

William Bruner
Interviewed by Jin Darney
The Evergreen State College oral history project

July 9, 2019

FINAL

Begin Part 1 of 2 of William Bruner on 7-9-2019

Darney: This is part one on July 9, 2019 with Bill Bruner. Bill, could you tell me a little bit about your upbringing, where you grew up and your family?

Bruner: I was born and raised in Tacoma. My mother was a single mother. My father disappeared when I was about two. We lived in a public housing project in Tacoma until I was in high school.

Darney: You went to Tacoma High School?

Bruner: Right. Also, I went to Lincoln High School.

Darney: After high school?

Bruner: I went to the University of Washington. I had scholarships to pay for that first year. I had a small loan, and then I think I had three different scholarships, so I was able to go. My family couldn't afford it. My mother remarried just before my senior year of high school. They really didn't have the cash for it, so I was able to put the money together for that first year. But I realized by the end of the year that the scholarships—one of them I probably could have renewed, the others I couldn't, so I was going to be short of money.

I stayed out. I didn't have a very good year. I really wasn't ready for college. I was the first in my family to go to college. Both my parents had just eighth-grade educations. It wasn't a very good year, and by spring quarter, I realized I was running out of money. I had two different jobs, one in Tacoma and one at the university, and I was running back and forth. I was spending more time working than I was studying, so I had a 1.19 grade point average for spring quarter, so I decided to sit out.

I had gotten a job for the summer and I sat out. I asked if I could work into the fall. My boss said he would keep me on through fall, but come January 1, he was going to lay me off, no matter what, because he wanted me to go back to college. I worked through fall and was able to save some money.

I decided not to go back to the University of Washington, so I went to Western Washington University. I had friends there. I started out as a math and physics major, and decided I just really

wasn't interested. I wanted to experiment a little more, and I thought it would be easier to do at Western, and it was.

I decided I was going to look at social sciences, so I took political science, and geography, and sociology and economics. Economics seemed to fit better with my interests and skills. I could use the math abilities that I had and my interest in math with it. So, I decided to pursue that. My intention was to go back to the University of Washington, but I liked Western. I liked it a lot, and I liked the Economics Department a lot, so I stayed and finished up there.

Darney: Then did you start graduate work right away?

Bruner: No, I was married. Because I was working, it took me five years to get through school because I'd been out. I got married before my senior year. I had applied for graduate work at a number of places, and I was accepted, but I didn't get any money. Western at the time was trying to put together a master's in economics, and they asked me to stay on. I was going to do that, but then it turned out Sue was pregnant, so reassessed the situation and decided not to go on to graduate school at that time.

So I stayed out, and got a job with the State. I worked for the State for two years, and then we were able to save some money. I applied again and got offers from two schools, so I went to the University of Maryland and just stayed there for a year.

Darney: Was it a good experience?

Bruner: Well, it was a good experience in some ways. I didn't particularly like graduate school, at least I didn't like it there. It probably would have been fine. It was a difficult move in a lot of ways. We were a long ways from family. We had a small child—she was just two. Having worked for two years, I really enjoyed being a working economist. I had worked for the State. They had given me lots of latitude. I had projects to do that were really, really interesting. I had a good group that I was working with. I also was having some health problems at the time, and so it just was not a good time for me to be in graduate school, so I decided to go back to work.

My former boss called me about halfway through the year and said, "I don't want to draw you away from graduate school, but if you're thinking about not going on, your supervisor quit and you can have that job if you want it."

I decided I really wanted to be a working economist. I did not want to be an academic economist, and had really no interest in teaching. So, I went back as manager of the group that I was working in, and spent five more years there.

Darney: Was that in Tacoma or in Olympia?

Bruner: That was in Olympia. I was working for the State. I was working for what was then the Department of Commerce and Economic Development, and I was in the Research Division. I was doing economic forecasting, among other things. The group that I was in built the first mathematical model for economic forecasting for the State. So we were the predecessors of the Economic Forecast Council now. There's a whole agency that's doing what we did at the time. So it was all brand-new work, and it was with people who were really smart, and we got recognition. It was good stuff.

The other thing I was doing was whenever we had legislation that was pending that we were addressing, I sort of did the background work. I didn't do the testifying, but I wrote all the testimony, and I put together all of the supporting documentation. It was a lot of fun, too. It was interesting work. That was a really good experience.

Darney: When did you move to Vancouver?

Bruner: After about five years with the State, I realized, in part, I was getting so locked in, and if I didn't do something, I wasn't going to be able to do anything but work for the State. There was an economic development organization that was established at the time. During the Kennedy administration, they did the Appalachian Regional Commission. They decided to spread that out across the country, so any lagging areas could have one of these commissions. They established one for covering Oregon, Washington and Idaho. I had been involved in sort of setting it up, and then I was offered a job there. Their office was in Vancouver, so I moved down for that.

Darney: Then you did forestry work there, too?

Bruner: In my job there I wasn't an economist, I was really an administrator, sort of a grants administrator. The money passed through the Regional Commission and then we contracted with universities and they made grants and so on. I was managing forestry, energy, and agriculture projects for them. My job was to work with the State. Typically, you'd get the directors of agriculture together, and we would talk about common problems. Out of that would grow proposals that we would fund. So I got to know the forestry people through that.

The Commission sponsored an energy policy project at the time—at the time, in the '70s, energy was a big deal—which was a very successful project, really well done, and it proposed a number of policy options for the State. The governors were the commissioners, and the governors liked that a lot, so there was a suggestion that we do more like that, exploring the common interests and policy changes.

They commissioned an agriculture study and a forestry study. My job was to get those together. I wrote the preliminary proposals for that. I turned the agriculture project over to someone else, but the forestry project, I worked through a little further. I set up a committee that was going to select the director for that project, and then I quit. I left there and I went to work for Portland General Electric as an economist. I wanted to get back into economics rather than being an administrator.

I was there for about six months, and that committee met and talked about what they wanted in a director. Then they came back to me and said, "We want you to do the job." So I quit Portland General Electric and I went back, so I was the director. We made the grant to Washington State University, so I was employed by WSU to be the project director, and we had offices in Vancouver.

Darney: Did it feel like it was back to being a manager?

Bruner: It was, but it was really an economics project. I didn't do much of the actual work. I hired some people who were nationally known. We were able to pick up a couple people that were just wonderful forest economists. I was administering it, but it was all about economics, and I think that my background in economics was useful in that regard.

Darney: But it also felt like you were doing more economics again?

Bruner: Yeah, it was both. It was both administrative and also had that professional scope again.

Darney: Which is where you were when you came to Evergreen.

Bruner: It was a three-year project, and we were finishing it up when I got a call from a friend who said he had gotten a call from someone at Evergreen. They were looking for someone to teach a four-credit class in public policy. He said, "Would you be interested?" I was wrapping up the project. I was still working, but I didn't have a lot to do, so I said, "Sure."

I went in and talked to David Paulsen, so he and I did four credits. Then I think I let Barbara Smith know that I would be interested in something, but she wasn't encouraging. They hired Lucia Harrison and were looking for someone else, and couldn't find anyone else apparently, so they called me about the middle of summer and said, "Would you be willing to come in and teach for a year?" I had been looking around for work, so it just worked out.

Darney: That was '81?

Bruner: Yeah, that was fall of '81.

Darney: Then you were there in the program for the whole year?

Bruner: Right. Lucia and I taught for a year. I was renewed then for four years as a visitor before a permanent position came up.

Darney: It seems to me that your interest in actually applying economics suits the way you were teaching it when you taught.

Bruner: I think that's why I was hired, because I didn't have the degree. So when the permanent position came up, I applied, and the minimum qualification is for a master's degree. I applied, but, of course, I was screened out. They interviewed but didn't accept other candidates, so when it was reopened, they said, "Master's or equivalent." They considered my work experience as the equivalent.

That was what I felt I had to bring to the teaching was I had done a rigorous series of courses at Maryland in economic theory, and I had that, but I could also then talk about examples from my own work experience, which I found useful at the time.

Darney: And it seemed to make a difference to the students.

Bruner: Yeah, I think the fact that I had worked as an economist as opposed to just talking about it.

Darney: Right. Your self-evaluations talk about this some, but how did you learn to be the teacher that you are?

Bruner: Lucia taught me. You taught me. That's literally true. I had not thought about teaching, and I had not been interested in teaching. I wouldn't have taken the teaching job except that I needed a job, and it was convenient.

What I found was I really enjoyed it, once I started doing it, and I really enjoyed doing it at Evergreen. I don't think I could have taught in an economics program at another university. I could not have taught economics 201. It would have just bored me to death.

Lucia really held my hand. Lucia is a good teacher, and she had good experience. She didn't push me, but she sort of provided a lot of support. That was really good. And then, working with you also, I saw good teaching around me, and I really modeled my teaching after what you guys were doing.

Darney: It's a small comfort, but nobody who comes out of graduate school knows how to teach.

Bruner: Right. In that year in graduate school, I was a research assistant. I was not a teaching assistant, so I didn't even have that. When I was an undergraduate, I was the department assistant, and so I had worked for three or four different professors. I made up their tests, I scored their tests, and all of that, so I saw their teaching styles. I paid attention to teaching, and I thought I knew good teaching from bad

teaching, so I had some ideas from that. But Lucia really helped me to be comfortable in front of a class. That was really difficult for me at first.

Darney: But you learned it, you developed it.

Bruner: Yeah, I think I did. I don't think I was really comfortable teaching for three or four years, but, yeah, I think I settled into it.

Darney: Would you talk a little bit about how you used case studies with your students?

Bruner: I didn't ever think of it as case studies. I used some of my own work as examples. I did more of this later, after I came out of the deanery.

I was unhappy with teaching economics, and I didn't feel like I ever really did it well, for a number of reasons. I had a conversation with Jerry Lassen about teaching economics. Jerry gave me a book, and we talked a lot about some work that had been done by economists. Their point was that we teach economics as though everybody's an economics major, and they aren't. So why do we do that? They aren't going to remember it, and it's not going to help them in any way. They find it drudgery, and they don't find it at all interesting. Why don't we teach economics for the average person? It will help them in making decisions about their daily life and politics and so on.

