

Sarah Pedersen
Interviewed by Nancy Taylor
The Evergreen State College oral history project
May 18, 2021
FINAL

Taylor: It's almost your big birthday.

Pedersen: Oh, that's right. I'll be 70 on the 30th.

Taylor: I'll be 80.

Pedersen: Isn't that incredible?

Taylor: Yeah, isn't that incredible?

Pedersen: One of the shocks I had moving here and getting to know new people was that I have a good buddy—who stands on the corner when we do protests, and she goes to the Democratic Party meetings, and she's in the Audubon Society, and I've been over to prune her flowers and everything—I discovered that she was in her eighties and it was like, oh, no, am I going to last that long. [laughing]

Taylor: I don't feel 80. That's fortunate because I think of 80 as being really old.

Pedersen: I know. But you feel okay. That's great. I'm glad to hear it.

Taylor: Yeah, that's good. This is recording, and I hope it's recording successfully because it would be a horrible thing if we did this and it didn't record. But it says it's recording, so we should be good. Even before we formally start, I looked at what you just sent, and I thought, oh my goodness, Sarah and I have perfectly parallel careers.

Pedersen: There is a lot of similarity. I was thinking about that.

Taylor: There's a lot of similarity. We made Evergreen and Evergreen made us.

Pedersen: Yeah. Did you go get your PhD after?

Taylor: No.

Pedersen: You never did?

Taylor: No.

Pedersen: Now, let me grill you. What degrees did you have?

Taylor: I have an MA actually, in the teaching of history. It's an MIT. It's different from an M.Ed., but I do not have a PhD. I went back to graduate school, but I never finished.

Pedersen: I was wondering because I knew that you had started in the staff. By the time I met you, you were faculty already.

Taylor: I was faculty from the first year, but we got legitimately through the backdoor and both proved ourselves, and it was the right thing for the college to do.

Pedersen: One of the things that I reflect on—and I always appreciated—was the structural fluidity that made everything possible. Our careers are examples of that.

Taylor: Were you already hired when the librarians were given faculty status?

Pedersen: No, I was hired after all of the existing Library faculty had been converted to that status. I was hired at the same time as Mary Huston, and she was hired as faculty and I was hired as staff because of the kind of librarian, the kind of position I was being hired for. I started as a staff librarian, and then I did not become a member of the faculty until I became dean.

Taylor: Oh, I see. I guess way before you, there was a big effort to make librarians members of the faculty. I guess that was reference librarians.

Pedersen: Right. In some ways, it was left up to who wanted to apply, because Malcolm Stilson was a reference librarian and he did not want to have that status, and did not want to go through that, and did not want to rotate and did not want to teach. There was a distinction, by the time I got there, between people who really saw themselves as being administrative types and people who saw themselves as being teaching types.

Taylor: Do you know who might have been the first one that was a teaching type?

Pedersen: I think it was Susan.

Taylor: Susan Perry?

Pedersen: Yes. She's on Facebook, and I could message her if you would like the bloody details, because what I heard about it was that it was a pretty tough process.

Taylor: It was a tough process, and it was a controversial process, but it was so much in keeping with Evergreen's style and belief that when it was—I can remember when it happened, people were delighted. Then coupled with the rotation out was rotation in, which a lot of people enjoyed and benefited from.

Pedersen: Yeah, I do think it's a really good example of the structural kinds of both accommodations and opportunities that the institution provided.

I have an overall feeling about the serendipity of my life, and how I ended up working at Evergreen. I was not ambitious at all, and I ended up doing all this stuff at Evergreen, and it's just because the institution was so welcoming to that kind of allowing people to grow.

Taylor: That's exactly the way I feel. Let's back up a bit. I guess I didn't even formally say what this is, so when the person does the transcription, they won't know who we are or what's going on. So, let's start back there.

Pedersen: Kind of like being hired at Evergreen. Who are we and what are we doing? We don't know.
[laughter]

Taylor: Just for the transcriber's purposes, this is Nancy Taylor. It is May 18, 2021, and I'm interviewing Sarah Pedersen, who is up in Anacortes. Unusually, we're doing this on Zoom. All the other interviews I've done have been in person, but I think this will work. Maybe we'll do a couple of sessions.

Sarah, to start with, are there early memories or things in your early life that you think people should know about that provided the background for why you were the successful person you were at the college? What you brought to the college in terms of your background.

Pedersen: I think that the most significant thing in my childhood that's relevant to this is that my parents were very politically active throughout my life, throughout their lives. I was raised in a family of people who were constantly talking politics and doing politics. It was so much a part of the culture of the family that when I left home, I was shocked to find out that people socialized and talked about anything other than politics. That was the most, the sense of political activism, and public service that went along with that.

Taylor: And education?

Pedersen: Both of my parents were University of Washington graduates. My father was the first-generation college graduate. He was the son of fishermen, fisherpeople. He was also, from what I understand, the only person in his Ballard High School graduating class who went to college. My theory is it has to do with the fact that he had polio when he was a teenager, and it may have made him think differently about his future. He never said that to me, but I thought about it later on and thought that might have made the difference.

My mother came from a well-educated family. Both her parents were University of Washington graduates, and her grandfather attended Harvard. My grandmother was extremely interested in education, and really emphasized it. My mother was an English Lit grad and my grandmother was an English Lit grad, so literature was a huge piece of what I was getting from them as well. Also, my mother ended up being a library staff person. She didn't get a library degree, but she worked in multiple libraries once she was earning money for us to go to college.

Taylor: There we have another thing in common. We're both Northwesterners, which wasn't very common at the college. Most of the people came from outside the state, but you were here for many generations.

Pedersen: Yeah, raised on camping and outdoor activities in the Northwest, and eventually sailing with my family.

I think that has been a really important piece of my educational history as well. I ended up attending Fairhaven up in Bellingham. I am very thankful that I developed a really strong cohort of friendships out of that. Because of the regional nature of the school, we've continued to be around each other ever since then, because people live in places like Seattle, and have maintained those contacts. Even our friend who's been in Boston at Harvard for the last 30 years still maintains contact with us.

Taylor: Is it the Fairhaven group you're talking about?

Pedersen: Yes.

Taylor: That's where you did your undergraduate work, and then talk about the rest of your education—not the rest of it because it goes on forever, but what happened next?

Pedersen: I graduated from college in '73 and employment opportunities were really bad. I was raised with this appreciation for education that made me not look at my education as being instrumental, but really being something that you do to develop as a human being generally, not employment-focused at all. But in the back of my mind was, what the heck am I going to do when I graduate with my English or liberal arts degree?

My mother had worked in libraries, so it was an obvious option for me. I would like to point out that although I was pretty much consistently an A student all the way through school, a good student and a very happy student, nobody ever suggested to me that I should go to graduate school or get a PhD. I ascribe a lot of that to gender issues and not seeing young women as being fodder for the graduate programs.

Thank heavens! Thank heavens I didn't [go to grad school]! [laughing] Library school seemed a fairly obvious option for me. I used it as an opportunity to see different parts of the country. Went to the University of Kentucky as the place that gave me the best deal. Library school is not very interesting and not very challenging. It's a professional school.

Taylor: But that was in the '70s.

Pedersen: That was '74 to '76. It was really a one-year program, but I had an assistantship that required that I take a lower load and take two years to get the program, which is beneficial. I got my feet much better grounded as a result of being there for two years.

What happened was the assistantship that I was working for was a terrifying, brilliant woman, Lois Mai Chan, who was a national-level scholar in cataloging and classification. This is not anything that I had thought I would do, but working for her, it was that was the only really rigorous work that was being done in the graduate school, as far as I could tell. There was one guy who was doing some really interesting stuff with history, but I just wasn't clued into that at the time. He was looking at libraries of instruments of social control, which I look back on and say, wow, I really should have been paying attention to him. [laughing]

But I fell into this role in working on highly technical, analytical work, and enjoying it. I felt the need of that kind of highly structured, analytical work. I personally, as an undergraduate, had become dismayed—

Here's the part where I want to talk about the Perry model. When I learned about the Perry model of cognitive and moral development, I said, oh, that's what's happened. There was this point at which I could not get political answers that were clear enough from what I was learning in school to connect it to practice. It was like there are no real answers here. The Marxists were all idiots, and nobody else had anything to say that was about practice at all.

Everything else that I turned to—I studied a little bit of nutrition, I did some things like that, and it was like nobody actually was coming up with any answers, and I was back in that Perry model phase that says, okay, the first level is want you black-and-white, and you want to be getting specific outcomes and specific answers. I threw up my hands and just went for the enjoyment that I got out of studying literature, so that was primarily an aesthetic experience rather than something that could inform practice. There were great lessons in literature, but no answers.

