

**Duke Kuehn**  
**Interviewed by Anthony Zaragoza**  
**The Evergreen State College oral history project**  
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**FINAL**

**Zaragoza:** Thank you so much. When we left off, we were talking about the emergence of your consulting business from your work at Evergreen. You mentioned how you were able to parallel these two things, things that you were doing on the job, you were teaching students, and/or things that you were teaching students, you were doing on the job. Are there more things that you'd like to tell us about that consulting business?

**Kuehn:** Yeah, it was just a remarkable experience, a remarkable evolution. It wasn't anything I had ever thought about or intended or anticipated. All of a sudden, I began to do this thing. First of all, it was just a sideline to make a couple of extra bucks. But also, out of a commitment to use my knowledge in a way that would help people in the community. I saw that as an extension of my teaching., literally.

All of a sudden, it took over my life. I became just that much more effective as a teacher in a much, much larger arena. Again, if I had intended this, if it had been an ambition, I'd probably feel differently about it. It was a continual surprise to me. It just happened. As with many things in my life, as I told you before, I've always been open to new opportunities. Some of them wouldn't take me very far, and in a couple of instances, they really changed my life.

I started this consulting stuff, and as I described to you in our last interview, calls would come into the college and secretaries would transfer them to me. Somebody would ask me if I could do something, and as I said at the time, unless it's brain surgery, I'd say, "Yeah, I can do it. I can figure out how to do it."

Interestingly enough, there were things I did have to figure out how to do, and many of them were rooted, surprisingly, in the Evergreen pedagogy—working groups, teamwork, collaboration, stuff like that. I got good at that. I already had this background in evaluation research, which set me up to be a good strategic planner.

Initially, I was just doing work in the local community—state agencies, and divisions of state agencies, or small county/city entities, and a lot of work with boards and commissions because they needed to do planning. On those boards and commissions were uniformly citizens who came from the

regular world. They went back to their offices, and pretty soon I was working with business and foundations and all sorts of things.

There was an incredible amount of chance and luck in all of this, and I need to credit that, and also talk about that a little bit. A good example is frequently, students would go back to their families and their husbands or their parents and tell them about me, and I'd get a call to come down. In those days, there was an entity called the Washington State Energy Office, which, after the great fuel problems of the late 1970s, had gotten tons and tons of federal funding, and they were the clearinghouse for that funding throughout the state. I don't know who referred me, but they were one of my first clients. I think it came from a guy who'd been in that career executive program.

I worked with the Washington State Energy Office and became friends with a lot of them. One of the people I became friends with was Dick Watson, who was the Director. This is an almost unbelievable story. Dick Watson's wife, Marilyn, who I had met a couple of times and who knew my work, was having lunch with her best friend in Olympia. I had no idea who her best friend was or that they were even having lunch.

Her best friend worked at the Washington State Association of Realtors, WAR. She was their political affairs director and was telling Marilyn all the problems that were going on in her office— conflict between people and poor leadership, etc. In a comment that I could have never known of or predicted, Marilyn Watson said something that totally changed my life. She said to her friend, "You should meet the guy who's working with my husband," and she gave her my name.

**Zaragoza:** Wow.

**Kuehn:** She went back to her office. I never added it up. Let's just say hundreds of thousands of dollars over the next 30 years. I ended working with WAR, working with them for several years, meeting lots of people, making lots of contacts. Got involved in the commercial real estate industry. That was my primary client for the rest of my life. I worked with commercial real estate firms all over North America—Mexico, Canada, the US, all over—and developed an expertise.

I'm not going to go into the details of it, but there's things about the commercial real estate industry and the ownership and operation and management of them that's kind of quirky and unique, and I got very knowledgeable, and known for my knowledge about that.

I developed this expertise out of nothing, and if you'd told me when I was 25 years old or 30 years old, coming out of graduate school, "Oh, yeah, this is where your life is going to take you. You're going to sitting in a boardroom in Boston dealing with a bunch of angry owners," I would have said, "What? How'd that happen?" [laughing] But it happened, and it was fun.

There were a lot of other things I did. I tried to have a broad portfolio, and I always continued to work at pro bono stuff or very low fee for non-profits, because that's where it started.

That story about Marilyn Watson's referral is just indicative of things that happened to me my whole life. I did very little marketing. The only thing I did do is I started a newsletter that I'd send out. That's how I recovered my writing voice that Jack Mitchell had stolen from me as a freshman in college.

