

Tom Rainey
Interviewed by Stephen Beck
The Evergreen State College oral history project
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FINAL

Beck: This is Stephen Beck. I'm recording an interview with Tom Rainey on July 31, 2017. We are here in Tom and Nina's living room. Tom, thanks for agreeing to do this interview. I really appreciate it.

Rainey: My pleasure.

Beck: I'd like to start by asking if you could say a little bit about your early childhood, and your upbringing, and how that might have informed your academic career.

Rainey: Oh, sure. Well, it formed my whole life, really, in a sense. I'm a seventh-generation Floridian. My folks have been in Florida since 1823, before it was a state. I was born in Wauchula, Florida, in a real cracker county, in the sense of being a kind of rural Southern county in central Florida. I was born in a place where my father was born, where my great-grandfather, my grandfather was born. My folks had drifted south into Florida from Georgia and Alabama during the nineteenth century, and all were in place by 1900, wherever they were going to be, that they are now.

That meant that I was born well within a Southern tradition. My folks had been farmers, but three generations back from that. My grandfather was the only Republican in town, and he was Republican as a patronage Republican, because he decided that he wanted to be postmaster, as his father, my great-grandfather, had been in 1909. So they shifted from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party. Every time there was a Republican in the White House, there was a Rainey in the post office. So I didn't grow up in a rural atmosphere. I grew up in a shopkeeper/businessman/postal atmosphere.

When I was born, in 1936, my father was a mail carrier. We weren't that touched by the Depression, largely because my father was employed the whole time. My mother was from a much poorer cracker family than my father was. She had wanted to be a schoolteacher, but she had to drop out of school in the tenth grade, lie about her age, and get a job at McCrory's Five and Dime, because she was one of 12, and there were four children younger than her left in the household.

When my grandfather, her father, was chased out of town in Fort Meade by irate husbands in his church—he was a Pentecostal preacher, and one of these people that had high moral standards for

everybody but himself—my mother was not able to finish high school. But my mother was a reader all her life, as I am.

When my sister Mary Sue and I came along, the first thing I remember about learning anything was how to speak the language, because my family was class conscious, in the sense that they wanted all of us to speak correct English because they didn't want any of their children to be confused with those people down in Tin Top. I would say, in some ways, my family in Wauchula was more prejudiced toward white trash than they were toward blacks. There was a black population. Virtually everyone in our family had black people working for them.

I grew up in a really quite loving atmosphere. My childhood was a happy childhood. And I grew up a reader; my mother taught me how to read when I was four and five. She read a book a week, and so she set the example. She was very determined to get away from her poor cracker background, so she was very much interested in us becoming educated, and speaking English the correct way. We could have an accent, of course, and she was very funny about this. She said, "I don't want you to say 'y'all', I want you to say 'you all.'" Of course, that's still Southern.

My father had grown up—and I think this is important in my early life—my father had grown up a rich boy, because my grandfather, his father—postmaster, businessman, developer and so on—was, for a while, during the teens and the '20s, a very wealthy man, wheeling and dealing in large pieces of real estate, and had crate mills and everything. My hometown was a sort of citrus/vegetable shipping center. It was cows, cucumbers, melons, strawberries—so my hometown was around the depot, and there were packinghouses by the tracks, so things were being shipped directly from these packinghouses to the North.

My grandfather was quite wealthy, and kind of spoiled my father. My father's mother had died when he was three and a half, and Granddaddy was too busy making money, gaining power, to take very good care of his son, so he farmed my father and his sister out to a grandmother, my great-grandmother, who was a real cracker girl. Her family had been in Florida since 1840. So, I grew up very much in a Southern atmosphere, with all the bigotry and the prejudice there appertaining to Jews and Catholics, anybody who wasn't white, Anglo-Saxon, Metho-Baptist. That's the general atmosphere that I grew up in.

But a very happy childhood, in the sense that I had a cousin that I played with that was older than me, who taught me how to be a boy, essentially; a loving mother; an employed father.

Beck: What early experiences might have contributed to you pursuing history?

Rainey: Well, I've actually written about that. I've written a family history, finished now but not yet published, called *Crackers in Paradise: Stories and Memories of a Florida Family*.

My father and my uncle, and my grandfather in particular, were great storytellers. So I grew up sitting literally at my grandfather's knee on the front porch. He was a broken man by the time I knew him. He'd lost it all in the '30s. But there he was on the front porch, with a white linen suit slightly stained with tobacco juice, smoking a Tampa Crook or a King Edward cigar, holding forth. I was the one child that was really interested in all of his stories about old Florida, and his snake stories, and that sort of thing, so I started listening to him. I was just interested in things in the past. I used to like to rummage through his attic, and find things that went back—items, broken furniture—things that went back to the nineteenth century.

The other part of that is that my family was very status conscious, in the sense that Grandfather would always say, "We're not much now, but there was a time when the Raineys meant something in this part of the state." He was always talking about how the Raineys came to Florida, and how they got involved in business, and that sort of thing.

But he had all these stories about old Florida, and the way Florida was when he was a boy, and I was very interested in that. I think I became a historian as I listened to him tell these stories, and I think of myself as a person who tells stories that just happen to be mostly true, and narrative stories. When I started to read, I started reading simple histories. In the meantime, my grandfather was imparting all of this. I must have heard from him maybe 300 or 400 stories. As with all such, they were mostly true. But they were also part of the mythology of being a pioneer cracker in the state of Florida. Snake stories, for example, were told to give you some idea of the character that was involved with the snake, so I heard lots about his encounters with snakes. But I was just very much interested in that at an early age.

My father was also a good storyteller. My father had grown up learning how to fish, learning how to hunt. At that time, Florida was open still. It was not posted or fenced off. He could hunt and fish across the state. I remember one time him telling me, after telling me a story about fishing and hunting, and carrying with him just a bag of grits, some salt and fatback, and eating fish and picking salad and berries—my father was a genius in the wild. He was a genius in the wilds of Florida. He just had a sense for the woods. He knew where the snakes were, he knew where the birds were. He raised dogs, and always told me stories about hunting and fishing and so on. I was the one of Granddaddy's grandchildren that was most interested in hearing about all that.

My book is essentially based on all these stories. I've got a lot of primary evidence in it, photographs and letters, and the usual primary evidence. But a lot of it is, I just assumed there's an element of truth in virtually every story, and that you can tell a story to make a point.

Beck: Where did you do your undergraduate studies?

Rainey: Let me start with high school. The only courses I did well in were literature and history. I could have done well in other things, but I played football and chased the ladies, so I was not academically inclined.

