

Jane Jervis
Interviewed by Barbara Leigh Smith
The Evergreen State College oral history project
November 12, 2018
FINAL

Smith: Okay, Jane, it's good to see you.

Jervis: It is good to see you, too.

Smith: You're going to sound a little hoarse on the tape because you have a cold. Let's start in the section Evergreen at first. I was Provost under you, so this is a really good partnership for the interview.

Jervis: Yes.

Smith: Talk a little bit about how and when and why you came to Evergreen, and your short history before that, what you brought best to Evergreen.

Jervis: Okay. I came to Evergreen from Bowdoin College in Maine. I had been late in life getting a Ph.D. after putting my then-husband through medical school. Because he was a doctor, I thought I would never have to work, so I then went to graduate school in medieval astronomy. I got my Ph.D. when I was 40.

In the meantime, I was divorced and had two kids in high school, and obviously needed a job. The jobs available were either in administration or they were locum tenens jobs someplace where somebody was on leave for a semester. I could go to Oklahoma or I could go to Reno for six months and then be out of a job and out of a house. I took an administrative job at Yale where I had done my Ph.D., so my kids could finish high school without changing schools.

I found that I liked administration, and there was never going to be a job market for medieval astronomers. [chuckles] So, there I was. I was dean of one of the residential colleges at Yale for four years. That was interesting. I learned a lot about how organizations worked.

Then I was getting a little restless, because I was tired of keeping track of how many grandmothers were dying right before final exams [laughter], so I took a professional development course that was given by an organization called HERS [Higher Education Resource Services] that was for women in higher ed who either were afraid they weren't going to get tenure or were in a dead-end, mid-level management job.

That was a very interesting program because we met on weekends at Wellesley College, and then we had homework to do in our home institutions. For example, we were asked to go back to our home institution and find the most powerful person on campus and interview him about power.

Smith: Wow.

Jervis: And then to find the least powerful person and interview her about power (gender of pronouns intentional!). I learned an enormous amount during that homework assignment, about the way power works in an institution. I was quite fascinated.

Another homework assignment was to pick an ad—any ad—and get coached on how to apply for a job, how to behave in an interview. I picked a job at random and I got the job. It was to be Dean of Students at Hamilton College. I had just married Norman less than six months before, and his kids were still in school. So, it was a big crisis but he agreed that we should go. He'd give up a tenured position and move with me.

That was quite a different experience from being at Yale. For one thing, they had fraternities. For another thing, we had just invented AIDS. For another thing, we were just beginning to invent the concept of date rape. The combination of that was explosive on that campus, which is a precious little liberal arts college out in the boondocks. It was a trial by fire for me. At Yale, I had supervised no one except my secretary. At Hamilton, I had 17 people directly reporting to me.

Smith: Wow, what a change.

Jervis: I kept saying, "Whose decision is that?" And my secretary would say, "It's yours, Jane." [laughter] Well, I stayed there for six and a half years and became convinced that there was something really wrong with schools that separated the student who studied from the student who was a drunken lout, when those two students occupied the same body. The administration of the college was divided between the Dean of the Faculty and the Dean of Students, and there was no overlap. It was if we had two different student bodies.

Then I was recruited to go to Bowdoin, where I would be the Dean of the College and responsible for both. And I thought that would be great. I was there for four years. I got experience with other parts of the college because I was responsible for athletics and financial aid and admissions as well as student affairs, so called. The problem that I discovered at Bowdoin was that they had 1,400 students at that time and they had 30 academic departments. Most of the departments only had two people in them. Some of them only had one and a half people, because sociology shared with

anthropology. And all of the students had at least double majors if not triple majors. It seemed crazy to me. I had been basically an interdisciplinary student at college.

Smith: Right, given your major.

Jervis: So it didn't make any sense to me. They also had fraternities. Actually, at both Hamilton and at Bowdoin, they eliminated the fraternities a month after I left, and I thought, that's an accomplishment that I will never get credit for, but I will always give myself credit for. [laughter]

I had been encouraged to consider presidencies, so I was applying to presidencies here and there. I had the experience of being the affirmative action candidate at a lot of schools, where it was clear that I was never going to be hired. I got to ask, "How many women are on your search committee," before I would agree to go.

Smith: What was their answer?

Jervis: I didn't ask that crude a question. I said, "Send me the names of your search committee."

Then I was nominated to Evergreen by a colleague at Bowdoin. I had heard of Evergreen as this kind of nirvana on the West Coast. [laughter] What I knew about it was that it was interdisciplinary and it didn't have all these departments fighting for turf and counting the hours that they taught and who they belonged to and all that stuff.

Smith: And no fraternities. [laughing]

Jervis: Right, and a public institution. I had gone to public schools through high school and all of those schools—Radcliffe, Yale, Hamilton and Bowdoin—were all in the precious category of highly privileged, highly polished students who were really only interested in burnishing their applications to business school or law school or medical school. So there was a very strong call to me from Evergreen because of what it stood for and what it was.

Smith: And your previous experience. Very cumulative.

Jervis: Yes. I didn't set out to learn those things. I really only needed a paycheck to support my kids. [chuckles] But it ended up being, I think, a very strong preparation for me at Evergreen.

Smith: I could see that.

Jervis: Nothing about working with a State government, though I had been in the League of Women Voters long ago. So, I came to Evergreen. I remember so vividly the three days of interviews I had.

Smith: What were they like?

Jervis: First of all, I was followed around by a klatch of people who had axes to grind. At that time, I don't remember if it was before or after but I think it was just after the ADA was passed, and there were some students following me around about access for the physically disabled or handicapped or challenged or whatever the language was. I learned very quickly how important language was at Evergreen. That was one. I had a threesome who followed me everywhere asking, "How does it feel to be temporarily able?"

Smith: Really?

Jervis: Yes. [laughing]

Smith: Oh, I never heard any of this before. Interesting.

Jervis: And then I had, I think it was an hour and a half, with the First People. They asked me, "Name the recognized tribes in the state of Washington." And I said, "Uh . . . Tacoma?" Nobody smiled. Nobody laughed. And I said, "Actually, I don't know the names of any of the tribes."

Smith: I bet you do now.

Jervis: I don't. I could probably scratch up a lot of them but . . . what was in my mouth to say was, "Where I come from, there are no living remnants of Indians, so I don't know anything about any of them."

Smith: Did you say that?

Jervis: No, I did not. I bit it off. Fortunately, I also didn't say, "We killed them all." So then I said, "Why don't you tell me what tribes you're from?" And they started calling them out. We had a good conversation. The main topic of the conversation was the Longhouse.

Smith: About how they wanted to have it built?

Jervis: About how they wanted it, and they kept being promised it, and the promises had not been kept. They quoted *A Raisin in the Sun* to me.

Smith: That's true. I was there through lots of times when they asked, even when Mary Hillaire was alive, it was her vision. Finally they got us to deploy the Development Office to explore whether it was feasible to raise the money, and they said, "No," and they didn't believe it. [laughing]

Jervis: One of the other things I learned while I was there on that weekend is that there had been a lot of racial strife going on at the college. And, also, that the faculty was divided into two teams. There was the President's team and there was the Provost's team, and they didn't talk to each other.

Smith: Really?

Jervis: While I was there being interviewed, people kept saying to me, “That one’s on the Provost’s team. Don’t talk to that one.” [laughter] I thought, “This is terrible.” I was appalled that I had a three-day interview, but it was very, very valuable to have done that.

Smith: In terms of thoroughness and knowledge gained.

Jervis: Oh, yeah. I had the feeling that when I left, I knew a lot. I was surprised when I was chosen and asked to come. It was difficult because Norman had already moved twice for me. We were newlyweds. [laughing] But he agreed to come.

Smith: Did he have any experience with the West Coast or Evergreen?