I'd go to conferences. I'd schmooze people at conferences. I can remember talking to a client one time, a guy down in Mexico City, and he was one of the few Jews in Mexico. His family was very prominent. When the president or whatever—prime minister—of Israel came to visit Mexico City, he stayed with this guy's family.

**Zaragoza:** Wow.

**Kuehn:** I'm talking to him in his office one day about how to market his services. I said, "I know it's tough for you, but sometimes you just have to say to your friends, 'I'm not hustling you or anything here, but I need you to know this is what I do and I'm available if you ever need my help.'" I said, "I know how hard that is to do."

He looked at me and he said, "Dooook, it's not hard to do at all. You come right up to me at a conference and say, 'We need to be working together.'" [laughing] And that's exactly what I'd do. I just go up to people and say, "Hey, I'd like to work with you. I think we should be working together." Sure enough, more times than not I'd get the job.

I did more and more of this. As I said, my teaching became more and more built around all of that. I'd come into class, and I'd say, "I want to talk to you today about how you would deal with this issue of goal setting." The students really liked the class—very practical, very useful—but I kept it tied to good sociology and psychology, good social psychology. The next day I'd go off and do the thing. Then I'd come back the next day in class and I'd go, "Here's how it went."

This is what I loved. Invariably, a student would raise his or her hand and they'd say, "Dr. Duke, you said never to do that, and you just did it!" [laughter] Every mistake, every misstep I took, they'd catch. But what was brilliant about it is that they were educating me. The students' feedback really, really, really upped my game. It caused me to think much more deeply about what I was doing, why I was doing it, if it was working, why it was working.

I owe an incredible debt to students for extending my thoughts, pulling me further, and I have to thank an Evergreen faculty member for that, a guy named Leo Daugherty, who I only taught one quarter with down in Vancouver. He was kind of a mythical Evergreen faculty member. He was a big, shambling, crazy kind of Lit professor. But he told me something. I'd only been at Evergreen a couple

years, and we were just talking about teaching, and he said, “Duke, here’s the secret. Teach what you’re working on. Students love that. They love getting involved in the things you’re working on. They don’t want to work with you, and they’re not going to be able to analyze it or deal with it in an advanced form as you can, but they can do part of it, and they can see how you do it.”

That’s exactly what I did. I followed Daugherty’s advice much earlier in my career, and as my career ended in teaching, that’s exactly what I was doing. I was engaging them in exactly the same process that I was engaged in. Their questions and their comments, and frequently, their criticism pushed me to a much, much higher level of understanding of all of that, both as a teacher and as a consultant.

There’s one last story I need to tell you about all of that. If I give myself credit for anything, Tony, it’s that I’ve always been open to new things and new ways of thinking. When I took a job at the Policy Institute, I was way in over my head. I didn’t know how to manage anything like that. I certainly didn’t understand the legislative process well enough.

I got to know a lot of people, and one of the persons I got to know briefly—not intimately at all—a guy named Ed Seeberger. Ed was in charge of staff for the Washington State Senate, and a lot of people in downtown Olympia were very, very helpful to me as I was trying to do the job of getting the Institute off the ground.

I’ll never forget this. It’s like it happened 10 minutes ago. I’m sitting in Seeberger’s office in the Senate, and he said something that changed my life. I understood organizations, certainly understood them theoretically and practically pretty well by then. He waved his hand around, pointing to the Legislature in the air. He said, “Duke, the thing you need to understand is it’s one, big decision-making machine.”

I’m sure I must have thought something along that line at some point in my life, but the direct way that he put it in his position, I’d always thought about organizations as machines, so it’s not a fair metaphor, but not a bad one, but I’d never thought about decision-making machines. What Seeberger didn’t realize is that—it’s like that story the kid told me about learning about leadership on the ski trip—he filled in a brick in the wall, and I realized all organizations are just decision-making machines. That’s what they do.

Their mission may be to make cars or sell cars or educate students, but it’s all about literally hundreds and thousands daily decisions—tiny, small ones—park here, park there—huge ones—spend the money or not spend the money. But once I grasped the idea that all I was working with, whatever the organization was—could be a regional ballet company, could be a huge international commercial

real estate firm, could be Golden Corral, the buffet restaurant people—was a decision-making machine, and I needed to understand who made the decisions, how the decisions were made, and how the decisions were implemented, because the implementation is as much a part of the decision as the actual choice. That changed my life, and it changed my approach, both as a teacher and as a consultant in terms of the subject matter I had at hand.