I joined the Navy immediately after high school. The way I would put it, I grew up in the Navy. I did as well in Navy schools as I did poorly in high school. But I'd been reading history and literature—some fairly serious literature—from the sixth grade on. I was more and more interested, and testing the historical veracity of films, for example. I didn't think I could make it in college. That's, I guess, the point. I didn't, because I was not prepared in high school. In the Navy, I did several things that prepared me for college, even though I actually thought I was going to stay in the Navy.

Beck: When were your years of service in the Navy?

Rainey: August 1954 – August 1959. I took American history, I took English, and I took mathematics from East Carolina University, when I was stationed at Cherry Point, North Carolina, Second Marine Air Wing. I was a hospital corpsman, and this may sound strange, but hospital corpsmen, electronics mates, they were a sort of elite within the enlisted ranks. Those were rates, as we called them, that required some education. I not only did well in hospital corps school, but I did well in lab at a blood bank school. That took me to Bethesda, Maryland. And that took me to Washington, D.C., which is a historian's paradise.

In the Navy, I'm reading Civil War history, and that takes me to something else and something else, and Reconstruction and so on. I've read virtually 50 books on the Civil War. Became interested also in a little bit in philosophy, when a fellow hospital corpsman, "You ought to read this." He sort of quoted Aristotle to me when I was about 20 in the Navy. He said, "It's better to teach and lead than follow and learn. But you have to follow and learn in order to teach."

Of all things, I read Voltaire. That turned me into a skeptic, or rather, confirmed my native skepticism. I've always been a bit of a skeptic. From vacation Bible school on, I was a skeptic. You had to show me. I'm well named Thomas. It's the same as a historian. You have to show me the evidence, or I don't believe it.

Beck: Perhaps Voltaire gave you a focus for your skepticism.

Rainey: *Philosophical Dictionary*. I read the whole thing. Then I read *Candide*. Then I read some of his histories and so on. In the meantime, I was trying to learn what I hadn't learned in high school. The last two years I was in the Navy, I took some university courses from East Carolina University.

I had a hard time getting out of the Navy. I loved the Navy. I did extremely well in Navy schools. I went up in rank quickly. I probably would have been an officer, or a warrant officer, had I stayed in, because I was doing so well. Then, I took these courses, and became more skeptical, philosophically skeptical. But I almost stayed in, but I was admitted to the University of Florida.

I felt I was going to be pre-med, and I thought I was pre-med. I was actually in pre-med and pharmacy. And then, one day, I was just sitting around in the student center at the University of Florida with some vets—I hung out with vets. The school was set up for vets then. I hung out with vets, and I said, "You know, I've liked being a hospital corpsman, I've liked being a blood bank technician, I've liked doing the emergency medicine I did in the Navy—with Marines in particular—but that's not what I want to do with my life. I don't want to be that kind of doctor."

So, I switched to history and Russian at the same time. The question people have asked me is, "How did you become interested in Russian history?" I became interested in Russian history, I did extremely well. I got one B in all of my university career. I did extremely well. I had great teachers at the University of Florida. I had a great humanities sequence, which was another kind of intellectual turning point for me, at the University of Florida. It's like the one, in some ways, at Reed College. Every sophomore in arts and sciences had to take this humanities sequence. It was world history, world history. We had lectures in Chinese culture and Chinese history, Russian, and European, and American, and so on. It was a year-long, two-semester program. And I loved it. It was just sort of one story. And here is this vet that's not sure he's able to be in school.

I did a paper on *Hamlet*. It was part of an exam. The discussion leader was an Oxford graduate. He was very disappointed with the papers, except for one paper. And I've loved *Hamlet* ever since. [laughter] And I started reading Shakespeare, started getting interested in Shakespeare, started getting really interested in the language that we speak. And just loved to be able to take history courses at that level. Do something in the nature of history, my own history, historiography, historical methods. Loved it all. So I think I had a really excellent education at the University of Florida, and I look back on it frequently, as this is where I learned how to do this, this is where I thought, this is what I thought might be the case.

Beck: That led you to graduate school in history?

Rainey: I had to decide. I was a history major. Actually, I was a double major. I also had a major in biology. That's what I was doing as pre-med, but I continued with that, so I had all the courses—the advanced biology, the advanced physics, physical chemistry, chemistry, all of that stuff. But many of us had a mentor—I think Pete Sinclair was yours, Frank Haber was mine—a professor mostly of intellectual history—had written a book called *Age of the World: From Moses to Darwin*. So I took History of Science from him, I took Intellectual History from him, and he was sort of my mentor. He was my example of what a historian is.

When I went in to talk to him seriously about being a historian, being a professional historian, I didn't know what to do. I said, "Frank, what do I need to do?" No, I didn't say Frank, I said Professor Haber. "What should I do? How do I do it?" And he says, "What do you want to specialize in?" I didn't know I had to specialize. [laughing] "Well, American, European, Russian, Asian." I said, "I don't know. I like American history, but I find European history much more interesting."

Right at that time, I had another professor that made a Russian historian out of me. A very eccentric, crazy guy named Ed Chmievsky. I took his two-semester Russian history, and, as I was taking Russian, that turned me into that channel. Again, I didn't know exactly what I had to do, because I was not that knowledgeable about academia. I went and talked to Frank and said, "What do I have to do, to do what you're doing?" was essentially what I said. And he said, "Well, you have to go to graduate school." I said, "How do you do that?" [laughter]

My family was very proud of the fact my father had gone to university, my grandfather had gone to law school. So they didn't expect me to go to university, but they had some anticipation or some . . . they were glad that I went to university. They were very proud of the fact. I'm a first-generation, the first one to get a college degree. My father went, and got kicked out of several schools in the South. He was a smart ass.

So, just sort of incrementally, step by step, as I learned what it was like. I had three, four very, very good professors in history. I didn't know what a fellowship was, I didn't know any of that stuff. I remember a conversation with Frank—I only called him Frank when I finished my Ph.D.—about how to go about it. He said, "Well, this is what you have to do, apply for a fellowship." And I said, "What's a fellowship?" He said, "Let me tell you what a fellowship is."

I applied to UC-Berkeley; I applied to Harvard; I applied to Indiana University, which has a great Slavic history program; University of Illinois; and University of Florida. I was admitted everywhere, and Harvard said, "Well, we admit you, but we can't give you any money at this point. We'll reconsider after your first year here." Harvard did that with everybody, I think. I couldn't do that. I had a wife and two

children by then. I was married when I was in the Navy, and I had a daughter in the Navy, and then a daughter as a freshman at the University of Florida.

The University of Illinois offered me a university fellowship, as did Indiana University. So I went to Champagne-Urbana. I had a university fellowship the first year. This was after Sputnik. There was a lot of money to study the Russians then. The second year, I had a Department of Defense foreign language fellowship. I had that the third year I was there, and then the final year, when I was working on my doctoral dissertation, I had a teaching fellowship. I actually taught Western European civ. I had graduate students as my seminar leaders, so I taught there.

