow had that first-year students in their first quarter could not possibly sit down and do serious work until they did some work on themselves.

They had to write 50 pages of autobiography a week. I read more stuff about young men's sex lives than you could possibly imagine. [laughter] We read some really, really good biographical books, both novels and autobiographies. It was just a lot of fun. I had a good time doing that.

Taylor: You were the first one. I know that that policy of making librarians faculty was an early one, and from my point of view, I think it had a lot of support. But do you remember the struggles or the issues about it? I don't think it was a slam dunk.

Perry: I don't know that there were struggles. I wasn't on the committee. It was made up of faculty members who were current faculty members. But it took maybe a quarter for people to come out with the report. I think it was the next year after I had been there one year that I launched off into Self-Exploration Through Autobiography. [laughing]

Taylor: Was this a unique thing for librarians?

Perry: Yes, it was unique. Often, librarians in academic institutions teach research skills, but they don't often work in things like coordinated studies program and work with faculty. In fact, we did a lot of research skills teaching within the library. What were they called? They were just those little courses.

Taylor: Modules, they called them, I think.

Perry: Yeah, we taught a lot of modules on how to help people learn how to do research. Then, when I moved to be the coordinator of Media Services, we taught modules on how to help students learn how to produce multimedia information. Wyatt Cates and I did that. My job was to say, "Is that thing plugged in, Wyatt?" [laughter]

Taylor: Do you remember how many faculty librarians there were at that time?

Perry: Pat Matheny-White. Malcolm Stilson.

Taylor: Although he never taught, I don't think.

Perry: No, I don't think he did. And Frank Motley, who was one of the best reference librarians I have ever known. He taught me more about reference than I had ever learned before. I think that was it.

Taylor: It's still going on, that policy is absolutely key to, I think, hiring librarians and to what librarians do at Evergreen to this day.

Perry: Is Greg still the Dean now? Greg Mullins?

Taylor: Yeah.

Perry: I know him because he was in the Valley at some point.

Taylor: Right. He still is there, and they're still hiring through the Faculty Hiring Committee in the normal way, and they still teach in programs, although there's just been so many struggles with the college about teaching assignments and all kinds of curricular things, and number of students, that I don't know how it's working right now.

Perry: Yeah. It sounds like things have changed a lot since you were there, or I was there.

Taylor: That's right. That's one of the reasons why we're trying to get down these stories. Is there anything more that you want to talk about about that librarian faculty business? Because I think that's one of the big, special things about the library. Certainly, Sarah [Pedersen] thought so, and thought that you had the early stories. Do you have any other stories about people going out? At the same time, there were people coming into the library.

Perry: That's right, there were. Actually, the person who rotated into the library when I went out actually came the next quarter, so I was there. It was Richard Alexander. Do you remember Richard Alexander?

Taylor: Oh, my goodness. [laughter]

Perry: I remember that he was sitting at the reference desk one day and a student came and asked him something, and he stood up in all his 6'4" redheaded glory and said, "That is the dumbest question I have ever heard." After the student left, I walked out and I said, "Richard, we never tell a student that their question is dumb. Our job is to help them take that dumb question and turn it into a smart question." He looked at me like a little boy who had been chided. [laughing] But he never told anybody else that their questions were dumb.

Taylor: That was your big service to Richard.

Perry: Yeah.

Taylor: I'm actually surprised that he just didn't take the student by the hand and take him upstairs and say, "There's this book, this book, this book, this book, and you're got to read them all." [laughter]

Perry: Yeah, he could have done that. But we taught him a lot about reference, and I think he enjoyed it.

Taylor: I sure enjoyed my time there—I was there for two quarters.

Perry: Oh, really?

Taylor: Yeah, you were supervising me. It was fun. I loved it, actually. I worked at the reference desk and learned an enormous amount myself, but then I also helped in ordering books.

Perry: That's the other thing that the faculty did was I helped to develop the collection in their area of expertise.

Taylor: Yeah, so I did a lot of that, even though there were a lot of books that were bought automatically, but not necessarily the ones I thought would be useful. And faculty could submit requests that had to do with the programs they were going to teach, and I did a lot of that work.

Perry: As I remember, we didn't have a lot of trouble with the budget for resources. Do you remember our saying, "You can't buy that because we've run out of money?"

Taylor: No.

Perry: I don't either.

Taylor: Not only that in those early days, but as I remember, Charlie McCann, at the end of each budget year saying, if there was any unspent money, it was all to be given to library collections.

Perry: Exactly. I think he did a very good job there.

Taylor: That was his priority. Unfortunately, I think, when there are budget cuts now, the library is the one that gets hit first.

Perry: That's often the case in institutions. But we were so young and so growing, it made a lot of sense to give the library the money to spend on resources.

