

AN INTERVIEW WITH CHARLES STANSIFER

Interviewer: Jewell Willhite

Oral History Project

Endacott Society

University of Kansas

CHARLES STANSIFER

B.A., Spanish, Wichita State University, 1953

M.A., History, Wichita State University, 1954

Ph.D., History, Tulane, 1959

Service at the University of Kansas

First came to KU in 1963

Assistant professor of History, 1963-1965

Associate professor of History, 1965-1979

Director of Costa Rican Exchange program, 1966, 1974

Director of Study Abroad Humanities program in England, 1969

Director of the Center of Latin American Studies, 1975-89

Professor of History, 1979-2005

Chairman of the History Department, 1993-1996

AN INTERVIEW WITH CHARLES STANSIFER

Interviewer: Jewell Willhite

Q: I am speaking with Charles Stansifer, who retired in December 2004 as professor of history at the University of Kansas. We are in Lawrence, Kansas, on October 13, 2005. Where were you born and in what year?

A: I was born in 1930 in Garden City, Kansas.

Q: What were your parents' names?

A: My father was Benjamin Harrison Stansifer and my mother was Berenice Arlene Isabel Lucas.

Q: What was your parents' educational background?

A: Very little. Neither of them had a high school education. My father finished the eighth grade and actually taught for a while in a rural school in Western Kansas. But my mother, who lived in California when she was high school age, attended, I think, about one semester before her parents left and returned to Kansas. She never went to high school again. So neither one of them had a high school education.

Q: Did you have brothers and sisters?

A: I had one brother, Philip. He was born in 1928 and died in 1991.

Q: What was your father's occupation?

A: Surviving, most of the time. He was raised a farmer and farmed during the 1920s, but in Western Kansas being a farmer was not very easy and he left for Wichita and held a number of jobs in different places. Most of the time during the 1930s he was simply unemployed or did manual labor for the Works Progress Administration. It wasn't until World War II that he got a job at Boeing Airplane Co. as a sweeper. After the war he

worked as a sweeper at the Wichita Flour Mill. So his employment history is mainly with the WPA and whatever temporary jobs he could find.

Q: So the Depression really had an effect on your family then.

A: Definitely. Well, I was born in 1930, which was the ideal time to grow up to experience the whole Depression. My mother, of course, was a housewife. She never had outside employment. During the Dirty Thirties we hardly ever knew where the next meal was coming from.

Q: Did you grow up in Garden City? Where did you attend elementary school?

A: No, we left Garden City when I was six months old. So I know very little about Garden City. I grew up in the Wichita area wherever my dad happened to be as a sometimes farmer or farm hand, in Rose Hill, Burton and Garden Plain near Wichita. Garden Plain is 20 miles west of Wichita. That's basically where I grew up, since I went there in the sixth grade and stayed through high school.

Q: You've traveled a lot as an adult, but your family obviously didn't travel much when you were young.

A: That's right, mainly back and forth from Western Kansas to the Wichita area. I did not leave Kansas until I was 18, and that was only a short trip to Oklahoma.

Q: What do you remember about World War II on the home front? You said your father was working at Boeing then.

A: I remember very little about World War II. The connections that come to mind as I have traveled to Germany and thinking about World War II mainly revert back to the comic strips. I remember reading in the comic strips about the Germans and them saying "Ach Himmel," "Ach Tung," "Mein Gott in Himmel," and things of that sort. So the caricature

of the Nazis in comic strips in World War II is basically my recollection. None of my family was directly involved in World War II. So I had no one in particular to be concerned about. When I was at Garden Plain High School one of the students at Garden Plain had gone to war before he finished. He was killed. His funeral was a major event. I remember that. But I never followed the war. I never read newspapers and didn't have much of an idea what was going on. Part of it was because I was working as well.

Q: You said that you had had a lot of different jobs while you were growing up.

A: Yes.

Q: What were some of them?

A: To start with, when my dad was an occasional fruit peddler in Wichita driving a horse and wagon, I went along with him and helped him deliver the fruit.

Q: Did he grow it?

A: No, he got it a wholesale market. We took it out for distribution primarily. So that was my first job. My second job was to sell ice cream bars at one cent a bar profit. I did that along with my brother in the mid-1930s.