Beck: What were the years that you were at the University of Illinois?

Rainey: I was at the University of Illinois from '62 to '66. I finished my doctoral dissertation. There's one story that I tell sometimes. I don't know if it's relevant, but I'll tell it anyway.

When I was a senior in high school, I was not doing well in algebra. I went in to talk to Miss Thelma Cole Miller, who was a formidable old-maid algebra teacher. I thought I could charm her out of a grade, because I was not doing well, and I needed to have a good grade to stay in school—not in school, but to stay and play football, which is the only thing I cared about then.

She listened to me and she said, "No, Tommy, I can't do that to you." I said, "What do you mean 'to' me?" She said, "It would not be good for you to give you something that you haven't earned. I'll help you a little bit with it, and your sweetheart"—who also became my wife later—"she'll help you." And, as I walked out the door, she said, "Well, Tommy, one of these days you're going to learn that you're not as stupid as everybody thinks you are here."

When I successfully defended my doctoral dissertation, the first person I wrote a letter to was Miss Thelma Cole: "Dear Miss Thelma Cole, I think I've finally discovered that I'm not as stupid as everybody else thought I was at the Hardee County High School." [laughter] And I signed it "Dr. Thomas B. Rainey." [laughter] She got the biggest kick out of that. She took it to Beeson's drugstore and showed it to everybody. "Well, our Tommy did all right now." It was that kind of town that I grew up in, that pretty close community that I grew up in.

Beck: Did you start teaching at SUNY right out of grad school?

Rainey: No. I had six offers. It was pretty competitive, but I had six offers. I had a couple of publications in refereed journals coming out of graduate papers, and I won an Alpha Theta scholarship award, and *The Historian* published this paper that I'd written. So I had some pretty good credentials coming out, and a very strong recommendation.

In my field of Russian studies, there were three schools, really. The Yale School; George Vernadsky founded that. The Harvard School; Michael Karpovich founded that. And the Columbia Slavic Studies Program, founded by Geroid Tanqueray Robinson. It was very Byzantine then, it seems to me.

My faculty advisor and mentor at the University of Illinois was Ralph Fisher. He was a Robinson Ph.D., and there was a whole stable then, so to speak—a couple of generations, by that time—of Robinson people. And then there were the Karpovich people. Well, the Harvard people got jobs for each other, the Yale people got jobs for each other, and the Columbia people got jobs for each other. So I was considered a third-generation Geroid Tanqueray Robinson student.

I knew John Shelton Curtiss, who was a very well-known Russian historian at Duke, was going to retire, because Fisher told me that he was going to retire, and that he would recommend me for that job at Duke. But it was going to be a year after I finished, and so I took a kind of stand-in job at the University of Arkansas. I taught everything there. I taught Near Eastern history, I taught European history, I taught Russian history, and I taught American foreign policy there. Then, this job at Duke came open, and so I got it. I was at Duke for three years on a tenure track.

Martin Luther King was assassinated in '68, and about nine assistant professors and I participated in this massive civil rights demonstration called the Duke Vigil. It shut the school down. We ended up with demands that the Board of Trustees recognize the custodial union, which was mostly black, and we participated in what locally was the famous, or infamous, Duke Vigil and the Durham boycott, with all of the black preachers and so on boycotting the businesses there.

It was an integration struggle, for the most part, and I was heavily involved in that. I was a member of the Southern Students Organizing Committee, an all-white civil rights group that consisted largely of those people that were kicked out SNCC when Stokely Carmichael said, “You white boys have to do your own thing, because if we achieve something, you’ll get the credit for it. And we need the credit for it.” So, we did. And I was the president of the chapter in North Carolina.

Beck: How did the administration take that from you nine assistant professors?

Rainey: Not well, so it was not clear that I was going to get a contract renewal. To be honest about it, I look back, and the only regret I think I have, academically, is not keeping the Duke job. It was a great job for a Russian historian. Duke had a consortium with the University of North Carolina. We had a speaker series coming and going. I had graduate students that were good. It was just an ideal place in the South for me to be. I had, as a Southerner, a kind of missionary zeal, too, that I wanted to be in a Southern school because I wanted to help my benighted white Southerners. But it was clear my contract was not going to be renewed. They didn’t fire me, exactly, but they wouldn’t give me an early decision.

Just at that time, a former teacher of mine at University of Florida, Cliff Yearly, who was at SUNY at Buffalo, it happened that Frank had changed from the University of Florida to the University of Maryland. Frank lived in Georgetown, which he referred to as the “most affluent slum in America.”

And Cliff called him, just to chat, because they had been fellow graduate students at Johns Hopkins. Frank said, “Tom Rainey’s here, and he’s visiting with me, and he’s on the way to Russia.” I was on the way to Finland, actually, to use the huge library on Russian stuff that they have at the University of Helsinki.

So I talked to Cliff, and Cliff said, “Well, I remember you as a very good student, but I’m not sure what you’ve done since, because I left the University of Florida before Frank did.” I said, “I’ve been teaching Russian history.” He asked me about my credentials. He said, “We need a Russian historian. Would you apply for it?” And I did. And I got it, at double the salary I was making at Duke. [laughter]

Beck: That was SUNY Buffalo?

Rainey: SUNY Buffalo. I was there from ’69 to ’72.

Beck: I know that you and Chuck Pailthorpe were both at SUNY Buffalo at the same time.

Rainey: Yes.

Beck: And he told me a story. I wonder if you’d be able to tell me a little bit about the protests that you were involved in there at SUNY.

Rainey: Well, after the news of the Cambodian bombing came out, SUNY Buffalo blew up, and was essentially on strike—I think I’ve got the dates right—the spring semester of ’71. Police were on campus, beating up our students every night. The students were bombing ROTC buildings and stuff like that.

So Chuck and I, and 43 others—faculty, and a couple of graduate students—tried to talk to the President. In the administration building, the President’s office was on the fourth floor, and I had an office in the basement, so I had a key to the building, so that’s the way we entered on a Sunday. We knew the President was there. We wanted to talk to him, and try to get him to get the police off campus. We got into the anteroom before the President’s office. It was full of police. He had us all arrested. We spent three nights in jail, and were released, and not charged. One of the people that helped bail us out was Gabriel Kolko, who was a faculty member there, and a radical revisionist historian.