Taylor: Right, and I think the library was used much more than at other places. Students really did live in the library.

Perry: Yes, they did. One of my early jobs was we had to give out the study rooms upstairs. Remember those study rooms?

Taylor: Yeah.

Perry: People really wanted those, so they had to fill out a form telling us why they wanted it, and then a Disappearing Task Force would decide who got them. The one that I remember the most, which I thought was hilarious, was a young man who said, "I live in a yurt." [laughter] We gave him a study room.

Taylor: I don't have any electricity. I don't have any light. I can't study.

Perry: That's right. "I live in a yurt." I thought that was so Evergreen.

Taylor: Right. You weren't Library Dean yet. When you started, you were not a dean.

Perry: No, I was the head of all those things for maybe two years. Then I was the head of User Services, which included almost all of the library. Then, for several years, I was the coordinator of Media Services because there was nobody else willing and able to do the job. .

Taylor: In addition to being a reference librarian this whole time?

Perry: Yeah, I did that, and in addition to teaching media production. Then I was teaching one quarter and Byron Youtz, who was, at the time, a Provost, came to my office, which was in one of the other buildings, and said, "I have just asked the dean to step down, and I want you to be the new Dean of the Library and Media Services." I said, "I don't know how to do that." [laughing]

Taylor: When was this?

Perry: I'm trying to remember. It was probably 1977.

Taylor: You came in '72.

Perry: Right.

Taylor: Okay.

Perry: I was the Dean of the Library for five years, I believe, but a lot of that time I was acting dean because they had to get their DTF together to select the dean, and I had to apply.

Taylor: But you did apply, and you were appointed.

Perry: I was indeed. I did that for five years, and then decided that I had done almost everything I could do at Evergreen and went off to Stanford for two years.

Taylor: You were dean there for five years, and you left in '83 or something?

Perry: No, I left in '86. I was the dean from 1980 until 1986.

Taylor: Can you tell some stories about how that work went?

Perry: Being the dean?

Taylor: Yeah, and the whole library. How the library integrated into the whole academic program of the college. Because I think the library's role was quite different than the library's role at maybe places that you were later, or any other university. Evergreen's curriculum made the library have to be a different place.

Perry: Right, and the librarians who came there to work wanted to work in a different place. They wanted a place where the people with library degrees could actually work more closely with the faculty and students, and work more closely on instruction, particular in research because at a place like Evergreen, students really needed to learn how to do research, so we taught that research module

every quarter. It was always full. And I've written my share of evaluations, I can tell you, but I'm sure you have, too. [laughing]

Taylor: Right indeed.

Perry: I told you when you asked me about this that I wanted to tell you two funny stories.

Taylor: Okay, we need to talk about some stories. That's good.

Perry: These are both stories about Exhibits and Displays. The first one was early on when I came to Evergreen and two male students came to me and said, "We would like to have the display area after the display that's up now." The display that was up then was mandalas. I said, "Okay."

They put up this display called "Woman and Man Bella," which had pictures of belly buttons of faculty members." [laughter] Photographs of belly buttons of faculty members. In the display case, they put a whole case of navel oranges because they thought that mandalas were about navel gazing.

I remember that somebody, I can't remember who it was in the library, was really upset about the navel oranges, because they were afraid they were going to rot, so the people who had put up the display came and they put something in there that would keep the oranges from rotting. [laughing] It was very funny, and I think people really enjoyed it. You know? What would it be to see a belly button of Rudy Martin? You know? [laughter]

The next one is about Lynda Barry. Lynda Barry came and wanted to do a display in the winter. She came in with about a ton of sand, and she filled the entry of the library with this sand. Then she put up a bunch of palm trees—plastic palm trees—and a mirror that was supposed to be a lake, so we had Hawaii in January at Evergreen. I thought that was pretty cute.

Taylor: These displays, you were in charge of what was allowed?

Perry: Yeah. No, I wasn't in charge. At the time I was, but there was a committee that I think Sid White was on for a long time that actually selected the displays after a while. Maybe they didn't like "Woman and Man Bella." I don't know. But there was a task force that decided what the displays were going to be after a certain period of time.

Taylor: Do you remember anything that was turned down?

Perry: Uh. I do, and it had something to do with Paul Sparks. It had to do with used tampons. That was turned down, and I was quite relieved.

Taylor: So, there was a line that was drawn at some point.

Perry: Exactly, but it didn't have anything to do with faculty members' belly buttons.

Taylor: Okay. I don't remember that story. I do remember the displays, but I don't remember that particular one.

Perry: After a few years, we built an area in front of media loans that was sort of a little art gallery. There was a lot of really good stuff that was put in there. Marilyn Frasca had a lot to do with it, I think. I still have a lot of the posters that were developed at Evergreen. As a matter of fact, I've got two of them in my office. One of them is called "Madeline St. James." Remember that?