Jervis: No.

Smith: So, it was new for both of you.

Jervis: He had heard of Evergreen. Evergreen was basically what he had been trying to do as a teacher for the previous 20 years.

Smith: Good fit then.

Jervis: Yes, but he was really sad and kind of crushed that he never could get a place at Evergreen. So, we said, “Yes,” and came, and I was there for a Board meeting in July. I’d never lived on the West Coast before. I’d been at Evergreen for a week and there was a Board meeting to discuss the next biannual budget. One of the things I learned in the training program at Wellesley was if you want to know an institution’s values, read the budget. So I said, “The capital budget. Is the Longhouse on the budget?” “Oh, yes. We always put the Longhouse on the budget.” And I had already understood that the capital expenses had to be prioritized. I said, “What’s its priority?” “Well, it’s at the bottom of the list because we really have to do this and that. We have to fix the roof, we have to change the rug, we have to paint this offices, we have to” . . . and I said, “You know, if you’re really committed to a Longhouse, make it number one. “

Smith: Wow. They’d never had a President talk like that! [laughter]

Jervis: I said, “If the roof leaks, we’ll put a bucket under it for two years.” Or, “We’ll put duct tape over the torn rug,” I mean, so what?

Smith: We had buckets in the Library actually. [laughing]

Jervis: I was a brand-new person, and it was my honeymoon. Everybody was in love with me.

Smith: They said, “Go for it.”

Jervis: They said, “Yes,” and then they approved it, which was amazing.

Smith: It was. I still remember that ceremony where the Governor came for the Longhouse opening. It was amazing.

Jervis: Yeah. As an aside, Norman and I went to New Zealand a couple years ago. We went to a Maori village, whose name I forgot. They have a big longhouse and they have a textile studio and a carving studio. We were talking to them and I said, “Have you ever heard of Evergreen?” “Oh, yes, we’ve been there.”

Smith: They come all the time, the Maori.

Jervis: It was really amazing. I was so proud.

Smith: And they just opened a fiber arts studio at the Longhouse and it’s got two entrances. One entrance is Northwest Indian art and the other entrance is Maori, and their biggest famous artist designed it. Amazing. It’s quite a relationship. It’s a huge achievement.

Jervis: That’s probably the thing. I was brand new, I was a little scared, and it was probably the single act of bravery that I’m proudest of in my life. [laughter]

Smith: It was very consequential. They’re the biggest fundraiser we have now. They’ve raised \$6 million.

Jervis: Wow. There’s a backstory—I don’t know if you want to hear it—to the Indians. My parents were immigrants. They came here in 1935, really as political and religious refugees from Fascism in Italy, because they were Waldensian, which is the Italian Protestant.

Smith: Not Catholic.

Jervis: Not Catholic. It’s a 12th-century heresy that survives in Italy. It started in France, so the language of the church is French. Mussolini made a pact with the Vatican and outlawed the speaking of French, and Catholicized—I know that’s not a word—the school system, nationalized the school system. So they had to go to Mass every day in school, which was just grrr . . . you know? They were *really* Protestants. [chuckles] They became active in the resistance. That’s why they emigrated. So, my sister and I grew up speaking French. We learned English in school. We were in school during the war, and the Italians were the enemy. It was really confusing for us. [laughing]

Smith: How old were you when you emigrated.

Jervis: I was born in Newark, New Jersey and Madeline (my sister) was born in Boston. We were born here immediately after they arrived.

We used to go into New York a lot. Both my parents were scientists. We used to go to the Museum of Natural History a lot. My favorite thing was the Indian displays. They had little villages with little teeny people doing all kinds of things in them.

Smith: Old-time museums.

Jervis: Yes, and we also went to the Met to see the Egyptian mummies, and I considered them in the same category. Extinct. Not so much now, but at that time Indians were extinct in the East.

Smith: Right. Before the rise of Indian sovereignty and self-awareness.

Jervis: Yes, so we really knew nothing. I thought it was like the mummies, and it was a revelation to me to discover that there was Indian life in most of this country. I had been completely ignorant of that fact on my little slice of the East Coast. When we moved back to Connecticut, all of a sudden there were two casinos in Connecticut.

Smith: Very successful ones. [laughing]

Jervis: Very, very successful.

Smith: That's changed enormously. I grew up in Wisconsin, where there were active tribes, so I knew they were there, but nothing like now. Since the Nixon administration, it's been rise, rise, rise. Huge generosity. It's an amazing story.

Jervis: When I was nine years old, I went to Girl Scout camp. I went there for 10 years as a camper and a counselor. They had a dedication ceremony every summer that talked about the fact that this island in the Adirondacks was inhabited by Indians. It's called Eagle Island, after a Chief Eagle of the Iroquois. And the re-dedication ceremony was brutal. I'll just recite a passage:

“Such fearless men they were, these Iroquois, strong leaders of a host of lesser tribes—Mohawks, Senecas, Cayugas, Oneidas, and the Onandagas, all united in the cause of war. War for what? To kill for the joy of killing? No. War to save their homes and lands from murderous men who came across the seas. Greedy in their search for easy wealth, they robbed the Indian's land and drove him West—West and South, and North, the white man drove all things before him, bringing only death.” I was nine years old when I learned that.

Smith: And you still remember it.

Jervis: I remember the whole thing. I can recite the whole thing.

Smith: Wow.

Jervis: We were, you know, innocent. Ignorant. Ignorant and innocent. And I was flabbergasted because, as new immigrants from an oppressive regime, we were super-patriots. I was born on Flag Day. I thought all the flags were for me. [laughter]

Smith: “Welcome,” huh?

Jervis: Right. And so to discover that the land of the free was responsible for all this stuff was my revelation of political pollution, really. It was a terrible blow to my national pride, because we were brand-new Americans. That’s a part of the background. I don’t know that that was actively in my mind when at Evergreen at that time, but it certainly was part of my consciousness. It’s partly why I feel so good about the Longhouse. It was such a little thing for me to do and it had such big consequences.

Smith: I agree. The best thing I did was appoint Tina Kuckkahn-Miller as the Director. She’s just fantastic. Huge. And they’ve got such a spirit of inclusion, and they’re so successful at it. It’s just amazing.

So, what was Evergreen like beyond the Longhouse story when you came?

Jervis: Well, when I came, I had people in my office busy telling me whose side everybody was on.

Smith: Geez. [laughing]

Jervis: It was pretty awful. I said, “I have to tell you that I have a very hard time with names, and if I have to remember not only what somebody’s name is but what side they’re on, I’ll be doomed. So stop telling me.” And they did, and it pretty soon went away.

Smith: So it was a test, in a way.

Jervis: Yeah.

Smith: They never asked me what side I was on because they never told me who was on what side. Maybe it’s because I was a side.

Jervis: Yeah, you were on the Provost side, I knew that absolutely clearly. “Watch out for Barbara. She’s really powerful, but she’s on the other side.” [laughter]

When I think about—and I’ve been thinking about it because of this—what did I accomplish at Evergreen? I feel like getting rid of those two parties was a big thing.

Smith: Yeah.

Jervis: People sort of relaxed and got back to work, it seemed to me. Maybe I didn't know enough, but I think to some extent, that happened.

Smith: Yeah. Don't you think some of the sides emerged because of the [Joe] Olander fiasco?

Jervis: Oh, I'm sure.

Smith: There were people who argued sort of during the taking-him-down phase and after he left about what was needed. Difficult.

Jervis: I had a lot to learn. I had a lot to learn about the legislative process, though my League of Women Voters experience helped. Jennifer Jaech, the legislative lobbyist took me around to meet all the legislators. I still see her often.

Smith: She's great.