It became clear that this was going to affect—and I was bumping right up against it by then—up or out. And so, I passed the department. There were three or four people that opposed my reappointment—well, by then, elevation to associate professor. But one, who was just adamant, for

reasons I never quite understood. I met all of my teaching responsibilities. I had published several things in refereed journals. I had just published a monograph on the Russian peasant problem. I'd done all of those things that I should have. I had excellent faculty evaluations from students. But he actually made up a story that turned out not to be true, that I was a sloppy teacher. I'd given someone credit that wasn't actually in my class. Once that got out, and the college-level committee, they voted, I think it was, seven to six against me getting tenure and a new contract.

So, '71-'72, I was looking for a job. And Micki Pailthorp, as I said, was the administrative assistant to the—we were kind of friends. I was not that friendly then with Chuck. I mean, we were friends, and we'd had this common experience, but we weren't that good of friends, I would say. But Micki and I were conversational, and she would tell him it was too bad, that they would miss me in the department. She said, "Well, would you be interested in teaching at a school that's a little different?" I said, "Well, how different?" [laughing]

Beck: She was the administrative . . .

Rainey: Administrative head, administrative assistant, to the chairman of the history department. She was working there. And this was conversation in front of the mailbox in the history department.

Beck: And so she told you that there was this school a little different.

Rainey: Yeah. Chuck had come out here in '71.

Beck: That was the first teaching year.

Rainey: That was the first teaching year.

Beck: You found out about it. So how did you go about applying, and what was that whole process?

Rainey: Well, I talked to Chuck, and Micki told Chuck that I would be interested. I said yes. So Chuck sent me information about TESC.

What I had also been doing, I'd been interested in team teaching. The only way you could do that at SUNY Buffalo was with an overload; by teaching with somebody else in one of the new colleges, which were formed around certain interests. There was a Rachel Carson College, there was a Social Science College. So I taught with other faculty programs on American studies, with Native Americans and so on, in the American studies program, and the social science program. Taught mostly history—literature combinations, as we do here, and some philosophy. I liked it, liked it a lot. So, in that sense, I was pretty well disposed to look favorably on a place that taught that way. And, you know, I needed a job.

Turns out that I got a job offer at Florida Central University, but I really did not want to go back to Florida. So, Chuck put my name in the pot. The way it worked then was there was Don Humphrey, Charlie Teske and Merv Cadwallader. They interviewed the people.

Beck: They were the deans at the time.

Rainey: They were the deans, and they interviewed the people in their areas. I fell in Merv's area of social science/history. At that time, they would come east, if there were people to be interviewed around the East. I had an interview with Merv at the Holiday Inn in a driving snowstorm in Buffalo. Merv recommended me, but then, I had to fly to Boston when all of the deans were there in Boston, and people were flying in for the final interview. And they offered me the job.

They offered me a job, and then, I think, that was the big class of '72—there must have been 20 people that came in with me. That was the first major class, I think. I've got it somewhere—I found it the other day—I wrote a statement that you might find interesting, and I'll give it to you next time. Because I looked for it, and I couldn't find it. But I'll find it.

Beck: This is a statement of interest in the position?

Rainey: Statement of interest on why I wanted to do interdisciplinary studies. That was the big draw to me, team teaching and interdisciplinary studies. Because I figured that—and this has certainly been true—team teaching, with people from other areas, has made me a better historian. I'm still a historian, essentially.

Then, I think what happened is I'm not sure how I ended up in American Studies, but I did, with David Hitchens, Chuck Nisbet and Mary Nelson. This was the first teaching team I was in.

Beck: What was the first program called? What was the title of it?

Rainey: American Studies.

Beck: Okay. And that was Dave and Chuck Nisbet. And who was the other?

Rainey: Mary Nelson, a Native American woman that, by the way, hated Mary Hillaire. I shouldn't say that on tape, but both are gone, so I suppose I can. For some reason, she did not get along with Mary Hillaire. Two she-bears in the same den, I suppose. I came in knowing nothing about what was going on here.

David and Mary Nelson were in, say, personal crisis. No point in going into the details of that crisis, but it was enhanced by alcohol. And Chuck and I end up, strangely enough—we have such different styles, and I was a quasi-, demi-, semi-Marxist at the time, and Chuck is a straight-arrow mainstream economist—we were both suspicious of each other, but we discovered that there was one thing we had in common. We wanted the program to be organized well, and for the faculty to do what

they say they're going to do. We were having a situation where Mary wouldn't show up, and David wouldn't show up. And David would organize a film series and wouldn't show up with the film. Going through a terrible time with his wife, and with alcohol. It was David's nadir, I would say, in his life.

So Chuck and I—it's too much to say we saved the program, but we ended up being friends after this. [laughing] And it's really on the basis of that friendship that Chuck and I started teaching with Alan. We set up the first Political Economy program.

Beck: That's Alan Nasser?

Rainey: Alan Nasser, and Jeanne Hahn. I taught that program four times, I think, altogether, with the constellation that usually included Chuck and Jeanne, and sometimes Alan, and sometimes Jerry Lassen.

Beck: I wanted to talk about the first year that you were here just a little bit more.

Rainey: Sure.

Beck: First of all, just general impressions. What was it like coming to Evergreen?

Rainey: In the Buffalo circumstances, I was considered, by fellow faculty members, an anarchist and a radical and so on. That's not the way I acted in my classroom at all. I had the reputation there of setting high expectations, and then helping students reach those expectations. That's really my simple academic philosophy, I would say.

I came here, and it seemed terribly chaotic. I didn't come expecting to teach my specialty area all the time. I didn't want to do that. I knew that, and I could always do that. But I wanted to learn from my colleagues, and I wanted to do interdisciplinary teaching because I honestly thought that's the best way to teach about anything topical or historical. I thought it was pretty chaotic, and I was not comfortable with that.

Beck: What kind of chaos was that?

Rainey: It was chaotic because it seemed like we had to recreate the curriculum every year. There was not much in the way of planning to go forward. I began to think, yes, that there are certain things that need prerequisites. It became clear to me as long as it was sort of take any student that comes in the door, that it would be very difficult to do advanced work. And I missed that. I just thought there had to be more accountability on the part of faculty; if they say they're going to do something, they do it. It seemed loosey-goosey at the time to me, and that there had to be some curricula pathways that were predictable, and that you at least had to order things so that the lights got turned on, and the faculty showed up.

That came also out of that first program experience I had. I did not like the way—I didn't think it was good for the students. So I took a position, as Chuck did—and Chuck doesn't get credit for this sort

of thing, but he really believed this—the students come first. Not in the sense of coddling them or anything like that, but they come first, and your responsibility to those students comes first. David was not able to do that then, and Mary certainly was not able to do that. So I came to the conclusion that organization, and some kind of predictability, is something we owe the students. I wouldn't say I have higher academic standards. That's not what I'm talking about. But I became a great believer in careful planning.