Taylor: Vaguely.

Perry: I'm coming right back. One of them is called the Studio Project, and that was Marilyn's. "Madeline St. James" was a prostitute as political prisoner. She came to campus and spoke, and somebody developed this really nice poster, and I've still got it on my wall.

Taylor: Tell me some other stories of things that went on in the library, among the students or among the students and the librarians, and how you worked across the whole range of things the librarians did. There were not just reference librarians. There were people in the back room. People like Libby Beck, people like Sarah.

Perry: Oh, yeah.

Taylor: There were a whole bunch of people.

Perry: Malcolm did a lot of archival work that was backroom work.

Taylor: Archive work?

Perry: Yeah. We had a lot of students who worked with us, you know, who were hourly employees. I frankly can't remember much about any of them.

Taylor: Do you remember somebody named Tim?

Perry: No.

Taylor: Maybe he was gone by then. He was a student, and he hung around during the planning year, and then he worked in the library with Jim Holley from the very, very beginning.

Perry: No, I don't remember.

Taylor: His name was Tim [Moffit].

Perry: Oh, I do remember the name, but now I can't put a person with the name.

Taylor: He married somebody named Suzanne, I think. She was around, too. They were just hang-on students that just attached themselves to the college before there were any students and stayed around for quite a long time.

Perry: Oh. We had some wonderful students, I thought. Don't you think?

Taylor: Oh, absolutely. When I walked with Larry Stenberg just a couple weeks ago, he said one of the things he was the proudest of was that he pushed really hard to hire students everywhere, not just in the library. Hiring students in the library, I think, is not an unusual thing in colleges, but he hired students everywhere—in Admissions, in Registration, in Student Services, in Business. He had students working everywhere. He thought that was a unique contribution that Evergreen launched with students.

Perry: Yeah, and we actually had students who then went on after they graduated to go to library school. Probably the most famous one I know of is Chela Metzger. I don't know if you remember her.

Taylor: I not only know her, but we've had contact with her. She rented my little house when I was gone for a while in Olympia, and she was a student of mine. She showed up when Fritz was doing some work with library archives with an organization called Sharp, and she was at the University of Texas.

Perry: That's right. She was an archivist, and she was teaching.

Taylor: I think now she might be in Delaware at the—

Perry: No, she's in California.

Taylor: Okay.

Perry: At UCLA, and she is one of the nationally known preservationists in the country.

Taylor: Yeah, and Fritz ran into her, and she said, "Oh, I went to Evergreen," and we had this funny aha moment, where here was somebody that Fritz found through some scholarly work he was doing, and she then said she knew me. [chuckles] Then it turns out you know her, and she's pretty widely known.

Perry: Yes, and I still keep in touch with her. She was a student of Judith's as well, and Judith [Espinola] and I keep in touch with her.

Then there was another person named Jonathan Cawthorne. Does that name ring a bell?

Taylor: That's doesn't mean anything to me, no.

Perry: Who graduated from Evergreen who I ran into years later when I was the Dean of the Frye Leadership Institute, which was a group that was helping assistant directors of libraries, media services, technical IT organizations to give them a good background so that they could move up into the leadership positions in those areas. He was one of the people who came to that, and he was from Evergreen.

Taylor: That's fun. Can we back up for a minute? This is a question about Evergreen's values, or Evergreen as an institution. When you applied, and you met Jim Holley, what did you know about the college, and what attracted you? Why would you want to work there?

Perry: I liked the idea of interdisciplinary-ness. I liked the fact that the librarians were expected to play a role in the educational organization, not just within the library, but within the school itself. I think those were the major things. Before I came, what I liked was the interdisciplinary.

Taylor: Had you heard of the college, or did you just hear of it through Jim Holley?

Perry: No, I think I just heard of it through Jim Holley. Pat Matheny-White was also at ALA, so the three of us had dinner a couple of times, and they told me a little bit about what they were doing and what it was like. I just thought it sounded terrific.

Taylor: You were hired before Matt?

Perry: I was hired before Matt, and then we came together. Evidently somebody who was supposed to be a faculty member dropped out and they hired Matt as a temporary faculty member at the last minute, and then kept him on.

Taylor: He was there for a long, long time.

Perry: Yeah, he was.

Taylor: I don't know in the library circles at that time whether Evergreen stood out.

Perry: It didn't.

Taylor: In the very beginning, something like 9,000 faculty applied for the first teaching jobs.

Perry: Really?

Taylor: It was just enormously popular and strange. They put an ad in the *New York Times*.

Perry: I didn't know that.

Taylor: Just a general ad, and they got all these people wanting to teach. There was one woman [Claire Hess] who sifted through the applications to try to figure out who to put on the list. I wonder in library circles whether it was known, or whether people sought it out, or whether it was word of mouth. What got people to come?