Jervis: She was a little timid (but not anymore!). There were some legislators she was too scared of to go and talk to. I found working with the Legislature not hard, quite enlightening. They kept telling me that I didn't talk like a President. I said, "Yeah, I don't look like a President either, do I?" [laughter]

Smith: No, you're not in a man's suit.

Jervis: Because all the Presidents at that time were tall and had hand-tailored suits, and I was kind of schlumpy and short.

Smith: Was the Legislature Democratic then?

Jervis: No. I came in the Gingrich revolution. It was horrible. I would watch the other Presidents, and they would be asked a question and a speech would come out of their mouth that was unintelligible. [chuckles] It was canned.

Then at some point, I was urged by the Board to take a course that was being offered—I forget by whom—about how to deal with the press. I went to that—it was a daylong thing—and what we were told was, "Have a speech ready. No matter what the question is, give your speech. Because when it's broadcast, only you will be broadcast. The question won't be broadcast. So if you start trying to answer a difficult question, it's only your mumbling around about the difficult answer—which nobody wants to hear—that will be broadcast, and you'll look like an idiot."

Smith: Wow.

Jervis: So I said, "That's what's the matter with political speech in this country. Everybody's taken that course." [laughter]

Smith: Actually, we did public relations training when Dan Evans was there, and he brought in the firm that did it for McDonald's. They did training in the Video Studio with us, where they would have roleplaying. We were just disasters. They would come up and attack Evergreen in some way through the question, and we always fell for it. The first thing they taught us was you don't have to answer anything. You can just shut up, and then they have nothing to broadcast to use against you.

Jervis: Or, you have a little anodyne thing that comes out and they broadcast that and everybody says, "What a dummy."

Smith: Right. I think it's a good thing, though, the training. Because we're not trained to handle that.

Jervis: And academics in general are trained to give complicated answers.

Smith: Yes.

Jervis: That doesn't play well because they just want a soundbite.

Smith: Yes.

Jervis: I thought there were two things in terms of dealing with the Legislature that turned out to be assets for me. One of them is that I talked plain.

Smith: Yes.

Jervis: And people appreciated that. They kept saying, "You know, we can't understand what any of the other Presidents say. That's why we come and ask you." [laughter]

Smith: Authenticity is one of your strengths, too.

Jervis: That was one thing. What was the other one? It'll come back.

Smith: You were honest, too. I thought you came across as honest.

Jervis: Oh! The other thing was I pushed financial aid. Terry Teale (the executive director of the Council of Presidents, kept saying, "Don't do that. It's not in your budget. You're wasting your time, you're wasting your energy. Don't do that. It's not your budget." And I said, "I don't care. It's the most important thing that we can advocate for, because nobody's advocating for financial aid." What that did was it made the community colleges love us.

Smith: Yes, that was our feeder.

Jervis: Yeah. I thought, this is a no-brainer. I always advocated for financial aid, and I think I got a lot of credit for Evergreen that way.

Smith: Right. It also put the students first, which matters. That whole area is still just a disaster nationally. People can't go to college.

Jervis: I know. My daughter-in-law here has hundreds of thousands of dollars of debt, and her kids are almost getting to be college age now.

Smith: I know. It's terrible.

Jervis: It's just disgusting. She made a bad choice. She chose to get a graduate degree in a private school. It's not smart out here in the West to do that. So, they're never going to get out from under that.

Smith: Yes.

Jervis: What else do you want to ask me?

Smith: You talked about the Longhouse and the legislative work. Your story about the things you learned from your previous colleges and the professional development work is really interesting. What about your educational philosophy, and what role did that play in terms of your development once you came to Evergreen?

Jervis: I'm not sure I have an educational philosophy.

Smith: I think you have a philosophy about what doesn't work.

Jervis: Yeah, I do. Part of it comes from hard experience. I had a terrible college experience. I went to Radcliffe, allegedly the best college in the world. Our curriculum was to be grateful for the crumbs of the great table of Harvard. [laughter] I was a math major, and I took a lot of physics and stuff. At the end of my junior year, I was called into the office of the head of the Math Department and told that I could not be a math major because I was a girl. I was flabberghasted and I just didn't know what to do.

I went to the dean at Radcliffe—Bernice Cronkhite, Walter's sister—and I said, "What am I going to do?" I expected her to say, "I'm going to go in and give what for to that guy because that's not okay." What she did was she said, "Oh, dear, oh, dear, what can we do?"

Smith: Oh, dear. She just sympathized with you rather than helped. [laughter]

Jervis: Yes! She said, "Well, there's one thing you could do. We'll figure out a way to change your major to put together the science and math that you've taken already." So, I graduated with a degree in physical sciences, a kind of portmanteau.

As a consequence, I had to take Geology 1 in my senior year. Well, I had already had nuclear physics, because I had four and a half years of physics. So, all the geology made sense to me in a way that the geology didn't. I mean, they had not discovered plate tectonics in the curriculum yet at that time, and so it was all pretty much tourist geology, what you see when you look around. I understood the molecular and the energetic reason why rocks were that way and behaved that way. But I could get into trouble with the faculty.

The thing that made me so mad . . . (Can you believe they gave true-and-false tests at Harvard?) One of the questions on the first test we took was "All atoms are composed of protons, neutrons, and electrons. True or false?" I said, "False," because hydrogen doesn't have a neutron. I got it wrong. [laughter]

Smith: But they were wrong!

Jervis: They were wrong. I went to the very-world-famous Harvard professor teaching the course and I said, "What about hydrogen? It says 'all atoms.'" And he said, "Open the textbook," which he had written. And in chapter one, it said, "All atoms are composed of protons, neutrons and electrons." I said, "But that's false." And he yelled at me and threw me out of his office.

Smith: Wow. [laughter] Lessons about authority and challenging.

Jervis: Also, I audited a chemistry course because I hadn't taken a chemistry course since high school, and nuclear physics helped a lot with that, too. So, I became an interdisciplinarian without knowing it had a name or without thinking about it. I became convinced that those silos were idiotic that people lived in, and didn't talk to each other from. They didn't even realize that this had anything to do with that.

Both of my parents are scientists. My father was an engineer and my mother was a biochemist. My whole upbringing was scientific. I'd go for a walk in the woods and it was all a lesson. [chuckles] Everything was a lesson in my family, so I grew up with a sense of the unity of knowledge, of the interactivity of knowledge.

Smith: Some of it probably came from the character of physics.

Jervis: Yeah.

Smith: I know very little about this, so this question might be completely ignorant, but wasn't that a time when that was kind of the leading science in some ways, the cutting edge?

Jervis: Yeah.

Smith: Then the others came along and learned from it.

Jervis: Overtook it. When I was at Bowdoin, there were all these microscopically little departments all fighting with each other, first of all, over the boundaries.

Smith: “That’s mine. That’s yours.”

Jervis: Yeah. And fighting over students. Made no sense at all. And the students were taking all these multiple majors, so the school wasn’t helping them at all for the interaction among those majors.

Smith: The advising function was not there either.

Jervis: Right, because the faculty were too busy wishing they were at Harvard and doing their research.

Smith: I went to a little liberal arts college, too, and started out in history. It had two-person departments, and when I had the same professor giving the same lecture in a subsequent course, I decided to switch fields. [laughter]

Jervis: So, from my undergraduate experience and my graduate experience, too—because in the medieval period, there weren’t disciplines, there was only theology and medicine—it just seemed that interdisciplinary was the only thing that made sense. Because no problem is a single-disciplinary problem.

Smith: No. Especially not when you ask the big questions.

Jervis: There was a sense, for me, even though I’d never lived in the West—actually, I went to Yosemite when I was in high school with the family, but that was my only venture west—in some way, I was really out of my milieu, my comfort zone. And I still think the people in the Northwest are really weird.

Smith: How come?