This sense of confusion about how to make my way in life separated my political interests and my activism interests from my intellectual development. Library school—the cataloging and classification—was this opportunity for me to have a very highly analytical, challenging piece of work that had apparently no political significance. It was a totally uncontroversial thing to do.

Taylor: It was a complicated topic, but it had answers.

Pedersen: Well, at least the way that Dr. Chan taught it, it was a clear yes and no, and you could do it right, or you could do it wrong. [laughing] I think a few years later, I probably would have become a computer expert of some kind in library science instead of working—

Taylor: It's fortunate you had that interest because the whole notion of library science has changed so much, and you had to learn that all, whether you were in school or not, in order to be a librarian.

Pedersen: Yes. Well, librarianship at Evergreen . . . hmm . . . interesting. [laughter]

Taylor: Right, right. But I can remember times with you in the early days of computers in the library where you librarians had to be the ones who learned how to use computer in research, and you had to teach the faculty.

Pedersen: That's right. I feel as though by the end of my library career—about 10 years ago—there were finally good enough computer labs, and I had enough of the right kind of ways of structuring stuff with faculty, that I felt like I could actually get the students in to work on things, and get their hands on things, and understand why it mattered which kinds of things they found, and how it was different from the Web, and what a scholarly article actually looked like, and have them work on their actual inquiries while I was in the lab with them. That was never possible up until that time because of the whole thing of trying to present from a single screen or present by just talking. I remember Frank Motley holding up books, endlessly pointing at them, talking about what they did. It was like, you know, this doesn't work. [laughing]

Taylor: But when you were in library school, that couldn't have been the topic. That wasn't possible yet, I don't think, in the '70s.

Pedersen: No.

Taylor: I remember the first computer I had was in the '80s sometime.

Pedersen: Computers were being used extensively for cataloging and classification and for circulation systems, but they were not being used at all to provide information to patrons.

Taylor: But you had the inclination to dive in rather than to avoid.

Pedersen: Yeah. My cousin, Barbara Walton, was a librarian at the State, and when she retired, she said, "Oh, thank god. I don't have to learn this." [laughing]

Taylor: Right. So, you got your library degree. Then what's next?

Pedersen: I landed my first professional job at Northern Arizona University. It was still a very compressed job market. I did an interview at Colgate University. My boyfriend was really not interested in being in New England, so we opted for the job in Arizona. That was a good place for us in the sense that it's a small town in the middle of the most gorgeous country you could imagine. I really was relieved to be in a situation where nature was readily available. Boy, what a lousy working environment Arizona was.

Taylor: That's too bad.

Pedersen: Well, it's still a right-to-work state, and there was a constant influx of people wanting to move there. They could just treat people any way that they wanted. It was a really nasty management climate. My best example of that—which just shocked me not end—for the first couple years, we got two weeks' vacation. Nothing abnormal about that, but they required that you take it at Christmas. You had no choice. It's because the President had been walking around one Christmastime when classes were out, and he'd seen people goofing off. He said, "Okay, everybody has to take their vacation when the campus is closed down. You don't have any choice about it." It's like, yeah, what if you don't have anything that you want to do [laughing] in the two weeks in the middle of the winter in that frigid climate?

Taylor: That's crazy.

Pedersen: It was, and they were just so completely unkind and exploitative of all of the staff. Librarians would tend to be protected more. They were investing their time in recruiting and us nationally and doing all this kind of stuff. We were generally not treated that way, but all the technical services staff had just—anytime anybody talked back or anything else, they were just out of there.

I was going straight cataloging—just plain cataloging—for three years, and then in the fourth year, I became the—I don't know if it was temporary or permanent. I don't remember. But I was made head of—probably that was just a temporary fill-in appointment, but I was made head of the Archives and Special Collections, and that was fun. It included the Kolb Collection, which is the guys who took all the pictures of all the mule trains down to the bottom of the Grand Canyon. We had of all their old equipment and all of the photographs. That was pretty fun.

Throughout that, I've been trying to find a way to get back to the Northwest. And, as another indicator of how bad the job market was, there were literally only three positions that opened up in that four years that were appropriate for me to apply for. So, I was really, really lucky to get the job at Evergreen. All I cared about was that I was getting back to Washington.

Taylor: What did you know about Evergreen before then? Because this is about '78 or something when you came?

Pedersen: That would have been 1980. We knew about Evergreen at Fairhaven.

Taylor: Sure.

Pedersen: At Fairhaven, we were, of course, talking about alternative education, what's the best education, and what are the alternative schools and all that, and we would hear about Evergreen that was getting started. Fairhaven's ambitions as an alternative institution were greatly limited compared to Evergreen because we, like our library depended upon the main library, I actually took my major

entirely at Western. It was really a college within the university, and very dependent upon the university for a lot of the structural support. There were a lot of limitations on its experimental nature as a result of that, which, when I got to Evergreen, I could see the difference.

I knew about Evergreen generally as an alternative institution. I didn't know much about it. It really didn't dawn on me until I got to Evergreen. It was like, wait! This is like home! The whole counterculture did not die during the last six years. [laughter] Living in a place like Lexington, Kentucky, and then a place like Flagstaff, Arizona, it was like that stuff was just gone. It was invisible.

So, here I was, landing just pretty as can be in the middle of an institution that was exactly like what I had chosen as my path when I first started college in the region that I really wanted to be in. It was like, whoa! That was just pure luck. A cataloging job at any other university in Western Washington would have been fine. [laughing]

Taylor: Then you said, "Where did all these hippies come from?"

Pedersen: I said, "Wow! Hippies!" {LAUGHTER}

Taylor: You were to arrive on campus and think it was complete throwback.

Pedersen: I didn't. What I realized was that I was in some other parts of the country that are quite different than the Puget Sound region.

Taylor: You came in '80.

Pedersen: Yes.

Taylor: And in cataloging.

Pedersen: Cataloging. Technical Services, yeah. That's a really literally a backroom, called the backroom situation. No public service aspect to the job at all.

Taylor: I remember I talked to Libby Beck—and you must have worked with her?

Pedersen: Oh, my god! Yes!

Taylor: She early on said the most fun thing about the job—because she was in cataloging—was that she sometimes would be the first to catalog a book for the world, and she got to choose where it would go based on what she knew. That was so exciting, and I suppose that was one of the things you did, too. I didn't ever think of a librarian doing that, but she just thought that was the most wonderful thing in the world.

Pedersen: It is. It's so different now, but back then, the unification of that system so that you could use the same methodologies across all of the different libraries was a big deal. And it was becoming controlled by machine-readable cataloging forms. The thing that made it so rigid was that we were trying to fit with Library of Congress practice and everything, so our cataloging was supposed to match

exactly what would happen if somebody had gotten that book first at the Library of Congress. Subject analysis is rarely going to be exactly the same, but that was the challenge. It was like “What would the Library of Congress do with this?” [laughing]

Taylor: She found that a lot of fun.

Pedersen: Yeah. Libby, God bless her—I was hired as Head of Cataloging, which basically means that I was supervising Libby, who, of course, had many more years of experience than I did. But gawd, what a wonderful woman. She was a wonderful person.

Taylor: Yeah. Who else was there with you at that time?

Pedersen: In the backroom who was with me was Bob Haft. That was when he was still managing the slide collection, doing all the art history aspects of that, managing that collection. I was hired by George Rickerson. I don’t know if you remember George. He was the head of Technical Services. Then there were maybe a half a dozen staff members back there that were doing all the different aspects of—we were still keypunching stuff for circulation records and things like that.

But the structural supports for the alternative Evergreen vision that showed in the library organization were really amazing. Even if I’d remained completely isolated from anything to do with teaching or anything else, you could see the difference in the way the library did things that were all based very deliberately on the Evergreen education.

Things that impressed me the most when I first got there, there was a place for you to put your dogs. If you wanted to have your dog on campus, there was a kennel. It was like, oh, my god, that is so cool. [laughing] The bathrooms in the library were unisex. How unheard of.

But in terms of specifically library things, it was like, well, yeah, we didn’t have to be quiet. There was a presumption of people working together rather than being silent.

Taylor: And you could bring a cup of coffee in the library.

Pedersen: You could bring a cup of coffee in. So, immediately, you started seeing how some of the bureaucratic characteristics of librarianship as a broader profession were upended in the Evergreen Library. You know what, though? I couldn’t remember the name of the first Dean. I’m blanking out on that.

Taylor: Jim Holley.

Pedersen: Jim Holley, right. He was long gone by the time I got there, but I realized that so much of that came from his thinking.

Taylor: Was Jovana Brown there when you were there?