Q: Where did you sell them?

A: I lived in an industrial district of Wichita. So there were some industries where you could go into the factory or business and sell ice cream bars. My brother was just two and a half years older than I. We both had a route along Washington Street in Wichita. I sold newspapers also. But this was more of an entertainment because if you sold newspapers at night in Wichita near the Forum Building you could get free entrance to the wrestling matches. So that was one of my entertainments.

Q: Did you continue those jobs when you were in high school?

A: Yes, indeed. I had jobs all during high school. But I should add that I left Wichita before I went to junior high. I always regretted it because my brother had an opportunity to go to a junior high where they taught carpentry and electricity and mechanical things. I never took any of those things. In Garden Plain, when I was there in the sixth grade, they didn't have any vocational classes. So I went to school in Garden Plain starting in the sixth grade and during that period I had odd jobs. When you asked about World War II I should have thought of this. I got a job at a dairy farm cleaning out the dairy barns when I was 11. By age 12 I had learned to drive the tractor. In 1942 because of the war there were not so many people around who could drive tractors. So I got a job driving the tractor. By 1943 I was making \$10 a day driving a tractor pulling a combine. I did plowing all day during the late summer season. During the winter I had a job at a lumberyard, mainly moving things around. When a boxcar load of cement came to town, another guy and I would haul the 90-pound sacks of cement from the boxcar into the storage unit. That was one of my jobs.

Q: You certainly kept busy.

A: Well, we didn't have much to live on. We had a house in Garden Plain. We had chickens and a couple of pigs. And we raised a garden. So we were not starving. We just didn't accumulate much wealth. I forgot to mention that I carried a newspaper route. I delivered the Wichita Eagle and my brother delivered the Wichita Beacon in Garden Plain. We covered the whole town. It was spread out but it had only about 300 inhabitants.

Q: I know you have learned foreign languages as an adult. Did you start studying foreign languages in high school?

A: Yes, as a matter of fact, Latin. You wouldn't expect much from a little town of 300 but there happened to be a very good Latin teacher, Mrs. Simon, in our high school. I took Latin and it did have a very important effect on my career. I also had a very good English teacher as well. She happened to be the daughter of the superintendent of schools in our district. She was very good. So I had two very good experiences with high school teachers. I also learned discipline from our principal, E. J. Gard, who doubled as an all-sport coach.

Q: I suppose you didn't have much time for extracurricular activities, or maybe they didn't have them in a school that small.

A: Actually, it's the reverse. If there are only 70 people in the high school, you have a chance to be involved in everything. For example, I was the tallest person in class when I was a freshman, so I actually played center for the basketball team. We had a miserable, small gymnasium but I loved basketball; I played basketball for four years, and during that entire time I was the center and the high scorer of the Garden Plain High Owls basketball team. Not only that. I played end on the football team, played first base on the baseball team and ran track. I sang in the choir and I was in the boys' quartet and regularly participated in high school musical competition. I participated in all the plays and I edited the newspaper, The Garden Plain Owl. You didn't have to have much talent at a small school like GPHS because you were needed. There were only 16 in my senior class, so it was almost obligatory that you participate in all these activities.

Q: Did you have honors in high school, such as valedictorian?

A: I don't remember anything like that. I did well in high school. My parents urged me to study. It was the thing to do to stay out of the poor house. They emphasized it. So I,

being the obedient sort, did what I was told, and I found that I enjoyed learning and I tended to respond to the demands of teachers. But I don't recall ever getting any special honors. Being editor of the newspaper was an honor.

Q: Did your parents want you to go to college? Did you always plan on going to college, even though you didn't have much money?

A: My parents prepared the two of us to go to college. Both were convinced that education was the way out of poverty. I don't know when, but I knew very early on that I was going to college. Interestingly enough, there was only one Garden Plain High School graduate who had gone to college before my older brother Philip. But that person never graduated from college; he was drafted in the army and was killed in the war. So my brother was the first person from Garden Plain High School actually to complete college and I was the second. I might also add that Philip obviously was a highly motivated student; he got an MA in biochemistry at Purdue and graduated as a pathologist from the KU Medical School. Obviously, his success influenced me.

Q: When did you graduate from high school?

A: 1948.