Jervis: Because they have these cuckoo enthusiasms. Non-evidence-based.

Smith: Just enthusiastic people?

Jervis: No, enthusiastic for—my daughter’s got it—this thing that I’m drinking here, which is herbal something or other. She’s very particular about what goes into her body and all this stuff. They’re a little bit like that politically, too.

But I felt like I was at home intellectually at Evergreen, and that was really important. I felt like I was at home in a way that I had never been at home in an institution.

Smith: Did you have much close connection to look at the interdisciplinary-ness and did that pass muster for meeting your expectations?

Jervis: Sometimes. I didn't have time, and I wasn't welcome, actually, to meddle around in an academic program, and it was not appropriate for me to do that. But I was a very passionate proponent of that in all the, gawd, I don't know how many speeches I gave [laughing] to every animal group—the Elks, the whatever. I refer to them as the “Lions and tigers and bears. Oh, my!” [laughter]

Smith: It's so much more efficient. And when you tie it to the structure change and the team teaching, it makes sense. One of the most worrisome things about right now is half the faculty are teaching alone.

Jervis: Yeah.

Smith: That could be a death knell for workload, for interdisciplinary, for all kinds of things.

Jervis: When I came back for a Return to Evergreen event, I don't know when that was—all the previous presidents were on stage, all the old Presidents. Les Purce was presiding and we were being asked, “Why did you come to Evergreen?” Everybody said, “Oh, the interdisciplinary curriculum.” I was at the end of the line because I was the next-to-the-last President. I said, “Well, that's really why I came, but I was looking at the catalog and there's almost no interdisciplinary courses anymore. What's going on?”

Smith: Yeah, that's what I say, too. [laughter]

Jervis: There was this reaction in the audience – everybody looking at one another and nudging one another -- and you could see everybody onstage looking uncomfortable, and Les started talking nonsense. I can't remember the name of the Provost then.

Smith: Michael Zimmerman?

Jervis: Probably.

Smith: Or Enrique Riveros-Schäfer, if it was earlier.

Jervis: Anyway, the Provost explained that nobody can go to school full-time anymore. It's a financial reason.

Smith: That's not true.

Jervis: I was saying, “If everybody on this stage came here for that reason and that reason is not true anymore, what's going on?” I was mobbed by faculty afterwards. “Thank you for saying that!”

Smith: Well, it's always been, I think, since day one, a contested tension about, what is interdisciplinary? The one divide I saw a lot was about the humanities versus the sciences. The sciences were seen as not interdisciplinary by the humanities because it didn't have humanities narrowly defined in it.

Jervis: But there's no science anymore that has only one name.

Smith: No.

Jervis: It's all biochemistry or biophysics, whatever. Those are 19th century silos and they keep people apart. And what I learned in the history of science was that all big developments in science come from people outside of their field.

Smith: Yeah, I read that, too. [laughter]

Jervis: Because they see things differently. That's what fertilizes that imagination, that creativity in everything.

Smith: Yeah.

Jervis: I had these patter speeches that I gave to all these men drinking beer at lunchtime. I got a lot of hostile questions and argued passionately and intelligibly for it, which is what most college presidents can't do. They can't be intelligible, and I don't know what's the matter with them. Maybe it's because they don't understand it themselves. I was a technical writer when I started out from college and I knew that if your audience was somebody who was not technically sophisticated, writing for them was difficult. The writing had to be crystal clear and simple.

Smith: Yes.

Jervis: And the more complicated it was, the more simple it had to be. Most people don't get that. They seem to believe that, if it's very complicated, then you get people all confused and they think you're really smart. I just have never believed that.

Smith: I think you were always seen as very good at explaining things. And it helped when we stopped talking about what we didn't do and started talking about what we did and why. Because if you just go "We don't do departments, we don't do grades," it makes people feel defensive.

Jervis: Yeah. And what I thought was really smart about Evergreen was that the programs were built around problems.

Smith: Yes.

Jervis: And no problem can be solved by one discipline.

Smith: No, not problems worth solving and talking about for a year.

Jervis: Because they take math and politics, and everything that goes into any social issue —and most of our problems are social problems or political problems.

Smith: There are sure a lot of those! [laughing]

Jervis: Yeah. I was never taught that, but I learned it. And I don't know why I learned it, maybe because of my scientific parents and because they were in a new country and they were trying to figure things out. My parents never talked about anything personal. They never argued. They'd have roaring fights about things that could be solved by hauling the Encyclopedia Britannica out on the table.

[laughter]

Smith: What a good role model!

Jervis: Norman thought it was funny that my family owned the Encyclopedia Britannica and it was right there next to the dining room table. [laughter]

Smith: Now nobody has those anymore.

Jervis: No.

Smith: I work at the library book sale at my local library and they're all getting rid of their encyclopedias.

Jervis: Everybody is trying to sell it.

Smith: I think the other part of your coming to Evergreen that strikes me anyway was you came on the heels of a horrible tearing apart of the institution, the fight over the President. You were seen as a healer, and that seems a very important legacy that you're too modest to describe.

Jervis: Well, I understood that. That was part of my saying, "I don't want to know what side they're on, because I'm too stupid to remember. If I have to think about that, I'll get it wrong and people will be offended. It's too awful. Just don't tell me." That was on purpose. If I can't see it, then maybe it will stop being there. Or, if I won't see it. And I felt good about that.

Smith: What were some of the big challenges you faced?

Jervis: Oh, boy. One that I hated the most was the arming of the police. I hated that because, you know, growing up during the war with a whole lot of our relatives in the war and us being guiltily safe was a big thing. We were never allowed to play with guns. To this day, I have never touched a gun.

But we were being held up by the Sheriff's Office. They were deliberately not responding when we called them. A student was beaten almost to death, and our security guards stood there and watched and did not intervene because it was against their work rules.

Smith: Wow.

Jervis: Security guards do not intervene in any instance in which they might get hurt.

Smith: Wow.

Jervis: The Sheriff's Office was on purpose not responding. I could understand it because they were underfunded, they were understaffed, and we were out in the boondocks. They didn't want to have to come out there, a bunch of over-privileged kids with too much steal-able stuff in their rooms.

Smith: Who were being naughty all the time.

Jervis: Being naughty all the time, doing fire alarms all the time, whatever. And when that kid was almost killed, there were two security guards watching doing nothing because their rules prevented them. I went to the Board and I said, "I think we have to do this. I hate it! I don't want to do it. I hate guns, but I think we have to do it." And we got a good Police Chief. I can't remember his name, but we had a stupid policeman who started playing with his gun in the snack bar, showing it off to kids, and I benched him. I said, "You're never going to hold a gun again, not on this campus."

Smith: Wow.

Jervis: And I think the message got across. I demanded a written report on my desk the next morning any time a gun came out of its holster. You remember the Mumia Abul-Jamal thing.

Smith: Yes.

Jervis: Our police were wonderful. I was worried about that but they were wonderful.

Smith: That was terrifying, but it turned out fine and we did it right.

Jervis: It was a heart stopper.

Smith: Yeah.

Jervis: It was three years later, I was coming out here to visit my daughter in Portland, and two kids—they weren't kids -- but two kids came up to me at the airport and said, "You're Jane." [laughter] And I said, "Yeah."

Smith: And they were students?

Jervis: They said, "We graduated in 2000, and that was our commencement. That was the thing that we learned the most when we were at Evergreen." And I said, "Thank you for telling me." Because I think it was an important thing we did. It was terrifying. Oh, gawd, I was so scared.

Smith: George Bridges had a similar situation and had to move graduation.