Perry: I think later on, it was sought out that it was a place that people who were interested in teaching and being a major part of an institution applied to. When I applied, it wasn't that way.

Taylor: Right.

Perry: But when I applied for the job at Stanford, I was asked to apply because the people at Stanford thought that Evergreen was a real model for undergraduate education, so I was asked to apply to be the head of the undergraduate library.

Taylor: Because of your Evergreen experience.

Perry: Exactly.

Taylor: Do you know anything about what Jim Holley—he was the instigator; he was the beginning librarian—what his ideas were, or what he brought?

Perry: I remember there was an ongoing discussion about whether he should be named dean or head of the library. He was very much in favor of dean. And there was an ongoing discussion about librarians as members of the faculty. I think he had a lot to do with the very liberal borrowing-lending policies, and the communication lines.

Remember those wonderful things that were at the front door? There was a big rack of information about various parts of Library and Media Services on them.

Taylor: I don't remember that.

Perry: We did some really nice newspapers that we sent to first-year students about the library. You probably never saw those. But I think he was really big on communication.

Taylor: I know very early on it was absolutely open access. There was no way anybody—eventually, they put in some kind of electronic gate so that you couldn't just walk out with a book. But at the beginning, it was total open access.

Perry: Right, and too many books walked out and didn't come back.

Taylor: That's right. But I think it took several years before that rule was made. It was a rule-less place, and you could bring coffee and your sandwich into the library.

Perry: Exactly. And navel oranges.

Taylor: And navel oranges. [laughter] Right.

Perry: The only time that I was rather annoyed about that was when I found a strip of bacon as a bookmark.

Taylor: I remember students coming barefoot with their feet up on things and thinking, this isn't a pleasant place to study. But there was never any rule about that as far as I knew.

Perry: No, and students were very comfortable there. The thing that I remember was that even though there weren't any rules and regulations, for the most part, they were very well mannered. There was not a lot of loud talking going on in areas where people wanted to study.

Taylor: No, there was really a lot of work going on.

Perry: Exactly.

Taylor: Groups of students would work together, and that seemed to be encouraged.

Perry: Yeah.

Taylor: The other thing I remember is the fantastic reference area. The whole downstairs was reference, in a way that you would never have today because reference is so different.

Perry: Right, but Frank Motley built that. He is a really terrific reference librarian, and he built that whole area, and helped the rest of us learn how to be reference librarians better than we had been. He was just great.

Taylor: That's what I remember learning. I don't actually remember learning it from Frank. I remember learning it some from you and some from Pat Matheny-White. When I was sitting at the reference desk, I just remember your giving me a glasses string—do you use the kind of things to keep your glasses on, so you don't lose your glasses?

Perry: Yeah.

Taylor: You gave me one of those because every time I would take a student back to reference, I would leave my glasses on the top of the shelves.

Perry: And then you'd be looking around. [laughter]

Taylor: I couldn't see, so you gave me this string to hold them, so I could just take my glasses off and I wouldn't lose them. That's the way we worked with students. We would get up and walk with them. But reference changed so much, and Sarah Pedersen and I talked about that a lot. Maybe you had gone by the time that was going on, but the technology changed reference librarians' work so dramatically. You were doing that at Stanford, but you probably weren't so much at Evergreen.

Perry: Right. I actually hired Sarah.

Taylor: Yeah, she told me that.

Perry: Do you know that she and Matthew were first cousins?

Taylor: No.

Perry: I'll bet you didn't know that.

Taylor: I didn't know that. She didn't mention that. But she absolutely said you hired her, and it was the best thing in her life. She really made her career at the college.

Perry: I think she did a good job of being dean. I left, she stepped in, and I think she did a really good job.

Taylor: Yeah, and it took special skills to be Dean of the Library. It was a motley crew of good people, but they weren't easily led.

Perry: Mostly what you did was listen a lot, and then set up DTFs for people to work through issues. I remember one issue that was really interesting that had to do with some books that were considered a

little off-color. There were several people in the library who wanted them taken out, so I asked them to do some research on how libraries reacted to that kind of thing. They did the research and decided that we should keep them.

There were reasons that we should. One was it was a small publisher. Another was that we aren't supposed to be making those kinds of decisions. We're supposed to let the people who use the library make those decisions for themselves. That was one of the things that got a few people hot and bothered, so I set up a group that would do the study. They did the study, and they made the recommendation, and we accepted it.

Taylor: I can imagine that study going on in lots of places coming up with the same response.

Perry: Yeah, and I don't remember a lot of personnel problems in that library. People certainly had opinions about things, but I don't remember a lot of conflict. And I don't remember lying awake at night worrying about whether or not I should ask So-and-So to leave. I remember firing one person when I was the head of circulation and media loan and so forth. The reason was that she had given her boyfriend access to our WATS line.

