

Elizabeth (Betsy) Diffendal
Interviewed by Anthony Zaragoza
The Evergreen State College oral history project
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EDITED DRAFT – PART 1
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Zaragoza: I'm here with Betsy Diffendal on August 5, 2020. We're here to do an oral history narrative for the Oral History Project of Evergreen. Betsy, maybe you just want to start by telling us about your early life—where you were born, what your early life was like.

Diffendal: I am now 77, so my early life seems long ago! I was born in 1943 in Dayton, Ohio. That was in the middle of World War II. My father, Robert, who was a journalist, ceramic artist and photographer, was a Photographer's Mate in the Navy in the South Pacific when I was born. My mother, Virginia, was an advertising copywriter, who became the Fashion Advertising Manager, in a Dayton department store where she worked with many artists who were my "aunts" as I grew up. Both of my parents were born and raised in small Ohio towns, both were only children, and both were college graduates who loved to read and enjoy the outdoors. I was their only child, born when they were 36 years old.



My Dad came home from the South Pacific in 1945 when the war was over. He had made me a book of his photos and a story about the children of Guam, where he had been stationed. Dad had blown up an image of large cane toad that he named Bufo (from its species name *Bufo marinus*), who was leading us on the tour of the island and

telling the story of the lives of the children of Guam.

That book is such a powerful early memory for me. He'd written a story along the bottom of each page, expressing his hope that I, as his daughter, would grow up as loving and caring as the children of Guam.

That early experience and my Dad's lifelong interest in human cultures and the arts influenced me and piqued my interest in the human species in all its diversity.

As a young man, just out of college, he went to Texas to work with horses on a small ranch. He got caught in a snow storm riding a horse near Taos Pueblo in eastern New Mexico and was rescued by two men from the Pueblo with whom he developed a strong lifetime friendship. Tony Mirabal and Tony Lujan stayed with him and my grandparents in Dayton on their way to meet with President Franklin D. Roosevelt in Washington D.C. in the 1930's.



When I think back on my upbringing in terms of the cultural and racial diversity that I have so enjoyed in my adult life, my childhood didn't involve much direct experience with that diversity, but my parents were always very interested in the larger world. For a few years Dad taught sculpture and ceramics at the Dayton Art Institute. A memory that I have from that early period was going to a film called *King Solomon's Mines* with him in which the Watusi warriors in Africa were filmed doing their beautiful athletic dances. My Dad loved their dance, their movements, their physicality, because he did a lot of sculptures of the human body. **My family's respect for and interest in diverse cultures was a major influence on my own world view and my career in cultural anthropology.**

I grew up in a stable, white, middle class neighborhood in Dayton. My paternal grandparents also lived in Dayton and I often spent time with them. My maternal grandparents died when I was fairly young and I knew them less well. I went to local public schools from kindergarten through high school - neighborhood schools with almost no racial diversity, a reflection of the housing segregation at the time. In addition to Christian churches in the neighborhood there were two nearby synagogues with a large Jewish community from whom I learned a lot about Judaism and the impacts of the Holocaust. My parents were raised in the Methodist Church but were not active as adults. However, many of my friends and I went to a local Methodist Church with an active youth program and choir which I joined in high school. Because both of my parents worked, we had a live-in housekeeper who was a widow, a Catholic woman who explained to me about the Saints and Holy Days in the Catholic Church and cooked us fish on Fridays. Mrs. Seitz was a very calm and kind woman who had two grown daughters with families in town. I loved her like my own grandmother.

A few years after WWII, and as a result of his war experience, my very creative and sensitive dad began to drink heavily, lost his job and stayed at home. At the same time my mother's mother developed dementia and moved in with us. My optimistic, hard-working, creative and loving mother and Mrs. Seitz were the calm and stable influences who kept me feeling secure even when my dad died when I was 14 from lungs damaged during the war, made worse by smoking and alcohol.

I grew up in the 1950's and had lots of neighborhood playmates. We rode our bikes, did all kinds of outdoor play, wrote and put on plays in the driveway, read comic books and Nancy Drew mysteries, belonged to Brownies and Girl Scouts, went to summer camp and loved going to school. We were in the generation and neighborhood where our parents didn't worry about our safety, so we would hang out till dark and play. I collected insects, rocks, fossils and Indian arrowheads from a nearby stone quarry. Once a year we would take a family vacation for a week or two, driving to the Smoky Mountains or to a beautiful state park where we stayed in a cabin and hiked the hills. I chose to take accordion lessons when I was about 10, with mixed results! I got to see Elvis Presley in person at a concert in Cincinnati, Ohio, where my best friend nearly fainted from excitement. In the 7th grade we all took ballroom dancing lessons at the local Botts Dancing School, and I dated and went to dances throughout high school. So, I would say I had a very exploratory, happy childhood and adolescence, despite the loss of my father.

When it was time for me to go to college in the fall of 1961, I initially thought that I wanted to prepare to be a doctor. I went to Ohio State University for a year because my friends were going there and it was affordable. I took required courses and joined a sorority, which I didn't know much about since my mother had gone to Antioch College which had no such Greek clubs. As it turned out, I was elected the president of my pledge class. As a part of the role of president, the members shared with me the history of the sorority and the group's criteria for accepting new members. People whose mothers had been in the sorority were preferred. There was also a preference for members with high GPA's and they did not recruit any students of color nor Jewish students. I decided before I finished the pledge training that didn't want to belong to that kind of "exclusive" organization. After two quarters I dropped out of Ohio State and started to think over what I wanted to do. By this time - it was mid-1962 - civil rights issues were coming to the fore and engaged my thinking.

My mother had gone to Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio. She talked to me about the difference that that college had made in her development because of its learning options e.g. students were required to have six-month internships each year located in various cities around the country, and the college offered broad liberal arts courses with an emphasis on social justice and community building.

I enrolled at Antioch in the fall of 1962. It was a wonderful choice, especially the internships, because I tend to be a person who learns more from experience than through reading about something. My own experience at non-traditional Antioch College made the new Evergreen State College a very appealing employment choice for me later in my life.