Jervis: Yeah, I heard about that. I probably never told you this, but I had a student who died at Yale when I was a dean, one of my students. The police found him under a bush. They took him back to his

dorm and put him to bed, and he died in bed. He'd inhaled his vomit. His parents came from Texas, and I went to the airport to pick them up. The rest of the administration at Yale vanished. [chuckles] "Who? Who? Oh, me?" I went to pick them up and the mother was wearing an ankle-length black mink. And I hugged her. And that week, before Mumia, I was feeling her mink in my hands.

Smith: Geez. All these old memories come back.

Jervis: It was a hallucination. It was a tactile hallucination that I was having. Because I wasn't responsible for that kid's death, but I was responsible. You know? And I didn't know what would happen at commencement, but I was responsible. So that was a big deal.

The other big deal that I was really angry at the faculty about was the semester thing. I was so pissed off. I could have killed you all.

Smith: Why?

Jervis: Because we took that up at the request of the faculty.

Smith: Some of the faculty.

Jervis: Well, it was a vote of the faculty, so I took it up. And we went through hell because of that. The students were after us. They sat in in my office. They were abusive to the Trustees. That's the thing that made me the most angry. They were really abusive to the Trustees. Then, the night before, the faculty changed its mind [laughter].

Smith: And make you do the tying vote.

Jervis: Right. [laughter] I had said to the Board, "I'm not going to tell you how to vote. This is the situation. The students are against it, the faculty is for it." Innocently, thinking the faculty was for it because they voted for it. And I could have put you all up against the wall and shot you all, I was so angry! [laughter] Not because you changed your mind, but because it was such a waste of time and such a waste of energy and such an abuse of the Board. It was like the Mumia thing. I never heard a word from the faculty until after it was over, and then everybody came out of the bushes and said, "We were right behind you, Jane." [laughter] I thought, oh, great. I'm really glad you told me now.

Smith: Right. A lot of the faculty had actually never taught at other schools. I was on the semester system at the University of Nebraska, so I had some experience of it, and I thought it was a disaster to go to semesters, but it looked like a real work simplification to lots of people.

Jervis: It would have put us out of sync with all the other schools.

Smith: That's exactly right. That's what I was looking at, especially the community colleges. But John Cushing was really out there, kind of leading the way.

Jervis: Yeah. It took up a lot of energy and we got a lot of abuse. The students were awful.

Smith: Yeah.

Jervis: Other students wouldn't like it.

Smith: They didn't realize that choice was the real driver of student opinions.

Jervis: Yeah. Those are some of the big things that I remember.

Smith: Remember on the 25th Anniversary, we put out a book of remembrances?

Jervis: Yeah.

Smith: And Paul Gallegos got all upset about one of the cartoons that looked—

Jervis: Yeah, and we had to recant.

Smith: Then we recanted, and then Jose Gomez said, "That's not the right decision. Put it back out."

[laughing] That was kind of an embarrassment and a test. And actually, the person who did that cartoon is now a good friend who lives in Port Townsend. [laughing] Live and learn.

Jervis: Free speech, at Hamilton and at Bowdoin and at Yale—all three of those schools in spring, when the sap rises—we had free speech issues on campus. Every year.

Smith: We did, too. And then doldrums in February.

Jervis: It was a little different because of the quarter system, but it was the same. One of the things that I really, really liked about Evergreen, after my experience at these other schools, was that it was mixed age.

Smith: Yes, I agree. I love adults! [laughing]

Jervis: It was a huge thing. And ever since, I thought we should not ghettoize late adolescents. It's terrible. They waste their parents' money. They're drunk or get raped or rape people, whatever. They are incapable of learning because they're poisoned by alcohol and hormones. It's just a way of putting them in prison and getting them out of their homes so their parents don't have to pay attention to them. It's wrong. You should have to be 25 to go to college – well, maybe 22. But we should have a national service program that takes kids away from their parents when they're 18, puts them to work, like, I forget what it was called during the Depression. The Work Projects.

Smith: CCC, WPA?

Jervis: Yeah.

Smith: It seems like those years with you were financially easy compared to some previous and subsequent years in terms of budget. Some people have said it was like Camelot financially, and because you were there.

Jervis: And because you and I were a good team.

Smith: Yeah.

Jervis: I have to tell you that—maybe I shouldn't tell you. Can you turn that off? During the Provost search, I was forced to choose you by the faculty.

Smith: Good! [laughing]

Jervis: And I was worried about that because of the this-side, that-side business.

Smith: Yeah.

Jervis: And I was determined when I saw that it was inevitable that I had to choose you that we were going to work well together. And we did. And I really thank you for that.

Smith: It helped that I'd been there a long time at that point.

Jervis: Yeah.

Smith: Because I was a baby when they hired me. I didn't know anything about what they hired me to do, but I learned it. And I think they've got trouble with upper administrators that have no previous experience, because it's a strange place.

Jervis: I had no previous experience at a school like Evergreen, because there isn't a school like Evergreen. One of the questions here is, "What do you do after you're retired?" I started a non-profit with some other people and I brought to that everything I knew about governance. But for a tiny, tiny, tiny organization.

Smith: What is the organization? Talk a little bit about that.

Jervis: Do you know about the Village Network?

Smith: Yes. That's Jin Darney. She's now a half-time employee of their Village—Woodstock, I think it's called, the Woodstock Neighborhood.

Jervis: When I retired I did some consulting work. I hated it. Some of it was very interesting. I worked for the Biosphere for a while. That was really interesting.

Smith: That was still functioning, huh?

Jervis: Yeah. Well, except that my job was to visit precious little liberal arts colleges and persuade them to send their students there for their junior year.

Smith: Internships.

Jervis: No, for their junior year. They wanted juniors, junior science majors. And I said, “You’re not going to get junior science majors because the schools won’t let them go, so forget about it.”

Smith: They need to be with the faculty.

Jervis: Columbia was running it, and the New York Columbia faculty despised it because it was interdisciplinary, and because it didn’t clearly distinguish between fieldwork and lab work. That’s a big fork in the sciences.

Smith: Although they still have the same goals in some ways.

Jervis: Yeah. But, you know, lab work is perfect. Fieldwork is messy.

Smith: That’s why I like fieldwork. [laughing]

Jervis: Yeah, because you can’t control the field the way you can control the lab.

Smith: Right.

Jervis: And the whole thing in doing lab work is that everything is absolutely controlled, and so you can depend on your outcomes. In fieldwork, you can take big inferences, but that is not the same thing. The wonderful thing about the Biosphere is that it scales up the laboratory, so you can control it in ways that you can’t control the field. But you can’t control it quite as well as you can control it in the lab.

Smith: So it’s a middle point.

Jervis: It’s a middle point. So the purists at Columbia—which, of course, is an Ivy League institution—said, “It’s bad science,” because it’s in between. So they insisted that students who went there had to be already science majors, well advanced as science majors, so they could see how inadequate the Biosphere really was.

Smith: They’d get polluted otherwise. [laughing]

Jervis: Right. So they sent me around to all these precious schools to recruit and all the science faculty said, “We don’t let our majors go away for their junior year.”

Smith: You were an outsider, too.

Jervis: Well, I had either attended or worked at a number of those schools. But it was really interesting. I fell in love with the Biosphere and I thought it had so much promise. What they should have done was

to take sophomores, because they could turn sophomores into interdisciplinarians. By the time they were juniors, they were lost. They were already gearheads, in their silos. So the whole concept of what they were doing was wrong, and they never could make it pay for itself. So, they turned it over to Arizona State.

Smith: And what are they doing with it?

Jervis: I think they're using it. Because the Vice President for Research at Columbia, who hired me, became the President of Arizona State. He was my boss at Columbia, so he believed in it.

Smith: Wow. So, talk about the Village non-profit.

Jervis: So I did that a little bit. I was being called on by a lot of little failing interdisciplinary colleges, private colleges in New England, and I would go.

Smith: Didn't you go to Goddard for a while?