That was the stuff I wanted to share with you about the consulting. I guess there's one other part of it that's kind of interesting, too. I began to take on a dual identity. Most of my faculty and colleagues didn't know I was consulting, and they weren't very interested if I were. Many of them were rather suspicious of it.

I remember Kathleen and I bought a new car. A bright red Mazda RX7. It was a hot car. I ran into a faculty colleague in the parking lot, and I don't know, I forget exactly what he or she said, but it was something to the effect "Well, that's why you do your consulting, so you can buy a fancy car like this," although that had nothing to do with it.

But most of my faculty colleagues didn't know me as a consultant, or even if they did, they had absolutely no idea what I was doing, or why I was doing it, except for a couple, Judy Bayard in particular. She knew.

On the same hand, my clients didn't know I was a college professor. In fact, if they had, it would have probably counted against me, because they would have stereotyped me as an ivory tower, hippie kind of guy. It would have come out eventually, but I developed a credibility that had nothing to do with my academic credentials or background. That was kind of interesting.

I guess the last part of the identity thing is I never, ever once in my life perceived myself as a salesperson. Just wasn't me. But, as I told you the story about my client in Mexico City, I became a good salesperson, mostly because I just interacted very naturally with people. I was helpful. Wanted to be helpful. But I got to the point where I wasn't afraid to ask the question: Are we going to do it or aren't we?

I got to the point even where I would turn down clients. I wouldn't work with somebody where it was just for show. If they weren't actually going to do a plan and implement it, I wasn't interested in doing it, no matter what I was paid. I wanted results. I wanted outcomes.

That pretty much describes my consulting career. The only reason why I spent so much time on it is, one, I would have never have probably begun it if I hadn't been at Evergreen, certainly not to that dimension. I never would have been as successful if it hadn't been for the opportunities that Evergreen gave for me to develop a whole bunch of skills and talents that I honestly didn't even know I had.

**Zaragoza:** And you mentioned the role that the students played in giving you opportunity to think out loud about some things and get feedback in what essentially amounted to in real time.

**Kuehn:** It was invaluable. I can't imagine a better tutorial for doing that. Probably, after I started to learn that I did that in other skills in my own regard, but I realized that the dialogue between teachers and students—I knew this from the beginning and you do, too; it's never been one-way street, but I didn't realize how important that reciprocation was.

Some students are pretty smart and sometimes they have a good way of seeing past the myths and fantasies that we create in our own minds. I have to thank Daugherty because that concept of seeing students as people who are working alongside you was a very important part of my teaching and my life. I owe him.

**Zaragoza:** I can relate to that, Duke, no doubt. As I've come to know your consulting business, [it] wasn't the only thing that came out of your work at Evergreen. You also met your life partner. Do you want to tell us that story, Duke?

**Kuehn:** [Laughing] In a very edited version, probably, yeah. I don't think I ever violated any MeToo rules, but there are some questionable behaviors in all this. I had married right out of college. A wonderful woman I still regard very highly today. But the motivation for my marriage was largely insecurity, I think. I was scared going off to graduate school and I was scared about being drafted and I was scared about growing up, and my first wife was a great emotional support through the next few years of my life.

The problem with that is that after a while, I wasn't scared anymore. I was developing a kind of competency and a kind of skill, and I felt confident about moving forward. Quite frankly, the two of us just didn't grow together. I was not the man she married. She was the woman I married, but I didn't need that anymore.

I went through a dark period in my life where there a lot of things happened. It became clear to me that my marriage was not going to survive. We tried counseling and everything else, but she couldn't change to meet me, and I couldn't go back to what I'd been. We had a son. He was now almost 10 years old, and I didn't want to break up a marriage to hurt him, but it just became unrealistic. I didn't want to live in a marriage that was loveless, not with my son. I didn't want him to see that, experience that.

I was teaching Management in the Public Interest, I think with Chuck Nisbet, and one of the first day of classes—it must have been like an orientation to the program in the fall—all these students were

there. As I mentioned before, I taught at a time when a lot of women were returning to college, and that was certainly the case with Kathleen. We'd both been married for a few years.