Antioch had a “co-operative education” program, like Evergreen, although every one of Antioch’s internships was paid. Had this not been the case, I could not have afforded to move for six months to a new community and rent an apartment there. My first internship was at Filene’s Department Store in Boston when I was 19. I lived in Cambridge not far from Harvard, with two other Antiochians. The period I was in Boston was the time that President John F. Kennedy was killed. There were pictures in all the downtown department store windows of Rose Kennedy, her family and of President Kennedy. This event, which was played and replayed on television, made me much more attentive to national politics. While I was living in Cambridge, I briefly dated a Harvard student from Scotland whose father bought him a sailboat sales company to operate on the coast of Maine as something to keep him busy while in college! He would drive to the coast on the weekends in his Austin Healey with a wine-rack in its trunk filled with bottles of Chivas Regal. The class differences that were so evident in Harvard’s student body were a startling discovery for me. I had never had experience with the global economic “upper class” in such a direct and personal way. I felt viscerally uncomfortable seeing young people my age with such privilege and sense of entitlement. At Thanksgiving, my Antioch roommate invited a Harvard student she was dating to dinner with us. He was from a “main line Philadelphia” family and was completing his degree in business so he could take over the family company in South Africa. I was aware of my own good fortune, since my parents were well educated and able to support our family. However, the level of privilege I encountered with Harvard students was a confusing new experience for me. It was emotionally powerful in terms of shaping my thinking about the lack of equity in the US and the ideas of Dr. King.

My second internship was at the University of Chicago Library on the South Side of the city. I lived in a duplex on the Near North Side with a friend from Dayton working in Chicago. The South Side, where the University was, was a predominantly African-American community, as it is today. On that internship, too, I learned so much. As I rode the EL every day to and from the campus and walked the neighborhood I saw parts of Chicago’s large Black community, including the high-rise public housing that was plagued with gang violence in the 1960’s. I also noticed the separation between the community and the world class University that was located there. Many foreign students were engaged in graduate

work there, yet I saw very few African American students on campus, despite the proximity of that large community.

I also remember a different, but related, experience that my sociology professor at Antioch gave us. We were studying the U.S. census and how it was done. He took our whole class to Dayton, which was where I grew up, but he took us to the African American community in Dayton. We were supposed to be using the criteria that Federal decennial census takers use to identify “deteriorated and dilapidated housing”. We walked the streets and looked at the census rules for assessing the state of housing. I was really startled, knowing that I’d grown up in that city and had seen so little of the physically segregated, low-income neighborhoods where Black people were living. The fact that it was my hometown made it particularly salient. Years later I found a newspaper article in which I’d been interviewed by the *Dayton Daily News* when I was in high school. I was a part of the Junior Council on World Affairs, and someone interviewed me about housing segregation. “Red lining” had become a city issue in Dayton when I was in high school. My response in the newspaper article was great surprise. I had no idea that it was going on, and I thought, later when I found the article, that I had been pretty naïve for a person who thought of themselves as a good student with broad interests. However, I hadn’t been given any experience nor information in school that would have helped shape my understanding of discrimination and structural inequality after the time of slavery. When I got to Antioch, those field experiences and subsequent conversations made me value experiential learning and other hands-on community-based assignments. They gave reading books and talking about them much more meaning. Creating such opportunities for experiential learning and honestly exploring the cultural and class issues in American life is what I carried through in my teaching at Evergreen.

I remember a cassette tape of a sociologist's lecture that I played for a class that I was teaching many years later. It was titled, “Who You Are Is Where You Were When.” When I look back on my early life, that is so evident. I was a white girl with socially liberal college educated parents who grew up secure and confident in a modest middle-class home in a mid-sized Ohio town during the 1950’s. I entered college as the Civil Rights Movement and the cultural revolution of the 1960’s were evolving. When I left home I was fortunate to experience other American realities throughout college, including my internships in Boston and Chicago, pledging a sorority, and having college faculty who created experiences that expanded my world view and my understanding of my own privilege in America at that time. My family background, my education and the historical times that I lived through as I was choosing a life path, clearly shaped my perceptions, interests, understanding and actions. My experiences in those years shaped how I came to see the world, what values were reinforced, my

awareness of American structural inequality, and my overall commitment to social justice and to education.

Zaragoza: Were there other classes or educators or educational practices that influenced you, or influenced what you would go on to do in the classroom?

Diffendal: Those two teaching strategies stand out as the strongest influences on my own teaching practices— internships and projects involving field work of some kind...experiential learning...followed by an opportunity to debrief those experiences in a thoughtful way, preferably in a small group. My time at Antioch was a powerful influence on my thinking about educational practices. I went there for two years before I returned to Ohio State. We didn't have a lot of money, so I couldn't stay at Antioch for the full five years. But I would say that the importance of experiential learning, the internships that I had while I was a student there, were most influential. Going to Boston at 19, having to find an apartment, learning how to get around town, then starting a job and getting to know people from Harvard, from the neighborhoods of Boston, the East Coast was a real learning experience. Then I went back to campus to study and to debrief with other students before I went out again to an internship in Chicago, another big city to navigate and explore.

I recognized the power of having those experiences when I was young. Later at Evergreen I was very supportive of internships for students and tried to create projects that involved students going into the field to do research. Particularly in the early years of Evergreen, it was interesting because a lot of the male faculty who had come to the college initially were more traditional academics and were loading on piles of books. We would have friendly arguments about how many pages a week they imagined a student would read! The ways that my background impacted what I brought to that conversation was my emphasis on thinking of projects that would get students into the field, talking to people, interviewing people, trying out their interpersonal skills in a context that may or may not have been familiar or comfortable for them.

There were other college experiences that influenced my thinking about higher education. In one of my classes at Ohio State, Psychological Anthropology, the female faculty approached me. "I have a grant that needs staffing. I wonder if you would like to do some part-time work?" I was delighted because it was an interesting project and I could use the money. I began to work in this little group of primarily graduate students in Anthropology. There was one other undergraduate invited to do this graduate level work and that was Lynn Patterson (aka Llyn DeDanaan). Lynn and I met when we were 20 years old at Ohio State. She was from near Dayton and had just returned from the first two years of the Peace Corps, assigned to a village in British Borneo, now part of Malaysia. A decade later after

graduate school in Cultural Anthropology, Lynn joined Evergreen's faculty in the college's first year. So now we've known each other for nearly 60 years, first as fellow students, then as professional colleagues at Evergreen and as good friends and world travelers. We were two of the six anthropologists hired as faculty at Evergreen in the first five years - Eric Larson, Mark Papworth, Peta Henderson, Ida Daum, Lynn Patterson and me.

Lynn and I both worked on the Ohio State grant project in 1964. The topic was "Trance and Spirit Possession in World Cultures." One student was translating from the Russian about the trance practices of shaman in Siberia and another was studying manuscripts on spirit possession in Haiti, Lynn was reading SE Asian ethnographic material and I was reading African ethnographic studies. The team shared findings in frequent meetings, so I had a really interesting, broad look at a range of ways that humans experience the unknown and explain it.

That grant project got me very interested in the broad field of cultural anthropology. I recognized the value of an undergraduate experience working on faculty research projects as a way of exploring the potential applications of a field of study in the real world. This practice was introduced early at Evergreen by Betty Kutter in the biological sciences. Luckily, there were a lot of anthropology and related courses offered at Ohio State including classes in cultural geography, Ancient Middle Eastern History and Culture, Ancient Egyptian Arts and Sciences.