Jervis: I actually worked at Goddard for a year and a half after they had lost their accreditation, and I got them reaccredited.

Smith: That's an achievement.

Jervis: Yeah, I feel good about that.

Smith: That's the granddaddy of a lot of this work.

Jervis: I would go to a school, and see immediately what was the matter, and see immediately what they should do to fix it. I would go and spend three days on campus and talk to everybody. They'd say, "Oh, that's so good! Oh, yes, yes, yes!" And I'd go away and they wouldn't do anything.

Smith: Really?

Jervis: Put the report on the shelf.

Smith: Oh, dear!

Jervis: I said, "I don't want to do this. If I can't be in charge, I'm not going to do it." [chuckles] I was poisoned by being President, because you could make it happen. I could at least sometimes make it happen.

Smith: You had such broad experience across the different sectors, too. That must have given you just big eyes and ideas.

Jervis: Yeah. John Terry (one of our Trustees) told me that I had to join the accreditation people out here. And I didn't want to, but I learned so much from that.

Smith: I did, too. I was mostly active on accrediting for SAC, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and I learned tons doing that. I liked that. That was interesting work.

Jervis: Yeah, I learned a lot. He told me I would. I said, "I don't want to." "Yes, you do." Anyway, after I'd done that for a while and then I rescued Goddard, I decided I wasn't going to do that anymore. There was a full-page story in the *New York Times* about Beacon Hill Village, which is the founder of the Village concept. I said, "Ooh! I want that!"

Smith: What's the idea of a Village?

Jervis: The idea of a Village is people who want to stay in their own homes as they age, getting together to help each other.

Smith: With all the functions of living?

Jervis: With all the functions of living, through volunteers and referrals to vetted providers. One of the little sayings we have: You get to know each other so you like each other so you'll help each other. We do social stuff and we offer rides. One of the big deals about getting old is when you can't drive anymore, so we have a big ride service, and we have a lot of social stuff.

A friend of mine called me up and said, "Did you read the article?" And I said, "Yes." He said, "You want to go on a fieldtrip?" I said, "Yes," so we drove up to Beacon Hill and we spent a day there. There had been a group of people who were sitting around talking about it, and saying, "Isn't this a good idea? Why don't we do it? Why don't we do it?" "Well, yeah. Let's meet next week." [laughing] Same conversation. So, Dick and I went to Boston and we came back with a notebook. They were very smart. They'd made a notebook on how to do it and they sold it to us for \$350.

Smith: Expensive.

Jervis: Yeah, but it was worth it. We came back. Dick was a lawyer and he should have gone to Evergreen but he didn't. He raised money and I kicked ass. I said, "You want to do this? Stop talking about it. This is what you have to do."

Smith: Get to work! [laughter]

Jervis: Committees. Bylaws. We're going to do this. We're going to do fundraisers. We're going to do little wine-and-cheese parties to spread the word. And we did it.

Smith: Wow.

Jervis: Dick raised the money, I raised the organization. We have 330 members now.

Smith: That's way bigger than Jin's. I think she said they have—

Jervis: She's here in Portland, and there's a bunch of Villages all around Portland. I gave some advice to the people who started that here. My daughter connected me

Smith: She's found that there's a whole bunch of jobs she's doing it all, which she needs to find how to decentralize it.

Jervis: We've learned a lot by doing this. Our main clients are professional and academic people.

Smith: That's not surprising.

Jervis: Because these people are the kind whose children go to college in Oregon or whatever, and they end up living far away. They don't have any local family, so they don't have nieces and nephews to come and change their diapers or anything.

Smith: Is a Village a geographically designed—

Jervis: It started out as East Rock Village, which was the neighborhood we live in. It was quite small. Then people started hearing about it and saying, "Can I join?" And we said, "No, you can't, because you're on the other side of that line or that line." And so we expanded, and pretty soon we had people from all different parts of Greater New Haven. Then we made it into a hub-and-spoke structure.

I wrote all the bylaws and all the policies and procedures and everything. I just said, "Let's get them out." I had done that for Goddard. I used to take the train back and forth to Vermont, and when I got on campus, I'd plug in my computer—psshht!—all these things would go out. [laughter]

Smith: We have a little Goddard campus that's very successful in Port Townsend.

Jervis: I know.

Smith: That program is just hot.

Jervis: It's interesting, and I think it's a little weird, like Evergreen.

Smith: Yeah.

Jervis: It's very good for some things and pretty sloppy about some things. Like Evergreen. [chuckles]

Smith: Yeah.

Jervis: So, I did all the procedures for this organization. Dick was President and I was Vice President. We hired an Executive Director. And Dick is a very nice person, but he falls in love with people and then he falls out of love with people. The Executive Director had been on board for two months and Dick

said, "Jane, fire him!" [laughter] I said, "You hired him. You fire him." He said, "No, I'm not going to fire him. If I have to fire him, I'm not going to be President anymore."

So I said, "I'll fire him but I'm not going to fire him now. It will take me probably six months and he'll think he left on purpose." Because that's how I fired people at Evergreen. That's how I've always fired people; let them think it was their idea. They usually thanked me. Not always. no names!!!

Smith: I think an awful lot of people are incompetent because they get no direction and help. Then you're mad that they didn't do what you didn't tell them to do.

Jervis: Yeah. We started that in 2007, and I'm trying to back out now because they're too dependent on me, and it's not good for the organization.

Anyway, this guy that I fired came to me in November or something and said, "I've been talking to Norman about skiing, because he likes to ski in the Alps and get a lot of money, and he needs a job." I said, "My parents were from the Alps." We kept talking about skiing with him. He said, "Well, we go to Switzerland for two months and we have a house over there and we go skiing for two months." I said, "Oh! I don't think we can get along without you. We're a brand-new organization. I think you're going to have to make a choice."

Smith: You backed him in the corner! [laughter] I might have gone skiing, too, with him.

Jervis: It was so devious. I'm so devious.

Smith: That is devious.

Jervis: And so he left, covered with glory. We gave him a going-away party. We said how much we'd miss him, but we hoped he liked and enjoyed his skiing.

Smith: Nice. That's a good way to go out. Better than the opposite.

Jervis: Yeah, but he had a lot of money and he was well known in the non-profit area. I said, "We're a brand-new organization. We don't need an enemy in town. It's not going to work getting rid of him to make an enemy."

Smith: Right. So, you sure haven't retired.

Jervis: Well, no. No, I haven't. I'm still pretty involved in what's now called HomeHaven. I'm on the Board and I'm also on the Board of the Whitney Center, which is the CCRC [Continuing Care Retirement Communities], the premier CCRC in New Haven. They recruited me because they were going to start an at-home program. So, in a way, the two organizations whose Boards I'm on are competitors.

Smith: That's kind of interesting actually.

Jervis: It's very interesting.

Smith: Do they have differences enough that they're both valuable?

Jervis: They are both valuable. And one of the problems of the Village Movement is that there may come a time when you can't stay at home.

Smith: Yes.

Jervis: And then you can't get into one of those places. What happens is that the hospital puts you in a nursing home bed, wherever it's vacant. Some of the nursing homes are appalling.

Smith: I'm a guardian for a person who's almost in that state. No family. In a wheelchair three years after back surgery. Going broke. Can't even do a reverse mortgage because the house isn't worth anything, but the land is because it's waterfront.

Jervis: It's terrible. We should be a socialist country. Other countries do this way much better than we do. So, that's a problem with the Village Network, although in the six years we've been an active business, we've had quite a number of people die in our hands by engaging hospice at home. But you have to have a good bit of money.

Smith: Yes.

Jervis: So, even though we keep talking about wanting to diversify our membership and not be such an upper-echelon organization, first of all, New Haven is an Italian city and most everybody has an extended family. They mostly live in two or three family houses together, so they don't need this because they have family. And the people who don't have family are generally indigent or they have money. It's a funny demographic puzzle.