**Zaragoza:** Was this in the undergraduate program or when you were teaching in MPA?

**Kuehn:** In the undergraduate program. I can remember being down in the big lobby in the downstairs corner of the Library Building, not far from the office I'd had when I was the head of that enrollment thing. There were all these people there, and I saw this woman. It wasn't love at first sight, but there was just something in her that just captivated me the first moment I ever saw her. I can see that today.

She was in my class. She was a banker. She had two kids. She has a beautiful smile. It lights up a room. But I could see a sadness in her eyes. Over the course of the quarter, we began to talk. As you know, with adult students, you have very different kinds of conversations than with kids. The conversations became more personal, more friendly, and I found myself falling in love with her.

Sometime, I guess in the winter quarter—the next quarter—I saw her and I expressed my feelings, which I think were honestly more than a little surprising to her, but what wasn't surprising was that they were mutually felt. We fell in love, and over the next period of time, slowly left our marriages. Nothing that I am proud of or will ever be proud of, but we had our reasons. To our credit, we made sure that we would not marry and make the same mistake again. We've had our ups and downs—any marriage would have that—but we've been together now for almost 40 years.

**Zaragoza:** Wow.

**Kuehn:** Blended a family, my 10-year old son, her five- and three-year-old daughters, who are all grown up and successful. If you met our kids, you would think they were all our kids, not stepchildren. We never used those terms. We both maintain very cordial, close relationships with our ex-spouses, so there's always been a strong family sense there. There was never a graduation or a ceremony that everybody doesn't show up. It's united. I think they went on to better lives in their own regards, too.

It was an incredible experience. Building a family, that was the key thing. We loved each other but we knew we had to serve these kids. Astoundingly, because of some other circumstances, we ended up raising one of our granddaughters, who's going to be 20 in November and is at college. She's home for the summer. Our granddaughter—who ended up, under rather difficult circumstances—coming to live with us when she was five became the child we never were able to have ourselves.

**Zaragoza:** Oh, that's beautiful, Duke. That's really beautiful.

**Kuehn:** Yeah, she's a remarkable thing in our lives. We're both Catholics. We're both very guilt ridden about things, but I think, as a penance, we tried to make up for the errors in our first marriages. She is an astounding person. She's been in banking. She was in college, 18 years old, and screwed up in her

first semester and her father—they lived in San Francisco—who was a ship’s captain, tough guy—after her first quarter or semester in college, he said, “Get up. We’re going downtown this morning.” He drove her to downtown San Francisco to the financial district and he said, “I’m going to drop you off here. I’m going to pick you up at 5:00. You’d better have a job by then.” [laughter]

**Zaragoza:** It’s like the story of the old-timers who would teach you how to swim by throwing you in the water.

**Kuehn:** That’s right. You’re either going to drown or you’re going to swim. She found a job at Security Pacific Bank as the vault clerk. That was her very first job. Ended up as a fairly highly-placed executive with KeyBank for a while, and went back to just branch banking, so she’s the branch manager of Columbia Bank in the Stadium District. For the first time in her life, she’s really starting to think about retirement. She’s gotten to that point.

Our life has been one series of successions after another as kids have gone and left the nest and have come back, and then have brought grandkids back, and all sorts of things. It has been an adventure. I made one mistake. [laughing] If I married my first wife because she was just so supportive and I could never do anything wrong in her eyes, I said, I’m never going to do that again. I’m going to marry somebody who’s got tough standards, and I did. I figured after a few years, Kathleen would kind of ease up on that. Not a chance. [laughter] She chewed my ass out this morning about not squeezing out the sponge. She has kept me humble and honest and we’re still deeply in love with each other. That’s that story.

**Zaragoza:** Thank you for sharing that story with us, Duke. It’s really beautiful.

**Kuehn:** She went on to graduate from Evergreen, too. Once we got involved, I let her loose. Another friend of mine, Greg Weeks, took her over. He knew what was going on between us and offered an academic buffer of sorts. I never got to teach her again. But she went on to graduate from Evergreen. My punchline to all this is I was her teacher for ten weeks, I was her student for the rest of my life.

**Zaragoza:** Sounds like you have several Evergreen alums in several different ways.

**Kuehn:** Yeah. One of my daughters graduated from Evergreen out of the Tacoma Program. There was a lot I didn’t like about Evergreen. If I had to do it over again, I still would have preferred to go to Lewis and Clark. [laughter] But if I had, I wouldn’t be talking about 90 percent of the things we’ve talked about. I guarantee you that.