Zaragoza: Betsy, I'm thinking of the story that you told about Dayton, and I'm thinking about the geographic, the structural, the conceptual, the ideological barriers that lead us to what you called naivete, which is, in some ways, a kind of manufactured ignorance.

Diffendal: I have come to think of "manufactured ignorance" as the oblivion of being in a majority group. When you're in any cultural majority, there is often an oblivion to the impact of the dominant cultural values, traditions, histories, behavioral expectations and related implicit biases on others outside your group. There is an oblivion to the experiences of those who are different from you. Because you are not impeded by others...are privileged to be able to carry out your daily life and reap social and economic benefits according to the mores of your dominant culture group...you don't need to know about others' experiences for your own survival nor do you have reason to imagine the structural barriers that the dominant group imposes on others. When your formal education or experiences growing up also don't include exposure to the value of different cultural practices and to an awareness of existing inequities in the dominant culture, it is easy to carry that majority world view into adulthood.

Zaragoza: I'm also struck by the role that education can play in overcoming those barriers, that oblivion. I was just curious if you wanted to comment—while we're in that area—on the role that education can play in a multiracial society.

Diffendal: Absolutely. I look at the situation now, in 2020, with the white supremacy movement and the seemingly non-negotiable societal splits over immigration, social safety nets, structural inequalities in our society. After sixty years, since the 1960's, we again have a movement, BLACK LIVES MATTER, that focuses on the structural barriers and the racism still oppressing people of color in America. I think that education can provide powerful experiences, both in the classroom - especially in diverse classrooms with skilled faculty and students from diverse backgrounds - and with experiential assignments that put students in situations that they may not have encountered before in a way that can be talked about, can be useful, can be experienced and felt.

The question of what effective multicultural education is has been very powerful across my own teaching life. In the 33 years that I taught at Evergreen I taught almost exclusively in culturally and racially diverse faculty teams with racially diverse enrolled students. I taught in Native American Studies, the Tacoma Program, on a faculty exchange at the University of Hawaii in Hilo with Hawaiian Studies faculty, and eventually, in the Master in Teaching (MIT) program where we were preparing teachers to go into diverse classrooms. As well, I was able to join Ratna Roy and other faculty on a Summer Fulbright Grant to India where we met with women in Indian higher education institutions.

Many white women and fewer white men are still going into K-12 teaching, and relatively fewer students of color are choosing to become teachers despite the country's increasing cultural diversity. The result is teachers who may not have had meaningful cross-cultural experiences themselves nor an understanding of their culturally diverse students' lives. This issue is reflected in such books as, You Can't Teach What You Don't Know and Culturally Responsive Teaching. Evergreen's MIT Program worked very hard to recruit students of color, during a time when other occupations such as law and computer science became appealing options for students of color who were graduate school bound. It was very hard to recruit students of color into the MIT program. Of course, major issues, such as the need to work full time, children and the expense of childcare, and the expense of both college and graduate school, continue to prevent many women and men of color from attending college.

The impact of faculty of color and women during the early years of Evergreen was the subject of my PhD project, which I completed in the 1986 while I was teaching. My dissertation title was, Significant Differences: An Ethnographic Study of Women and Minority Faculty in the Development of an Innovative Liberal Arts College. My question was, "What difference did it make, during the first five

years of Evergreen, that there were more women and faculty of color hired than there were in most universities at that time?" I wanted to understand their influence on Evergreen's curricular emphases and student recruitment, as well as the difference that faculty and staff of color made on students' experiences in those early years. Among the differences that Evergreen graduates noted from their experiences with diverse faculty teams was an awareness, often for the first time, of the untold histories of Native Americans, African Americans, immigrants and women in America. Also, for many, it was the first time in their education that they had the perspective of a person of color who was their teacher.

Yes, I do think education is central to creating and sustaining a pluralistic democracy, and I think that because of continuing neighborhood segregation, geographic isolation, and economic and cultural separation in this country, what goes on in public and private schools and the universities is absolutely critical to creating empathy and understanding and working toward structural changes that create an equal footing for everyone.

I would say that my own education spoke to that, all the way along. For me experiential learning opportunities were most powerful for my learning as a young person. When you're young you don't have a large bank of experience, and informal experiential opportunities in communities or with persons from unfamiliar backgrounds give you something that you can't get by reading books only. If you've never had to interact in settings where you are in the minority, where you are the listener, where you have to think "let me understand what's happening here" and how are these points of view different from what I'm used to hearing, I don't think you can really "get it".

Zaragoza: Much appreciated. So, you go to Ohio State, Antioch, and then Ohio State. Where do you go after Ohio State?

Diffendal: I wasn't quite ready to move on, so I thought, I'd better get a job because I didn't have my part-time student jobs anymore. I was living in Columbus, Ohio, and I applied to the Franklin County Welfare Department. I got a job as a Caseworker 1, a beginning caseworker. I was 21, white, right out of college, and I was given a caseload of 70 primarily African American women and children receiving Aid for Dependent Children, with a few older men who were on Aid for the Disabled.

This was another important experiential learning period for me because I had only my notebook and my job was to go out to each home in my caseload and have a conversation with the clients. There was nothing I could do for them beyond the small check that they were getting. I was just supposed to check on them to see how they were doing.

My role was very ambiguous. I had an older African American woman supervisor, Gladys Mack, who was firm about my responsibility. She told me I needed to go out to each one of my clients

regularly and assess how things were going. I didn't know what I was assessing for, I have to confess, and there was no training offered. As I think back, I had one young African American woman who had four children, all under the age 10. She lived in a very small apartment and was getting a small public assistance check. As I began to look at her situation and the other families in this caseload, I finally decided that the best thing I could do was to let them know when I was coming and tell them I would babysit for them if they needed to go out and do something, because I could not imagine living in that apartment with four children under the age of 10, and having no way to get some time to myself.

Zaragoza: You did an assessment and granted those needs in an expert way! [laughter]

Diffendal: Childcare was the only thing useful that I could possibly do.

Zaragoza: You thought, I don't have anything else to give but I can give time.

Diffendal: Yes, that's it. I didn't have much to give, and I didn't know what to do with my notebook, but I thought, okay, I can do this. So, I looked at my caseload and tried to identify a useful thing or two that I might be able to do. There were many women with young children, so I did a lot of short-term babysitting.

Then I got to my Aid for the Disabled clients, and these were primarily older men who didn't have anybody to talk to. There was a man who had his wife's ashes in a jar on the mantel. Each time he would talk to me about his wife. He had not moved a doily on any of the chair arms nor had he changed a curtain since his wife died. He was at home, disabled and he didn't have anyone to talk to. So, for the Aid for the Disabled, I decided the best thing I could do was to listen. I listened, and asked questions, and let them tell me about their lives.