Taylor: Whoops!

Perry: And he was making all these phone calls using our WATS line that should not have been made from the library. They were exploiting the library and I asked her to leave, and she did. Aside from that, there weren't a lot of personnel problems. There were a lot of egos.

Taylor: Yeah.

Perry: But they seemed to work pretty well together. One other thing. We had one woman who was an absolutely delightful human being who was a terrible drunk. Remember Rita Cooper? Rita and I had a meeting with her and said, "If you come into the library one more time drunk, you are saying that you are resigning." And she did, and I went in and accepted her resignation.

Taylor: And she left.

Perry: And she left. It was really sad because she was a terrific person. She couldn't get it together. We tried everything. This wasn't a first-time discussion with her. She had gone through rehabilitation and all kinds of stuff, but it just didn't work.

Taylor: The other thing I remember is I used to just stroll through the library, and I would go back in the back room and talk to Libby Beck.

Perry: Who I adored.

Taylor: I don't know when Libby started, but I think pretty early.

Perry: She was there when I came. She was already there.

Taylor: She was a cataloguer, I think.

Perry: She was.

Taylor: She was friends with faculty, but she had no interest in teaching, and I think she was a staff person.

Perry: Yeah, she didn't have a library degree.

Taylor: But what she did, I remember one day talking to her about how excited she was that she had just catalogued a book in the Library of Congress system. You don't get to do that very often because almost every book you come across has already been done. She told me how she had done it, and how excited she was to find exactly the right place where it should go. That just made her day.

Perry: Yeah, and she was a wonderful person.

Taylor: She was a wonderful person. She sat back there and did her work.

Perry: Yep, she did.

Taylor: There were other people. There were a number of people in the back room that just quietly did their work but were definitely a part of that whole operation.

Perry: Yeah. For the most part, that was a really strong set up people. But the people in the library part were particularly strong. There were some kind of iffy people in the Media Services area, which is why I went down there and spent, I think it was two years, before I became the dean, trying to help them get themselves more closely aligned with the faculty. Some of them did well with that and some of them didn't do so well with it.

Taylor: I think there was an issue, and it's a continuing issue. It was, who has control of all of that media equipment? The faculty wanted it and the media people wanted to have control, and I think there was always tension there.

Perry: Yeah, there was.

Taylor: Probably still. The faculty thought that it should all be theirs and students wanted access whether they were working with faculty or not.

Perry: Exactly. The other thing that I wished that the college had done probably after I left was to integrate the Computer Services into that area.

Taylor: Which they did.

Perry: They did do that?

Taylor: Physically they did.

Perry: I spent hours writing Barbara Smith justifications for that.

Taylor: I'm not sure it was totally integrated, but the spaces are integrated. They're still right there together.

Perry: In this day and age, it's really important to have Computer Services, Media Services, and Information Services all be part of one organization, I believe.

Taylor: Yeah, and I think there was a lot of talk about that, and I don't know how it got resolved. But they certainly physically are right there together. But I'm sure there's a head of Academic Computing and it isn't the same as the Dean of the library.

Perry: Who's the head of Academic Computing now?

Taylor: Don't know.

Perry: I don't either. Ron was for a while, Ron Woodbury. When I was there, he was the head.

Taylor: He went off to California quite a long time ago, and then he died maybe [three or four] years ago.

Perry: Didn't he come back to Olympia? Didn't he die there?

Taylor: Maybe. I think he had family there, but I didn't follow him after he left.

Perry: Yeah. He and Melissa came to visit us here at one point. I think they were going back to Olympia.

Taylor: I know his daughter still lives in Olympia. I don't know who is head of computing now. Who was head of computing when you were there, before Ron? Both John Cushing and York Wong were head of Academic Computing and then switched over to being on the faculty, but that was later.

Perry: That I don't remember.

Taylor: Was Jim Johnson ever head of computing?

Perry: Maybe. There was another person who helped me when we decided that we were going to computerize circulation, and I can't remember his name now. But he wasn't the head. I think he was the computer analyst.

Taylor: You were there till the mid-'80s, and that's when computerizing was going full force. Did you have a lot to do with how the library transitioned to computers?

Perry: Yeah. Mary Huston had a lot to do with that. I think Mary was more sophisticated when it came to computing than the rest of us were, and she had a lot to do with that transition. I believe that she is now in San Jose at San Jose State.

Taylor: What did the librarians and you do to teach yourselves about libraries and computers?

Perry: A lot of that, we learned through the American Library Association and through the publications. Mary helped a lot of us with some of the searching techniques. As they started out, she knew them, and she helped the rest of us learn them. We sort of taught ourselves.