The other thing that was not clear—one of the things I figured out here, over the first 10 years—and I don't want to sound too elitist about this—is that I discovered that there were people I did not want to teach with. Not necessarily because they were bad teachers. But, one, I couldn't learn anything from them; two, they were organizationally sloppy; three, in some cases, were what Isaiah Berlin calls hedgehogs. They had ideological pre-considerations that determined everything that they planned or did. And I'm a fox. Multiple causality. Pluralistic explanations.

So, the first 10 years, I consciously began to sort through the faculty I would teach with, and people I would not teach with. I think virtually everybody has done that. There were about 25 people I would teach with. I finally decided, for example, Niels Skov—not your daddy Gordon Beck so much, but Niels and Andrew Hanfman were considered to be the old fogeys.

Beck: Right. Niels Skov and Andrew Hanfman.

Rainey: But I wanted to teach Russian history. That meant that I had to deal with this particular old fogey, because he and I had to do it. And we did. We created the first Russia program, and then taught together five, six times after that. And it's one of those things that you not only learn subject matter, but your learn style, and you learn other things from your older faculty members.

What happened to me is—I was still fairly young then, I came here when I was 36—I began to appreciate the kind of authority that they represented, and the people that were older than I was, and respect that, and feel like I could learn something from that in the way I teach, not only what I teach, and how I learn, but the way that they operate. Byron Youtz was another one. And Rudy Martin, I would say, is another, although Rudy's only a year older than I am. I discovered I wanted preplanning, and an orderly delivery. And I wanted to learn from my respected elders.

Beck: What sort of preplanning was there? You were here '72-'73, so you were probably involved in planning for the next year or two.

Rainey: I was. It was chaotic. It was sort of get together and plan, without much in the way of—there was a thing that was required then that should have been helpful that was never used. The coordinator of a program was expected to write a program history. I used those, and I helped write several, and it

was a way to review that, and make some judgment about what works and what doesn't work, like the study of history does.

But it seemed quite chaotic. And I was one of the people that didn't support departments, but I supported something in the nature of specialty area concentration, if the baronial boundaries had not been heavily established, so you could leap from specialty area to specialty area. It just seemed chaotic, and I wasn't quite sure . . . and, strange as it may seem, what I discovered is that I can teach with almost anybody, whatever their opinion, as long as they have the same work habits as I do.

Beck: So it's the work habits that really make the difference.

Rainey: Yes, right.

Beck: What about other things about the first year, outside of the chaos of the academic planning process? Were there other experiences, or impressions that you formed of this new school?

Rainey: Right. Yes. The one thing I did like—and Byron was one that kept stressing this—is the moment I walked in the door, I was not a junior professor. I was a professor, like everybody else. And I liked the fact that we got raises basically on time and grade, rather than success only the seduceable, which is the way it was everyplace else I'd been. If somebody else wants you, you can get a raise. And the people in the business college make twice as much as those people with the same level of experience as people in the history department. I liked that kind of egalitarianism, as far as the faculty was concerned. I am a professor because I have something to profess.

I was one of the advocates for having some kind of faculty senate, though, because I thought the faculty needed to make some decisions about working conditions, and about curriculum; those things that faculty should do as a group, collectively. There were a fair number of people that didn't feel that way, and Willi Unsoeld was one. So we had a lot of debates, Willi and I, in faculty meetings.

The other thing I like about it. I ran into Stone Thomas today on campus, and we reminisced. I liked the level of civility. You could argue with almost anybody on any question, and what you said wasn't necessarily held against you. So I felt that I could virtually say anything, as long as it was right reasoning and logical [laughing] in some fashion.

I came with the mentality, really, of an assistant professor. I remember going down to Duke and talking to Joel Colton, who was the department chair, about offering a seminar on the Russian intelligentsia. "Well, perhaps when you're an associate professor." But there was none of that here. There was, at least within the faculty, a perfect egalitarianism.

I guess the other thing, quite honestly, I learned here about myself as a teacher is that I really do believe that teachers teach and students learn. And I never bought that kind of egalitarianism, that if

I'm teaching something, it means somebody wants to know what I know, and how I think about it. And that has remained, essentially, my teaching approach.

Beck: Speaking of students, what was your impression of the students when you first arrived here?

Rainey: I had the best students I'd ever had, and the worst students. I had students that wanted to build spaceships on a \$6,000 budget, and asked me would I help them get the money. And I had students, like Bob McChesney, early on in the '70s. I did a program, I did a group contract, called Marx and the Third World. Incredible students there. Twelve.

I discovered then one of the problems that we have, and I don't think it's a problem that we've ever solved, and that is, how to do advanced work. The only way you can do advanced work—which, by nature, is selective—is to violate the sort of assumed student to faculty ratio. So, if you have seven people that want to understand more deeply philosophy or study Plato or something like that, that's advanced work. But we haven't been able to break that. I guess my fear has been the same as Kirk Thompson, as we talked about; that, if we're not careful, this is going to be the best two-year community college in the state.

But that's been a problem that I felt was there from the very beginning, and we've never been able to solve it. The scientists have. The scientists have been the best organized here from the very beginning. They had pathways, they had understandings about faculty. The most anarchic has been the humanities. I remember discussions: "Well, I don't want to talk about pathways. I want to teach what I want to teach."

So, in the humanities, we never really—in language studies, we did. Susan Fiksdal and Andrew, and all the people involved in the Japanese history and language, were able to work out a sequence, so that we're not offering that every year, and competing for the students. It was every three years for the Russia program at first, but in other areas, it was just really impossible, it seems to me. I'm not quite sure why that's the case.

Beck: You mentioned the sciences and the humanities, but in the first couple of years, were there organizations along divisional lines at all?

Rainey: Yes. They were around the deans.

Beck: You had deans' groups?

Rainey: Yes.

Beck: You were in . . .

Rainey: . . . Merv Cadwallader's.

Beck: You mentioned the Russia program, you mentioned the Political Economy program. When did those get started?

Rainey: The '70s. If I recall, the first Political Economy, Introduction to Political Economy—it went Introduction to Political Economy, and then group contracts that came from that. So that's how we did some advanced work. Like Chuck Nisbet would do intermediate macroeconomics, or intermediate microeconomics, or economics and the state, or something of that sort. Jeanne would do radical theory, and you know what Alan would do.

Alan's prickly personality has kept him, I think, from being recognized as one of the greatest minds on this faculty, in my opinion. The other one was the Cornhusker. I think he's from Nebraska. David Marr.

Beck: Iowa, I think. Isn't David Marr from Iowa?

Rainey: Oh, that's right, the University of Iowa.

Beck: When did you become involved in doing political economy? You got started with Chuck Nisbet right away?