Then there were some fellows who simply were bored, so I played gin rummy with them. They would know when I was coming, and we would play a few hands of gin rummy and I'd check to be sure that everything was okay.

Zaragoza: Was there money involved?

Diffendal: No money involved. Neither of us had any money, so it was not even a question at that point. [laughing] There was no money involved, but we did have a good time playing gin rummy.

After about a year I realized that there was something wrong with this whole system. Nobody was giving the clients, especially the young mothers, any way to change their circumstance. This would have been late 1964-65. This was before LBJ's War on Poverty really got off the ground. There were no programs sending single mothers to college or giving them opportunities for employment with some childcare support. I thought, this was not okay. I was not going to be complicit. If I was going to do work like this, I needed to change the system, or help change the system, not just go babysitting.

I recall another event when one of my client's apartment heat had been off for a couple of very cold days and her young children, who had snuggled up to sleep with her, had soaked the mattress overnight. When I got to her freezing apartment for my visit on a Friday afternoon, I learned that she had no other family in town and no money to stay elsewhere. I called some of the non-profit charities to see if I could get some clothes for the children, who had soaked theirs, and some emergency shelter. None that I reached were able to help on a Friday afternoon as they were closing for the weekend. So, I decided to phone another nearby client in my caseload who was a very mature young woman, with an extra bedroom, to see if this family could spend the weekend with her until other services and the heat in her apartment were available. She agreed and I drove the family to her home then I went to the local thrift shop and bought some clothes for the kids. When I got back to the office and told my Supervisor she warned me that what I did was completely inappropriate and if I did such a thing again, asking another client for help or buying things with my own money, it would be grounds for termination. I was shocked. I could not have left that family in the situation and I would not have cared if she had fired me for the offense.

Years later I found a resignation letter I had written to the head of the Franklin County Welfare Dept. I described the experience that I'd had; gave my critique of a program that was just giving a small monthly check to young women with children and no other opportunities or support. I said that I'd decided to go to graduate school, because I realized I needed more education to figure out how to have an impact on the whole system. I ended with, "Doing this job is not something that I can justify."

Meanwhile, I was applying to various graduate schools. This was the time of the NDEA—National Defense Education Act—scholarships for people who wanted to go to graduate school in areas relating to cultural studies and languages. Fortunately I got a full scholarship to go to UCLA, which had the largest anthropology department in the country. At the same time, my friend, Lynn Patterson (aka LLyn DeDanaan), had applied and was going to the University of Washington in the Department of Anthropology. So, we drove across the country together – I went to Los Angeles and she went to Seattle. We had been in touch all of this time because we had a lot of shared interests.

I got a tiny apartment on my own in LA and dove into yet a different group of experiences. I lived near UCLA between Westwood and Santa Monica, and could hear traffic on the nearby freeways all night long. Classes didn't start for several weeks after I arrived. I think it can be a very confusing period, when you're just out of school and far from home after many years with familiar friends and family. In this case I was just starting graduate school in a very big city where I knew no one. I found that—as I think a lot of young people do—a really difficult time, perhaps because I had no idea what the

future would look like. My experience from this time taught me, when I was hired at Evergreen, to spend time with Evergreen students who were about to graduate, talk with them about their interests and help them think about next steps.

My experience at UCLA was wonderful. I met interesting fellow students and faculty and had great classes and opportunities to learn. One opportunity—which was a part of getting an advanced degree in anthropology—was a chance to do some summer cultural anthropology fieldwork. One of the faculty had a Ford Foundation grant to do archaeology fieldwork in the Alaskan bush on the Kuskokwim River. He was doing historic archaeology, looking for Russian artifacts from the period when Russia was occupying Alaska. He had funds to supervise graduate students in the area while he did his own excavations. I was interested to apply, along with some of my colleagues, to live in a small Yupik community and study the roles of women. Eventually three male students and I were chosen to go. Only one other woman had ever gone to do fieldwork in Alaska with that UCLA grant. As a result, when I said, “I’d like to go to the field this summer,” I had some very strange interviews. I had to promise that I would eventually be as good an anthropologist as Margaret Mead if I was allowed to go! I was asked if I was sure I could do this work? Could I live alone in a little cabin out in the wilderness? Would I promise not to get romantically involved with any local men? Yes, I thought I could do just fine. That was in the summer of 1967.

We went in the late spring and stayed until the early fall before the winter freeze-up came. Wendell Oswalt, who was the faculty, found me an empty cabin, owned by the former postmistress, in a small Yup’ik village, Aniak, on the Kuskokwim River. The village had an airstrip, a roadhouse and a small supply store. The cabin had a big old oil drum stove, moose horns over the door and a moose-hide rug on the floor. We landed in a bush plane. Oswalt and the other



students dropped me and my duffle bag off at my cabin door. My task was to figure out how to get to know and spend time with the Yup’ik people who lived there. The community was living primarily on a subsistence economy and I wanted to know what women’s work was like, what their lives were like.

I began by wandering around, making conversation with anyone I saw in this small village of about 100 people. I met a woman who had 13 children, the youngest about 8 years old. She and her

husband and three of the children were getting ready to go out on the tundra berry picking. I wanted to go with them, but needed to explain who I was - which made no sense at all, I'm sure. I was a college student studying anthropology from Los Angeles. What is anthropology? Where is Los Angeles? What was I doing there? It was very difficult. I had to figure out how to negotiate that. I asked them, could I go with them to see what berry picking was like and to see how they processed salmon in their smokehouse near their usual berry picking area. I wanted to understand. So, Mary Kameroff asked her husband, Tim. He was a big, big man with a big smile... He said, "Yeah." He, too, didn't know who the heck I was, or why I might be there, but I looked harmless!

Mary said I would need boots, so I went to the little store run by a couple from Florida. Mrs. Grout, the wife of the manager, spent much of her time growing orchids indoors. I let them know, "I need some boots," and they sold me hip boots, which were huge. What I really needed were some short boots to walk on the tundra. So-already a curiosity to everyone local-I spent the summer berry picking in hip boots on the soggy tundra.

All of us slept in the family tent pitched near the smokehouse at their fish camp upriver. The smokehouse was filled with salmon hanging from racks to dry.