Taylor: There was so much change going on there. Because I can remember librarians being responsible for teaching students how to do research with the computer. I just wondered, did the college help in any way, or were you just on your own?

Perry: No, we did it. I think we did it ourselves. Maybe John—John Aiken, is that his name?

Taylor: Cushing. Now Cushing.

Perry: John Cushing helped us to some extent, but for the most part, it was a bootstrap operation. [laughing]

Taylor: What faculty did you work with the most, and what are some stories about what you did with faculty?

Perry: I worked a lot with Nancy Taylor. I taught with Nancy Taylor.

Taylor: That's me.

Perry: Not Taylor, the other one. Nancy Allen. Josie Reed. Betty Ruth [Estes], who just died, you know.

Taylor: Yeah, there was just an event for her last week.

Perry: Rudy Martin and Willie Parson. I worked with them a lot. And then I don't know if you remember this, but at some point, Maxine Mimms decided that even though I had the worst Southern accent she had ever heard, I wasn't such a terrible racist that I couldn't come up to Tacoma and teach her students how to do research.

So, for I think it was probably five years, I did a module in Tacoma with Maxine's students. I did a lot of work with Maxine and with Betsy [Diffendal] and with Joye Hardiman. Maxine would get up and say, "Now, I want you to listen to her. I know she sounds like she's probably a racist, but she's not. And she knows a lot about libraries." [laughter]

Taylor: You never lost that Southern accent, even though you haven't been in North Carolina for a very long time.

Perry: I know, but my mama thought I sounded like a Yankee.

Taylor: Oh, dear.

Perry: Those of the people that I think of. And Kirk Thompson. What I remember more than actually working with people is that Matthew and I used to do a lot of cooking, and we would invite people over

to our house for dinner. We would all sit around, drink wine, and make up coordinated studies programs. That as our idea of fun. [laughing]

Taylor: Isn't that crazy? When you think back on it, what specially stands out about what the college was doing and what your life was like?

Perry: I'll give you a story about something that I'm working on now, that I think is useful to the Dean of the School of Information at UNC. They're building a new program that includes faculty members from various disciplines. Does that sound familiar? [laughing] They couldn't figure out how to do it because they weren't getting along.

I called Gary Marchinetti—Gary's the Dean—and I said, "Gary, I want to tell you a story about how we did this at Evergreen because we did have people from various disciplines. We started out with a big issue, or a big question, that included all of the disciplines. Then we began to talk to the faculty members who were experts in those disciplines about what they could contribute to answering the question.

I think that was really helpful for him because it seems to me that that also is a good life lesson about how, if you've got a big problem, if you bring people from various aspects of the problem together and ask them what they would do with the problem, you wind up with a better answer.

I think I helped Gary to begin to get these people at UNC—boy, am I mad at them right now about this woman that they didn't give tenure to.

Taylor: Oh, yeah. Well, they lost her.

Perry: I know. And I am so embarrassed.

Taylor: And I think they are.

Perry: They should be. The trustees should have been kicked in the butt.

Taylor: Yeah.

Perry: Because it wasn't the people on the campus, it was the trustees who didn't—anyway, I think that that issue of how you approach big things in life, I learned at Evergreen, or I had reinforced at Evergreen, and it's served me forever.

Taylor: It's amazing to me. You were there for 13 years?

Perry: Sixteen.

Taylor: Sixteen years. But it was a long, long time ago, and it still stands pretty strong in your life. You can still remember a lot of what happened.

Perry: Yeah, and I really liked it there. I really liked the faculty and the students.

Taylor: What do you remember taking with you? First, you went to Stanford, and then you were at Mount Holyoke. Maybe you were somewhere else?

Perry: No, I was at Stanford. I was the head of the Meyer Library for several years. And then, remember, they had a big earthquake?

Taylor: Yeah.

Perry: Nothing that hadn't already happened was going to happen with Meyer, so I went to work at the Stanford Data Center as the Director of Departmental Services. My job there was to take 2,500 administrative assistants on the campus and move them from paper-based transactions to electronic transactions in three years. We did it in two and a half years.

During that time, I also met some really interesting people who helped me understand why it was important to have computing libraries and media all together. Peter Lyman, who was at USC for a while and then went to Berkeley, and Pat [Batten], who was the Vice President for Information Services at Cornell, were people that I worked a lot with while I was in the Data Center. They helped me understand the connections.

From the Data Center, I went to Mount Holyoke where the provost hired me because he wanted to integrate the library and computing services. So, we did.

Taylor: You weren't at Haverford?

Perry: No, I applied for a job at Haverford and got it but turned it down and went to Stanford.

Taylor: That was just a memory I had, and I didn't know how that fit in.