Q: Did you go directly on to college then?

A: I had one more job. And it was an important job in terms of my career. I got a job on the Santa Fe Railroad as a gandy dancer during the summer of 1948.

Q: What does that mean?

A: That means that you lay and tamp railroad ties. Two people take hammers and drive spikes to hold the railroad ties in place. (If you have a good imagination you can see how two people alternately hitting spikes can seem like a dance.) That's the exciting part, but

you also have to clean out the brush from the streams that may be a danger because of logs rolling down the stream, and other nasty maintenance work. Basically we maintained the track so the trains could run on time. I operated out of the town of Goddard, which was just six miles east of Garden Plain. Our team covered the track from Wichita to Kingman. There was one other gringo person, a fellow Garden Plain High School graduate. All the others were Mexican Americans. So I learned to swear in Spanish before I knew anything else in Spanish. This was a very important step in my career choice. Since I had studied enough Latin I had a head start in picking up Spanish, at least a part of it. So when I went to college at the end of the summer, I automatically enrolled in a Spanish class.

Q: Where did you go to college as an undergraduate?

A: Southwestern College in Winfield. I followed my brother there.

Q: Was that a four-year school?

A: It is a four-year school. However, I stayed only two years and then switched to Wichita State.

Q: Why did you decide to go to Wichita State?

A: My parents had lived in Garden Plain. During my second year at Southwestern they moved to Wichita. So it was cheaper for me to live at home and go to Wichita State than to go back and forth to Southwestern. At Southwestern I had jobs also.

Q: What did you do there?

A: I worked for the Winfield Floral Company. My brother had preceded me. He worked in the nursery and I worked there. We also sold flowers at the football games.

Q: Those mums?

A: Yes.

Q: They used to have those when I was in college.

A: That was a big deal. I also was a clerk and busboy at the college cafeteria and I was a dishwasher at a dormitory. I did a number of odd jobs at the college.

Q: What was your major at Southwestern?

A: I didn't have a real firm focus. I considered radio broadcasting and took courses in speech and communication. I took a couple of psychology classes, which really got me motivated about serious study and research. And then there was Spanish, which was fun. I was drifting toward being a Spanish major, but I did not make that decision until I went to Wichita.

Q: Then you became a Spanish major.

A: I became a Spanish major at Wichita State.

Q: When you became a Spanish major, what did you envision yourself doing with that?

A: At first I didn't know. I just liked Spanish. I had a great teacher, Eugene Savaiano. He's still alive in his nineties. I just saw him a few months ago in Wichita. I took every course that he offered. So there were a number of Spanish courses. He was of Italian descent, so he taught an Italian course and I took that. I was really smitten with language. I also took French, a total of 15 credit hours, and even won a prize as the best senior French student at Wichita State. I also studied Russian. I gradually realized that I wanted to go on to graduate school but I knew that I didn't want to teach language. So I sort of drifted into history at Wichita State, partly because of two very strong Latin Americanists at Wichita State. Because of my Spanish language study I naturally began to focus on Latin American history.

Q: So you decided to be a history major with the idea that maybe you would teach history some day.

A: Yes. Well, actually, I was rapidly developing an interest in international relations, in part because of the ongoing Cold War. So, along with history courses I took courses in political science and international relations. I was thinking of going directly into the Foreign Service. That became my goal. So during the two and a half years I was at Wichita State working on the B.A., I was thinking about a Foreign Service career. By the time I decided to stay on for the M.A. level, I had switched to history completely. I majored in Spanish as an undergraduate and received a B.A. in Spanish. But my master's degree was in history.

Q: And that was at Wichita State also?

A: At Wichita State.

Q: I suppose you had jobs at Wichita State also.

A: Not at Wichita State, but I got a job at the American Laundry, so I worked at night cleaning the laundry. I also had a job at Fox-Vliet Wholesale Drug Store, so I worked in the afternoon at Fox-Vliet Drug Store and I worked at night cleaning the laundry. I could clean the laundry at any time during the night after 5 p.m. I usually let it cool down and worked from 10:30 to 12. One of my fun jobs was to work with a team of Fox-Vliet employees inventorying local pharmacy stocks. I also had jobs as a construction worker, golf caddy, busboy at the Hotel Lassen restaurant. One summer I tutored Spanish at night and worked during the day as a laborer at the Wichita Flour Mill.