So I completely rethought my approach to it. I started teaching a lot less theory and a lot more applied stuff. I developed a whole series of workshops, and each year, I would try to add to that. I had Teaching Supply and Demand. I developed this example of the supply and demand for hamburgers in Olympia. We'd talk about what demand was, and we would develop a demand curve for hamburgers for the class. Then I had this little exercise where they had to operate a hamburger business, and they had to make decisions that would affect their costs, so we had a supply curve. Then we put the two together. It was real hands-on, really applied, really interactive. I was really happy with that exercise. It got better as time went on.

I had another one when we were looking at government expenditures, my brother-in-law exercise. My brothers-in-law at various times have made statements about the government, about overspending and wasting money. So I have a whole bunch of these statements. I show students where they can find the information and I say, "Go out and find out where my brothers-in-law are correct and where they're incorrect." They have to go find this stuff, and then they come back and we have a good discussion about that.

For every topic I was working with, I tried to have an exercise like that that made them look at and put their hands on the data, and interpret it and discuss it. I was pleased with it. I taught with Larry Geri, and a new hire who was from Columbia. I can't remember his name now. He was quite pleased with how I had done that, so he said, "Can I have that? Would you mind?" I said, "You can have it all, but what I realized is it's so personal, there's no way you can transfer it." I would have had to completely rethink it and rewrite it for someone else to be able to use it. I offered to give it to him, but I said, "There's no way it would really work."

Darney: I guess those are the kinds of activities that I thought of as case studies, although I realize they don't fit the definition of Harvard Business School, but applications, and using it. I think students really respond to that.

Bruner: Yeah. The other one that I used several times. When I was an undergraduate, one of the classes I took that really helped me to understand economics was a class on economic forecasting. The class itself wasn't all that great, but each of us had to do a forecast. It was simple. There were no mathematics involved, it was understanding. We had to forecast GNP—GNP at that time rather than GDP. We went through all the components of GNP, how they perform over the cycle, and how they anticipate. It was a really applied, hands-on class.

I used that a number of times with students as a way of teaching applied macro. Okay, you want to be in business? You have to know about the economy. You have to be able to anticipate whether the economy is going to go into a recession or not, so these are the things you need to do. I divided them into teams and we would work through. That was more like a case. It was more elaborate than the exercises in the other thing, one-day exercises.

Darney: I think this is where we talk about our famous statistics class. [laughter]

Bruner: That was fun.

Darney: You came to me and said, "You think everybody should learn how to read a novel before they graduate from college, and I think they should know how to read"—I don't know—"a bar graph." Would you talk about that class a bit?

Bruner: I don't remember that conversation, but I'm not surprised that we had it. What I didn't realize, of course, is that you have phenomenal mathematical abilities. [laughter]

Darney: That I started out as a math major!

Bruner: It was a shock. You did really well. We were teaching undergraduates, mostly returning adults, many of whom have an absolute terror of everything that was mathematical. We felt that they needed some quantitative background, so I taught statistics. You joined right in. I think we made a good case that if you're going to be in college, you need to do this.

I did this several times, but I think this was the group that you were in. We had a number of women in there who had no math background, and who were scared to death. I spent quite a bit of time with them, and I gave them my phone number. So they would get together—I think it was on Friday night—and I told them, “You have to call before 8:00. Do your problems, get your questions, and then call me. If I answer the phone and I'm slurring my words, hang up.” [laughter] And they did. They would call me. In 10 minutes of conversation, I could get their problems cleared up, so they got through it.

It was a good group because they were really supportive of each other. Most of the students were working in groups. The design of the class was that I would do a lecture to lay things out. We had a book called *Stat City*, and there were problems in there that related to the mythical Stat City. There was a database in the book, so the students would have to extract data from the database and solve the problems, but then they also had to write a memo to the mayor saying, “This is what you should do based on my statistical analysis.” It combined writing and mathematics, and there was lots of good discussion. I thought it was a great deal of fun, and I think the students got something out of it that was useful.

Darney: The day in my section when they all had the same answer to the problem and their memos were wildly different, the students who had complained about writing the memos, I said, “This is why you're doing it. It doesn't do you any good if you can do the math if you can't explain it to somebody else.” [laughter]

Bruner: Exactly. *Stat City* got out of date and was no longer published, but later, when I was teaching, I always required them to write things up. It's really hard to do that, but it's really important to do that.

Darney: Right. Maybe back up a little bit and just talk about the structure of the Vancouver program, the offerings and how it was put together.

Bruner: That evolved over time. The intention was to have a management program—something similar to the Management in the Public Interest on the main campus—a humanities program of some kind, and a human services program. When we first started there, they seemed quite separate.

Diana Cushing was doing the human services, I guess, the year I was hired, and you were doing humanities, so Lucia and I were supposed to do the management stuff. We didn't work together very much. We knew each other, and we socialized some. We went out for lunches and stuff. I'm not sure when this happened. I think maybe when—there were two positions in management, and we didn't have enough students to justify that. So when Lucia moved to the main campus, we weren't able to replace her. So there was a need then to use our resources more effectively.

I remember you and I talking about it. I think it was before Justino Balderrama was hired. We decided that we would do what we called the core, so that we would all participate in that. It would bring us together as a team, and then we would also each do our own thing in our particular disciplines. That was really nice for me because I loved the breadth of that, and I loved the interaction of it, and I think it made for a stronger program.

A lot of our students came in, in my case, wanting to major in business or in management. They were able to take too many courses, and I couldn't meet all their needs. We just didn't have enough resources to do that. So by forcing them into that core, it both broadened them, and also, I think, made for a better educational experience for them.

Darney: Right. And it allowed them to be as part-time as they needed to be.

Bruner: Right. It was modular, so they could do four, eight, 12 credits. Not many of them did 16—we really discourage that—but some of them did 12.

Darney: But they all had to do that core.

Bruner: The first year. After that, then they could go—I think that's the way we did it, wasn't it?

Darney: I don't remember.

Bruner: They had to do three quarters. I don't think we ever gave anybody a pass on that.

Darney: No.

Bruner: I think we really insisted on it.

Darney: Right. I guess I'll just add to part of that is that most of the students had been out of college. They dropped out of school—hence, lots of the women—but a long time ago, so they were rusty and terrified.

Bruner: Exactly. We had a few young people who came directly from community college, but very few. Many of them were women who were divorced, or divorcing, or in transition, and a few men who were trying to do something about their careers.

Darney: Right, who needed a degree to move ahead.

Bruner: What was neat about it was, when we started mixing the students up more, I started getting humanities students in my management classes, and management students started taking work with you. Those boundaries became less distinct. It was more “Well, that looks interesting. I’ll take that.” I think it was a very strong program. After Justino was hired and we sort of settled into the routine there, I think it was really, really good.

Darney: I think the students identified themselves less often as a management student or a humanities student, when they saw that kind of blending.

Bruner: Right.

Darney: Would you talk about one or two of the programs that you thought were especially good?

Bruner: The one that I absolutely loved was on the Middle East. We had done the Third World. Wasn’t that one of our first programs that we did with you and Lucia and me?

Darney: I think so.

Bruner: That was fine and that was good. I think we saw the real potential, and so then we decided to do one on the Middle East, at a time when things in the Middle East were rocky, as they still are, I guess, before all the wars. I remember the students’ opposition to that. They absolutely did not want to study the Middle East, were not going to study the Middle East. We said, “Okay, if you don’t want to study the Middle East, go down the road to another institution. They reluctantly went in, and by the end of that first quarter, they were all really enjoying it.

The three of us had very little background. It was just we were interested in it. I remember going to Powell’s and spending an entire afternoon digging through books at Powell’s and coming up with a stack of books that I thought would reflect my interest. I think each of us did the same thing.

Darney: Mm-hm.

Bruner: By the end of that year, we had really, I think, accomplished a lot, and the students had learned a lot, and we had a lot of fun. We really did.

Darney: And they recognized that they’d learned about something important.

Bruner: They did, and they admitted that they were wrong in their opposition. I remember we went to a Lebanese restaurant. [laughter] The whole crew took over the place.

Darney: Right, at the end of the year. What kinds of things did you think you learned from the students?

Bruner: It's hard to identify specifically. I really appreciated that they were returning to school, and that this was really hard for many of them. Many of them had families. They had activities in the community or churches or whatever. They were working full-time, and they were making a huge sacrifice to do it. They really wanted to do it. In most cases, they were really interested in having a good education. We had a few that just wanted the degree, and they didn't want to do any more work than they absolutely had to. But most of them were pretty well engaged. I think I learned a lot about resilience and tenacity from them.

These were working-class students. There weren't wealthy students by any means. I learned a lot about the value of an education, and I think it affected the way I taught as well; that you reach those students in different ways. When I moved up here to Olympia, and working with younger students, you work differently with them. The expectations are different. Both are good. I enjoyed both experiences, but they are very different.

Darney: I found that many of the students were quite accomplished, and had responsible positions in the community. It was a real struggle for them to be so vulnerable, to be in a position of having to learn something. I wonder if you think that part of what the team did was to say, "Oh, here's something we don't know about, and that's okay. And here's how you go about learning something you don't know."

Bruner: I think we were modeling that learning process. We took on crazy things. That's what I loved about Vancouver is that no one was looking over our shoulder, no one was there to criticize us. So we did the Middle East, even though none of us had much background of the Third World. We took on a number of topics that we were learning right along with the students. I think that was important to us.

I lost track. There was something I was going to say in response to your question. Tell me your question again.

Darney: About modeling and not knowing.

Bruner: Yeah, so I do think that was important. And we were really upfront with the students. "We don't know about these things. These are things we want to know about, and we think we can put together a series of books and exercises that will get us there." Yeah, we did it right along with the students.

It was nice for me not to have to be an expert in whatever we were teaching; to think that, okay, I can model the learning process for them and with them, but it's not passing knowledge from my head to theirs. We're out discovering things together. That was a good experience.