Rainey: Yeah, I knew that, and it began to coalesce into "Well, we ought to do this." I think the first was '74. I think so, '74 or '75. I remember we had a little more informal hiring then, and there were lots of positions to hire. It was Jeanne and I that were instrumental in hiring Alan. Alan's a Jesuit, a Jesuitical Marxist [laughing] who is brilliant at casuistry. [laughing]

But I remember going down to Eugene, when he lived down there, to interview him. I knew right away that this was somebody I could learn a lot from, so I was instrumental in the hiring of Alan. I've never been sorry. It's been up and down. Alan reminds me a lot of my father, in the sense that sometimes Alan outsmarts himself. I don't want to get into defending Alan, but I ended up doing that, at a point when I thought he should not be fired for things that did not seem to be reasonable that he was being charged with. I remember Mark Levensky, and David Marr, and several other people, we got together at a retreat and said, "We're going to stop this." And we did, by going to the Provost. I don't know if that tale has ever been told. I don't think it needs to be told in any more detail. [laughter]

My feeling has always been I don't want to judge a person on their personality, but on their intellect, and their contribution. And we have some recent examples of that. They will remain nameless, because now it can be litigious. But I want to hire the smartest people, the best-qualified people. And if they turn out to be assholes—what the great Bob Sluss once called an "un-charming compoo"—those are the people we need to protect. There are those, like you and me, that are charming compoo. [laughter]

Beck: Well, you're charming anyway. You're flattering me.

Rainey: So are you.

Beck: That does remind me, because I did watch the mention of the organizing of the faculty meeting. And I did watch the debate that you had with Willi Unsoeld the other night. I think that was in '74 when you had that conversation.

Rainey: Right. I liked Willi, by the way, and he liked me. David Hitchens didn't like Willi, but I liked Willi. I had all of his children at one time, except Terrace, but Devi was in Political Economy, Krag was in Political Economy, and Regon was in Political Economy.

Beck: One of the things that came out from that was, I think, you said something about the role of diversity of opinion and disagreement.

Rainey: Right.

Beck: That was a really crucial element of the community.

Rainey: The other reason I believed that we ought to have a collective voice, and I believed we ought to have our own senate, or something like that, is that our working conditions are different than the working conditions of the staff. That's the thing that Willi and I really debated over; that if we have our own organization, and our own this and that, that it will offend the staff. But we have different working conditions, we have different intellectual demands, we have different responsibilities, and faculty ought to make the key decisions on those issues.

It's why I tried to create a union here. I was president of the first AFT that we had on campus, in the '70s and early '80s. We had a hard card campaign, and what we were doing mostly was working on trying to get recognition at the Legislature. And we almost got it. We lost by one vote on enabling legislation.

Teaching is different from anything else that's done here, and it seems to me the judgments about teachers should be made by teachers, and not by administrators. The whole notion of across-the-board equality among everybody was, in some ways, a lie. It's not equal. And we learned that a couple times when the Board of Trustees stepped in and asserted their authority, as they should have. But I felt that we had to have a separate voice on this, because we have a different situation, we have special needs that no other staff member has. I've never wavered from that view. And it's why I tried to create a union here, and why I joined the union, and the function, I think, that the union now has.

Beck: When was that hard card campaign?

Rainey: Early '70s.

Beck: So '73, '74, somewhere in there?

Rainey: Not early '70s. I'm sorry, '77, '78. I'd have to look it up.

Beck: That was after the formation of the faculty meeting. Is that true?

Rainey: Yes.

Beck: Did the faculty meeting actually emerge in '74? It sounded as though, from the debate you had with Willi, that what was called the faculty forum at that point was already in place in '74.

Rainey: Right.

Beck: And were you involved with the organization of the faculty forum, or the faculty meeting?

Rainey: Yes. And never the head, I'm happy to say.

Beck: But you were active in it?

Rainey: There's just enough Machiavelli in me to believe that the head is restricted, essentially, in what they say and do. I was asked several times to run for it, but I did not.

The other thing, I guess, the background of that with Willi is I felt that if we didn't have a senate, a faculty collective voice that would vitiate, in some ways, what I perceived to be the egalitarian decision-making within the faculty. Because a number of the people that were opposed to having a faculty meeting, including Willi, were older people that all they had to do is to walk in and talk to the President. They had a channel into the President, and into the Provost, and into the deans that all the younger faculty did not have. That was my perception then, and I still believe that was so. Willi didn't need a faculty voice, because Willi was able to get everything he wanted without it. But the rest of us had to grope around, and work within some specialty areas, or work with the groups that were here today, gone tomorrow. But I never felt that the faculty should have any control over things that don't pertain to the faculty. Now, I think, we have to be . . .

The other part about forming the union that was separate from the meeting is that I believed then, I believed throughout the '80s, I believed throughout much of the '90s that the administration did very little to keep up with faculty salaries. [laughing] I was about to use a Southern expression probably I should not put on tape, but I'll just give the allusion. We ended up, on questions of salary and benefits, sucking hind. I felt that Charlie, not so much, but Charlie, too, was not active as our representative in raising—

Beck: Are you talking about Charlie McCann at this point?

Rainey: Charlie McCann. Now, I don't know that to be the case about Charlie. Okay? But it did not seem to me that the presidents after Charlie were real advocates for the faculty.

Beck: You were saying that you didn't have the sense that the presidents were advocating for the faculty.

Rainey: Right. I don't know this to be true, but my thought then in why we needed a stronger collective voice was that I didn't feel that the administration represented us well. Particularly when we were in a period of crisis. This is just the latest we have had. This is maybe, I would say, the worst that we've gone through in terms of lost enrollment and things of that sort. But we're going to have to deal with it. I say "we"; I may not be "we," because we have a low enrollment, lower than we had anticipated in Chekhov and . . . But I felt that the administration did not work hard enough for the faculty, and, in fact, did not give the faculty the kind of recognition that it needed when they got up to . . . and I felt that from time to time from various presidents.

That's another reason why I've supported the union is we've gone through some horrendous administrations. Joe Olander was the worst, but Jane Jervis was not a very effective leader, intellectually or—and Barbara Smith was a great organizer, but Barbara disliked much of the faculty.

Beck: This was Barbara Smith, who was Provost?

Rainey: Right. And, I think, for the most part—I mean, she told one—and I liked Barbara generally, and I think generally, she did a pretty good job. But she never taught here. I don't think she had a very high regard for the faculty, and in some cases—I mean, she allegedly told one faculty member coming in here, who told me this, that "Well, here are the people that you should avoid teaching with." And she named 10 or so of the brightest people on the faculty, most of whom were white males. Now, that may be by chance. But I felt that we needed our own representation, we needed our own voice, and I still feel that way. Strongly.