Pedersen: Jovana was Dean, and she was in the process of being basically asked to leave by the reference librarians. They were unhappy with her leadership. To me, I didn't have any idea what they were talking about. First of all, the idea that you could do that [laughing] blew my mind. But also, I just didn't work with her long enough to see what the issue was. They enlisted Byron's support to ask her [go over to the faculty, and Susan Perry became the Dean.

Taylor: Susan Perry was a reference librarian at the time, right?

Pedersen: I think at that time she was actually Media Services. She had been a reference librarian. My sense is that she was an instigator of the rotation in the library faculty model and was first to go out. At the time that I got there, she . . . hmm . . . I'm not sure. Because I also remember her going loaning herself once a week to go to Tacoma to do library instruction. I don't know. I can't remember.

Taylor: What was the work atmosphere in relationship between the people working in the library like when you got there, or when you worked there?

Pedersen: I think that it was all—like I said, I didn't understand what the issue was with Jovana. I didn't get to see that go on long enough.

There was constant consideration of all kinds of ideas for changing things and people's vested interests in those various different competing ambitions and stuff like that. I think that it was much more in flux than a lot of institutions would be just because of its youth. That created some insecurities. But Susan, when she became Dean, was really, really good at group process and getting people to make decisions constructively together. Really good.

Taylor: I always think of the tension between staff, librarians and faculty, that whole interchange of people. It has been a tension that has been, I think, paid attention to more at Evergreen than most places, but nevertheless, it existed.

Pedersen: Yeah, it's a glass ceiling kind of a situation. There's inherent classes in libraries everywhere where the professional librarians—people who don't have a library degree are completely shut off from practically any management in a lot of libraries. Then the faculty status, which is—I don't know how they talk about it now, but back then, it was like an institutional—it was part of things like accreditation; that an academic library, if you're looking at accreditation and quality of an academic library, one of the questions you ask is, "Do the librarians have faculty status?" In most institutions, it didn't mean anything. It was purely a question of status. It meant things in terms of the quality of life of their work experience, but it didn't mean any responsibilities necessarily beyond normal library faculty. I think WSU had some kind of additional expectation of library faculty about publishing and presenting.

Taylor: How did it come that you got faculty status? Because when you were hired, you probably were not hired as faculty.

Pedersen: Right. My faculty status came with my appointment as Dean. It's just like when you hire somebody from outside into that level of position, the position is predefined as being a faculty position.

Taylor: How did other people get that status?

Pedersen: They're hired into library faculty. When I got there, I think that Mary Huston was hired as a library faculty, and that was predefined.

Taylor: Predefined because they already had that arrangement, so the advertisement went out as—

Pedersen: Right, and so part of her hiring process was that she went before the faculty hiring DTF.

Taylor: Right, and I think that's been true now for everybody hired as librarians. They all have faculty status, but there was a time when—

Pedersen: No, we have continued to hire people into non-library faculty positions in Technical Services, and I'm thinking . . . we ended up identifying a staff position for the management of all of Public Services to stabilize the whole function.

Taylor: When you were there, how many people were faculty in the library?

Pedersen: Five. There was Pat Matheny-White, Frank Motley, Mary Huston, Susan Perry, something like that.

Taylor: What was the job specification for being in that faculty library pool? You taught a certain amount of time?

Pedersen: The rotation was established before I got there. For hiring, what they would look for was evidence of teaching experience, which we might not actually be able to get, considering the limited opportunities for most librarians. But we practically always hired people who had a subject masters beyond the—I think we always did into those positions. A lot of it was potential for teaching rather than actual teaching experience.

But the rotation was established before I got there. That was you taught one quarter every three years. Then we had the faculty coming in, which was great. I remember working with Richard Alexander and people like that. [laughing]

Taylor: For you, was that a big plus, a big benefit, that you could rotate out and teach, or is that something that you—as you say, Malcolm Stilson didn't want to, but was that something that you wanted to do and you saw yourself fitting in quickly?

Pedersen: I had a lot of time for development between the time I was hired as the Dean and the time I started teaching because, of course, the teaching didn't start until I was no longer Library Dean. That

was the faculty status that came with an administrative appointment without teaching. It would be just like Barbara Smith or John Perkins.

What I would say is that the nature of the institution was such that—okay, here’s how it worked. I’m a backroom person. Susan Perry was a phenomenal mentor. She stuck me on some committees. I started meeting people. In 1985 or ’86, she stuck me on the strategic planning DTF with Patrick Hill. From then on, my mind was being blown by his capacity for thinking deeply about philosophy—theory and practice—and what does it mean ethically, morally practically in our institution?

And the nature of the deans’ teams that I worked with meant that I was getting a really strong introduction to educational philosophy, but also the epistemological questions that were a fascination to people like Patrick, Chuck Pailthorp, Matt Smith, Brian Price, Rita Pougialis. I was in what amounted to about five hours of educational philosophy seminar every week. [laughing]

We ended up doing something . . . I don’t know what made us do this, but I think it might have been an idea from Sara Huntington. We developed something that we called an affiliation, where it was like you’re not going to just go out one quarter every three years. And you’re not going to be an effective teacher of research unless you know what’s really going on in a program.

We started doing something called affiliation where we would participate in the collective parts of a program. So, we would affiliate with a program and it would mean that you’d do all the readings, you would do the faculty seminar, you’d do all the readings, you’d attend as many of the all-program meetings as you could, you’d deliver the teaching research support component in that context. You’d skip the part about seminar with your own seminar group, and you wouldn’t do any evaluations, and you might skip some of the other small workshop sections, or sections that were done on other specific disciplines within the program. That was very much like experiencing the program overall.

Taylor: Right, so that meant the role of a reference librarian as a faculty member was very different than it had been before the teaching started because you associated with programs and you actually had to spend a fair amount of time learning the program content to be able to really help the students.

Pedersen: Exactly.

Taylor: That seems like a wonderful luxury. I wonder, how did the librarians as a team, or even the college, think of a job description of that sort? Because it was very different than what you would have signed on to at the beginning.

Pedersen: Yeah. There were some of us who were just really interested in this model and did it, and then there were others who just never got around to really connecting. I think a lot about Barbara

Smith in this context because she was always facilitating these things that made people meet across different programs, teams, institutions. She was just really focused on making connections.

There were so many faculty institutes and other kinds of development activities that we could participate in, and some people were really good at that and some people just, it was not their personality to go out and get to know people. I myself found that the one reason why I could always find great teams to be part of is because I got to know so many people through the deanery. All the people that rotated through in the six years that I was doing it were all my best buddies. I came out of that and I [said], "Hey, look at what you're teaching. Could I affiliate with your program?" "Oh, yeah, sure!" [laughing]

Taylor: The thing about it is it's such a wonderful model for community-building, which is one of the things that the college kept hounding at and talking about, and how people thought that the community was split. By integrating the librarians and the library so completely into the teaching, you ended up with a much better relationship between the academic side of the college and the library, which shouldn't be split to begin with, but often is. So, students would come in and they would know you.

Pedersen: Exactly.

Taylor: Faculty would come in and ask for help, and it wasn't just an incidental requirement or whatever, they were together. I think that was pretty obvious, and when it worked, it worked beautifully.

Pedersen: Right, and it's admittedly an extremely small portion of the curricula that you could work with.

Taylor: And I bet you anything, it doesn't go on today.

Pedersen: I don't think anybody is doing anything like that. As far as I could see, there were people who weren't even rotated. It's not happening anymore.

Taylor: But it's always what happens when you have a good idea and you want everybody to do it.

Pedersen: Then people say, "I can't do that."

Taylor: No.

Pedersen: Traffic at the reference desk was greatly reduced by the advent of powerful search engines and all that. Everybody could access their journal articles from home. Lots of people thought they could do their own research without instruction. The level of participation in the reference desk really ended up getting less and less and less over time. We were double-staffed many hours a week when I first got there, and busy. By the time I left, it was like you hardly even saw anybody the reference desk. I don't think it's quality of service, I think it's really the changing information accessibility.

Taylor: But when you were doing that at the beginning—I can remember when you were a liaison with one of the teams that I was working with—I was trying to remember with Fritz what search engine it was that you preferred at that moment. It certainly wasn't Google. The students really didn't have any idea how to use it.

Pedersen: How to get into it or use it.

Taylor: They just didn't know anything.

Pedersen: Why?

Taylor: They wanted to. It was part of—we had sort of a library research section as a part of the program because that was part of their education. I still think students need to learn all of that, but somehow, it's assumed that they know, so they just do it on their own because they're just computer literate or something. I'm not sure it's true, but that's where you spent an awful lot of your time, I can remember.