Darney: And the students, do you think, saw that?

Bruner: I think they did, yeah, absolutely. The nice thing about Vancouver was, since the students were part-time, even though they were coming in as juniors and they had two years to finish, because they were part-time, we saw them probably on average about three years. We got to know them really well, and they got to know us really well. We socialized with them. We had events that we went to. We went to weddings, and we saw their kids being born and all that, so we got to know their families, in a way. So there was a completely different atmosphere, and we could reach them as individuals, as opposed to a bunch of people sitting in the classroom.

Darney: And it let you see their growth over a longer period of time.

Bruner: Right.

Darney: I remember being frustrated by the women who were used to running things, and who did very well, but hadn't worked very hard, or hadn't learned anything.

Bruner: Yeah.

Darney: The virtue of evaluations is you can say that. "You got an A, but you didn't do much, you didn't learn much."

Bruner: Right, right.

Darney: You could really push them.

Bruner: The evaluation conferences were entirely different there, because they were much more personal. I can say, "I know your kids were sick this quarter, and you weren't able to put as much, but next quarter, you've got to do better. I'm going to give you full credit. You probably didn't earn it, but I'm going to." So we were really looking at their long-term progress as opposed to quarter to quarter. That was good.

Darney: And that's a different way of working with students.

Bruner: Right. The other thing I want to talk about with Vancouver is that I think that we grew as faculty, and we grew as a faculty team. It was tough when Justino was hired at first because he had a very different take on things, so establishing a good working relationship there was difficult. It took time. I don't know if it was difficult, it just took time. I learned a lot from Justino about education in

general, and I came away with a lot of questions. But we did establish a working relationship, and I think the fact that we had to work together, and we were stuck there with each other, we had to work through whatever problems we had, and we did it, and we did a really good job of it. On the main campus, you can escape that, and you don't have to make those accommodations, you don't have to adjust to each other's learning style. There are strengths and weaknesses both ways.

Darney: And so many of the programs aren't even year-long.

Bruner: Anymore, exactly.

Darney: We were beyond year-long, but it takes that amount of time.

Bruner: It does, it does. On main campus, it always took at least a quarter to adjust. You really felt like you were hitting your stride about the end of the second quarter. Then the program dissolved and you moved on. So I think there was real value in what we did, and I think that's missing somehow.

Darney: That's one of the components about the characteristics of team teaching is that it takes that kind of time.

Bruner: It takes that time. And when you get to know each other well, you can anticipate in ways that you can't when you don't know people. And we did. I think that there was synergy there.

Darney: Right.

Bruner: It was more than the sum of the parts, it really was.

Darney: Do you remember the skit we did for the students, you and Lucia and I?

Bruner: Oh, god! I thought of it the other day. She was in the retirement workshop, and she came in carrying her great big bag. And when she talked, she was all over the place. [laughing] That was just hysterical.

Darney: I think the students got it, right? Talk a little bit about what we did.

Bruner: What we did was it was an end-of-the-year gathering, and I think the students asked us to do a skit. The students were doing skits, so what we did was to model a faculty seminar, and we played each other. I played Lucia, you played—

Darney: I must have played you, and she played me.

Bruner: Right. So we came in with a few props. I came in with a great big suitcase full of stuff.

[laughter] I don't remember much about the rest of it. So we did caricatures, really, of each other. We

had a topic that we were seminarizing on, and it was both fun, but you also had to stop and think about yourself.

Darney: Do I do that? [laughter] I guess another advantage of that longevity is the planning, in some ways, is easier, because you're around the people, you have easy access to the people you're going to be teaching with the next year for planning throughout the year before.

Bruner: Right. Our offices were close, and we saw each other every day.

Darney: We did some planning hiking Indian Heaven, you and I.

Bruner: We did, we did a few hikes, and that was useful. But the thing about Phil Harding, too, when we were working on the new building, and his ideas about design weren't so off-the-wall. But the way the building turned out—and I think this was in part Phil's influence—was that everybody had to go in and out. So we scheduled breaks, so the students were in the gathering areas and in the hallways at the same time, and had a chance to mix up. There was a group that was smoking on the porch, and others inside. But it wasn't the management students and the humanities students, they were all mixed up together. That building really worked that way for us. It was really good in that regard.

Darney: And he had sort of made the old building on Officers' Row work that way.

Bruner: Right.

Darney: Everybody came into the kitchen. Then one Monday, we all came to work and there was a hole. [laughter]

Bruner: That was before I was there.

Darney: There was a hole cut between the two sides of the building so that you no longer had to go down the stairs, around the porch, in the other door, up the stairs to get to your office. [laughter]

Bruner: And the kitchen there was—and we tried to replicate that in the new building.

Darney: Right.

Bruner: It sorta worked.

Darney: I think what he helped us do was to say, what is it we like about where we are now? And what we liked was not having all the—you know, being mixed up with each other in offices.

Bruner: Right.

Darney: We tried to have unisex bathrooms in the new building. The State kind of went crazy. [laughter]

Bruner: That architect we worked with, he was really good. He listened, and he did everything he could to accommodate us, within architectural reason.

Darney: And State regs. [laughter]

Bruner: That was fun, actually, and that building worked surprisingly well, until WSU moved in with us.

Darney: Yeah, I want to talk about that a little bit. What do you think of the main themes of your teaching, if you think about all of your teaching? The main ideas maybe, or the main principles, or the main skills that you wanted to be helping the students learn?

Bruner: What I tried to convince the students of and tried to model—I was working with management and business students most of the time—is that management and business isn't about learning a bunch of techniques. It's about learning how to adapt to changing circumstances. Having some of that disciplinary knowledge is useful, but it's more than that. It's about being able to put those things together in creative ways.

When I went back to teach the last time—and it didn't work very well because I couldn't find the right materials—I did a class on resilience. I can't remember the guy's name, he was a political scientist who was sort of controversial, who wrote a book about nuclear energy, actually, and the policy toward nuclear energy. His point was with planning nuclear power plants and other applications, you can't anticipate everything that can go wrong. The whole idea of planning is misleading, because planning assumes that you can anticipate the future, and I had done enough forecasting to know you can't anticipate the future. His point is rather than building a nuclear power plant that is safe from all of these things, what you do is you design it in a way that it's resilient, so it can survive anything that might come along, because you can't anticipate what might happen. His point was that that's a good thing to do in life in general.

I always tried to build it into the courses and programs that I taught that you can't anticipate things. We're going to forecast, but you're going to find out the forecasting is not very scientific. So you have to think about how you might adjust to things as circumstances change. That's not about having a plan, it's about having a set of skills that you can apply under any circumstances. I think I began to develop that in Vancouver, and I really used that throughout all my teaching, the whole idea of resilience.

Darney: In addition to a set of skills that you can apply, it seems like you also have to have a sense of the purpose of what you're doing, or some values, I guess, that you can then apply to figure out what to do in these new situations.

Bruner: Right, and you need the people skills, because you can't do it yourself. It's not about how I can do it, it's how you can build organizations, and work with people in creative ways in adjusting to new situations.

Darney: Would you talk a little bit about the transition to WSU in Vancouver, how that happened and what that was about?

Bruner: I'm not sure that anyone really knows. [laughter] I guess we heard about it from President [Joseph] Olander. Well, no. There was a strategic planning process that went on campus. The question was what to do with off-campus programs. The conclusion was Vancouver was not economically viable. It was too small, hadn't been able to grow, we weren't really doing much there, so maybe we should just scuttle it.

Darney: Do you think that's a true perception?

Bruner: No, and I wrote some stuff trying to suggest that that was wrong. We actually had put together a pretty efficient program, and if you looked at the number of students versus the number of faculty, that's how they were making the case. But the fact is that our facilities costs were low. We had no overheads, essentially. We didn't have a lot of administrators. They weren't looking at the full picture.

Darney: Is that a consequence of being a line item in the budget in a way that an academic program on campus is not a line item?

Bruner: Probably. It could well be. You remember, we invited the Provost down and students. The conservative legislator from Vancouver came in. It was sort of bizarre. But I think that that raised questions about it. The other thing that was going on was the community didn't really want Evergreen. There was no doubt about that.

Darney: Why do you think that was?

Bruner: Vancouver is a very conservative town. Clark County is very conservative, and they wanted a real university. I understand part of that. They wanted the full range of graduate programs and all of that. The feeling was that we were in the way. So the political movers and shakers were—

Darney: Sorry, one other thing is it seemed to be that most of the people in Clark County went to WSU as opposed to UW.

Bruner: A lot of them did.

Darney: So this was a connection that was already there.

Bruner: Some of that was from agriculture. WSU had the research station there, and agriculture had been a big thing in Clark County, so there were a number of reasons why. And there was one particular political person who was a WSU alum, and he was quite conservative, and absolutely hated Evergreen, and he was able to work behind the scenes. I remember Olander coming down and telling us that there were discussions. WSU had come into the community, they had then moved into our building—were sharing the building with us.

Darney: The new building.

Bruner: The new building. Then Olander came in and said there were discussions going on that WSU wanted to take over everything and pull us out, and then it happened.

Darney: And WSU was looking for enrollment.

Bruner: Right. At that time, they were having trouble with enrollment, so they needed that off-campus program. I think it's done really well. It's probably been really great for the community. I think that Evergreen could have existed along with it. Our experience was WSU would draw the students in, they would talk to WSU about coming, and then they would stop and talk to us. We got many of those students because we were more accommodating and more interesting in some ways, especially for the returning adults.

Darney: At that point, they were doing a lot by distance learning. They're doing less of it now because they have a huge new campus north of town.

Bruner: Right, I don't think they're doing much of it. They may be doing it online.

Darney: There's quite a bit in your evaluations of you and your self-reflections just about the stress of that time, trying to be, I guess, grownups about it, and not bitter. How did you handle that?