That summer I learned to pick salmonberries, blueberries and low bush cranberries. My inexperience showed. I was



slower than the eight-year-old. I started out picking with the adults. When they had emptied their baskets into a large bucket several times and I had only filled about half of my basket they tactfully suggested I drop back and pick with the teenagers. When I couldn't keep up with them, Mary suggested, "Maybe you'd like to pick with the youngest, because he is picking by himself at the rear." So, Timmy and I picked berries together most days. Mid-day and evenings, when we all sat on a blanket drinking coffee and eating smoked salmon and store-bought pilot bread, I talked to Mary and Tim about their seasonal rounds, how the salmon were cut and cured, what they did to preserve the berries. Luckily for me, the adults had learned to speak English in the mission schools, although they still spoke Yup'ik.

There were also still Russian Orthodox Churches along the Kuskokwim. A linguist from the University of Chicago came there that summer, interested to visit the Russian Orthodox church services. Oswalt had directed him to a village called Little Russian Mission. He listened to the service, conducted by a Yup'ik village elder, as there were no longer Russian Orthodox priests to go around to every village.

As was the Orthodox tradition, the Yup'ik men were on one side and the women on the other side of the sanctuary. The linguist said that there was not one entire complete phrase of Russian left in the service. It was all a mixture of Russian phonemes, the sounds that people remembered, but they weren't words and phrases and stories anymore, they were simply Russian phonemes that were being repeated. He was fascinated by what remained of the Russian cultural and linguistic influences in indigenous communities.

I did lots of observation, lots of note taking, wrote down lots of stories. We would be in the boat on the Kuskokwim and another Yup'ik group would come past. I could see them gesturing to Tim, "Who is that woman in there?" And he would always put his hand up, as if he was giving himself a shot. I realized he was saying that I was a public health nurse, because that's the only familiar reason an unknown white woman would be with the family in their boat.

By the time we got back to Aniak, the whole village had been waiting for Tim—the man who was the head of his family and a community leader— because the Head Start program had just begun in Washington, D.C., and a man had flown in to help the community get a program started. I thought to myself, having known a little bit about what Head Start was going to do, that the Yup'ik children had such astonishing skills at a young age that it would be interesting to see what a pre-designed Head Start program might offer in a setting like that, because they already were so adept at managing their environment.

My summer field work in Alaska was a profound experience for me in terms of developing self-confidence in my ability to function outside of my own culture for a long period. It was educative in a way that only being outside of your own culture can be. I gained confidence in my ability to understand what anthropologists often call the "rules of the game" of a culture different from my own. How did that culture work? What were the values? How is women's and men's work done and thought about? What is their relationship to their natural environment? Their technology? How did they think about life events? How were children raised?

Yup'ik culture made perfect sense. The villagers were well adapted to their circumpolar environment. Children mastered skills for surviving in the environment very young—they were able to read the river, navigate the river in boats, catch and cut fish for optimal preservation, hang them in the smokehouse, harvest and preserve berries, trap small animals for food and follow the seasonal patterns required to survive in this extreme environment. The stories told in the evenings were communicating the values and emphasizing the traits that were respected in the community. There was nothing

“primitive” about this culture and their hospitality to “a stranger” was something that many in my own culture could well emulate.

Zaragoza: Have you been back since?

Diffendal: I have not been back to that village, but I have been back to Alaska. I later went to Anchorage and Juneau as a consultant doing program evaluation. I had maintained contact with one of the young daughters in that family. She had gone to Anchorage, eventually married the head of a rock band from Boston! The daughter and her children were living in a little apartment in Anchorage when I went there. I met with them. They had very few resources, were very hungry. I supplied their cupboards. None of us had much money at that point. I kept sending their family supplies after I was there, to share with them what I did have. I sent them some tarps and ordered some food to be sent on the barge that went to Aniak, sent some raincoats, things like that. I helped the daughter in Anchorage as long as I could do that. I had so many other things going on because my own life was just evolving at that point.

Thinking back to the end of summer, 1967, when I returned to UCLA from Alaska there was another faculty member with a grant doing archaeology at a Paleolithic site from 15,000BC in southern France. Dr. Sackett needed someone to come help him finish up the grant. I was done with all of my coursework and my Master’s exams and thesis and was trying to decide whether to go on with my PhD then, or get a full time job. I was interested in what was going on with the LBJ administration and the War on Poverty... the “Poverty Program”. I knew that a lot of young people from Alaskan villages were moving outside of their communities to cities. A lot of Native Americans from around the country were moving to cities during the 1960’s as a result of the Indian Relocation Act of 1956 (also known as the Adult Vocational Training Program). That Act, which was part of the Indian termination policy that terminated the tribal status of numerous small tribal groups, was intended to encourage Native Americans to move off their reservations and traditional lands and to assimilate into the population of urban areas. I was thinking about looking for work in the Pacific Northwest where I had some friends and where some of these young people were moving.

However, I decided first to go to France with the faculty’s project for several months in the Fall to help finish up the grant, before I moved to Seattle. It was hard to turn down a paid opportunity to go to Europe for the first time and to visit France.

I thought I had learned to speak French pretty well in high school. However, there I was in southern France, a region where a quite different patois of French was being spoken. Almost no one spoke English in the village of Perigueux in the Dordogne region. Gratefully, Dr. Jim Sackett, the UCLA

faculty, did speak the patois beautifully. Every day another woman graduate student and I would go shopping in the village of Mussidan and order all of our groceries in French. The tradespeople would listen to my French and it was clear that I had not achieved mastery!

Over the months in southern France, I learned how it feels when the language you speak is not understood and how frustrating it is when you don't know how to speak the native language well. I understood for the first time how difficult it is for inexperienced second-language speakers. Thinking about the United States, I could imagine how hard that is when people with accents struggle to be understood by some of our primarily monolingual English speakers who can often be very impatient and rude if they cannot easily understand a speaker. In southern France the villagers were very gracious. It was a rural community and they were generous with their patience, much more, I noticed than was true in cosmopolitan Paris where my "fractured French" was usually responded to with English. I developed increased empathy and respect for second language speakers from these experiences in France.



When I returned to the U.S. my friend, Lynn Patterson, was nearly done with her graduate work at the Univ of Washington in Seattle, so I decided I would move to Seattle and stay with her until I could find some work. I decided not to begin my PhD then, rather I wanted to dive into some of the culture change projects that were going on by this time. I moved to Seattle in 1968. I was introduced to the head of the Social Work Department at UW, Dr. Larry Northwood. He had a grant and he needed someone to be a "gofer" for a while. It was a very progressive social work department at that time, teaching social work as "advocacy. The grant was funding invitations to national speakers advocating change. My job was to pick them up at the airport, take them to the hotel, and keep them company until we got to the place where they were going to be speaking. I remember picking up Tom Hayden, who was one of the Chicago Seven protesting the war in Vietnam...and later Jane Fonda's husband.

That was a good introduction to Seattle, but I needed more work. At that point, Dr. Northwood suggested I consider working for the Seattle-King County Economic Opportunity Board, which was the Office of Economic Opportunity's "poverty program" in Seattle. Northwood let me know, "There's a job open there for a Program Evaluator. I think you'd be good at doing that." I applied and, fortunately, got the job.