Pedersen: That was what the main thing was. At some point, a student who's going to be a serious student has to know about peer-reviewed journals and how to get to them, and not just depend upon what's free. But we have things like Google Scholar and things like that now where you actually can get to a lot of the peer-reviewed literature without doing that.

It's so interesting, because I can remember really good, responsible teachers saying, "We have to have a van to go to the University of Washington so the students can use a real library." Excuse me? All of those periodicals are available online through the [laughing]

Taylor: There used to be a huge section of the library on the main floor that was devoted to reference materials.

Pedersen: Right. Frank was so proud of that enormous collection. [laughing]

Taylor: I used to bring students in in the '70s to learn how to use a library reference section. But that changed, and that's what you were at the heart of, really, because the librarians had to lead the way.

Pedersen: Yeah, we had to sort out. But I remember also having conversations. I remember a friend of mine laughing at me because I said, "I don't see the usefulness of the Internet for reference service," and it was because at that time, it was all listservs and professional organizations. You didn't have anything like even government Web pages at that point.

It was like, okay, you're working in a specialized field, and you have colleagues that you find by using the Internet. This does not help me with a person who's doing a general research project.

Taylor: Right.

Pedersen: Within probably two years, we had a good human interface and could search whatever we wanted to.

Taylor: Do you remember what the search engine was that you used to like before Google?

Pedersen: EBSCOhost was a prominent one for a long time. EBSCOhost and [unintelligible 00:49:07], which were both collectors of articles from across the discipline. In working with you, we had *America: History and Life* and historical abstracts online, which is just a replacement of the paper sources.

Taylor: What I remember was something the equivalent of Google that, before it was settled on what was the engine that was going to be the most effective.

Pedersen: I can't remember. We went through a lot. [laughing]

Taylor: You went through a lot—I remember that—and you saying, "This is the best one right now." [laughter]

Pedersen: Tomorrow, it's going to be different. What was really crucial in the role of librarians is that we were making decisions all the time about how to spend that money on databases and which databases really were going to serve the curriculum and the students. They were changing all the time, and you were reviewing them all the time, and you were trying to figure out what was the most powerful and what was the most reputable.

I feel as though one of the weaknesses in our mixed model for the librarians was if you are not actually dedicated to librarianship and you're coming at it from your own discipline for which you have a very strong affection and expertise, it's possible that you won't even try and teach students that part of it.

I've observed people who come into it who don't have that background just not seeing the point of really doing the work that it took to identify the databases that were really going to work for the students and bring them what was needed for that project, present those to the students, and do all of that. They'd basically fall back on this generalized searching stuff.

As with the rest of the faculty, to a degree, some of it was jack-of-all-trades, master of none, which is part of the professional character of librarians often. Good generalists.

Taylor: When you think of Evergreen values and the things about an Evergreen education, and what the college was built on, how does the library fit into that model, and what were the tensions? What were the things that you really valued about what the college was trying to do and how it was doing it, and whether the librarians—or the library—could support it or were in tension with it? What's going on there?

Pedersen: I think that early on, many thinkers about the library and the curriculum realized that you cannot have a small college offering students the opportunity to do things like individual contracts or all-year programs with a little library that's for a 3,000-student body. You've got to offer services that are not normal for undergraduate colleges, and you've got to teach people how to take advantage of them.

An example would be that interlibrary loan accessible to undergraduates when I got there. Other institutions did not allow anybody but graduate students to use interlibrary loans. I think that there was, from the outset, a recognition that research skills and access to resources beyond the institution were crucial if you're going to have an open-ended kind of curriculum as we had.

People who are doing all-year programs have got to be able to do big projects, and people have got to be able to check books out for the quarter. And having study rooms. These are all things that would have only been possible for graduate students anyplace else.

Taylor: How do you think your life would have been different if you were a librarian, say, at Western or a Brand X kind of university?

Pedersen: The only way that I would have had the kind of opportunities I had at Evergreen would be to go forever greater supervisory responsibilities—most often, of course, within the context of the library—which means increasingly grindingly horrible work in order to get more pay. [laughing] Instead of being able to do all of this wonderful intellectual work with wonderful colleagues in great community, and getting so many different opportunities.

Taylor: It was a perfect fit because not everybody would have taken advantage of it the way you did, and not everybody would have wanted to.

Pedersen: Yeah.

Taylor: You were lucky. Talk about your teaching, your teams and what you think was most successful, what issues you had, all about your teaching. Because you taught with teams a lot.

Pedersen: I did at the beginning. I think that was, of course, harder and harder as time went on, and as I changed in my orientation toward maritime studies. I really couldn't do big teams with that work. And the college was going toward smaller teams and shorter programs by then.

I got involved with that in the late '90s, but before that, all of my earlier teaching experience was in three or more-person teams pretty much. My first one, I went out as a baby to teach a quarter. It was one of those big, coordinated studies programs with not enough leadership. I was in one quarter, and another person was in a quarter after that, another person was in a quarter after that, so it was kind of disorganized in that way.

I'm not going to name him, but the coordinator was a pretty tired faculty member who really didn't know how to coordinate a program. The students all year long—you hear this in all programs sometimes—the students are saying, “How does this all go together?” [laughing] And we're all saying, “I don't know.”

But it was typical in that—part of the reason that I could teach so easily in programs was that the studies literature in a conventional program was the text, the discussion, and the writing. That's all there is to it. Class after class after class, you're just looking at the texts together, you're talking about the texts together, you're basically always doing discussions and seminar, very few lectures. Then you're writing extensively about your thinking about whatever that is. You're perfectly text-based seminar.

I had an enormous backfile of books to draw on any time I wanted to think about a topic. I found that what I could do, with a program that was very loosely organized like the first one—the theme was just like cities or something like that—was I could think about the books that I had read that I didn't get that I really wanted to know what was going on in them, and then we could use them in a program, and I would get to work on figuring those texts out.

Typically, there were two regular faculty, and one of them was a really, really smart young guy who brought all kinds of great Marxist-based, materialist theory-based texts that were really smart, and it was the first time, like, oh! The Marxists aren't all just these black-and-white dopey people who can't handle any complexity. There's some really good stuff here! [laughing] The readings themselves that came into the programs.

I think my first real quarter in a program where I got to pick the program was when I taught in Power and Perspective with Rita and Brian and Matt. We had political science and anthropology, we had feminist theory, we had lots of economic history—once again, really good Marxist stuff. It was focusing on what was happening to me mentally along with the rest of academic culture that was the linguistic turn and looking at how our immutable truths were not immutably true. So, it was about cultural differences and seeing things differently based on power relationships.

I got to get a little bit of grounding in political economy. Matt has us reading the true classics of classical economics. Brian had us reading contemporary theory about that. Rita always brought the most amazing feminist literature in. I think that was an affiliation in the sense that I think I was in the program fulltime for a quarter, and then continued without having a seminar with students for the remainder of the year.

I had a year of teaching fulltime with David Rutledge, so one thing I really want to have time to talk about is how the commitment to equity evolved, and what the different stages were in that in my career as part of the stages in the college. David Rutledge, of course, is one of that cohort of faculty of color that were all hired at the same time, of which there might have been six or so. It was when Angela Gilliam was hired and Fred Dubet and David. Carol Minugh.

Taylor: That was something we called Wild Card Hires, I think.

Pedersen: Yes, exactly! That's right. You remember. You were probably on a hiring committee. It was after we had a year where we didn't hire a single faculty of color, and it was like, oh, my god, what's wrong with us?

Taylor: I think this is a Patrick Hill notion, but I'm not sure.

Pedersen: Yeah. It was certainly this moment where we were in the deans' meeting and Patrick was saying, "We've got to do something. We have got to do something." It was like, okay, how come we've put all of our attention on this question of diversity in the faculty, making Teaching Across Differences part of the overall mission?

Taylor: When you came to the college, were you aware of tension with equity issues, both with diversity and with women? Was that in the air?

Pedersen: Not for me, no. This might not be true, but the fact that there was a Tacoma Program that was really dynamic and really interesting, and that Susan was working with them and committed so much time to it, that was an important piece of information.

I had incredible admiration for both her and Pat Matheny-White, for example. Every single time we talked about collection development she would bring up whether we were being appropriately diverse in developing the collections. What kind of multiculturalism were we representing? I have to admit that there was nobody talking about anything like that in the institutions that I'd been in before, in my English literature classes or the library school or my first library job. It was like "Wow! You people are so cool!" So, I would have been quite oblivious to tensions. I was very aware of some commitments that I was oblivious to tensions.