Bruner: [Laughing] Geez, I don't know. I'd lived in Clark County then for 15 years, so it didn't surprise me. I wasn't sure that Evergreen was a really good fit. I wasn't sure we could ever grow beyond where we were, and I thought if we were going to survive, we really needed to. I wasn't opposed to moving back to Olympia. We'd lived in Olympia before, and I thought being on campus would be sort of interesting. So I wasn't personally threatened by it, but I did feel bad for the community, because I did think that we filled a need there that WSU wasn't going to fill.

I was disappointed by the way it was handled. You and I were in a meeting when it was announced—it was a faculty meeting or something—and no one had talked to us ahead of time. That

sort of clumsiness is absolutely inexcusable. That really pissed me off. But leaving Vancouver for me personally wasn't—it was more awkward for you because you were really settled in Portland.

Darney: Right. You talk in other situations about this sort of bureaucratic clumsiness of the college, it seemed to me for kind of the same reasons—making decisions without consulting people, making decisions without telling people, whatever.

Bruner: Part of the problem is that Evergreen doesn't have the usual structures. There are no departments, I think the faculty meeting is pretty much dysfunctional, so it's hard sometimes to—there are mechanisms for doing DTFs and so on, but it's not like there's a structure in place that automatically gets input or serves as a conduit for getting information out. So, things get overlooked sometimes.

Darney: Yeah. I guess it's also the consequence of being an academic program that really acts more like a unit of the college that has some administrative responsibilities that academic programs don't have that Vancouver did.

Bruner: Yeah.

Darney: If you close an academic program, you'd talk to those faculty and that would be it. But this was a different situation.

Bruner: And we were 100 miles away. All those things. I think actually part of it was they were embarrassed. I don't know that anyone really wanted to close Vancouver. I think it was a political decision. It was made behind the scenes.

Darney: Was it made at the HEC (Higher Education Coordinating) Board.

Bruner: No, I think it was made between Olander and the legislators from Clark County. I think that all of that took place off campus, I really do. I don't blame Olander. I think he was trapped in that. I don't think he had a choice, actually. I think they came to him and said, "You're going to have to do this." Rather than fight them, he said, "Sure, we'll do it." The political reality was they didn't want us there. They wanted WSU. And as long as we were there, we were a threat in some ways. So I don't think the college had any say.

Darney: But it was his decision, though.

Bruner: Yeah. I was no fan of Olander, but I thought he handled that well with us. The announcement on campus was part of it, but then he came down and talked to us. He told us "It was a political decision. It has nothing to do with the work you were doing, it has to do with politics. You shouldn't feel bad about that. You didn't fail." I thought his meeting with us was fine.

Darney: The college supported the kind of exit that we designed.

Bruner: They did.

Darney: To take care of all the students who were there, to take care of—well, what's the order? Justino left first because his kids were out of high school. Then your second one was out, so then you left. Then mine was out, so I left.

Bruner: They paid our moving expenses. That's unusual to do that. And they gave us jobs. They probably could have legally, when they close the program, they could have cut us off. I really didn't have any complaint with the college, except for that announcing it in the meeting.

Darney: But it seems like your attitude helped allay some of the bitterness. The students were bitter.

Bruner: They were.

Darney: And faculty were bitter, and your attitude about it really helped.

Bruner: I don't remember. Maybe so.

Darney: It kept us from transferring all of the phone calls to the elevator, which was one of our plans.
[laughter]

Bruner: We had some good schemes. But that was a hard time in a lot of ways. I think Justino took it harder than either of us. He appreciated that program as much as anybody did, and I don't think he ever really felt comfortable on the campus here.

Darney: And I think he anticipated that.

Bruner: Yeah. And he isolated himself.

Darney: Which you could do on the main campus and you couldn't do it in Vancouver.

Bruner: Right.

Darney: In general thinking about teaching, would you talk a little bit about the role of management at Evergreen? Like where does it fit, and why is it so hard to keep it staffed?

Bruner: It doesn't fit philosophically in a lot of ways. When I came out, Barbara asked me—I associated, I can't remember how the planning units or whatever they were—I didn't want to join the management, the MPI [Management in the Public Interest] group, so she asked me would I agree to teach one year out of three, and I said I would do that.

When it came time to do it, it was going to be Dean Olson, and then we had an opportunity for a new hire. We talked about this. Dean's background, of course, is in business. We didn't like the way

the MPI had been done. It was too rigid, it was too narrowly focused on management, and they were trying to do almost an MBA in one year. The faculty didn't seem to be enjoying it. It was a hard program to teach. I think the students liked it. It had appeal that way.

We decided we wanted to do a much more interdisciplinary approach to it, but we wanted to call it business. We didn't want to call it management. Let's call it what it is. It's business. Our thought was we wanted to put together a program that was truly an Evergreen program—it was interdisciplinary—that looked at business. It would teach business, but it would also look at business in society in creative ways. I think that program did that. I think there were rough edges. After that, it became a business program, and MPI was dead.

That was good and bad. It was good in that it sort of opened it up. Our thinking was the business program is whatever three faculty want to make it. It could change from year to year, but there would be a business program, and it would depend on the disciplines and the interests of the faculty at the time.

But what's happened then is they began hiring for business, and that's quite different. All of a sudden, it becomes not an Evergreen interdisciplinary, team-taught program. It becomes a business program that tends—at times at least—to lose touch with the broader look that we were addressing.

That's morphed into entrepreneurship, which I think is completely phony. Yes, Evergreen has a history of entrepreneurial graduates, but they don't come out the business programs. They are people who are in the arts and theater. And you can't teach entrepreneurship. That's something that's sort of hardwired, I think, the ability to take risks and do those things. You don't teach that. You can teach people the steps to create a business, but you can't teach them how to be really creative in their process.

I think it was a good idea to break with the MPI model, but I don't like what's come after that. I think we didn't have the people in the right places at the right time to sort of build that out. I think what needs to be done there is you need to get a bunch of people together, many of whom don't have business backgrounds, and say, "What would a really Evergreen business program look like? What would be the components?" Kind of rethink the whole thing, and then hire the people to do that, as opposed to doing business.

I was never really happy with it. So what was happening was we would hire people, and they saw all this freedom to do wonderful things around them. Do I want to do the drudgery of teaching business over and over again? No, I'll go do this and do that, and they do. They've done some good

things. The people who are left are the people you don't want to teach business. I won't name any names. [laughing]

Darney: We had a brief moment of thinking about a program that would be film. We were going to take over the Olympia Film Society. Do you remember?

Bruner: Right.

Darney: That building. The building was kind of available at that point. It would have been a great program.

Bruner: Yes. That's the kind of thing, to look at how you bring disciplines together to create that would be—

Darney: Right.

Bruner: So two of the things that I did—I did the same thing pretty much twice—I worked with Walter Grodzik. He taught introduction to theater, and I taught a little bit of arts management. So I did an exercise in how you start your own theater business, or theater operation. It was good, so we drew both business students and arts students. The theater students didn't want to do the business stuff and the business students—but they had to do it. Both programs I thought worked really, really well. Walter has enough of the administrative aspects of theater that he could provide examples for the kinds of things that I was talking about. It was great fun. The students afterward said, "You know, it was good to do both those things."

Darney: It goes back to what you were saying earlier about it applies the principles to something real.

Bruner: The theater students realized you can't have theater without having somebody to count the money, have a bank account.

Darney: Turn on the heat. [laughter]

Bruner: I think that's a model that could be applied more widely. Others have done it. Drew Buchman had a faculty who did arts and management together. That was a really good program.

Darney: And you could do it with writing people, with publishing. You could maybe do it anywhere. Right?

Bruner: Yeah. I talked to some of the film faculty two or three times, and I couldn't get any interest. But I thought that would have been a natural—a good, strong media program, and to supplement that with, okay, how do you get the money together to do this stuff? How do you organize it? It could have been a really good program.

Darney: They weren't available at the time or whatever.

Bruner: They were doing their thing, and that was fine.

Darney: You came to the main campus and taught for how many years before you went in the Library?

Bruner: Two.

Darney: Because we taught one of those.

Bruner: Or, was it three? It was three years. So I came up and I worked with Justino and Les Wong. We did a program. What was it? I can't remember the title right now. And I did that program with you, Carrie Margolin, and who else?

Darney: Sarah Williams and Flora Leisenring. It was a huge program.

Bruner: Then I did the program with Dean and Sarah, whom we hired and who was with us for the year, a visitor. I went into the Library after that.

Darney: We'll talk about the Library later. And I think in the food program, it was the first time I heard your concept of the program mother. I called you the program mother. [laughter]

Bruner: Because I was looking out for the students, yeah.

Darney: About week five, you came in and said, "If you haven't done your laundry, you should do some now."

Bruner: Yeah. [laughter] I said, "Your sheets are going to crack."

Darney: But I think that illustrates that one of the strengths of team teaching is that those roles can circle around. Of course, all the women who hear that are thrilled because mostly the women have to be the program mother. But it's not necessary, it's just that somebody has to kind of accept that role.

Bruner: That was the only core program that I taught, and I have to say that I don't think it was the best program, but it's the best experience that I had in many ways. The team didn't always come together very well. There were some tensions among us and I didn't like everything that went on there. But for me, it showed the value of the year-long core program. Those students got so close, and we got so close with them. Did we keep the same seminars all three quarters?

Darney: I don't remember.

Bruner: I worked with many of the same people all year long. I still am in touch with some of them.

Darney: That's great.

Bruner: After that year, many of them lived together, they studied together, they were friends for life as far as I know. It was a remarkable group of students. It was good.

When I think about going out to this two-in-one model now, I think we would have lost something had we not had that spring quarter. That spring quarter was really, really important. I know the year-long programs, I know it's difficult to hold students in them, but you can do things in that third quarter that are just amazing.

Darney: The other thing we did, if you recall, is their first reading just made them crazy. The Mary Douglas "Deciphering a Meal."

Bruner: Oh, yeah!

Darney: It was very difficult, but we kind of threw it at them. We worked on it, and we did a lot of other things. At the end of the year, they read it again.

Bruner: I didn't remember that.

Darney: And they were so proud of themselves. "Oh, I get this now. I get what this is about."