I really didn't know all that program evaluation involved, so I read, read, read, everything I could find about goal setting, qualitative measures, quantitative measures, formative assessments, summative assessments. It was a time when there was a lot of federal government money supporting the evaluation of new programs that were supposed to be community based: designed by and for communities that would develop and manage their own service programs. My job was to see how the programs were doing, and particularly, I decided after reading about evaluation, doing formative evaluations for these new programs. I would go in early in the program's history, take a look at how they were setting the programs up, their goals, what kind of staff development they had, what outcomes they were having and, in consultation with their staff, make recommendations for things that they might want to do to strengthen these new programs.

There were many cultural aspects to these evaluative tasks. El Centro de la Raza was begun during that period. The Seattle Indian Center, the first urban Indian support program in the country, was started by Pearl Warren under the poverty program. The Central Area Motivation Program was started in Seattle's Black community during that period. Many community groups were funded to begin programs that would help provide services to their members in the city of Seattle.

We were a small evaluation team - three or four of us. There were so many things that I had never done before. I don't know who would have had previous experience at that point because there wasn't much of that work being done. It was an opportunity to apply creativity and experimentation in my work. Finding ways to evaluate and improve these efforts was an engaging challenge.

For those of us in the social sciences who were beginning our careers in the 1960's there were many new and unfamiliar jobs available under the aegis of the War on Poverty. There was funding for new community-based programs approaching social problems and economic issues in new ways. There were new programs to improve the economic and educational base for local communities of color who had been barred from opportunities available to others.

It took time for community leaders to figure out how create effective programs to serve youth or to provide educational opportunities and jobs to adults. One of the first things I had to evaluate was a program run by a group of African American women in Seattle who developed what was called a "Sister-nar"...a seminar for Black women. Black women were invited to a local hotel to talk with each other about what their concerns were, what the community needed, how they thought changes could be made. It was an exuberant event. There was singing, there was dancing, there were engaging topical seminars. I simply was a fly on the wall. I asked the organizers, "May I just listen? I just want to hear what the issues are, how you imagine addressing them and what results you hope to achieve."

I essentially did fieldwork the entire time I worked for the Office of Economic Opportunity in Seattle. I worked with many African Americans—particularly men at that point—who were heading the Seattle-King County Economic Opportunity Board (SKCEOB) and many of whom were members of Mt. Zion AME Church in Seattle. There were other community leaders involved with the programs. I simply listened, learned, would sit in meetings listening, learning. I was learning how the cultures worked—what were the values, what were the goals, what were important things to the community, what were the difficult things? What might be some ways to strengthen new or existing programs?

At one point, in 1969, there had been a racial incident in a Seattle public high school where white students had ganged up on an African American student. Maxine Mimms, who was hired in 1972 as one of the early African American faculty at Evergreen, was working for Seattle Public Schools in the district's Intergroup Relations program. She and her husband had moved to Seattle from the East Coast. She was one of the first Black teachers in Seattle in the '50s. By then—1969—she had been asked to go to the other high schools in Seattle to talk to Black students about their concerns. Maxine was to hold conversations with them about how they might approach racist experiences without damaging their own school opportunities, and how they might want to protest in a way that wouldn't undermine their own education.

Maxine had been talking with Ulysses Rowell, the Director of SKCEOB, in his office before coming over to our evaluation section. I had never met her before. She sat down at my desk and started a conversation about our work and eventually asked me if I would like to evaluate her work as she went to the schools to meet with Black students. With permission from Ulysses Rowell, I began doing that as part of what I was doing at SKCEOB. From that point, in 1969, we have been close friends. We have given each other honest "cultural feedback" in the many different contexts we have shared, including working together at Evergreen. This cross-cultural friendship and honest feedback has been a critically important factor in my own development. In 1969, I was 26 and she was 41. She had three children ages 8 to 12 and was working full time in Seattle, and I was just trying to get my feet on the ground and figure out what I was going to do with my graduate degree in cultural anthropology and in this new job.

Shortly after that, the Nixon administration brought in as the Secretary of the Department of Labor an African American man from Washington State who knew Maxine. He asked her if she would like to work as the Assistant Director of the Women's Bureau in the Department of Labor, based in D.C. He thought she would be very good addressing women's employment issues. She accepted the job and prepared to move her family to Washington D.C.

Meanwhile, the Board of Trustees at the Economic Opportunity Board in Seattle asked me to recommend to them which programs should be “spun off” or defunded? If the community could pick up the program costs themselves that was fine, if not they would shut down. They wanted to know which ones I thought had the least possibility for success.

This was a real moral dilemma for me because all of them had just begun. I’d only done formative evaluations of the programs. They were all just getting off the ground, figuring out how to operate. There were many jobs at stake for all of the community people who had been hired to start these programs.

I told the Board, “That’s not something that I feel is appropriate for me to do. At this point none of the programs has had a long enough history. They are all doing important, good work. They’re beginning to figure out with their communities what are the most needed things to be done. If spinning off means stopping the program because there was no other money to support it, I am not going to make those recommendations”. The Board of Trustees told me that if I didn’t get them a list of programs that should be “spun off”, I would lose my job. I let them know that I was not going to give them that list. They let me know that I was fired.

I think from that point, building on my awareness from my earlier job with the Welfare Department, I understood that I would never be able to do work that I didn’t feel ethically committed to. I didn’t care if I lost the job. I understood that I was privileged simply by being a white person with a good education to be able to get another job of some kind; and that I would never put myself in a position in a job where I was doing something that I didn’t feel was ethical.

I felt strongly about that, and I understood how a dominant culture could take advantage of lower-income communities by offering some funding—something to build up the community—and then pull the plug on it and say, “Okay, you’re on your own now.” I realized that none of us is on our own. The Poverty Program didn’t teach community groups how to raise funds to keep their programs going. The communities were just getting their programs started. There were a lot of ethical conundrums around the Poverty Program that gave me insights into the complexity of “system change” which I carried into my teaching.

Meanwhile, Maxine was on her way to Washington, D.C. I had lost my job, so she asked if I could drive her car across the country and see what DC might have to offer. I agreed to go because I was interested to talk to the head of Program Evaluation at OEO’s national headquarters about their evaluation policies. I thought that the agency’s program “spin-off” approach, after such a short time,

was defeating their purpose and harming the communities. I was 26 at this point and thinking seriously about these issues.