I think that at the time I got there, a lot of the initial faculty of color were gone—left in disgust or fired. There were a lot of people that came and went. I knew Rudy. What was his name? Gil Saucedo. He did a rotation. There were a few folks like that. I think that the whole idea of having places where people were able to do this work away from the center of the college was a lot of what was starting to happen.

Taylor: How about women?

Pedersen: Patrick was so incredibly committed, and it's a white, liberal institution that really didn't know how to do that work very well. He came up with a lot of bright ideas and got people really involved. We did those extra hires in addition to focusing a lot on diversity in the job descriptions, so you hire for the quality of the person's ability to contribute to us Teaching Across Differences. What he insisted upon—and I think Matt worked really hard with this idea as well as other people in the deanery—was these are important intellectual ideas. This is not just a matter of trying to get a lot of people of color. These people are going to bring us forms of expertise that we can learn from, and we need to make this an intellectually interesting process.

We had Andrea Gilliam do a really great lecture from her work, and right after that hire, we had the Martin Bernal—we had that cohort of four panelists. We got to center on *Black Athena*. I met Russel Barsh, who now lives on Lopez Island. Did you know that?

Taylor: No, I didn't, but you also met Johnnetta Cole, I'll bet.

Pedersen: Yes. As an example of how to integrate this, Patrick arranged for people to have stipends to work on the library collection to help us do collection development from their expertise. So, Russel Barsh produced information about the coverage of Native American legal issues.

Russ now lives on Lopez Island and he works with an organization called . . . I forget the name of it . . . that is environmental research. At that time, he was working in the UN and he retired.

Taylor: Spelling?

Pedersen: B-A-R-S-C-H. [Transcriber found Barsh.] The organization is a Native American word that I can never remember exactly what it is. I'll send you the e-mail link. It does community-based research on all of these environmental questions. He finds questions that aren't being researched and does things like he and his partner organize people to go do surveys of sand—what are they called?—the feeder fish that live in the sand. They do all these amazing things.

Taylor: Okay. It's an amazing place. There's amazing people there, actually.

Pedersen: Yeah.

Taylor: I'm really interested. Your perspective was that the college worked pretty hard, at least at the time of Patrick Hill's tenure, on equity issues.

Pedersen: Yes.

Taylor: The word now is that the college has been a complete failure on that and that that's one of the big problems, and the climate is toxic about those issues. It's a matter of memory, isn't it?

Pedersen: The thing is that that work was really hard, but also what's clear to me is that most faculty wanted to have faculty of color hired who would be just exactly like them. People were reactive if people brought different perspectives. I think that continues. I really do.

Taylor: I think that's true.

Pedersen: We're teachers. College is about teaching people something different from what they experienced before they came to college. Some of that means that people, particularly from some disciplines, think this is what needs to happen.

Taylor: Right. They want to replace themselves.

Pedersen: Yes, they do absolutely, which is a huge problem as well.

Taylor: What about the issue of women?

Pedersen: I'm afraid that I have an old liberal prejudice, which is that I don't like to focus too much on the things that are about me in terms of political activism. [laughing] Feminism becomes entirely just a personal project, something that I thought about.

But I was really interested and committed to feminist epistemology as a result of working with the different people that I've worked with.

Taylor: But one of the things—Nancy Allen and I came to the college at the very same time at the very beginning, and we've had very lively, funny conversations about how women were treated at the beginning. By the time you came there, I don't know what your response would have been, but I think it would have been very different. Because the college did like a 180 by the time Jane Jervis became President, Barbara was Provost, Rita Cooper was head of Personnel, Ruta Fanning was head of Finance. The college was run by women.

Pedersen: Yep.

Taylor: It was really a women—

Pedersen: And really good women.

Taylor: Really good women! It was the glory days, as far as I'm concerned, but it was very different from the beginning. I don't know where you stepped into it.

Pedersen: I think one way for me to think about it is that I was just in so much awe of everybody who had gone before. I would go to faculty meetings and I would listen to these mostly men dominating everything, but I just thought that they were so smart that it didn't bother me. It took me 20 years before I was saying, "Oh, would you just shut up?" [laughter]

Taylor: [Unintelligible 01:09:17] with women, of course.

Pedersen: Yeah. But there were dynamic women. There were out lesbians, very prominent and leaderly in the faculty. That kind of stuff, to me, was a liberating context. Things like having a unisex bathroom that the one cross-dresser on campus could safely use. Things like that were so awe-inspiring. [laughing]

But I have to say that that recruitment period and that intellectual work that we did with racial equity was really exciting and really motivating. It didn't last as a happy thing. I think a lot of people who we hired had PTSD, and they had to come and navigate an informal organization where the instructors were not easy to understand, and don't know how to acculturate easily into a new environment, then you're going to be really paranoid.

Taylor: I had never thought of it that way. I've always thought of it as that we haven't done a very good job of not just faculty development but acculturation in a positive sense. We haven't helped people figure out how to be at the college.

Pedersen: That is the kind of work that I thought that Barbara [Smith] was really good at facilitating, but it takes an enormous amount of effort. You really have to focus on it, and you have to spend money on it. She thought really hard about who should teach with whom and that kind of thing. I think for the last 15 years at least, it's just you show up and you do whatever.

Taylor: Yeah.

Pedersen: There aren't big teams to go into. It's much more difficult to find your way across different divisions. But some people are just really, really good at it. [laughing]

Taylor: I remember early, early, early days when the college had a 1,000 students, and then we thought of having to hire 50 faculty a year, and we were supposed to grow to 10,000 students in 10 years.

Pedersen: Yeah, take over the library building. Everything would be out of the library building except the library. [laughing]

Taylor: Even at that time we said there's no way that we can train faculty, or teach faculty, or hire the right faculty to be able to sustain the college at that rate. We just can't do it. I think without that specific effort, that's one of the things that's gone awry. Faculty development was a big part of my job in the deans' area, and Barbara really cared about that. It's thought of as a luxury now, and the consequences are pretty clear.

Pedersen: And you think specifically about the way that the college is constantly pushed to or is pushing toward more segmented curriculum and more silos of curriculum. Smaller programs, quarter-long programs, people needed to get their Pathways established in their field, doing all those things. The prospect for having an institution-wide perspective just seems really, really difficult. Really difficult.

Taylor: And maybe—I've often thought about this—when we started, we were really on a good philosophic base and educational values, and we may have outrun our course. I don't know. But now, what we used to do really well, we're not doing.

Pedersen: I agree.

Taylor: Maybe it's because we don't believe in it anymore, and the consequences, whatever is sort of the easiest penchant is what happens. It's much easier not to have to teach in teams, so not teaching in teams. It's much easier to teach what you know than to have to learn something new with another group of people, so we do that.

Pedersen: Yeah, and you come with commitments to your discipline. It's pretty inevitable.

Taylor: You always did, but then the value was to do interdisciplinary teaching, and that required you to learn from other people.

Pedersen: I was just reading some minutes about reestablishing upper-division credit all the way across the curriculum and all this stuff. It's like, oh, yeah, we can see where this is going. [laughing]

Taylor: Yeah, you can see.

Pedersen: I do have a feeling as though a lot of it has run its course. A lot of it.

Taylor: When you think back on the college, what are the things that you think are the backbone that can't be compromised? What have you learned from the college experience that would make you advise people doing certain things?

Pedersen: I guess that after the incidences of the spring of '17—

Taylor: Were you there?

Pedersen: Yeah. I have given up on any belief that the college can do the work that needs to be done for it to live up to its diversity commitment.

Taylor: You've given up?

Pedersen: Yeah. I don't think that Evergreen is the right place. But what can we do in those eddies that faculty freedom allows? There are places where really good work can be done. You can have a program, like if you're going to put all this money into Native American Studies, how good could that get? Certainly, subsets of the curriculum exist effectively because they have walled themselves off, intentionally or not.

Environmental Studies or Sustainability and Justice have to be interdisciplinary. Those things cannot be taught effectively without being interdisciplinary. There's some things where there's no way to avoid interdisciplinarity if anybody is going to take this study seriously. I can think of chunks of the curriculum where it's obvious that Evergreen can do a good job.

The Tacoma Program has been a glorious success. I don't know what's going on with them recently, but that was a really amazing program and I got to spend time teaching library research in that program, despite all the technical difficulties. It was an amazing program. It's because it could establish itself in a way that protected that curriculum from the kinds of things that would have ground it down if they'd been interacting more with the campus. Then the Olympia campus lost the opportunity to work with those faculty basically, except in administrative roles. I don't know.

What does Evergreen have to hang onto? Hmm. I always hoped that it would collapse down to 2,000 students.

Taylor: That's where it is.