Bruner: That was such a good experience. There were a couple of older students, but most of them were 18 years old, right out of high school, and watching them change over that year was just amazing. It was just a really, really good experience.

Darney: I think that was my second year up here, and I was . . . well . . . I had not done so much pregnancy counseling with our students in Vancouver as I did the main campus. [laughing]

Bruner: I did some of that myself, and I say, abortion counseling in a couple of . . . yeah. [laughing] I had one young man who wasn't doing well, and I asked him to come in and talk to me. I said, "What's going on with you?" He was really, really upset because he was in love with one of the other students in the class. She was dating another guy who lived in the room next door, and he could hear them having sex. It was just driving him nuts! [laughter]

Darney: Oh, poor kid. You talked a little bit earlier about being able to take risks in teaching and program planning. One of the things that always struck me about that program is that it was most students' second or third choice, and their parents had warned them off of it because it was home ec. I don't know if that was about the labeling, the title. I don't know how we could have done it differently. But by the end of the year, the rumor in the freshman dorm was that it was the hardest core program.

Bruner: I remember that. And the students were really proud of that, that they had survived the toughest program.

Darney: And they had done well.

Bruner: While there were things about the program that I didn't like, I think we did a lot with skills that helped them a lot further on. So I think it was a successful program.

Darney: When you came up from Vancouver, did you have to adjust to the students? Was there an adjustment period?

Bruner: Yeah, there were lots of adjustments. I had to adjust to the faculty, the structures, the whole thing. It wasn't hard, it was just I remember being really mystified about a lot of things. We had been teaching evenings, and I thought, this is going to be great to work days. I am going to start my day at 8:00. I'm going to have an 8:00 class. And no one showed up. [laughter] Okay, maybe they'd show up at 9:00 or 9:10, but they wouldn't show up at 8:00. And working with younger people was very different from working with the population we had in Vancouver.

Darney: And also, when you first come to the campus, you have no reputation, so you're brand-new to all the students, so on campus, you're more likely to be brand-new to all the students for quite a while, until one develops a reputation.

Bruner: Right, and that does take time. I taught for three years, and then I went in the Library and I was there for nine years, and then I took a year sabbatical.

Darney: Whatever reputation you had was gone. [laughter] Gone again.

Bruner: That really was like starting all over again. It was tough.

Darney: Do you have other things you want to talk about teaching?

Bruner: Nothing comes to mind, no.

Darney: How did you find it, kind of entering into the faculty up here? Because I think we would show up at meetings from Vancouver, but people ignored us, and people discounted us, I felt like. I don't know how you felt about it.

Bruner: I did. I didn't feel slighted, we just didn't have anything in common with them, and I did notice. We didn't know what to do. I don't know if this was my first—I think it was my first, it might have been my second or third year—I came up for the faculty retreat. We had it at one of these camps. I had been to the one the year before. So I came in, because I was driving a distance, I got there early. I was probably the first one there.

I went to the room where I had bunked the year before, and I put myself on the bed, and then people started showing up, so I went to the meetings and all that. I went to bed early. There wasn't

anything going on, so I went to bed early. I was the first one who turned in and turned off the lights and went to sleep. I woke up in the morning, and it was light enough I could see it was all women.

[laughter] And I thought, oh, shit! What am I going to do?

Darney: How am I going to get out of here?

Bruner: Yeah. So I laid there for a long time, and I planned my every move. In all-in-one motion—I was in a sleeping bag, so it was a little awkward—I got out of my sleeping bag, I grabbed all my shit, and I ran out of the room. [laughter] No one saw me, but I thought, my god! Here I am in my underwear! Someone's going to wake up and scream! How do you explain that?

I just didn't know enough people, I didn't know about things. It was part of that awkwardness, I think. I certainly felt it.

Darney: I think that's one of the downsides of, for example, not having departments.

Bruner: Right.

Darney: Because there's no kind of group that would automatically bring you in.

Bruner: You're focused on your team, and the way we worked, there just isn't time to circulate otherwise. It's really hard.

Darney: But you didn't have a chance to have many teaching partners before you went into the Library.

Bruner: Right. Each of those years was quite different, but that's right. I did not have very many teaching partners. When I came out, of course, I had quite a few, so I always met my requirement, whatever it was.

Darney: Did you ever teach with Ryo Imamura?

Bruner: No.

Darney: Weren't you planning to?

Bruner: We were planning to. He was still working and I was retired. We planned a one-quarter spring quarter program on an aging society. It was a really good idea, and I found some really good stuff to use. Then he decided to retire and was going to move.

Darney: It sounds like, for you, one of the best parts was the planning, was thinking about new programs, finding books and other materials.

Bruner: It was. That's why I couldn't have taught anywhere else. It's about discovery and new things, and new people. I always enjoyed a new team and making those adjustments. It was never boring.

There were times when it was not fun, but it was never boring, and there was always something new. I think I did that reasonably well. I think my interests are broad enough and I was quick enough that I could pull that off. I could not have taught anywhere else. I just would not have been interested.

Darney: Yeah. Do you think you came in with that breadth from the beginning, or do you think it's something that happened?

Bruner: It was both. When I was an undergraduate, I really had taken—I set aside a whole year and I just took everything I could get my hands on, just to try everything. During that time, one of the reasons I went up to Western was they had a Western Civ requirement. It was seven credits a quarter, and it was required three quarters. It was team-taught, in a way. It was more of a tag-team kind of thing, it wasn't really a team.

It was history and music and art, and it was pretty well done. The individual lecturers were really very good, many of them. It was five credits of lecture, and then there was a two-credit book seminar. Some of my high school friends had told me about it, and that just sounded marvelous to me. So I went up there and I got 29 credits of A because I just loved it. The interest was there, and I had some background, and I really liked the idea of team teaching.

I have to say, that quarter I did with David Paulsen was really good. We had some really, really good faculty seminars. We'd go down and have dinner and have a beer, and that was even better. So anyway, I think I had the interest if not the ability going in, and I had the opportunity to refine those skills a little bit.

Darney: It comes back to those women in statistics, but how do you help students who are afraid of the material, who are afraid to try, or afraid of failing?

Bruner: I think part of it is you convince them there's no failing. I think we told them at the beginning, "If you do the work, you're not going to lose any credit. Give us a good effort and you'll get all the credit."

I think it also is about providing the support. Giving them my phone number and letting them call me and talk for 10 minutes once a week seemed to make a difference.

Darney: Got them through.

Bruner: It was no great sacrifice for me to do that. That was more difficult when I came up on the main campus in some ways, because you don't get to know the students as well.

My first year on campus, I was working with Les Wong, and we did statistics. We were in that funny classroom up on the third floor that was at the end of the hall. Remember? It was sort of open. There was no door on it, it was a gathering space. Students had problems to do and the write-ups and all that. They were in an oval-shaped setup with tables and chairs. I had them working with their partners. We would do something, I would show them something, and then they had to do it.

Mark Levinsky walked up. I knew who he was. He stood there for a long time and made me really nervous. He came over to me and he said, "This is wonderful." The idea was it was really interactive, the students were working together, and they were getting a lot of support. There was no right or wrong. So I think those kinds of things having them work in teams, and giving a little extra attention at times, goes a long way.

I didn't teach statistics after I came out of the deanery because I had gotten out of touch with it. But I felt good about teaching it when I did it.

Darney: I think those lectures in Vancouver were amazing, because you were anticipating something they hadn't read yet. The truck. I mean, the students loved it. Right? The truck or the socks, whatever. [laughter]

Bruner: Oh, yeah. I'd forgotten all that stuff.

Darney: But then when they came to it in the book, they had something to pin it on.

Bruner: Right. That's right. I always tried to use really simple examples and stuff that they could relate to.

Darney: Your use of humor, I think, also makes a difference.

Bruner: Not to mention doing an entire lecture with my fly unzipped. Not intentionally. [laughter]

Darney: I bet that went over. Oh, my. You talk a little bit about being in Advising when you first came up. Were you there—

Bruner: It was part of my governance, and I thought it would be good for me. It would help me to learn more about the campus, and it was good for me. I enjoyed working with the students, and I enjoyed working with the people in Advising. When I went into the Library, I was slated that year to be the faculty person in Advising, so I sort of left them shorthanded on very short notice. But it was good. I had to learn the curriculum, I had to learn who was doing what, and how they were doing it. It gave me a little more insight into young people and how to work with them. It was good.

Darney: We could take a break, and then we can talk about the Library afterwards.

Bruner: Sure.

End Part 1 of 2 of William Bruner on 7-9-2109

Begin Part 2 of 2 of William Bruner on 7-9-2109

Darney: This is part two of an interview with Bill Bruner on July 9, 2019. Bill, we talked this morning about teaching at Evergreen. A good part of your time has been in the deans' area, more specifically as the Library Dean. I'd like to get you to talk about that now. What interested you in applying for the position?

Bruner: I'm not really sure. I guess I had applied for another position, a temporary position. The Vice President for Students Affairs had left—I can't remember how that was—and there was a callout for someone to fill in. I put my name in, and I really didn't expect to get it, and I didn't. Carolyn Dobbs did that.

I think that was probably when I started thinking about administrative. I had had management experience before. I'd been with the State. I ended up as a Division Manager, and I managed a research project that was three years, and I had worked for the Regional Commission in an administrative capacity. I had been the acting Director twice. The combination of those two interim appointments was longer than any Director had lasted. [laughter] So, I'd had management experience in different settings.

But I wouldn't have even thought of the Library position except that Frank Motley asked me if I would consider it. I remember sort of brushing him off. I thought he was kidding me. Then he came back and he said, "No, I'm really serious. You should think about this. It's open to faculty. It doesn't require library background. It doesn't require a library degree."

Which was a break from the past, and the reason for that was that Sarah Pedersen wanted to step down as Dean and there was an open position because she wasn't leaving the college. She insisted she didn't want to be the Dean any longer, so the only way they could deal with it was to rotate a faculty member in, and then two librarians were going to rotate out at the time. The impact on the curriculum would be neutral.