**Zaragoza:** Getting to know you this little bit, I have a feeling that that 90 percent would be pretty damn interesting no matter where you ended up going; whether you stayed at Riverside or Lewis and Clark or



wherever, Duke, you've just got some magic to you that is able to make things happen. That's clear to me, and it's been an honor to talk to you.

**Kuehn:** Oh, I forgot to tell you one last thing, one last evolution.

**Zaragoza:** Please do.

**Kuehn:** It's November 2019, just before the pandemic starts. I think I've mentioned some of this before. I never had an ambition like this, never had an interest in doing this at all. I'd been working on a textbook, which I finally finished, about organizational change. But I'd never had an interest in writing a novel. I literally woke up one morning in November and had an idea for a story. I sat down, and on an iPad, wrote about four or five pages. About a month later, I had a mystery novel. [laughing]

**Zaragoza:** Wow!

**Kuehn:** I had to do a lot of editing after that, but I'll tell you, I can't take any credit for this. It came literally out of my head, almost divinely inspired. I'd get up in the morning, Tony, and I'd say, okay, he's got to go talk to the sheriff's office today. I'd sit and I'd write three or four or five pages and put it aside. Next day, I'd get up and do the same thing, and all of a sudden, I had 250 pages. It just wrote itself. I'd lie in bed at night, and I'd think, what's he going to do next? Oh, yeah, I think he'd better talk to this guy, or he'd better go over and do this thing.

I love mysteries. It was a genre that I understood pretty well anyhow, so I understood I had to introduce twists and surprises. I'd go and in and tinker around a bit. What can happen here? Oh, yeah, I can do this.

I wrote the first one, and I made a conscious decision—because I'd been around this stuff, and I'd been criticized so many times about my writing—I wasn't going to publish it through a publisher, and I wasn't going to have an editor edit it. I had one of my former students do the proofreading of it, but when I found out I could do it through Amazon—they have great free software, and you can do Publisher and make your own covers—and I published it. [laughing]

**Zaragoza:** Wow.

**Kuehn:** Then I wrote a second one, and a third one, and a fourth one and a fifth one. Self-published all of them. The sixth one is ready to publish and the seventh one is in process. All in a series about a college professor who's retiring, a guy named Doug Wilson. Doug starts investigating the murder of one of his students and he gets involved with—Oh! Oh! There's one other thing I've got to tell you about. I can't forget to do this.

**Zaragoza:** Please do. You said that those books were available on Amazon then?

**Kuehn:** Yeah, just go to Amazon Kindle. Write in “Duke Kuehn.” There they are. Ebooks and paperbound. People like them. A lot of friends have read them. I don’t sell very many of them. I don’t promote them in any way. I don’t care to. I never wrote them to make money or to do art.

Here’s the thing. I forget, I was reading this about some famous popular author, and she said [that] all she hopes is that her books entertain people. I was writing the first one and I was pretty much through the first draft of it. I shared it with a couple of very close friends. Ex-clients. I’ve got a lot of ex-clients all over the nation who are good friends still.

One I sent it to is a woman who works for the National Association of Realtors in Chicago, Jan Hope —great, great lady, good friend. I sent it to her because I knew she’d enjoy it. Turns out she started reading it at the same time she was diagnosed with breast cancer and was undergoing chemotherapy. She lived a little bit outside of Chicago, so she’d have to take the train into town to go to her chemotherapy, so she would read my book coming and going. If that’s the only damn reason I wrote the book, that’s enough.

**Zaragoza:** That’s a very good reason.

**Kuehn:** I can’t describe the feeling [I have]. I send these things out, and people read them, and I know they’re entertained. I’m lying in bed at night and I know somebody’s reading my book right now and they’re entertained. I’ve entertained somebody.

I used to say I had a double life because of the college professor and consultant. I now say I was a college professor, consultant, and a novelist. [laughter]

**Zaragoza:** I’ve read the first chapter of *The Sportswriter* and look forward to seeing where this goes.

**Kuehn:** You’ll be getting some more, I promise you. You’re on my list for sure now. But I really appreciate what you said because it’s for me a very high compliment. I never wanted to be pigeonholed.

The only thing you haven’t asked me, you haven’t asked me about my nickname.