Pedersen: Yeah, and actually restructure itself around 2,000 students. But when we had the 2,000 students that were there when I got to Evergreen, we also had a faculty that was designed for a much larger number of students. We were teaching programs that half of what was required by the time I quit teaching.

Taylor: Say that again. We had more faculty?

Pedersen: Yeah, the faculty—student ratio was—was it 2,500 students? Something like that? You could afford to have programs that had much fewer than 20 per faculty.

Taylor: Now the ratio is much less because [unintelligible 01:18:15] students.

Pedersen: Are you hearing anything from faculty where they get to enjoy that?

Taylor: There are many, many programs that are very, very small, teaching to 10 or 12 students. Faculty are being asked to do lots of other things because there are so many administrative jobs—various kinds of things—that people are being asked to do. Of course, now, having to do everything on Zoom, the faculty are working night and day, but the faculty—student ratio is very low.

Pedersen: Right. I keep on forgetting to keep up with the e-mail, but I just went through a whole bunch of them and it was like I see Eirik Steinhoff and Ruth Hayes and all kinds of people—there's public work going on through the e-mails about all of the different curriculum development ideas and self-studies and all this kind of stuff.

Taylor: Yeah, there's a huge amount of work going on and it has nothing to do with students, it has all to do with planning for the future and survival.

Pedersen: Yeah. It's good work, but I doubt that they get to have nice, robust seminars with one another about what they're doing.

Taylor: I don't know. [laughter] I think the morale is pretty low.

Pedersen: I'm sure, and some of that is just the larger context of the pandemic.

Taylor: Right. So, we're moseying into an area that we probably don't want to spend too much time on. [laughter] You said you'd done some reflective writing and you'd been thinking, so we've carried on here for about an hour and a half, and we can come back and do more, but for right now, are there things that you were thinking about that you wanted to make sure you included?

Pedersen: I want to go back to the Perry model, the Perry progression thing, because I spoke about this at Patrick's memorial service. [choking up] I experienced the split that happened when I had to separate political commitments from intellectual commitments. That lasted until I started working with Patrick. Once I started working with Patrick, I could reintegrate those pieces of my life and move up into the Perry model levels, where by observing how he and other really wonderful leaders functioned, I could see the way that he would never react to people, and always would listen, he would always witness suffering, and he would always keep working on dialogue and connection. It didn't matter who you were or what your ridiculous perspective was, he was going to listen to you, and he was going to work with you, and he was going to engage.

The amazing thing about the deans' groups is that you did get people with all these different challenges. There were people driven mad by Patrick's willingness to engage forever, including President Olander. But other people who loved Patrick would say, "Just leave it. We're done with it. Let's move on." And Patrick never would. We'd always continue to niggle at things, probably not sleeping at night while we did so, and he would come back to the next deans' meeting and want to talk about something. He would never ignore what kinds of things we were sweeping under the rug.

I worked with him, and I worked with all of those people and all of those texts and all of those seminars where, for example, the narrator is presenting one perspective and the text, all of a sudden, flips the whole perspective. I would see that I was allowing myself to be carried along based upon my cultural context, and then I would be turned completely upside down, and the text would do that for me.

David Rutledge and I had a ton of seminars all year long about this kind of multicultural turn, which allowed me to become a person who could recognize my own stupidities and consider other people's experiences deeply, and then be motivated by that.

I learned from Evergreen about Praxis, which was everything that we did had an ethical, political, racial, social component. It was all malleable to one degree or another, and it all needed to be considered, and that you could do that, and you could work from that position. You didn't have to have a set of ideas that were going to be the same and not be open to serious reconsideration given new information.

Taylor: Very hard work.

Pedersen: Yeah, but how satisfying is a career where you get to do that? By the time I got to my last quarter of teaching—it was the quarter when all the trouble was going on—

Taylor: Oh, really? I thought you left before then.

Pedersen: I'd been out of town for two years, but I was coming back to teach one quarter of the year. I had a really firm, strong friendship with [Nyeem Murlowe? 01:24:49], which was primarily based upon professional. But I learned to be called out by her, and I learned how to recognize just how much shit people were going through based upon the color of their skin in the context of our wonderful environment, and I was really, profoundly, and deeply hurt by how much people wanted things to just shut up and get quiet.

At that point, it was like, well, this probably is not the institution to get a lot of this work done in. At the same time, there's a lot of good people who were still trying to get the work done, and I've got to respect that and would like to contribute. [laughing]

Taylor: It makes you think—which is one of the sad things that I often think—that I'm glad I'm not there anymore because I can't see how the work can be done.

Pedersen: Yeah, whether you're talking about, can we have a whole community with coordinated studies and integrated intellectual work, and can we have diversity, and can we have independence?

Taylor: Yeah, and can we have a community that is working together and not at each other's throats?

Pedersen: Right, so can you do that without expecting everybody to shut up and go along, which is what I was hearing?

Taylor: And you can't.

Pedersen: No, but I look back on Patrick's example and it was like he never expected people to shut up and go along. But the sense of threat that people experienced in that, to me, this is white privilege, pure and simple. We have a really good life here. Don't mess it up.

Taylor: But is that 2021? Is that the culture that we're now living in? Evergreen can't be separate from it, and it can't live in a bubble.

Pedersen: It can't live in a bubble, and part of what we are learning as a culture is people work on how it is that you engage. It's still all about value, learn across cultural differences. [laughing] I just had this Facebook exchange on my native plants group where people were objecting to using the term "thugs" for invasive plants. Some people got really defensive saying, "No, no, no! You can't apply that here!" Other people very carefully were saying, "It's a term that is offensive to some people. Therefore, it's offensive to anybody who cares about those things." Then you get the people who say, "I can't believe

that you need to bring [unintelligible 01:28:07].” My eventual outcome of that is let’s see. How about if we called them “Bezos”? [laughter]

Taylor: Right, right.

Pedersen: There is one thing that I didn’t get to talk about, which was there were some distinctive things that I got to do as a result of the maritime studies work that I did. That’s not something that most people would have anything to do with, but I’d like to talk a little bit about the pedagogy that worked in that context.

Some of the things that happened as a result of being able to teach using the boats were some things that were difficult to attain otherwise. My first post-contract teaching, I decided I would just do a maritime literature class by myself in the fall. I slammed those students with long readings. We had a great time. What I did was I had them do the voyage first. In week two, all 25 of us or whatever it was got on the *Adventuress* for a week.

Taylor: All 25 on one boat?

Pedersen: Yeah, the *Adventuress* is 115 feet long. It carries 24 passengers plus 12 crew. We did that, and when we got back, I was walking into buildings and got onto the floor in the—I can’t even remember the name of the building—walked into the hallway at the far end of the hallway at the other end of the building, and I could hear them in the classroom. They were all hooting and hollering and screeching and having a great time, and it was like, yes. It was instantaneous community because they had had to live together for a week. In that context, they’re not going off and getting drunk, they’re not going off and having affairs. Everybody is literally sleeping in the same room.

There’s a community that’s part of an enforcement that’s similar to a lot of other kinds of field trips, but there’s also something that in the Sea Education Association is their basic saying, which is, “Shipmates. Self.” There’s a requirement in that context for people to be thinking about outside of their own individual interests. It’s very bizarre for young people in America. The best learning communities that I was involved in were learning communities where people recognized that their contribution mattered to the other people; that they were caring for one another; and it didn’t take weeks and weeks and weeks to develop that when they had this shared experience, where they’re physically dependent upon one another for their safety, for the work, for living together. That was one piece that you could create artificially and really push the community experiences.

The other thing is there’s a lot of technical stuff that you ask people to learn, and it’s yes or no. It is exactly hierarchical, black-and-white knowledge, and your safety depends upon it. You are not allowed to not learn it and you’re not allowed to do it differently. [laughing]

Taylor: That's very comforting.

Pedersen: It's comforting, and it moves that community into a different space where it's these are some things that have to happen, and these are the things that can happen. People get to do both of those kinds of learning and both of those kinds of experiences. That was really—there's altruism that's brought into it. There's also just the whole business about I really, really loved being able to teach from place, so I get to do that as well as part of what it is.

I have a story about a student. One year I taught with Cynthia Kennedy and we taught on the Grays Harbor ships, the *Lady Washington* and the *Hawaiian Chieftain*. The students were two different groups and they had two weeks aboard the vessel. That's pretty intensive. Those vessels require an enormous amount of labor to run, and they deliver a curriculum to children. You're actually working really hard all day long to do things like keep the ship clean, teach a bunch of students, take them out and raise sails, climb up the rigging, drop sails, and blah blah. All this stuff. It is literally like at 6:00 in the morning until 10:00 at night kind of schedule. Our students are actually helping deliver that service.