I talked to him about it. I've always been interested in libraries. As a kid, I spent a lot of time in libraries. I decided I would go ahead with it, so I started the paperwork. But at the same time, I decided to talk to as many people in the Library as I could, just to get an idea of what I might be getting into. I scheduled appointments with everyone I could get hold of, and it was good. I came away with a good feeling, both about I might be able to do something there, and also about the people I'd be working with.

What was apparent was they had lots of librarians around, lots of library expertise, but the problem seemed to be in personnel and budget. Those were areas that I felt I could work in. I knew the State personnel system. I'd worked in it for quite a while. I'd done a lot of hiring and some firing. I'd sat in on lots of hiring committees and that sort of thing. In the 12 or 15 years that I had been working, I'd done budgets. I'd done a lot of budgets, so I felt pretty confident in that, so I decided I'd go ahead and apply.

At the time, I was the only one. No one in the Library was going to apply, so I started getting things together. And then Sara Huntington [unintelligible 00:04:23] decided to apply, so there were two of us in the end. If she had [done] that first, I probably wouldn't have done that. But the fact that I had already—I think I might have even had my materials in when she decided to do that, so I went ahead with it.

I didn't really expect to get it, but I gave it a real good shot. I put a lot of thought into the application materials. I thought, I've got to find a way to make this not just the usual, so I was poking around. I was at the Safeway, and I looked at the magazine rack, and here was an astrology book. [laughter] I bought it, and I looked up my—all the stuff in there about—so I extracted, and altered a little bit, some of my horoscope that I was destined to be the Library Dean.

There were like three questions that I had to answer, so I organized my responses around that. It was actually quite good, I thought. I put a lot of thought into it. I don't even remember what the questions were anymore, but I put a lot of thought into it. I had the interview with the committee and with the staff, and the one with the staff went really, really well. I got a lot of support from the staff.

I still was kind of surprised when they chose me, but the Provost didn't want me. He felt that since there was a librarian who was willing to do it that it should go that way. I objected, but there wasn't much I could do. The committee—I owe Larry Eickstaedt, the chair of the committee, a huge amount for this—went as a group to his office and insisted that he honor their wishes, so he did. Against his better judgment, he appointed me on a one-year interim appointment. He said he wasn't going to be the Provost any longer, and someone else could deal with it. Maybe it was a two-year appointment, I can't remember. Anyway, it ended up for two years.

One of the reasons he didn't want to appoint me was I had been quite vocal in the interview process about my frustration with the deans and with him. There were things that happened that I wasn't going to allow to get by. He took that quite personally, and he and I didn't get along throughout that first year.

Darney: Do you think that's partly because he didn't understand the dynamics of the personnel in the Library?

Bruner: He didn't care. I don't think he cared about that at all.

Darney: It was the rules and the structure, the hierarchy.

Bruner: And it was that I challenged him, so we butted heads the entire time. I hope we can take the names out of this. We really did butt heads the entire time. The deans were not functional. The two years with him were really not fun at all.

I don't know if Barbara remembers this—and I have no idea if this even was an influence—you had a gathering at your house one evening. Barbara and I ended up talking about the Provost position. She had decided not to stand for it, and I tried to talk her into it. We talked about what was going on, and after that, she changed her mind. I'm not saying that it was because of anything I said, but I'd like to think that I played some role in convincing her to do that.

Darney: How was the transition into the Library?

Bruner: It was good. Not everyone was supportive of me, but everybody was willing to give it a try, and everybody gave it their best shot. I said, "I'm going to spend the first couple months just going from one office to the other. I want to sit down with you, I want to see your work, I want you to show me how you do it, and I want to try to understand how libraries work. I did that, and everybody was gracious, spent a lot of time with me. We had good discussions. That was really good.

I went in in July. Sarah Pedersen and I worked together during the summer, and as of September 1, I was the Dean. I think it was in November, we had to do a budget cut. That was my real test. I got a committee together and we worked on it. I had to defend the Library's budget. I had lots of good support from people, but people seemed to think that I did okay with that. We did take a budget cut, we managed it reasonably well, so I think I got some credit with the staff for that.

Darney: The work that you did early on paid off, because you understood all the parts of the Library.

Bruner: I wouldn't say that I understood it very well, but I had a good sense of it, and in the process I had gotten to know the individuals. That was really important to establish a rapport with each person.

Darney: Did you hire Angie Skov or was she there when you came?

Bruner: She was not there when I came in the year before I went in sometime. The Library's administrative assistant had died. What was her name? She'd been there for a long time. I can't remember. They had someone filling in for her, so that position was open. Sarah had held it open so that it would be something that I would do. We got a committee together, and Angie came out as the—I did not influence it at all. I wasn't in the committee. The committee was meeting and interviewing and made that recommendation.

Darney: You'd work with her in Vancouver, hadn't you?

Bruner: Yeah. She was in some of my classes and yours, did I know her, and I knew about her work. She'd worked with the courts and reporters and all. That was a good relationship.

Darney: Did she stay for your whole time?

Bruner: Yeah, she was there after I left. She stayed into Lee Lyttle's term, and then quit probably three years after I left.

Darney: What were the challenges in the Library besides the budget?

Bruner: I had no idea about this when I went in, but it was really exciting times for libraries. When I went in, the digital revolution had not really started. There had been some modernization. They had terminals, but they were dumb terminals. They were just green screens. The catalog was on there, but it wasn't—and there was the relationship with the State Library and the local library system.

But as soon as I got in there, things began to change. All the electronics and all the digital stuff coming in. I went in in 1992 and I came out in 2001, and that exactly encompassed the period of transition. By the time I came out, we had made the Library over completely. When I went back in 10 years later, things weren't greatly different. There was a huge difference in the years that I was in there, and it hadn't changed very much in the 10 years after. There were changes, but they were not revolutionary changes like they had been earlier.

The hard part about that was managing that. We would just buy a bunch of new equipment, and new equipment would come out and we'd have to try to figure out how to do that. My role in that was I had to manage the budget. But also the Library Deans and Directors for the six institutions got together.

The first year I was there, we had a meeting in Bellingham. They had some consultant come in and he said, "Things are going to change in libraries. It's going to take money, and you've got to think about how you're going to do this." Everybody started rubbing their hands so we came out of that year with a commitment that we were going to try to develop a proposal to the Legislature.

Darney: As a group of all the institutions.

Bruner: As a group. The next year, I chaired that group. When it came up, I said, "Look, I don't have the background on libraries. This is going to be a big year. I would be happy to step aside and let one of you do it." They said, "No, no, no. We think you'll be good."

I started in the fall of that year drafting a proposal for the [Washington State] Cooperative Library Project. I had lots of help. Nothing in there was mine, except I was putting the words on paper, and working with each individual to try to get that stuff together. We had a series of meetings, and gradually put the proposal together. We took it to the Provost, who sort of reluctantly bought off on it. I think they thought it would be competitive with other projects. Took it to the Council of Presidents and the Presidents liked it, so they took it forward as their primary thrust for that session.

Since I was in Olympia, and since I had worked with the Legislature before, I did a lot of work with the Council of Presidents in supporting it. I think we were all surprised, but it passed. So it was a huge injection of money at just exactly the right time, so we were able to buy software that linked all the libraries, we were able to buy the hardware that we all needed, and we were able to keep up with the technology as it went. I think the first time around, we got like \$3 million or \$5 million, and then we went back a second time, the next session, and got another couple million to finish it out.

That really gave us a boost. So when I left, the libraries were linked, we were all using the same software. You could search all the libraries in the state, all six of the libraries in the state, as if it was one catalog. If you ordered a book, it would show up in two days on campus, whereas before it all went through interlibrary loan. So it was a major step forward. After I left, at the time I left we were in discussions with the Oregon people. That came together afterward, and so now it's the two states and it's 34 libraries, something like that. It's amazing compared to what we used to do.

Darney: It is.

Bruner: I feel like I played a role, and I felt like the experience that I had, I don't think being an economist hurt, and I think that the legislative experience I had really helped. And the fact that I was the Dean of the Library of the smallest institution meant that no one was competing with me. I had no axe to grind. If it had been the University of Washington, it might have been different, or WSU. It was just a really good group of deans and directors. They were all supportive of it and really, really helpful. It seems to me, that was sort of my achievement.

It set us up then. We had a little increase in staff and a lot of equipment money. We actually bought the first Internet line for the college, a T-1 line that went in. We bought the first course

management software that now everybody uses. At that time, we were ahead in computer services. We were sort of pulling them along with us, so I felt really good.

Darney: That's a huge achievement.

Bruner: It was a huge achievement for all of us. I feel like I played a role in it, but the fact that everyone really pitched in. The Directors at the University of Washington and WSU, both of them were really, really good, and I got along with them really well. The only one who was balky was at Central, and we were able to kind of pull him along with us. But everybody else really pitched in.

Darney: I was going to ask if you felt like that group accepted you. And obviously, they would after that.

Bruner: They did from the beginning. They were gracious and helpful, and they offered, if I had questions, and I did. But we met regularly, and the group had good rapport. There was one person who left at the end of my first year, and that was good. She was the one who kind of stood in the way of things and the others were all good.

Darney: And she was replaced by somebody . . .

Bruner: . . . who was much more on board.

Darney: What about working in the Library did you like? You must have, because you stayed a while.

Bruner: It was my dream job. It really was. I had always wanted to manage an operating unit of some kind. So what I managed with the state was a research group. We had things to do and all that, but I think the biggest it was like seven people. So the idea of a larger organization that had not just a research role but an operating role really appealed to me. The size of it and the nature of the work, it was ideal for me. It really was. And it was at a good time. I had good energy. When Barbara came in, and you and the other deans, the time was good. It really was. Working relationships were all excellent. We got a lot done.

Darney: Yeah. And a lot is under the Library besides the Library.