**Zaragoza:** Yeah, I think that’s a wonderful place to end. Tell us about your nickname, Duke.

**Kuehn:** I was born a month premature. Both my mother and I were in a very, very critical condition at that time in the hospital. My father took it upon himself to name me, and he decided, without consulting my mother, to name me after his twin brother and himself. They were born in 1920 in agricultural Iowa and their mother thought it would be neat to give them the alliterative names of Lyle and Lowell. I was named, my mother found out as she came out of her coma, Lowell, after my uncle, Lyle, after my father.

My mother didn't like either of those names. She, in fact, hated them. Neither were saints' names so I couldn't be baptized that, so I had a baptismal name of Paul, so my name was Lowell Lyle Paul Kuehn, and nobody could pronounce Kuehn.

My name was problematic all my life. I really didn't like it. The first day of school, invariably the teacher couldn't pronounce my last name. They'd get to Diane Kaufman and finish with Dee Dee and go Low-e-e-ell [garbled last name] and I'd have to correct the teacher from kindergarten on. Hated it. It didn't bother other people, apparently, because I was popular growing up, but I never got a nickname growing up.

I'm headed off to college to the University of Redlands. It's August 1963. I get a letter from the Dean of Men. "Dear Lowell," and then there were a series of questions so they could match you up with a roommate. Did you smoke? Blah blah blah blah blah. It said "Name," and then a blank space that said "Nickname." Tony, at just short of the age of 18, I said to myself, there's no fucking way I'm going to college with this name. [laughter]

I spent a couple of days thinking about what my nickname would be. I'm not quite sure how I hit on Duke. I certainly didn't know it was John Wayne's nickname. I probably vaguely knew about Duke Ellington, but being a big baseball fan, I did know Duke Snider from the Brooklyn and Los Angeles Dodgers.

I tried it out. Duke. Duke Kuehn. Duke Kuehn. Nice. Can't get too confused about that. Didn't tell anybody except the Dean of Men. I put it down on that piece of paper and sent it back to him. A week later, I get back a letter that says, "Dear Duke." [laughing]

**Zaragoza:** It was official.

**Kuehn:** "Your roommate is Paul Berger of Lakewood, California." I showed this to my parents, who were more than puzzled by the reference to Duke. I think my father, for the rest of his life, was highly offended. He never called me Duke but everybody else did.

I go off to the first day of college. My parents drive me out to Redlands early in the morning. I get to my dorm early. Move into the room first so I get the best bed. A few hours later, they leave, and I'm there all by myself on my own. First time in my life. There's a knock on the door. It opens up. It's Paul Berger, and he says, "You must be Duke." And I became Duke from that point on.

**Zaragoza:** Wonderful. I love that.

**Kuehn:** Later on, after I got my PhD, I thought, that sounds kind of weird, so I started to change back to Lowell, but nobody would do it. They thought I was Duke. [laughing]

**Zaragoza:** Just too late. It done stuck. I'd love to see the list of the different possibilities that you had way back when.

**Kuehn:** I think Buck was one of them. [laughing] I'm glad I didn't choose that. Probably fits me more today.

**Zaragoza:** Well, it's never too late. It could be you're coming out as Buck today, Buck.

**Kuehn:** Yeah, I don't think so. I'm stuck as Duke now. But I made sure when my son was born, he was named Matthew. [laughing]

**Zaragoza:** Yes, I'm sure that was easier.

**Kuehn:** I think you've got all the stories out of me that I've got.

**Zaragoza:** I cannot tell you how much I appreciate the many and wonderful stories that you shared, especially the last few. They seem very important to you as a human being, and it would have been a tragedy not to have those stories. Thank you, Duke Kuehn, for sharing them with us. I really do appreciate the stories and knowledge and wisdom that you've shared, and the history of the role that you played at Evergreen, which is pretty large, and I don't think a lot of people know just how large.

**Kuehn:** No, and there were times when I'd get grumpy about that, but then I realized I never did any of this for my own glory. I did it for my amusement, frequently, or for money or whatever, but the idea of—when I was working for Evans, part of the experience of that was not long after Watergate. I'd always wondered about Watergate, the degree to which Nixon's aides had abused their powers, as we've seen in the Trump administration. I wondered, if I were ever thrust into that kind of power, would I do that?