I had a student who was a completely feckless, unable to participate kind of slug in the classroom. It was clear to me that he had never felt as though his contribution mattered probably to anything. I guess he was horribly depressed. Eventually, I recognized that he had parents that really hovered over him quite a bit. I just really felt like he really didn't think that he had anything to contribute.

He got on one of these ships, and one of the rules is you cannot go up in the rigging unless you've tied your gear on. You might take a rigging knife up there with you, but it's got to be tied on, tied to your belt or beltloop or whatever. He got up there and he dropped his knife on deck. Oh, my god. Somebody could have been killed! [laughing]

He was completely mortified, and he completely understood that what he did mattered. He completely got the message that this is an environment in which you can't just lay back and be a feckless slug.

He went on to work on a bunch of different ships for several more years. Maybe five years later, his mother contacted me, and she said that she had just reread my evaluation and she just thanked me for what had happened for him. I don't know if he ever became a student, but I know that he got a completely different picture of what his role in the world was because of this experience.

There were some really amazing opportunities. [laughing]

Taylor: Maybe we want to quit here, but there's one big area that we haven't talked about—you have, but only tangentially—and that is your whole governance service to the college. You were involved in a

whole bunch of very significant governance issues, including the presidential search and many, many, many things before then. Is there a way of talking about that that makes sense to you?

Pedersen: I think overall I was in three strategic planning processes, or was it three reaccreditation reports? I don't know.

Taylor: I always just think of you in the heart of things continually.

Pedersen: That's very nice. [laughing] One thing this institution allowed me to do was to go in and out of that kind of thing. I never connected very well with Barbara Smith, and when she was Provost, I didn't get involved, and I threw myself into the boat thing and was doing other things. The college really allowed me to have different cycles of activity like that. When I did move into something, I could really do it with fairly fresh energy and interest.

I loved in the early part—the first thing that happened to me, as I mentioned, was working on a strategic plan with Patrick Hill. We had to do things like go down to Vancouver Campus and talk to them about closing the campus. Big things like that.

We did some really good things, like they were not going to have more than two sports. Typical Patrick, he asked us to try and really work on some big questions. I got to work with Rudy on that group. It was great.

During that early period, it was just really exciting because I was learning so much. Later on, after I had—here's one thing that I forgot to talk about. I left administration, I left being Dean of the Library, because I could not stand the deans' meetings anymore. It had gone from being really deep, thoughtful seminars and practice to perfunctory crisis-driver, get-her-done meetings. I realized after about a year that I was the most experienced administrator there, and I was getting nothing out of the level of decision-making and discourse that was going on. I just said, "I'm sick of this. This sucks. This is exactly I thought administration would be." So, I quit.

I liked the people I was working with. It's just the level of what we were working on really was not interesting. People were reactive—that was part of the issue—and people were not thinking in ways that were interesting. I didn't feel like we were getting anywhere.

So, I quit, and became library faculty, and got to really focus on teaching. Eventually, I agreed that I would be acting Library Dean, I think when Bill needed to become Budget Dean maybe. Because somebody needed to be Provost? I can't remember what all of those pieces were.

Taylor: That might have been when Enrique came in or something?

Pedersen: Yeah, it could have been when we decided Enrique wasn't any good. That was my hiring committee. [laughing]

Taylor: You and I were on that committee together, as you'll remember.

Pedersen: Yes. I just feel terrible about all of the hirings. [laughing]

Taylor: I know, I knew. That was a case—I can remember it so clearly—[where] there were two Johns. They either got a five or a one.

Pedersen: Exactly.

Taylor: Everybody either loved them or hated them, and then this guy Enrique was right in the middle. Nobody hated him but nobody liked him. It was a compromise hire, and it was a disaster.

Pedersen: Yeah. If we could have had John Cushing, I think it would have been terrific, but people so terrified of him.

Taylor: That's right, and they were terrified of John Perkins, too.

Pedersen: Yeah. I didn't get that same sense about people being terrified of John [unintelligible 01:41:02].

Taylor: Not terrified, but I think either one of them would have been fine.

Pedersen: Yeah, but the typical thing internal to Evergreen is people know all the baggage. It would have been interesting because John Cushing would have been very much contrary to Barbara Smith's strategies about adding programs. He was totally focused on core. He didn't want to have any of that peripheral stuff, so it would have been really interesting to see what would have happened.

Taylor: Yeah, what would have happened, because the pressure is greater and greater now. It's hard to get students, and I think it might be wrongly placed, but nevertheless, it's there.

Pedersen: I did the Library Dean thing out of loyalty to my colleagues in the library. I felt like I could do that job pretty well and not make everybody miserable. Largely because of having become a ship captain, it was way, way easier. It was because I was older and more [unintelligible 01:42:08] and everything, but it was so much easier because I had a much clearer sense of, you know, you can't actually have a consensus decision on everything. [laughing]

Taylor: And the library was famous for being quite at each other's throats. The library was not a peaceful place to be.

Pedersen: No, and I worked really hard on trying to develop a consensus model the first time I was the Library Dean. I look back on that and say, oh, this is people's livelihoods. They cannot be dispassionate about these decisions, because you know what the decisions always were, they were always budget cuts.

Taylor: Yeah.

Pedersen: You cannot ask people to make these decisions. Anyway, there was a lot of budget cutting that needed to continue to happen. I asked Bill to go ahead and do most of the slaughtering before I got in. People were really relieved to have me because they knew me, and they trusted me, and it was very enjoyable really for that year. Then Les asked me to be the Dean of Budget. That was fun. It was really fun. Ken had things in good shape, and I really wasn't in a position to make any changes.

Taylor: When was that?

Pedersen: I don't know. [laughing]

Taylor: That was fairly recently, right?

Pedersen: Yeah, it was. It would have been 2011 or 2010 or something like that. It was when Ken was the Acting Provost.

Taylor: That's right.

Pedersen: [Unintelligible 01:43:52] another year, and I enjoyed that very, very much, as I said, because the responsibilities were really modulated by the fact that I really was a placeholder, so I could just rationalize a few things and be really nice to people.

Then I went back to the library for another stint because we had an unsuccessful dean that we hired. I did that, and that was when we worked really, really hard on some organizational changes that I think really were good ideas. We got to have one of them, but goddammit, if Walter Niemiec wasn't just a complete . . . obstacle to everything.

Taylor: Really?

Pedersen: Yes. The problem being—and I ascribe it to administrative exhaustion—he had no time to pay attention to what we were working on, so I couldn't bring him along. When I presented to him eventually what we wanted to do, he just said, "No." So, we spent a year working on ways to reorganize Media Services and address some of our really fundamental issues, and some remodeling to incorporate other uses into the library, and he just stopped them. I really feel as though it's because if you didn't already have a relationship with him where he was going to listen to you all the time, it was like there just wasn't any room in his—

Taylor: What was it that you got through that you thought was good?

Pedersen: We established a staff public services position for the library to stabilize the units that had been administrated either chaotically by reference librarians who were going in and out, or all by the dean, who had too many people reporting to him. We were just lucky enough to hire a really excellent person into that position [unintelligible 01:46:07] for the first time.

Taylor: Is that who's still there?

Pedersen: No, we hired Andrea whatever her name is, and she was perfect. She was really perfect. She had very much of a small liberal arts college perspective. She was really kind and competent, and she could make things happen in a way that was orderly and well organized, and the reference librarians could go off and do whatever they wanted to do without screwing up everybody else. [laughing] She eventually went to Timberland and they hired another person that I've never worked with, so I don't know.

Taylor: But the job is still there.

Pedersen: The job is still there, but there's nobody working in the library.

Taylor: That's true, but that's the pandemic, so who knows how it's going to get sorted out.

Pedersen: It's an impression overall.

Taylor: They have to cut back so much now it's not going to be recognizable. And as you say, everybody is talking about scaling back to a smaller college, and what that means. The number of students they expect to have in the fall would be about equivalent to what was there in 1972. You think about the number of faculty in 1972, they probably—

Pedersen: I don't know what the number of faculty was in 1972, do you?

Taylor: I think it probably was 100. I don't know how many there are now, but there are a lot more than 100, and a lot more staff, and a lot more higher-level administrative staff.

Pedersen: Yeah.

Taylor: It's very top-heavy. Every time there's a problem, you hire a staff to solve it, and you promote them and so you've got—in 1972, I think there were two Vice Presidents.

Pedersen: Right, there was when I got there.

Taylor: Now, there are about six.

Pedersen: Yeah. There was a lot of energy about being a new institution. [laughing]

Taylor: There was, and faculty did a lot of jobs. When I was working in Admissions, there were two people in Admissions, but all the faculty, in effect, were in Admissions. They all did work in Admissions. Now, there are 15.