Beck: I'd like to go back to the Political Economy program a little bit.

Rainey: Sure.

Beck: I know that one of the—and I guess this was one of the reasons that I was bringing up the point about the diversity of opinion topic that you brought up in your debate with Willi—that you had a particular view about how political economy should be taught, from a diversity of perspectives. Do you want to say something more about how the Political Economy program was shaped in the early days?

Rainey: Diversity in terms of diversity of approaches, and diversity of methodology, and diversity of views. It was mostly how economics should be taught. I'm in no position to say anything about political economy for the last 20 years, maybe 25 years, but originally the perception was—and I think we all agreed to this, and maybe it's because Chuck was a very strong part of creating Political Economy.

Then, I was certainly a revisionist historian, however you define that, in terms of, particularly, American foreign policy, and opposed to the war in Vietnam. Hardest decision I ever made, by the way, was to oppose that war, because I very much believe that we need a military, and we sometimes need

to fight wars. I believe in just wars. I had a couple of buddies killed in Vietnam that stayed in, hospital corpsmen that were killed as hospital corpsmen.

Political economy should be put, as we taught it, in the context of so many of us escaping situations where the Marxist or the radical view was not welcome. So that, we believed had to be taught. But we also believed—and Chuck convinced us of this—that so did the mainstream view. And I have never bought the view that our students get taught that in school or other places, so we don't need to teach them that, or as if it made any sense. Because, frankly, I believe, in terms of predictability, and the way economies work, that the mainstream model is just as successful, in some ways, to understanding certain aspects of the economy as the Marxist one is. We ought to teach those two positions, and they should be taught by people who believe in what they're teaching.

When, as I perceived it, it became just one particular view, and mainstream economics, or mainstream politics, or anything of the sort, was squeezed out of that, it made me, in some ways, intellectually more conservative, frankly. Because I believe that students should be given an equal shot on how this sorry democracy of ours works and doesn't work, but not only from a Marxist standpoint. And we all agreed to that.

I was more radical then, and I felt sort of—when Alan wasn't doing it, I did a series of programs on Marx, and I did it from the perspective that this is going to be helpful in helping us understand capitalism during a certain period of its development. But altogether, Marx is not prescriptive at all.

There was a lot of seminal discussions going on amongst us. Open, seminal discussions about it. In some ways, it seems to me, that in some cases, it settled into a routine of teaching it only one way. And I'm not comfortable with that. I know it's one of those situations, if I'm in a seminar, for example, and I see the radical view—which I sometimes, in certain circumstances, use in my own analysis, and certainly Marx helps me understand capitalism in a certain stage of development—but I'm very uncomfortable with the homogeneity of opinions that I now see in faculty and students in political economy at TESC.

I see a lot of that coming out of some programs now from students; that that's the only one that can be considered. And I joked that I think we ought to hire a conservative philosopher. I think we ought to hire a theologian. I think students need to be exposed to a variety of ideas, and then give them the credit that they can choose the one that enhances their understanding of their circumstances best.

Back to the Political Economy program, the discussions and the planning, to me, were some of the most interesting that I've had here, of how are we going to do it? But that we would do it in such a way as to not presuppose the validity of anything we taught. We'd lay it out, as we understand it. And

some students then came out of that, worked with Chuck. Some came out of it, worked with Jeanne. Some came out and worked with me, and some came out and worked with Alan. That's how we did advanced work.

Beck: You started teaching, I think you said, in '74, in the Political Economy program?

Rainey: Right.

Beck: How long were you pretty seriously active with that group?

Rainey: Through '85, I would say.

Beck: So it's really about that 10-year period?

Rainey: Well, that 10-year period, but then, something else interposed, that's always interposed in my academic life. Gorbachev brought me back into my specialty area. And teaching with Andrew brought me back into my specialty area. There was a sort of intellectual tension between teaching my specialty area—and then doing that every two years, which we decided finally—and Political Economy.

Something else interposed itself that's of interest, which came of the result of my exposure, I think largely, to John Perkins, and that's environmental history. I just simply became more interested in other fields than straight political economy; political economy in order to understand environmental history.

Beck: When did you start getting opportunities to teach your specialty in Russian studies?

Rainey: Andrew and I decided to do it. It was easier to do that sort of thing then. [laughing] We decided to do it. Andrew and I danced around each other, because he's ex-CIA and I was one of the resident radicals at the time. And I always have been, and still am, of the sort of Stephen Cohen group—not with Stephen Cohen now on Russia, but Stephen Cohen then—that was very suspicious of the totalitarian model that became the cold war view, and saw a sort of multiplicity of causality in the Soviet Union.

So I shifted over then to Moshe Levin, and Stephen Cohen, and Jerry Hough at Duke, and so on, who I learned from about how decisions are really made in the Soviet Union, and they were much different than mainstream Cold Warriors. I became sort of a revisionist Russian historian, in that sense, and I'm still in that group, I would say, as my intellectual context. I was interested in Soviet political economy, and Russian stuff. Andrew was the one who not only confirmed my reentry into my specialty area, but we had a way of working it out in a civil way, where he could express his largely cold war view, and I could express my more revisionist view, if I could put it that way, of the Soviet Union. I would give a lecture, and he would comment on it, and we would have a discussion. He would give a lecture, I

would comment on it. We worked it in. At the same time, I guess I began to move a little closer to his position on a lot of things.

Also, the happy part of it, for me, is that the Russian program was truly interdisciplinary, in the sense that we gave as much time to literature, philosophy, intellectual developments and that sort of thing as we did the political and economic, whether we were on the tsarist or the Soviet period. He confirmed, actually, my use of literature in virtually everything I teach in history. I've always retained that interest. That's still what I know the most about, but it's going up and down as far as student interest, and faculty interest, aside from Pat Krafcek and Andrew and I. But I'm modest enough to believe that the Russia program has been one of the consistently best programs in language and literature and history that we teach at Evergreen.

Beck: When did you and Andrew finally come together and start teaching Russia together?

Rainey: I think it was '76. It was about four years after I got there. Maybe three, '75 or '76. We taught every third year, so we taught through about '87 or so, because I remember one . . . And we became very good friends, and I much admired him. I much admired him, I think, because, like Niels Skov, he is one of our colleagues that has worn the twentieth century directly on his back, in so many ways. And I didn't have that experience. They're real Europeans, and so if I want to know about Europe . . .

We had a connection that we didn't discover until just before we taught. In Russian, there are no Hs, so it wouldn't be Hanfman, it would be Ganfman. The G takes the place of the H in Russian. We were sitting around, with Beryl Crowe, as I remember, and Rudy Martin. There was a sort of "dinosaur" table in the CAB building, and that got fairly early established in the center.