Q: You must not have needed much sleep.

A: Well, I didn't seem to need much sleep. I got by on five to six hours a night.

Q: When did you get your undergraduate degree?

A: 1953. Because of the switch from Southwestern to Wichita State I didn't finish in four years. It was four and a half years. I finished my B.A. requirements and then began my master's work the last semester. Tack on one more year and I finished the M.A.

Q: Did you have to write a thesis for your M.A.?

A: I did indeed. And I wrote a thesis on Herbert Hoover's policy of recognition of new governments in Latin America, a rather esoteric topic. But it had to do with U.S.-Latin American relations. So it fit my background in Spanish. I was very interested in the 1920s and 1930s. I had a very good instructor, John L. Rydjord, at Wichita State, who was at one time the chair of the history department and one time dean of the graduate school. So I finished my degree with him.

Q: What year did you get your master's?

A: 1954.

Q: Then what did you do?

A: The Korean War was going on. Actually, it was winding down at this time. So while I was finishing my degree two things were going on: I had a full-time job at Boeing Airplane Company and I wrote my M.A. thesis during my last year at Wichita State.

Q: While you were working on your masters?

A: Yes. I was a supplementary training technician. My job was to administer the program to the teachers. So I didn't teach. Boeing taught shop math and blueprint reading to production line workers who knew little math and who didn't know how to read blueprints. So I scheduled the classes, paid the instructors, and I also gave demonstrations at Boeing. The latter was a very interesting aspect of my career, which

sort of led me to history as well. We had an individual at Boeing who was the author of a book called *Stop Forgetting*. He was interested in improving people's memory and getting them to read faster. Rapid reading was big in those days. So he did rapid reading courses and memory courses. I was the guinea pig for the memory courses. You'd be amazed what you could do if you focused on it. For example, he would give memory courses to 30 instructors. I would stand at the door and greet each one of them, get their names and shake their hands. Then he would go through various things. When they left 45 minutes later, I would tell them goodbye and mention their names.

Q: Oh, my.

A: It was good preparation for being a teacher.

Q: I suppose. Did he give you ideas on how to do this?

A: Yes. It was a technique he taught. He also had a technique so that you could remember telephone numbers. Boeing, always looking for ways to save time, asked me to demonstrate that you could memorize 150 telephone numbers so that you didn't have to waste time looking them up in the telephone book. I did that and as a demonstration, memorized the exact population of every capital in the 48 states at that time. It is amazing what you can do if you have the technique. I don't remember all that data now, but I could apply the technique still and sometimes do.

Q: You were talking about the Korean War. Did you get drafted?

A: No, I didn't. Of course I registered. I was fearful of getting drafted. So I tried to get in Naval Intelligence. I failed the test. I couldn't see as well as I was supposed to. But by the time all that happened, the Korean War was pretty much winding down. They didn't

want Naval Intelligence officers anyway. So I thought the smartest thing for me to do was to go to graduate school to get a Ph.D.

Q: Where did you go for that?

A: I remember that I had opportunities at Ohio State, Berkeley, Florida, and Tulane. I didn't particularly like Ohio State or Florida. I thought very seriously about Berkeley. But to get a Ph.D. at Berkeley at that time you had to study German. I had studied Latin, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Italian, and even Russian. I didn't see the need to learn German at that point just to satisfy their degree requirements. (Oddly, after coming to KU I started a research topic which forced me to study German; so I took a class in German my first year at KU.) At Tulane there were two advantages for me. I had already written on a Central American topic and this was one place in the United States where there was a strong interest in Central America. My Wichita State mentor, Rydjord, had received his degree from Berkeley and knew someone else from Berkeley who was at Tulane. That was William J. Griffith who became my mentor at Tulane. Through Rydjord and Griffith I absorbed the Berkeley tradition in Latin American Studies.

Q: Where is Tulane located?

A: In New Orleans. So that was a big cultural shock in my life, moving from Kansas to New Orleans.

Q: It's a very different place. There were probably not a lot of Spanish speakers.