To my credit, I didn't. I was very humble about my power. I feel good about that. I'm glad I can look back and I don't have things that I'm ashamed of. I'm not happy about having gotten divorced and having an affair that led to a marriage. I tried to make the best of that, but I was an honest person. Certainly, honest in my dealings with colleagues and students and clients. Yeah, it would be nice if somebody said, "Gawd, Evergreen wouldn't be here if you hadn't turned enrollment around," but nobody's going to. Now, it doesn't make any difference anyhow.

I never felt, at least amongst the founding faculty and the cohorts that they had hired before me, accepted or particularly liked. Some, but not many. I never felt at home. Later on, with some colleagues, particularly in Tacoma, I found that. It is a bit of history now, and even if somebody wrote an official history and left it out, I wouldn't be surprised or particularly hurt. I did what I set out to do. Ultimately, I guess, the evaluation of that is in the results that occurred. People have jobs. Students learned. The institution, with a very distinctive mission, was able to survive for a while. As with any

organization, survival is always at risk. There have to be other people that come along and do the kind of stuff that I did.

**Zaragoza:** I think the important thing is that the stories are in the Archive, and that's really important. At least for my sake, Duke, I do want to thank you for the very, very crucial work that you did, not only early on in the marketing campaign, and crunching the numbers, and getting folks to realize what needed to be done, but also the many programs, the campuses that you worked at, and the ways in which you treated students and helped folks grow. I thank you for your service, Duke, and I thank you for helping to make Evergreen what it is today.

**Kuehn:** I do appreciate that. I have to tell you, at one time, I went online at Evergreen, and I think I was looking for whether there was an oral history archive or something like that. At that time, I hadn't seen one, but deep down inside, I yearned for these interviews.

You know me. I'm like you. I'm a storyteller. I had all these stories that I'd never been able to share, or even have a context to share. I told Kathleen the other day you're very good at doing this, and you're very good at getting me to see some things a little clearer than I'd seen them in the past. At my age—I'll be 76 next month—I'm okay with kind of bringing some accounts to rest. Okay, this is what I did, and I'm proud of some of it. Some, I'm not that proud of, but there are a couple of things I did that I don't think I wasted my time here.

In raising our kids, the only Christian principle—outside of the most obvious ones that we passed on to them—was the Parable of the Talents. God gives you talents and you have a responsibility to use them for the good of others. I truly, truly, truly believe that. It doesn't mean I haven't advanced my own ambitions or my own checkbook, but always built on a principle of you're here to serve others.

I think my kids reflect that. My son is an attorney in the Attorney General's office who handles Medicare fraud cases. One daughter is a legislative aide—staffer, policy analyst. My other daughter went through some tough times in her life, but she's got herself on her feet and is a hard worker. Works for Xfinity.

I think our kids—and our grandkids, for sure, certainly our eldest—reflect that same commitment that you're here to serve others. It doesn't mean you don't have your own interests and ambitions and needs but use your talents. I guess that's my motto for life.

**Zaragoza:** I think that's a fantastic note to end on. Just one final coincidence between us, Duke. I'm currently re-reading the *Parable of the Talents* by Octavia Butler, not exactly what you were talking about, but in some ways, it is.

**Kuehn:** That's fascinating. Oh, I'll have to look that up.

**Zaragoza:** She starts with the Parable of the Sower—it's the first in the series—and Parable of the Talents is the second. Hold on because it's some pretty deep stuff, but I think they're two of the most important books we could be reading right now.

**Kuehn:** Really? What's her name again?

**Zaragoza:** Octavia Butler. *Parable of the Sower*. *Parable of the Talents*. There's also a podcast that they go through chapter by chapter discussing it, and I've been following it since the beginning. Toshi Reagon and adrienne maree brown do Octavia's Parables. Really beautiful stuff, Duke. I give that gift to you as a kind of giveback Tacoma-style.

**Kuehn:** That's great. Super! She's a science fiction writer.

**Zaragoza:** Yes.

**Kuehn:** Interesting. I'll go look it up. Again, thank you for doing this. Thank you for letting me leave a little bit of a legacy. I can't imagine what anybody will think of all this stuff, but you've done a great job of pulling everything out of me that I wanted to talk about.

**Zaragoza:** Excellent, Duke. Thank you again. I really appreciate being able to talk with you.

**Kuehn:** It's been great fun. And I've made a new friend. Thank you.