Smith: It doesn't help that the rules of Medicaid have long wait periods, too. How do you survive. That is what I'm trying to figure out.

Jervis: What I've always been afraid of, because my father and my grandfather had Alzheimer's disease, is that I will lose my mind and not be able to kill myself. [chuckles] And if I'm of sound mind and if I suddenly come up with stage-4 cancer, I'm going to stop eating and not go that route, because I've seen so many people go that route and then it recurs and you end up being tortured to death.

Smith: Ick. Ugh.

Jervis: Yeah. I turned 80 this summer and I had a slight psychiatric crisis about that.

Smith: You don't look 80.

Jervis: I just started getting gray hair. It's about time. [chuckles]

Smith: Well, that can be taken care of and it makes a big difference about looks.

Jervis: Everybody assumes that I dye my hair so I might as well.

Smith: The last set of questions are about how you think of the college in retrospect and what its prospects and urgencies are.

Jervis: Well, for 16 years, I didn't hear anything from Evergreen.

Smith: Wow.

Jervis: And I never heard from Les Purce

Smith: That's my experience as well.

Jervis: So I got on with my life and it's okay. Then I've met with George Bridges several times on the East Coast.

Smith: Yeah.

Jervis: And I like him.

Smith: Yeah.

Jervis: My sense is he's feeling a little out of his depth.

Smith: Yes, I think that's right. He's used to richer, more stable environments.

Jervis: Yeah. Well, he comes from the same environment that I came from.

Smith: Right, but he didn't have your prior upbringing history to level that experience.

Jervis: Yeah. And he shared with me the assessment of Evergreen that he had.

Smith: The stand-in?

Jervis: Yes.

Smith: That was a very interesting thing, and disturbing.

Jervis: He called me first because he was terrified about losing funds with all this alt-right stuff. And I tried to reassure him. I said, "That's an old, old story. It's been going on since 50 years ago."

Smith: That's true. Up, down, up, down, up down.

Jervis: Up, down, up, down. He said, “How did you work with the Legislature?” I said, “I don’t know. I worked with the Legislature by not acting like a President.”

Smith: Plain talk.

Jervis: Yeah, plain talk.

Smith: We were there in a rich period, too, which helped.

Jervis: Telling the truth and advocating for financial aid, even though it’s not in your budget.

Smith: Right.

Jervis: I think I gained so much credit by that.

Smith: Good, I’m glad you told him that.

Jervis: I said, “It’s an act of magnanimity for you to do that, and it will be appreciated.” So I don’t know what else I could do. He sent me a geoduck for my 80th birthday. [laughter]

Smith: A real one? A frozen one?

Jervis: Yeah. No, it was alive.

Smith: Oh, really?

Jervis: Yeah, it was alive.

Smith: What did you do with it?

Jervis: Fortunately, Norman’s son Joseph who lives here in Oregon, was visiting for my birthday. We had a big birthday party at the beach. He went to Evergreen, he graduated from Evergreen, and before that, after he’d dropped out of Stony Brook, he was in the food service business for 10 years, sometimes making pizzas and sometimes as a sous chef.

Smith: He knew how to cook it!

Jervis: He knew what to do. We had fried geoduck for lunch.

Smith: It’s pretty delicious, actually.

Jervis: It’s really delicious with the salsa that he made. I don’t remember how he fixed it for supper. We had it as an hors d’oeuvre for supper. It was delicious but it was really disgusting looking.

Smith: Yeah, they are. Like an elephant penis. [laughter] I took a Chinese cooking class years ago, and they served geoduck in red wine leaves once that was delicious, actually. But I didn’t have to deal with how it looked or chopping or any of that.

Jervis: I didn't realize—and Joseph knew—that all you have to do is peel off the skin like you're taking a sock off.

Smith: Right.

Jervis: Then it wasn't so disgusting. [laughter] It came in a very well-insulated package.

Smith: Right.

Jervis: They called in advance to make sure I would be home.

Smith: That was smart. [laughing] Yeah, Evergreen is a studied reinvention institution, so it keeps losing its history and it loses a lot of the knowledge that would make the job of our successors easier as a result of the way that it doesn't communicate and keep records and do oversight. That's very frustrating.

Jervis: Yeah.

Smith: As well as making people feel left out. That doesn't help advancement in the long run.

Jervis: Yeah. I think that the model that Evergreen developed back then is a really important thing to have in the world.

Smith: I do, too.

Jervis: And I'm sort of heartbroken. But it seems to me that the things that are working against Evergreen are financial, because it sort of requires more than a course at a time. A lot of people now go to college, of course, in their spare time when they're working like mad to keep body and soul together.

Smith: Right.

Jervis: It's all part of this fragmentation of the society and of the, I don't know what you call it, the commercialization of everything.

Smith: Yes.

Jervis: And Amazon is taking over everything, for crying out loud.

Smith: They're my favorite store where I live. [laughing]

Jervis: And so I worry about this country.

Smith: Yeah.

Jervis: Gawd, I don't know what's going to happen to us. It's a miracle we're not at war.

Smith: Yes. The thing I remember that I loved about working with you was when we did accreditation. I think I'm the only person who loved doing accreditation because it was a convening opportunity. And Jin Darney wrote this little section about the critical tensions at the college and how it's a teeter-totter between autonomy and community, and how you have to keep it in balance, and it does do this. I think that's true. And that's dangerous.

Jervis: Yeah.

Smith: But the Evening and Weekend Studies Program is pretty interdisciplinary, although it also offers little chunks. But it has lots of yearlong eight-credit things that are very interdisciplinary. So I think there're some ways you can accommodate the more part-time students without giving up.

Jervis: Do you still have the small proportion of teenaged students that you had then?

Smith: Yes.

Jervis: So, it's still mostly grownups?

Smith: I think that's unsolvable. It's kind of sewn in the kind of institution it is. And they won't even start Running Start, which has more students than any of the four-year schools do. People are doing that because of expedience for financial reasons, and we're too snotty to think that a smart 16- or 17-year-old could be with us. But UW has 14-year-olds if they're prodigies. There're some rigidities, I think, in how—I mean, there're still lots of people who think, I only want the best and don't even like the open admissions.

Jervis: Yeah, well, there's always this question: best at what?

Smith: Exactly. And if the "what" gets too narrow, you're going to lose on the "what."

Jervis: Yeah. One of the reactions that I had to the way I grew up and my previous work experience is that these kids—I saw it most strongly at Bowdoin—come in absolutely polished, and they've done every single extracurricular activity and they have nothing but As and they have nothing but APs and everything. They're highly, highly polished and they can't think. They want to know, "Is it going to be on the exam?" They want to know, "Do I have to know this?" Most of them continue to get good grades in college and they go to a good graduate school and they probably do the same thing in graduate school.

Smith: Then they become a professor and teach that way.

Jervis: Or else they become a stockbroker or whatever. And all the time, they are regretting—this is true of the faculty, too—that they're not at Harvard because they didn't make it. I used to be really mad

at the faculty at Bowdoin because they were all longing to do their “research.” They didn’t publish anything, but they couldn’t spend time with students because they were doing their “research.” They couldn’t do anything over the summer because they were doing their “research.” They never came out of their “research.” They were all feeling that they were second-best because they weren’t at Harvard.

Smith: Right. I don’t think our faculty, as a whole, has that kind of mismatched aspirations. Although there was some of the interviews, I guess some that showed that they came only because it was the only offer they had, which is not a good reason to be at Evergreen. [laughing]

Jervis: Right. I don’t know if I invented this myself, but one of the things that I believed was that the reason you publish or perish at Harvard or at Bowdoin or wherever is so that your brain doesn’t die.