Bruner: Yeah, all media services. That was really tough for me to get a handle on. I'm not sure that I ever did, but I got enough of it. And I had to deal with the equipment needs there, which are just never ending. I got to know them quite well, and I think, there again, they were—like in photo—digital cameras were just coming out. I remember Steve coming to me and saying they wanted like \$600 to buy a camera, and I said, "Shit! What kind of a camera is this?" It was an early digital camera. So they started early experimenting with it, and they built their digital capabilities during that time. The same thing with all the electronic media, it was in transition.

The first Library Dean—I can't remember his name now—had written this paper about why Media Services and the Library should be connected. It's a good paper. His point is, it's all information. One's print information, one's visual. It's all information, and we should integrate that in the Library.

But the problem was that the two operations were on different floors, so there wasn't that opportunity. So when we started looking at possibly remodeling, what I wanted to do was to remodel in a way that would bring the two groups together. That was the plan when I left the Library, and it got changed after I left. I think in retrospect, it probably would never had worked because the groups never

really converged in the way that they might have. Maybe they would have if we had actually followed through with it.

But I thought that was a challenge to sort of bring all of that stuff together in one place. What I thought should happen was that if a student comes in looking for information, there would be people from the Library, from Media Services, from Computer Services all in the same place. A student doesn't care which organization is providing it, but they could provide it on the spot. It's still a good idea, I think.

Darney: Then there's all the space management of all those parts of the Library that you're dealing with, and remodeling.

Bruner: Right, and the remodel of that. We did the pre-plan for the remodel, and then they went through with the final planning after I left. But the pre-planning is the fun part because it's all blue sky and you can think of anything you want. Nobody's putting up money yet, so it was interesting to think about how all that would come together.

That was a part of management that I hadn't even thought about was managing the stacks, and what's involved with that. Rich Edwards was head of Circulation at the time, and was really, really good at that. Then Mindy Muzatko took over, so Mindy was there when we actually brought up the new systems. This was also fun.

Mindy had started just a few months in the Library, and she was in a temporary position, and then she was worked into a full-time permanent position, a very low-level position in the Library. She started off in Technical Services and she ended up in Circulation. She gradually moved up and took on more and more responsibility. So when Rich left, what do you do? She was sort of unproven], but she knew kind of, and she just grew into that position. When we brought up the new system linking the libraries, she took the lead on that—of all six libraries—and she was really the person who drove that.

Darney: Wow.

Bruner: It's really good to see that. She really earned the respect of the entire six library staffs.

Darney: That's great. Were you there during the Nisqually earthquake?

Bruner: That was in February, I think?

Darney: Yeah, and you came in—

Bruner: I left in the fall. It was 2001.

Darney: Right.

Bruner: It was the day that Rich Edwards was leaving. When the earthquake hit, [Jean Eichel? 00:26:04] and I had run to the deli over here on Capitol Way to pick up a cake for his celebration. While we were there, it happened. So we loaded the cake in the back of my truck and drove back to campus. Of course, we couldn't go back in the building and there was no party. It was two or three days before we were able to get back in, so we never did have a party for Rich.

Darney: But then you had to pick up all the books.

Bruner: We had probably a third to half the collection on the floor. In the interim, Mindy and Jason [Mock] shared the responsibility. That was their first test was how to get those books back up. Saint Martin's sent a crew over, the State Library sent some people, and we had volunteers. We worked into the evening. It was four or five days, but we got all the books back up. They weren't all in perfect order. They had to go through after that and do the shelving.

Darney: Did you come into the Library with a vision of how it could be? Did you have ideas even?

Bruner: No, I didn't have any kind of sense of that. People had given me documents and I read them, so I had some sense of what the discussion had been, and why the librarians were faculty and how things were supposed to work. I don't believe in vision statements, and I don't believe much in planning anymore. If we had had a vision statement in 1992, by the end of 1993, it would have been—

Darney: Because of the changes.

Bruner: And if we had had plans, we would have pursued the wrong things. So what we really did—I talk about resilience—was we really constructed a very resilient structure that could respond to anything that came along. We bought some things that we probably shouldn't have, but we didn't know it. Six months later, we threw it out and bought new stuff. But it's kind of what you had to do.

The whole idea of resilience is you take some chances, and sometimes you make some mistakes. What you try to do is learn from your mistakes and you move ahead. That's exactly what we were doing. Literally, there was some equipment that we bought that six months later, we threw out. It worked for us for six months, but then something came along that was so much better than we had before.

Darney: You were part of the deans' team, although always in a special way, it seemed to me, because you weren't working as directly with faculty. You were somewhat, I guess, but did you feel like you were one of the deans, or did you feel like an outsider?

Bruner: No, with that deans' group, the earlier group, I didn't feel part of that. That was really awkward. But with the group you and John and Susan and Barbara and whoever else was in there.

Darney: Masao Sugiyama Was Brian Price there?

Bruner: No, Brian had left. Masao had come in and replaced him. I definitely felt a part of that group. The Library was always my refuge. I would go to those meetings, and there was tension between us, but it was always good tension. It was always positive. There were legitimate differences of opinion. But it always felt good to me to walk back to the Library. And yet, I felt like I always had my say. Barbara, in one of her evaluations of me, said I should talk more, but when I needed to say something, I felt like it was heard and that I had an impact.

I remember a couple of issues that I worked really hard on. When Mark Levinsky was writing the faculty reappointment policy, I remember really working hard on that, partly because I had to deal with the faculty librarians, but I was also following Mark's reasoning on that stuff, and I remember talking quite a bit. There were other things that I was active in.

So I felt a part of the deans' team, but I felt enough separated that I didn't feel that I was being—I think you guys had—the deans' jobs are really, really hard, especially the Curriculum Dean job, I

think, is just incredible. I didn't feel quite the same pressure as you guys did. I had other pressures and other things to deal with, but it always felt good to crawl back to the Library.

Darney: Were you there when they split the Curriculum Dean into two positions?

Bruner: That was when I left.

Darney: I wondered how you thought that went.

Bruner: I was really opposed to it, because I was concerned that no one would have a view of the curriculum if it was split. Because I thought you had done a really good job of holding all that stuff in your head, and I remember thinking these two people have to get along really, really well to make it work. And if they didn't, it was going to be a disaster. It seems like it's worked pretty well. The idea of rotating one year was something I hadn't even thought about. It seems to be okay, so I guess it's been all right. But I was really disturbed by it. I wasn't sure that we needed two deans to do that, but I felt that you had been working really, really hard.

Darney: Yeah, I think just because it's a job for more than one person doesn't necessarily mean it's a job for two people.

Bruner: Exactly.

Darney: And I don't know what you can do about that.

Bruner: But I guess it's worked okay.

Darney: Yeah. And you were in the Library when the faculty union came in?

Bruner: No, I was back in the faculty. I think it happened just after I left when I was interim Budget Dean. I think it was right after that. That was in 2005 that the union came.

Darney: Because you came back—just for the record—after teaching for a couple of years, then you stepped in to be Budget Dean for a year.

Bruner: It was about a year and a half. I went in in summer, and I stepped out at the end of . . . winter quarter, I guess it was, the following year. So it was a year and a quarter, year and a half.

Darney: How was that time?

Bruner: It was interesting. I can't say that I didn't enjoy it. It was a tight budget time, so since I was on Budget Dean, I was on a committee that was looking at revenue alternatives. Don had worked up a little bit of stuff on extended ed, so I inherited that. I worked with Amy Betz in pulling that stuff together, and we took it to the faculty and got it approved.

I was really, really busy with that, and it was good for me to work more directly with the faculty. I enjoyed that. I didn't like the five-year review stuff in general. The portfolio reviews were tedious, but I found them useful, and I felt I connected well with some of the new faculty, and that was nice.

I didn't like the way the deans worked at the time. Just as an example, we developed this proposal for Evening and Weekend Studies. It was Amy and me pretty much, and there was a committee that I didn't pay a lot of attention to. I wanted the deans to work it over, so I sent out copies

to everybody, and scheduled it at a deans' meeting, and no one had read it. I got absolutely no feedback, but I got opposition to it. "Oh, it'll never . . ."

That wasn't helpful at all, and I felt like the deans were working much less collaboratively than we had, and there was a lot more door closing and working alone. But that may have just been me walking into that. They may not see it that way at all. Russ Fox was in there then. I really enjoyed working with Russ. He and I saw eye to eye on a lot of things and not on other things, but I came to really appreciate him as an individual.

Darney: It seems to me that there's so much kind of small work that the deans have to do that it takes a special person to be able to step back from that and look at something bigger, which is where the collaborative part comes in. And which is, I think, what the Provost can help with is to say, "Here's the bigger picture that we're all trying to aim for." Or, to have a project that you're trying to enact. It's too easy to get bogged down in details.

Bruner: It is. And the setting, we had a Provost who was totally unsuccessful, and then Don Bantz went in as interim. As interim, you can't do much anyway. With Enrique, [Rodriguez] the deans had really come together around that issue, and it had been a really, really tough time for the deans. I wasn't a part of that, so me coming in, I didn't share quite that camaraderie, but I didn't see it in their working. They had been united around that, but they had not been together working on their individual projects, so that sense of collaboration was gone.

Darney: Also the sense of knowing what each other is doing, and not just doing your own thing and not paying attention to the rest of the team.

Bruner: Right. The deans' meeting were useful but not—I'm walking into a situation, and I'm a temp, and I know that, so that's probably a lot of my dealing with it. The good old days always look better than . . . you know. But I felt like there was something missing in there. They're all good people, and I enjoyed working with them individually, but there was no cohesiveness, really.

Darney: I think that there was a period when the deans did a lot of things, I guess, that would fall under the category of teambuilding as deans. There were social activities, there was a retreat every year. Do you think those things make a difference to the team?

Bruner: Absolutely. And they still did the retreats. I don't think there was much socializing. You were really good about getting us out to diner, and I think that did make a difference. I don't think there was much of that that I recall.

When I went back in the third time, when I went back in as Library Dean, it again was quite different. That's when we were completely caught up in the union stuff, negotiations with the union. We spent a lot of time on working through the contract. What did we want to see corrected? Anticipating how the requests might be, and how the negotiations might go. But there had been no leadership in the Provost position. I liked Ken Tabbutt a lot, and I think he really tried. But there had been no leadership in the Provost office for a decade, and it really felt that way. To me it felt like we were doing what we have to do, but there no looking ahead, there were no initiatives to try anything new. There wasn't a lot of collaboration among the deans either.