Pedersen: There's a million programs that they have to administer, too. It's not like it's make-work.

Taylor: Yeah, it's different from being a baby and being an adolescent or whatever.

Pedersen: How are the graduate programs doing?

Taylor: It sounds like to be more emphasis there. I don't know. Certainly, the big highlight, I think, at the moment to me feels like the Native American effort.

Pedersen: Right. They can get a bunch of money for something.

Taylor: Yeah.

Pedersen: Tina [Kuchkahn-Miller?] was providing such incredible leadership for the non-teaching aspects of all of the organization. It's going to take another really exceptional administrator. Really tough.

Taylor: Yeah, and I just wish them luck.

Pedersen: Absolutely.

Taylor: I don't know if we want to do another session. If you want to, if you think of a bunch of things that you feel like we should have talked about and didn't, otherwise not. I have one more thing I want to tell you that you'll remember. I don't want to say it in any great detail, but I just want to thank you. I don't know if you remember the evening when I was in the deans' area and I came running into the library in tears.

Pedersen: Yes.

Taylor: It was one of those moments in my life that I needed somebody to lean on, and you were there.

Pedersen: And Fernando [last name?] was there.

Taylor: It was the scariest thing I've ever experienced. I think you took me home. I don't remember.

Pedersen: I think Fernando walked you out to the parking lot or something like that. You were really shaken. It was really upsetting.

Taylor: Yeah. It's never happened to me again, never happened to me before, but it gives me a kind of perspective about people that are in terrifying positions.

Pedersen: Right. Another thing that that makes me think about is that one of the things I learned from Patrick that made me dismayed when he was no longer in the academic administration was his lack of defensiveness. I learned from him that when you're in a position of responsibility, as you were as dean, you are subject to negativity, threats, accusations, all kinds of crap, and you don't get to be reactive. In your case, there's a layer of power differential there about gender and everything else that was really, really scary. It was much more about physical threat.

Taylor: It was physical.

Pedersen: It's like you cannot be President and act like Donald Trump. You cannot be defensive and reactive and self-centered and be a leader. You just can't be like that.

Taylor: But that was a situation where I was terrified. This very large, strong man was threatening me, yelling at me, and standing in the doorway and preventing me from escaping.

Pedersen: That was not okay.

Taylor: That was not okay. [chuckles] I don't know to this day what should have been done, what was done. I just felt relieved. It was like 6:00 at night and there was nobody else in the deans' area.

Pedersen: Yeah, you were all by yourself. You can imagine how people who go through the experience of the protests and the experience of the Proud Boys being on campus and all of that, if they've been through anything like what you went through, you can imagine. There were so many people who were so frightened.

Taylor: Yeah, and I don't know how one is supposed to respond or whatever, but I know at that point, you have no . . . you're not operating rationally.

Pedersen: Yeah.

Taylor: I was grateful that you were there.

Pedersen: That there was somebody else on campus at 6:00. I was really pleased with how Fernando reacted. He reacted really, really well.

Taylor: Yeah. I remember him. I don't remember walking out to the car, but there was something. I know that you didn't leave me. He didn't leave me.

Pedersen: Yeah.

Taylor: Anyway, what do you think? Do we want to wrap it up? Is there anything that—

Pedersen: I think that I've talked about everything that I want to talk about. This is really exhausting work. [laughing] Memory is exhausting.

Taylor: I think it's been a good conversation. I've learned things and I just think it's important that these stories get recorded.

Pedersen: I encourage you, if you're interested in the recounting of that process about faculty librarians that we get in touch with Susan.

Taylor: I think somebody should interview Susan Perry, actually.

Pedersen: You want me to message her? Because she checks in on Facebook periodically. I don't have direct exchanges with her, but I could message her and let her know that [unintelligible 01:54:11].

Taylor: I actually am in touch with both Susan and Judith, so I can call her, but I hadn't thought about her. But I think it's so easy with this Zoom. Assuming this recording works, I could do an interview with her.

Pedersen: Yeah, that would be wonderful.

Taylor: She would be a good one to get those early stories.

Pedersen: Yeah.

Taylor: I think what the librarians did, and what the college did, is unusual and pretty significant, about how the library worked within the context of the college. I don't think it's a story that every librarian has.

Pedersen: Oh, no. We did get to publish a few things about it and get it out there in the profession.

Taylor: It made the librarians integral to the students' education. I think that's pretty significant.

Pedersen: Yeah. We think about other models of what was going on, I think Advising kept a really good model going. Really good. They didn't try to open the rotation up to everybody. They selected people carefully, invited them.

Taylor: Media, you did some things there, too.

Pedersen: The whole thing about media is just so completely outside of any other academic library. Nobody did anything at all significant like that. If there was a really strong media component in those institutions, it's always been exclusive to media curriculum. The interdisciplinarity of the collections and the services was reflective of what the college needed, which is everybody gets to use everything. I was just stunned that there weren't any special branches when I got to Evergreen. Whoa! That makes life so much easier. [laughing]

Taylor: We haven't talked about that, but that whole media thing, Judith was involved, and Karen [Kline? 01:56:31].

Pedersen: That's a toxic environment, so Karen got out of that and came up to work with the reference librarians. She's an example of somebody who was hired as a faculty. It was an almost impossible hire to make because we were seeking people who had teaching experience, media expertise, and administrative expertise.

Taylor: The tension there was between the faculty and the staff, or what?

Pedersen: No, no, no. I think it was always a really hard staff to work with because there's a lot of professional pride and a lot of egos and a lot of [unintelligible 01:57:22], competing ideas about what—I could give a name, but . . . [laughing]

Taylor: We don't need that, I don't think, but I know that there was tension there.

Pedersen: Yeah. It was a dynamic place, and a lot of really smart, creative people. And we had that whole thing going on with a large number of people in Media Services who were hired as staff who were also teaching and had their own ideas about being faculty and working with students and prioritizing their own work as opposed to prioritizing the services of the area. It was always very stressful.

Taylor: Then there were the Media faculty as well.

Pedersen: That's the thing. The first area that I experienced it in was we had two, possibly three, faculty teaching photography who were regular faculty, and had their ideas about what was supposed to happen. Then we had people who were running Photo Services, and some of them were teaching. There were huge conflicts about who got to use what [unintelligible 01:58:34] and what the rules were and all of that.

Taylor: When we moved out of our house in Seattle, Fritz had a photography lab, and it was when Kirk Thompson was teaching photography somewhat and wanted the old equipment. So, Fritz gave it all and it went to the Photo Lab. I wonder what in the world happened to it because it's all stuff. It was good, but probably not necessary.

Pedersen: Surplussed long ago, I'm sure.

Taylor: I'm sure it was. But that is a world that has changed probably more than any other world.

Pedersen: That's the thing that's interesting. There were often questions about why we should have the professional-level facilities that we had—not in Photo, but the Media Labs and all that—in a liberal arts institution. It was a really good, legitimate question. But it came out of [Jim?] Holley's perspective, I think, that we were moving to a mediated world, and this was information provisioned in the same way that a library collection was.

Yeah, and the amount of resources that are necessary to keep something like that up to date—incredible. Now, of course, it's all readily available to people independent of a big facility like that.

Taylor: Now, it's changed technologically completely. But also, the whole Media area at the college, for a while, it was one of them most sought-after areas in the faculty were in huge demand. I don't know where it is now, but it's one of the high points of the college, I think.

Pedersen: Yeah. I imagine—I don't know—all of arts curriculum is in comparatively high demand.

Taylor: Not the arts anymore because there are very few people there.

Pedersen: Right, that's what I mean. The students who want it have a really hard time getting it because they're a very small [unintelligible 02:00:49].

Taylor: That's true. Okay, thank you so much. This has been fun for me, and I hope for you. I'm really pleased that your stories are—at least I hope, they say it's still recording, so I hope that's true. We talked about doing this way last fall, but then, of course, I let it go. But Nancy Koppelman and not Erik, it's Eirik or something, Steinhoff have been given a grant to try to pull together all this stuff into some kind of a book. They're working on it, so Sam called me and said, "You've got to interview Sarah because we want to get it done in time so it can be included in the book," so Nancy Koppelman for sure will listen to this interview, and your stories will be indelible.

Pedersen: Ah, great.

Taylor: I thank you so much.

Pedersen: You bet.

Taylor: The other thing is I hope to see you in Anacortes or on Lopez,

Pedersen: Yes, absolutely. And look up Russel Barsh.

Taylor: I will look up Russel Barsh. And do live right in Anacortes.

Pedersen: I do.

[Stopped transcribing at 02:02:06]