Perry: After Mount Holyoke, Pat McPherson, who had been the President of Bryn Mawr, was a Vice President at the Mellon Foundation, and I had worked with her a lot with the presidents and provosts of the liberal arts colleges, because her job was with liberal arts colleges on issues having to do with libraries and computing. She asked me if I would come to work for her, so after I had been at Mount Holyoke for eight years, I went to work at the Mellon Foundation to help them build support for libraries and IT in the liberal arts colleges. I did a lot of consulting at individual institutions.

Then I helped to build a consortium for the American Liberal Arts Colleges abroad. I did that for, I think, 10 years. Then I retired.

Taylor: I don't know if it's an appropriate story, but I think it needs to be added—back in '90 or '91, when you applied for president of Evergreen.

Perry: Yeah. And I didn't get it. [laughing]

Taylor: You didn't get it, but you were taken very seriously, I can guarantee you that. I just think back on what that would have meant. Given your whole connection between what role computers play in libraries and what role computers play in universities, I think you could have contributed a lot to what's going on at Evergreen that they've had to develop, but under your direction, they might have gone a better way.

Perry: Oh, well. I really loved working for the Mellon Foundation, and I particularly liked this job of helping to build a consortium for the American liberal arts colleges abroad. It was for librarians, IT people, and faculty members. It's thriving. There are 26 institutions. I went to places, Nancy, that I had never heard of. I had to look them up. Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Pristina.

Taylor: I've heard of that. In Albania or somewhere?

Perry: No, it's Kosovo. Places that you would just never think—and Yola, Nigeria. [laughing] I had a great time doing that.

Taylor: That sounds wonderful. How long ago did you retire?

Perry: Ten years? Although I consult from time to time. I've often been to the American University in Paris, which is one of the parts of this consortium, because the woman who is the president there is a good friend of mine. They've been building a new facility for their library that was connected to their computing and media services area, so I spent some time there.

When did I retire? Maybe I'm not really retired.

Taylor: Maybe you're not. You sound like you're still doing things with UNC.

Perry: Oh, yeah. I'm on two boards. One is WiderNet, which grew out of UNC, and it is an organization that provides equipment, training, and the resources for people in the world who don't have access to the Internet. It's a great little organization that's always struggling for money but has computer facilities all over the world that they've trained people to use, and a huge collection of materials that can be used for education and medical reasons.

Then I'm on the Board of Visitors for the School of Library and Information Services at UNC. I graduated from there. I've served on that group for a long time.

I spend a lot of time now fundraising. I just decided that it was time for me to give back to the town, because all I had done—I've lived in this town for 28 years now and all I've done is pay my taxes and vote. So, I decided that I would put my name in to be on a planning board for the town.

Taylor: Good for you.

Perry: I got selected for this planning board for the town. There are several things that I'm really interested in. One is diversity, because this is an awfully white place, or it's led in an awfully white way. And yet, there are lots and lots of Hispanic people and a few African Americans here, and they need to be part of it.

I'm interested in the environmental stuff like putting up electric plugs for electric cars.

[laughing] That kind of thing. I'm going to get to do that for a while, too.

Taylor: That's good.

Perry: Aside from that, I spend a lot of time Jazzercising.

Taylor: That's important. I spend a lot of time in the pool doing aqua aerobics.

Perry: Do you have a pool?

Taylor: Bainbridge Island does, and it's five minutes away, so that works. Who are you still in touch with from the old days?

Perry: I was in touch with Betty Ruth until she died. I was in touch with Matt.

Taylor: Where is Jason?

Perry: Jason is in San Francisco. He is the IT support for a huge law firm. He's married to a woman who is an architect, and they have two children.

Taylor: And you see them quite frequently?

Perry: Yeah, I do. Jin Darney. I'm still in touch with Jin Darney. I see a bunch of people on Facebook, but I wouldn't really say that I'm in touch with them. Sally, and Llyn De Danaan, and Dee Van Brunt, but I wouldn't say that I'm really in touch with them. Jin Darney's granddaughter Elinor is at Smith now. We went over and had dinner with her the other night.

Taylor: Oh, good, because for a while, she was living with Jin because she had to do classes online. She wanted to go away to college, but then came the pandemic, so she just went across the street to her grandmother's and lived there for a little while.

Perry: Yeah.

Taylor: Is Smith going to be full in-person this fall?

Perry: Yeah, and she's doing well, I think.

Taylor: Elinor, I think, is her name.

Perry: That's right.

Taylor: I'm in touch with Jin quite a bit because her sister lives on Bainbridge Island, so she comes up.

Perry: The other person that we're really in touch with is Bob Haft, and Hiro Kawasaki. We keep close touch with Hiro.

Taylor: Bob just did a wonderful interview with Hiro.

Perry: For the same thing that you're doing?

Taylor: Yeah. Because Hiro's story is so interesting.