Smith: Right.

Jervis: Because your brain will die if you keep teaching the same courses all the time, and you’ll get cynical and start molesting your students and whatever. [laughter] That function is taken at Evergreen by teaching with other people.

Smith: I agree completely.

Jervis: It takes guts to put yourself in that situation where you’re not the expert, and at Yale, God knows, everybody is the world’s expert at a grain of sand. That’s brain-killing, too. My dissertation was on comets in the 14th century. [laughter] How big of a grain of sand is that?

Smith: Teaming is all about keeping the learning going. It’s wonderful.

Jervis: Yeah, and demonstrating learning, and demonstrating that even a professor at your college could say, “I don’t know. Teach me about that.”

Smith: And it’s social development, too, and risky, which feels good when it’s successful.

Jervis: Yeah, and I understood that immediately coming to Evergreen. I think I understood it during my interviews that that was what Evergreen was about.

Smith: I wrote an article on team teaching years and years ago when I was at Nebraska. Most of the schools that had it only had a little, and it almost all disappeared. So it is also about, I think, the infrastructure for maintaining that.

Jervis: Right, it has to be built into the infrastructure or else it gets eroded.

Smith: Yeah.

Jervis: Evergreen was an extraordinary experiment and I think I was there at a really good time.

Smith: Me, too.

Jervis: Maybe it was partly a really good time because I was there.

Smith: Marilyn Frasca was one of the people I interviewed before and she said that there were three Evergreens in her time there. The first was before I came in '78, which was like reinventing everything. She said actually the deans designed the programs. They set out the themes, and they were the old Meiklejohn themes about democracy. There was no place for science. [laughing] And then they assigned people, and that changed in '75. Then our whole period that went through your period was getting more organized but still keeping all that. And then the union came and it was all different since then.

I think we're in Evergreen 4 now because Jen Drake—I'm really distant so this is not an informed statement—seems to really know what she's doing about the details of organizing people. She's the Provost. We had five Provosts between me and her, and the two outsiders were complete disasters. But she's not. She's got the skills to work with people, and she set up processes I've never seen before that seem to be working.

Jervis: Good. I inherited Les's bottom drawer.

Smith: Oh? What was his bottom drawer?

Jervis: All the things he didn't want to deal with.

Smith: Really? He had a drawer of them? Wow.

Jervis: That made me really worry about his being appointed President after me. I hope that didn't happen.

Smith: He was a good President on capital and legislative and buildings. Not good at personnel. He kept people that should have gone bye-bye too long.

Jervis: I inherited a lot of people who should have gone bye-bye and there was no record. No paper. I learned that dealing with fraternities. Everything went on paper, and I signed and the president of the fraternity signed this contract, which I knew that they weren't going to be able to keep.

Smith: The thing that drove me most crazy as an administrator is people who would whine about things but never document it.

Jervis: Yeah.

Smith: People deserve fair warning, I think.

Jervis: Yeah. But there were people in the President's office who had nothing to do, and would sleep at their desks all day. I went to them and I said, "You know, you must hate coming to work." "Yeah."

Smith: Did you give them a job?

Jervis: I tried to give them a job or I said, "Let me help you find another job."

Smith: There's also the whole thing about growing an institution. I keep thinking of the aspiration to always grow because you get more money. And then there's a right-sizing idea about, what is the right size to be? I think our reach exceeded our grasp.

Jervis: How many students do you have now?

Smith: It's down to 3,100. It's down 40 percent.

Jervis: Really? Wow. That's what it was when I was there. It was 3,200, I think.

Smith: It went up though to like 4,800, so it looked like 5,000 was within reach. But it's a long, long-term trend. It started after you left but it's been going on for like six years. And the community colleges are in the same position. The branch campus are the surge centers. They're huge now. Bothell is 67 percent first generation. Asian mostly. It's a lot of geography. [laughing] It's good.

Any last comments you want to make?

Jervis: I really hope that Evergreen's prospects and urgencies—I can't speak to the urgencies because I don't know—but I was asked in some forum, I don't remember what. Oh, I know. It was my college getting ready for my 60th reunion, which I'm not going to go to. I was so angry at the 50th reunion. Never going back there.

Anyway, they did a big questionnaire. One of the questions was, Did you ever work for money?

Smith: Ever work for money?

Jervis: Yes! [laughing]

Smith: Was that about your motivation? Just the fact?

Jervis: No, they just wanted to know if you were ever employed.

Smith: That's a strange way to put it.

Jervis: I thought so. I said, "Yes, quite a lot." They said, "Well, what paid work was most rewarding to you?" I didn't have to think about it. It was at Evergreen.

Smith: I would say the same thing. For all its annoying features, it has so many good ones.

Jervis: So, I'm really glad I did that.

Smith: Me, too. And it was a pleasure to work with you.

Jervis: Good. Ditto. I was scared at first. Afraid of you.

Smith: You did good. [laughing] I don't think I'm scary.

Jervis: It wasn't you personally. It was your embeddedness. I was an outsider.

Smith: I felt like an outsider the whole time at some levels because I was the first outside dean, and I didn't have all those ties that rotating administrators have. Some people would say I was escaping from teaching or I didn't like teaching, which wasn't true. But I do prefer administration. I love problem-solving.

Jervis: Yeah.

Smith: And I'm teaching now with the Native Cases Project.

Jervis: Tell me about that.

Smith: It's 14 years old. After I retired, I had a one-year contract to do fundraising. I wrote a couple grants, and the second grant I wrote was to the Lumina Foundation to support and build up the Native Studies Program. And we got it—\$800,000—and no one was there to direct it, so I became the Director. A tiny piece of it was developing Native curriculum on current issues. It was problem-based learning through case studies.

Jervis: I looked that up on the Web site. So, they are modules that people can use?

Smith: Right, and they're used by 200-plus colleges now. There's 109.

Jervis: That's fabulous.

Smith: I write some of them, and when we had lots of money we'd pay them a lot of money to write them. We operate now on \$14,000 a year that's funded by the tribes completely. We run an institute for teachers once a year. That's it.

But I'm facing this issue, who's going to take this over? Are they just going to let it die? We could give it to UW's Ethnic Studies Department maybe. Evergreen just lets stuff go away that was very successful. That's a tragedy, I think. And it's also like a privacy thing. It's your thing, so therefore it's you or nothing at all. It's very fun. I've learned a ton.

Jervis: I learned a lot about Indians when I got out here [chuckles] since I knew nothing when I came.

Smith: I love it. It's really fun. But we're very purposeful about bringing new schools in and staying in touch, tracking the most current issues. We had the first case about whether tribes should legalize marijuana the minute that hit.

Jervis: Is recreational use legal now in Washington?

Smith: Yes. We were the second state to legalize after Colorado.

Jervis: I have very mixed feelings about that.

Smith: I voted no, but we're kind of an alcoholic society, I think, in all kinds of ways. That's why I thought it was a big mistake.

Jervis: And I've seen too many kids sort of drift off center and not be able to get back.

Smith: Yeah. That whole part of the U.S. falling apart in all these different ways is frightening.

Jervis: Yeah. We shouldn't talk about politics, but gawd . . .

Smith: There's a lot of it. [laughter]

Jervis: I'm really terrified about the rise of the alt-right. In Europe? How can Germans and Italians be going that way? I just don't get it. I can understand why we could be going that way because we've never been in a war.

Smith: Except with the Indians that we killed.

Jervis: Yeah, but that was a long time ago.

Smith: That's true.

Jervis: But World War I and II are within living memory. How can people be going that road again?

Smith: A lot of it's backlash and fear.

Jervis: Yeah. And all of Trump's best friends are the most horrible despots in the world.

Smith: Right. Okay, I'm going to end this.

Jervis: Okay. It's been a pleasure – really!