All of a sudden, I said, "Andrew, what is your patronymic?" Because I didn't know what his patronymic was, and that's important to a Russian. He said, "Maximovitch." And I said, "You wouldn't happen to be related to Maxim Ganfmann, would you, who was the editor of *Reich*, which was the major paper of the Constitutional Democratic Party under Paul Miliukov, in the Russian revolutionary period?" He says, "Yes, he's my father, thus Maximovitch." I said, "I used that source exclusively in the last half of my doctoral dissertation." [laughter]

So then, he finally sort of laid out his whole history of anti-Fascist activity, and being kicked out of Italy for that. Then, going to school in Germany during the '20s and seeing the street fights between the Nazis and the CP.

The final culmination of that connection, which is one of my favorite stories about him, is his godfather was a man by the name of Andrei Shingaryov, who was the minister of finance in the last provisional government of Alexander Kerensky, and was murdered by Bolsheviks during the Bolshevik

revolution. He was in the hospital, and they came in and killed him. Kronstadt sailors surged through and killed all of the Kadets. Thus, Andrew was Shingaryov's namesake.

In '84, I think, Andrew (or Andrei in Russian) went back to Russia for the first time since he was a child. I took the group the next year. I particularly went to a monastery called the Alexander Nevsky Lavra. There's a huge graveyard—there's a section for Dostoyevsky, and Mussorgsky, and all the cultural figures—and I found Shingaryov's grave, and I put flowers on it. I had the monk who showed me where it was take a picture of me doing that.

We taught the program that following year, '85-'86, and the first thing I did was to make a big deal out of it, and to present this photograph, which I'd blown up, to him. I had never before seen him speechless. [laughter]

That was the best of it, for me, as a young faculty member, is being able to distinguish between authoritarian and authoritative, and coming to admire people, like your daddy Gordon Beck, who were older than me—and Byron—and it stopped me from being such a young punk in faculty meetings, slurring the personality of people and things like that, which I'd been doing for a long time. [laughing]

Beck: You mentioned Byron Youtz a couple of times. Obviously, he wasn't teaching in your direct area. I know later, he became Provost, but what kind of contact did you have with him early on, and why was he so important for you in your first couple of years?

Rainey: Well, I don't know. There were a couple of times when he stood in for the Provost. But he was a major figure of that age group in creating the curriculum, particularly the science curriculum. Just those faculty areas, he was clearly—there was a certain quiet charisma about Byron, and a sense of humor, a wry sense of humor, that I appreciated just by hearing him talk, and talk about issues. We did a lot of small-group discussions about what we were doing, and what we needed to do, and that sort of thing, and he always made a lot of sense to me.

I developed a great deal of respect for him, just vicariously, not by teaching with him. But about '75, '76—it had something to do with the union, I think—in a faculty meeting, I made a disparaging remark about him, and it really upset him. He told his wife Bernice Youtz about it, and Bernice called me. That's one of the things that got my young ass fired at Buffalo, doing things like that. [laughter] Or, at least getting the reputation that nobody would support me, because I was thorny and raspy and difficult to get along with, or at least that was the perception.

So I went to Byron, and talked to him about it. He said, "Yes, I thought we had a good relationship." He was very gentlemanly, and he was a real gentleman. We ended up and I said, "Well, Byron, I can't say I'll always agree with you. But I tell you what, if I ever disagree with you on a major

thing, about the curriculum or anything, I'll come and talk to you personally about it. I won't say anything in public." And he said, "I appreciate that. I think that would be more constructive."

After that, we became very good friends. We taught together about three years before he retired. We taught a program called Discovery, Exploration, and Empire, so we could do the scientific revolution, we could do the building of the European empires. We had the boats, and so Sluss was in it, too, and we could do ecology.

Byron was one of the few people I knew that could really talk about physics in a way that made physics, particularly questions like relativity, accessible to students, and accessible to people like me. I knew something about it, and I always used something on Einstein when I taught Western civ at other universities. I just developed a great intellectual friendship with him.

When I told my wife Nina about this, retrospectively, she says, "He was like a big brother to you"—10 years difference—and that was the case. And he suffered through some of my faculty childhood pains, and helped me, as did Sluss.

Sluss, and Byron, and David Marr, to a certain extent, and Alan, to a certain extent, and Jeanne for a while, and Mark Levensky. I was arrogant enough to think that I was part of that inner intellectual circle.

Beck: You described an intellectual circle. What held that group of people together?

Rainey: The care and feeding of The Evergreen State College, that's what held us together; that we all cared about what was happening, we were all concerned about some things. And we ended up mostly—even though Kirk Thompson and I didn't get along very well, but we got along when it came to dealing with the college, as we understood it, and the curriculum, and so on. I think we all—and this may sound corny—we all had a serious love affair, at that time, with the institution.

I said something in a faculty meeting in '78, '79 that I truly believe to this day. "For all the difficulties and the organizational things that we've gone through, and the crises, I think that this is the largest concentration of good teachers, of whatever they're teaching, of any place I've ever been."

I have taught in places with great scholars, but people that cared little about teaching. And we disagreed about teaching a lot. I'm not one of the workshop people, as you know, but I always enjoyed the conversation I had with Bill Aldridge about this, and with Earle McNeil. We could disagree with a civility on process, and civility on current issues that . . . So, in some ways, Byron taught me how to be civil within this context, if that makes any sense at all.

Beck: I think so, yes. So you'd say that this love affair that you had with the college was really about—well, what? Was it really about the fact that there was such an emphasis on good teaching?

Rainey: Yes, and I believed firmly—I was a bit on the right, I would think, of the pedagogical scale. Because, as you know, I really do believe in the importance of lectures to hold together, and to integrate the themes of a program. It's not that I'm against workshops.

But we could have those kinds of discussion with a civility that somehow seems missing these days. You know more about it than I do, because—and I've been very happy over the last 15 years, to teach just in Evening and Weekend Studies, and an occasional program when they want me to teach it because somebody's sick or something like that. I stood in for Jerry Lassen, I stood in for Rob Smurr, I stood in for David Hitchens during his last illness. But mostly, I've enjoyed doing what I thought this life would be all about, and what I wanted in teaching and in academia, and that's reading, thinking, talking. And I was glad, for the last 15 years, not to be involved in faculty politics, and doing committee work, and things of that sort. I can't honestly say that I know much about what's going on in the daytime curriculum, so I'm not exactly sure what's going on at Evergreen now. [laughter]

Beck: I wonder if we might pause now, and just end up for today.

Rainey: Okay.

Beck: Then find a time when we can talk again.

Rainey: Are these some of the things you wanted to find out?

Beck: Definitely.