Darney: To think about your experience at Evergreen as a whole, it seems to me that the really important thing that you've come up with as being crucial to the college is your idea of resilience, and the way that you talk about; that things are going to change. I think about we don't do cogs [Committee on Governance—a regular review of the governance] process anymore, but all the thinking about, what can we change at the college without changing the core values? And how to be resilient as a college as well as in the Library or other places. Do you see any hope for that, that the college has learned how to do that?

Bruner: I think the college is a resilient structure. The fact that there are no departments and the fluidity of the curriculum is the ultimate in that. But there's a difference between resilience and chaos, sometimes I think it's too chaotic.

I think maybe the faculty had too much power. I don't know if this is true—you'll know this more than I—that in the college's founding, the faculty agreed not to have tenure, and in return, were given a strong say in governance. But the faculty have tenure now, and they still have a lot of say in governance. Some would argue that they don't, but they really do. Certainly the curriculum is all faculty driven. I think that it needs to shift more. The Provost has to have more power over the faculty to make sure that people are in the right places at the right time, and to make sure that the curriculum has coherence in some sense. I don't think that's possible now.

Darney: Because of the structure, or because of the personalities?

Bruner: Both. We have hired independent people, and we have said, "You're independent. The structure says you're independent." But also we have selected for people who do those things, so how do you rein it in? Now, in order to do that, you would have to renegotiate the contract. There is a way, there is a mechanism, for making those changes, but how successful you'd be, I don't know.

I think that the Provost now should be saying, "We don't need this, and we don't need that. We do need this, and we need to hire in these positions." That means that someone has to create the money to fill those positions. But letting the faculty do anything they want—that's being reined in some by some of the structures that we're talking about now—you can't get there. When you're growing, I think that the deans and the Provost were able to influence the hiring decisions to steer people, so it wasn't just totally the faculty. And if you made a mistake, it wasn't a big deal, because you were growing. But when you're in the hole, getting out of that, then I think you have to have a little more coordination than that's going on right now.

Darney: I guess I want to press on that a little bit, because I'm not sure—and maybe it's because it was good times and there was money—but Barbara clearly had a vision of the curriculum. I clearly had a vision of the curriculum. We both worked with faculty to make that happen as close as possible, without saying, "You have to do this." But that's a lot of work, and you have to go into it with that sense of how things ought to be.

Bruner: Exactly. We had 10 years without a Provost who could do that. I have high hopes for the Provost now. She seems like maybe she can put that together. How do you restore that? I don't know about the Curriculum Deans. I think they've tried, but Barbara really did have that vision. I think Byron Youtz probably had that.

Darney. Right.

Bruner: What's his name between . . . who Russ . . . who got fired by Olander?

Darney: Patrick Hill.

Bruner: Patrick had a sense of that. But certainly, the Provost we've had since—I mean, as interim, you can't do it, so many of those years were filled by interim Provosts. Michael Zimmerman should have been able to do that, but I don't think he did. He was more interested in cleaning up messes, and he did a good job with some of those, but he didn't have a vision for the curriculum. That's hard. How can you get that back?

Darney: Right.

Bruner: And it is. So if you had two Curriculum Deans and they have two different visions, how do you—and if they're doing alternate years rather than working together all the time, yes, you can get a curriculum together, and it's efficient, but is it effective? I don't know.

Darney: Right. What about life after Evergreen?

Bruner: It's been good. I did two post-retirement quarters. Then I went back two years ago. That was after my contract had expired. The first two were good. No, one was not a good experience. I worked with a new faculty who was no fun to work with. I was asked by a faculty colleague if I would work with him because he was having some troubles. He committed some of the ultimate sins of a faculty colleague. He made commitments without checking with me. Students got credit for things that they didn't do. He didn't evaluations in on time. He is no longer at the college. But that wasn't good.

But I worked with Walter Grodzik and we did one, and that was great. We had a lot of fun. It was a good program. And then the program I did two years ago was good, and I really liked Steve [last name?], who we hired. But it was just too hard on me physically, so I'm finished teaching.

Beyond that, it's doing good. I mentioned this in that workshop on retirement. I read a couple books before I retired. One of them was by Sherwin Nuland, a physician, a surgeon, who wrote *How We Die*. You know who I mean. And he has a book about aging. He did it a few years ago. I really like him, and I like his books. One of the things—I think it was from that, or there's a book by Atul Gawande, in one of those it said about the important of having projects. I thought about that, so I've tried to structure retirement around projects.

So I feel like I'm planning something, and I'm doing something, and I complete it, and I feel like I've accomplished something. The house was one, and that kept us busy for a whole year. It was good. We really worked together on it. We worked with designing the floorplan and the whole thing. Then in construction, we were over here every other day. Then moving in and getting the furniture, it was just really good.

The travels I've done, I've treated as projects as well. I do very definite preparation. For every one of the trips, I've done a little bit of the language, I read the history, I try to read the literature, get a sense of the art and music before we go. The trip is the completion of it, and it feels good. This time, with the Germany thing, we've gone sort of over the top. But that's been good as well.

I've got a group of guys who come here twice a week, and we sit down and watch "Great Courses." We've studied the cultural history of Russia, the Ottoman Empire. We just did ancient

empires of North America, which was amazing. Now we're doing some stuff on prehistoric palaces, sort of the anthropology, and what it says about power and social structures. Dean Olson is part of it, but the other guys are mostly schoolteachers. One's a historian and a science teacher. We have good discussions. We don't take it terribly seriously. It's a good way to pass some time and stay active. I've enjoyed retirement a lot, probably more than I thought I would.

Darney: What was it that you did with *The Olympian*? On the board?

Bruner: Actually, that was before I retired. That was when I was on sabbatical. After I left the Library, I took a year's sabbatical. They had an editorial board, and they invited applications for people from the community to serve on that. I thought that would be a good thing to do during the sabbatical, so I applied and I didn't get it.

They appointed someone every three months. The three months came up and they called me and said, "Are you still interested?" I said, "Yeah, but now I have to go back to work." They said, "Geez, we really want you." I said, "Okay." I arranged my schedule. I had to go once a week, and it was a non-teaching day. There would always be an issue for us to discuss. It was going into the fall elections, so we interviewed all of the candidates for all the local positions, and then made recommendations.

It was really good. I influenced a couple of them. At the time, there was a proposal for a conference center downtown, and the newspaper wanted to support it. It was the executive editor, the publisher, the editorial editor, and two community people. There was a sixth person, who was one of the staff, a rotating position from the staff of *The Olympian*.

They wanted to write an editorial supporting it and I said, "Conference centers are money losers. Every place they've ever been built, they're money losers. Why would we want to build one here?" "Well, there are assurances." "Look at Wenatchee, look at Spokane. They're money losers." I was able to convince enough of the board to go along with me. They did not. [laughter]

Darney: They stopped it.

Bruner: Yeah, it never happened. The elections, interviewing the candidates, was really, really interesting. In one case, there was a candidate who I would have voted for, but he couldn't answer questions. He actually got the job, and he resigned because he had Alzheimer's disease. But when we asked questions, he couldn't answer them. The other candidate, who I didn't like particularly, answered the questions, and he had a coherent story, so we supported him, but the other candidate won. I was able to influence some of those things, and it was a really good process. It was a lot of fun.

Darney: How long was that term?

Bruner: It was supposed to be three months, and since the election was coming up, they asked if I would stay on. I ended up staying for six months. It was good.

Darney: You said you were thinking about volunteering with math tutoring?

Bruner: Yeah, I've toyed with that. I should have done it when I first retired, but I was having post-retirement contracts. When I finished that stuff up, I was having health problems, and I couldn't commit to things. There were days when I just could not go out of the house, so I put it off. Every year I think, in the fall, I really should call. I haven't done it. Maybe I'll do it this fall. But we like to travel in the fall. I

could do it, I know, but I thought it would be best to probably get set up in the fall and do it through the year. I'll be able to do it one of these days. The neighbors were delivering Meals on Wheels, so I was helping them with that. That was kind of fun. They had to drop it, so I don't do it anymore.

Darney: Is there anything else you would like to say?

Bruner: I can't think of anything. It seems like I said everything and more.

Darney: I'm curious. You didn't do five-year reviews when you were the Library Dean, is that right?

Bruner: No.

Darney: But you did when you were interim Budget Dean?

Bruner: I did. Wait. I didn't conduct them, I went to several of them because I had worked with people.

Darney: Do you think they're effective?

Bruner: It depends on what you mean by effective. I think they're not, and I said I thought they were taking a lot of the deans' time, and I thought it wasn't worth the time. It wasn't useful. We should find a way to do them that, or just drop them altogether. Somebody else said, "You know, the discussion is actually helpful to the people who are up for review." They had some examples, situations they thought had made a difference. So, I don't know. I did a lot of them when I went back into the Library. I wasn't doing the new faculty reviews, but I was doing those, and so the Library Dean takes the lead on those.

The problem is they're coming up, I go and I read the portfolio, I pay attention and make notes, and I've got things to talk about. No one else read them. I did a dozen of them probably in that year and a half, year and a quarter, and I don't believe anyone ever read the portfolios except me.

Darney: Wow.

Bruner: Or very, very few. So we have these discussions, but there's no substance to them. Unless the faculty really takes them seriously, I don't think they're very useful. I would advocate dropping them, although others—I can't remember who this was—made a convincing case.

Darney: It's a kind of recognition that faculty often don't get.

Bruner: For me, when I did it, putting my portfolio together, it was good to sit down and go over that stuff, and it made me think about it. So it's valuable in that sense, yeah.

Darney: Thank you very much, Bill.

Bruner: Thank you.

Darney: It's been a pleasure.

Bruner: Beyond this, it's always good to see you.

End Part 2 of 2 of William Bruner on 7-9-2109