My mother came from Ohio and we drove across the country together in Maxine's car, and delivered her car to her in Washington, D.C. I stayed with Maxine and her three children in a home in the middle of D.C. Nearly everyone living in the District of Columbia in 1970 were African American families, many of them people working for the federal government. There were very few white people living in the District at that point. Nearly every white person headed home to Maryland or Virginia after work every day. I had many experiences, living with a Black family in the District of Columbia for two years, that opened my eyes both to the strength, dignity and joy of Black culture, as well as to the many ways that racism and discrimination impacted the community.

Soon after I arrived, I went to talk to the national Director of Evaluation at the Office of Economic Opportunity. I gave him my perspective on what the Evaluation Specialists were being asked to do Seattle and recommended that they develop a process for working with boards about the role of evaluation and about the serious ethical questions related to spin-off. He was very engaged in this conversation. He told me that he was overseeing a lot national grants that were being evaluated by contractors based in D.C....might I like a job with one of them? I was glad to talk with them.

One of the consulting firms had a big grant to evaluate Rural Resource Mobilization Projects around the country designed to help rural areas get out of poverty and they needed an Evaluation Specialist. I was given a great team to work with - they're still my friends today. We traveled all over the country to Rural Resource Mobilization Projects and did formative evaluations of them. Among those I was assigned was the Mingo County Moccasin Factory in a former coal mining community in rural West Virginia and a commercial turkey farm in southern Ohio. Again, this was an opportunity to learn more about American subcultures and about efforts at structural changes designed to alleviate poverty.

Meanwhile, I was living in D.C. and staying with Maxine and her kids. I worked in an office downtown near the main government buildings. If I ever needed to take a cab home, I'd stand out on the curb, put my hand up and a cab would stop in a minute or two. But when I would tell the driver where I was going— up one of the main streets in the District, not far away - nearly inevitably the cab driver would say, "No, I'm not taking you there. I thought you were going to Virginia or to Maryland. I don't go into that neighborhood." I would say, "Well, I do go into that neighborhood and I need a ride home." The driver usually would reply, "The only way I'll take you there is if you pay me upfront. I'll drive you there, and you get ready to open the door and jump out because I'm not going to stop. I don't want to pick anybody up." So, I'd give him the money, and many a night I would get dropped off—in

two seconds—I would jump out the door and the cab would be gone. That was the way that the Black community - at that point in D.C. - was “supported” by the taxi drivers.

It was also a new experience for Maxine’s three children, who had grown up in Bellevue, WA, which, at that point, was very rural and where they had been one of the few Black families. They lived on some acreage and at one point even had a horse. From there, they moved right into the middle of Washington, D.C.’s African American community and schools. For them, as fairly sheltered, almost rural, kids they were suddenly in the middle of a school culture with urban kids stealing lunch money and playing craps during recess; doing things that Ted, Kathy and Kenneth were not familiar with. We would have deep conversations at night about what was going on, and how could they cope. Occasionally I would have to drive Ted to school, because his school was a little further away. He always wanted me to be sure to stop on the corner, not anywhere near school, and drop him off so that other kids would not see this white lady driving him to school. We all had many new experiences living in Washington, D.C., including being falsely arrested and accused of shoplifting a package of smoked lox in a grocery store in a predominantly white neighborhood in Maryland and being stopped on suspicion of car theft when Maxine was driving a friend’s BMW in the District.

Meanwhile, in Washington State, my friend LLyn De Danaan (aka Lynn Patterson) had been hired to the faculty of Evergreen to begin teaching when the college opened for its first year.

She recommended Maxine as a person who would be an excellent addition to the faculty at Evergreen. Merv Cadwallader, one of the first four Academic Deans from the faculty, came to Washington, D.C., interviewed Maxine and offered her a job at Evergreen.

The consulting firm where I was working in DC in 1972 was thinking about opening a branch office on the West Coast, since most of their contracts involved work in the western Federal Regions, as well. They were at the point of hiring someone as the director and asked if I would like to join that branch office to continue working on program evaluations. The timing was right, so both Maxine and I moved back to the Pacific Northwest in 1972. We bought two small houses next door to each other in Tacoma, where UNCO was opening its branch office and within easy driving distance for Maxine to Olympia and Evergreen.

In the Fall of 1972 Maxine began teaching at Evergreen and I began working downtown in Tacoma. With both Maxine and Lynn at Evergreen, I was hearing lots of stories about the college and what it was like. My work was taking me all over Federal Region X – Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Alaska - evaluating Head Start programs and other OEO programs, as well as Washington State human service programs.

In 1973, I was 29 years old and pregnant. I decided not to get married but to continue my work in Tacoma. In April, 1974, my son was born and I realized the amount of consulting that I was doing that took me flying all over the west and back to Washington, D.C. was hard to manage with a new baby, my son, Steven. I had someone come in to help occasionally and, finally, I found a wonderful family daycare provider who I trusted because she had five children of her own, cared for foster children, and loved spending time working with young children.

Occasionally I flew back to Washington, D.C. to the office of HEW—Health, Education and Welfare - for contract meetings and I would take Steven with me. Staff there would find me child care. I remember a wonderful woman from Peru who spoke only Spanish would take Steven on days I was working there. He would have a wonderful day playing with her children. Eventually, I realized this job required too much travel.

Maxine suggested that I should apply for a job at Evergreen. I'd been invited in by Richard Alexander and other faculty to talk about my fieldwork in Alaska, qualitative research and evaluation, and various cultural topics in their programs. At that point my broad experience seemed like it was a good fit for Evergreen's interdisciplinary philosophy.

The College also was trying to get more women and people of color hired as faculty because the planning faculty of 12 were all white men, with the exception of one African American man, Rudy Martin. With the first hires, they brought in women, Native Americans, and two more black men. Increasing faculty diversity was a big issue. How are you going to create an alternative to a traditional college - which was the reason that Evergreen was created - if the largest percentage of the faculty were white men primarily trained in traditional institutions? How successful would the college be in recruiting and retaining non-traditional students of color and working adults if they did not see themselves among the faculty? This was a big issue in the first years of the college. LLyn De Danaan, the first woman Academic Dean, and Rudy Martin, the only African American faculty among the founders, were especially committed to trying to find women and people of color to recruit to the college faculty at that point.

I was interviewed for the faculty position by one of the planning faculty and then dean, Charlie Teske. At the time, I'd been doing a lot of work evaluating childcare centers and in-home care. Charlie's wife was going back to visit family in Germany, leaving their children with Charlie in Olympia during her visit. I remember that a serious topic of conversation during our interview was whether I thought they should make cassette tapes of his wife's voice to play for his children while she was in Germany? Would that be a good or a bad thing? I replied, "It would be a good thing if it makes you feel

better, and makes your wife feel better. It would be a bad thing if it makes you feel worse. No one knows what the children are going to think about it.”