Perry: Yes, it is. Matthew was the head of the Hiring Committee that hired Hiro.

Taylor: I didn't know that, but Hiro was one of the best hires. He's just a sleeper. He just did his work and had a tremendous influence on what happened at the college, but he never stood up and shouted about it.

Perry: Yeah. He's a terrific human being. I really like Hiro a lot.

Taylor: Yes, he is.

Perry: He taught me how to make sushi. [laughing]

Taylor: He taught me how to do that, too, and he taught a whole bunch of stuff about Japanese pots and Japanese art.

What I remember the most about teaching with him was a time that we were teaching—actually, Judith was in the same program.

Perry: I was going to ask if that was the program that Judith was in.

Taylor: She was associated with it because she was head of media at that time, and I think she just wanted to be a part of a faculty seminar. We were reading *Moby Dick*, and Hiro had never read *Moby Dick* before. It was tough for him. It was a big, big book. His contributions in faculty seminar were absolutely the most important of the year. He came at it, talk about interdisciplinary and intercultural and whatever you could call it. He came at it from such a different angle. He was absolutely wonderful in that program.

It was a program with Chuck Pailthorp and David Marr and me and Hiro and Judith. I think that was the five of us. We had great faculty seminars. It was called Form and Content—

Perry: Oh, I remember that.

Taylor: And we lost students left and right for reasons I never knew. I think we were too serious. I don't know.

Perry: They didn't like *Moby Dick*. [laughing]

Taylor: It was too hard. We did Marx. We did *Middlemarch*. It was a hard program, and they were freshmen. I remember Leo Daugherty's daughter was in that program.

Perry: Oh, yeah, Leo! We still keep in touch with David and Susan. Not closely, but a couple times a year.

Taylor: Thirteen years left its mark on you.

Perry: Oh, yeah.

Taylor: And, of course, you met Judith.

Perry: That's right. But I love the place. I still think the idea of Evergreen is really important, at least the Evergreen that you and I knew.

Taylor: Can you put that in words? What's the idea of Evergreen that you live with?

Perry: It's interdisciplinary. It's very accepting of differences. It's imaginative. It's questioning, and it's problem-solving.

Taylor: Those were the things that you took with you that formed your career, actually.

Perry: Right, they are. I learned as much at Evergreen as I taught. Does that make sense? I really grew a lot from being there, and from being connected to the faculty and the students. It was a really important place for me.

Taylor: That's the way I look at it as well.

Perry: Good!

Taylor: I don't know if there's other things that you want to talk about.

Perry: No, I think we've done enough for today.

Taylor: We covered quite a bit of territory.

Perry: Yeah. If I think of anything else, I'll send you an e-mail and we'll get back together.

Taylor: Okay, that's good. Say hi to Judith for me.

Perry: Will do and tell Fritz hi.

Taylor: Will do. Okay, thanks for everything. I'll get back to you soon.

Perry: I have a question for you. Do you have air conditioning?

Taylor: Yeah, we have not suffered one minute.

Perry: Good, because I'm really worried about people up there.

Taylor: Now, a lot of people have air conditioning, and there was a problem two weeks ago.

Perry: I know.

Taylor: It was 108 in Seattle, I guess. We were so lucky just by good planning or coincidence. We went up to Lopez. It was 88 tops, and not that in the cabin].

Perry: That's not bad at all.

Taylor: No, it wasn't bad at all. And it's only 67 here today. It's cool.

Perry: But I think it's going to get warm again.

Taylor: Yeah, but in the 80s. And you live with 80 and humidity back there.

Perry: It's been really hot, but you know what's been awful here? It has been raining to beat hell. I told you this morning that I thought maybe we needed to build an ark. It is just amazing.

Taylor: When I lived in Boston, nobody had air conditioning at all, and I guess you do now. Do you?

Perry: Oh, yeah, we have three mini-splits.

Taylor: I don't know what they are.

Perry: You know, in hotels, they have these heating/cooling devices?

Taylor: Yeah.

Perry: That's what ours is like.

Taylor: We have a heat pump, and it cools. It keeps it at 70 degrees, whether it's cold or hot outside.

Perry: That's great. I wanted to be sure that you were comfortable.

Taylor: We're not suffering at all.

Perry: Good.

Taylor: And I don't know anybody that is. People in Olympia, I think everybody I knew has air conditioning. But it is hot in Olympia, hotter than here. But we're fine. Thanks for asking.

Perry: Okay, my dear. I hope this is useful.

Taylor: Yeah, I'm sure it is. Thanks so much.

Perry: Okay, I'll send you an e-mail if I think of anything else.

Taylor: Yeah, do. Let me know. Glad we succeeded.

Perry: Yes. Bye!

Taylor: Bye-bye.