I started teaching at Evergreen when I was 31 and when my son was 16 months old, in the fall of 1975. I began my teaching in Olympia with faculty member Carol Spence, in a year-long program called Caring for Children. We designed the program to attract students who were running daycare centers or other children’s programs or who were thinking about going into teaching or other work with children. We hoped to give them a strong background in child development, as well as an understanding of the business of childcare which, at that point, people were trying hard to improve and expand to address the increasing demand.

The college had been operating for nearly five years at that point. Nineteen seventy-five was a big hiring year, and Virginia Ingersoll, Joye Hardiman, Susan Fiksdal, Duke Kuehn, and I were hired, among others. A lot of the women who were hired in Evergreen’s early history had not come straight from the academic world but had been working in community work of various kinds.

I would say that the men who were there—certainly the men who started the college—were experienced faculty and administrators drawn straight from other colleges or, a few, just completing graduate school. They all had finished their Ph.Ds. They’d all been teaching, some of them at Oberlin, some from Reed, some from Santa Cruz. They were interested in creating a college with fewer structural constraints - no tenure – just contracts renewable every three years; no status differences which meant no Professors and Assistant Professors; no curriculum committees setting program designs; no sports teams. They wanted to break away from many institutional constraints.

Many of the women faculty hired hadn’t completed our Ph.D.’s, in the early 1970’s. A lot of us had stopped mid-course after the Master’s Degree because there were other things that we wanted or needed to do. So, we had done a lot more community work than some of the men had. As a result, we often had a really different experience base than the men. Of course, there were women who came straight from an academic setting as well. Most all of the women faculty without a terminal degree finished our doctorates while we were teaching at Evergreen, many, including LLyn de Danaan, Maxine Mimms, Joye Hardiman and me, at The Union for Experimenting Colleges and Universities, based in Cincinnati, Ohio – a consortium of midwestern colleges founded to develop interdisciplinary doctorate programs for place bound adults.

Overall, we were a diverse group of faculty. In general, those first few years, it was a small enough college that everybody knew each other. The staff were very pivotal in our experience getting the college going. We got to know each other and enjoyed each other’s company. Faculty and staff

often ate lunch together, always in the same cafeteria with the students. We made a conscious decision not to have a separate Faculty Dining Room which we thought would create an unwanted separation within the college community. The staff and faculty women had an annual baseball game for many years and even took weekend excursions doing wild water rafting in Oregon and riding horses in Eastern Washington. These women's events were an important source of enjoyment and support that the faculty and staff men were not a part of.

Zaragoza: What were your first impressions of how education was done at Evergreen?

Diffendal: I loved it. One of the major reasons that I applied to teach at Evergreen was because I love working in teams. When I was doing program evaluations earlier, we worked together and talked things through, bringing our different backgrounds and observations to the assessment. Teaching in an interdisciplinary coordinated studies team was really appealing to me. I was impressed with the creative themes and combinations of disciplines brought together in the programs I visited as a guest before being hired. I thought it was a perfect way to teach, because both students and faculty get many points of view on the topics discussed. It also allowed for the larger group to divide into smaller discussion groups, the seminars, with individual faculty. I also quickly learned that as faculty planned together collaboration helped us select books and articles for the students and each other to read that enriched the exploration of the program theme.

that Another appeal of teaching at Evergreen was the opportunity for student Internships; especially the opportunity to build internships into coordinated studies programs and then meet in seminar with students to link their experiences to the program theme...what they had learned from that experience. I would love to have had a seminar when I was on my Antioch internships and my anthropology field work because discussing it would have enriched my learning from the experience.

From Evergreen's beginning. Individual Contracts were appealing to many of the working adult students and I was impressed with the Contract's potential to reach students who could not otherwise enroll in classes offered weekdays. The average age of Evergreen students at one point in the early years was 35. These were adults who had busy, complex schedules. Most of them had jobs and children and they were eager to improve their opportunities by completing college. They were a very different group than 18-year-olds who were just beginning to explore college, live on campus and were available for full-day programs.

A lot of the students who I saw in the early years were adult students on a career path, who either needed other kinds of experiences, or wanted to do a project of some kind that would lead them

deeper into some area that they were working in. I thought that the Individual Contract was a creative solution to meeting the specific needs of the student.

In my view, Evergreen was the most student-centered college possible, because – with all of the learning modes - you had time to understand where students were in their thinking, and had the opportunity to spend time with them to design learning experiences that were meaningful. The programs were small - no one faculty would have 120 students, for example, all studying Biology 101. We had 12 or 15 students in our individual seminars, for whom we would write quarterly evaluations. If there was one of us who had better rapport with a particular student, we could change our group around a little bit and make it a better fit for the students.

The college was very open to innovation, the structure was not constraining, there was no curriculum committee nor constraints on pedagogical strategies. For example, when I met my first teaching colleague, Carol Spence, we went hiking on Mount Rainier together while we were doing our program planning for our year-long, two-person program, Caring for Children. She had a doctorate in child development. I had done lots of assessments of community childcare programs - childcare centers, smaller in-home settings and Head Start Early Childhood Education programs. Some of the people we had as students were running childcare centers. Carol didn't have experience with that aspect; I didn't know the literature on child development, so we worked out ways to get the coverage we wanted in the program. I was especially interested in cross-cultural child rearing issues. The program was a good opportunity to look at the lives of children through history and from diverse cultural backgrounds.

We divided our labor based on the things that we knew - what we each did best. Then we created 20 hour per week internships within the program in the Spring Quarter. Each student worked in a childcare center or with children in other settings, so they could see what that was like. Carol and I set up those internships all over the county and would go observe our students and work and debrief with them in weekly seminars.

So, in my first year, there were just two of us. It wasn't a big faculty team. It gave me a chance to get a feeling for how to begin to do planning with a colleague, how my skills could fit in with someone else. My broad background of experience was helpful. Had I been straight out of college, my approach would probably have been more traditional.

I had only ever taught once before, while I was doing consulting. I was hired to teach Anthro 101 at Bellevue Community College. I had never taught anthropology before and I believe that I taught everything in that course that I had ever learned in the field of anthropology! The students just looked stunned. Since college faculty are rarely trained in pedagogy, and the course requirements in

anthropology are rather broad, I began at the beginning and just kept on going! It was a very good first teaching experience for me...if not for the students. I learned that you need to winnow what you know, and figure out which concepts are most important to introduce students to the field of study or, in the case of thematic interdisciplinary programs, what concepts were useful in exploring the problem at hand. I was glad I had that teaching experience before I came to Evergreen because it gave me a more informed place to start. Most important, I learned that "You teach who you are." I discovered that my varied experiences in diverse jobs and diverse communities, my fieldwork and overseas experiences, combined with the influences of my family and childhood, affected everything that I taught and how I saw students.