A: Actually there's a sizable Latin American community, but it is very old, so they have pretty much mixed with the local population. Part of the cultural shock was that I got married at the finish of my master's degree. So my wife and I left on our honeymoon in August of 1954 and ended up in New Orleans.

Q: What is her name?

A: Mary Ellen Love was her name. Unfortunately, she died in 2001.

Q: Did you meet her at Wichita?

A: She was a fellow student of Spanish at Wichita State University

Q: I didn't know that.

A: One of the other steps in preparing my life situation was in 1952 when she and I were on the same trip to Mexico.

Q: So you did have a chance to travel to a Spanish-speaking country while you were in school.

A: Yes. This would have been in my second year at Wichita State. I was a Spanish major and so was Mary Ellen. The secretary of the president of the university organized this trip to Mexico in a two-car caravan with seven students. We drove all the way to Mexico City and to Acapulco. While the rest of them went to Acapulco I separated myself, with great laughter and derision. I stayed to do research at the library in Mexico City.

Q: That must have been an interesting experience. Mexico is very different.

A: Mexico is very different. I learned that although I knew some Spanish, I realized I didn't know it well enough to have a decent conversation. So I knew I had to work harder.

Q: So you went to Tulane as a history major.

A: Yes, but my intent was still foreign service. I enrolled as a history major with the intent of preparing myself for the Foreign Service exam and going into the Foreign Service. I wanted to be a diplomat.

Q: And you were married at this time.

A: I was married August 21, 1954, and we arrived on August 31, 1954 at Tulane. It happened to be the hottest day of the year, 99 degrees and muggy. It's a day I won't forget.

Q: What were you specifically studying as a doctoral student?

A: To get a Ph.D. in history in those days you had to study several fields of history. My comprehensive exam covered the history of Latin America, the United States, Great Britain, and Modern Europe, and Latin American Area Studies. At Tulane and some other schools you could offer an area focus. Latin America was obviously my area. So I took courses in archeology, anthropology, language, and the economics of Latin America. Although my preparation was strongly focused on Latin America the degree was a History Department degree.

Q: What did you write your dissertation on for your Ph.D.?

A: I wrote my dissertation on the Central American career of E. George Squier. Squier happened to be a diplomat who served in Nicaragua in 1849-50, got really interested in Central America, and became the first US scholar to focus on the Central American region. Because of the strong research collection at Tulane's Middle American Research Institute, there was a lot of material about Squier. I didn't originally intend to do a dissertation on Squier. I had other intentions. I wanted to do a history of the United Fruit Company. The explanation for this is that my mentor, who happened to be a native Kansan, William J. Griffith, took me to a party on a banana boat within weeks after I arrived at Tulane. I was fascinated by the United Fruit Company and bananas and the connection between Central America and the United States. But I gradually realized that the United Fruit Company was not very eager to have anybody get into their archives to

explain what they were doing. I could not get access to any UFCO records. So I eventually had to abandon that and switch to Squier. I have a footnote on that. I wrote my dissertation and published a few articles on him. When I came to KU in 1963 I got a grant to study at the Huntington Library in San Marino, CA because there are some Squier materials there. Believe it or not, in 2004, 40 years later, I got another grant to go back to the Huntington Library to study those materials again and now, in retirement, I am currently writing a biography Squier. There is still room for a published book on this man. He's worth it, and I'm working on it right now.

Q: That's great. Where did you live? Did they have married student housing?

A: They did. These were old World War II barracks that we lived in while we were in New Orleans. It was a very communal operation. Most of the graduate students lived there. Tulane had a very good medical school and so there were quite a few medical students in our barracks, Stadium Place, as it was called. It was right by the Sugar Bowl.

Q: Did you have children while you were in graduate school?

A: One was born during graduate school. That was our son Ryan. I should explain that I didn't go to the Foreign Service. I got talked out of it at the last minute. From "Epiphanies in the Pursuit of Pedagogical Perfection: New and Expanded Version" (a talk given by Charles Stansifer). "I was on the waiting list for my first assignment. It was only then that my mentor William Griffith began to get through to me. In a conversation he put a lot of emphasis on the word 'service' in Foreign Service. He said that you might be an officer in the Foreign Service, but that you had better be prepared to serve, whether you liked the policy or not. He warned me not to expect to be an independent thinker or more especially a writer, as you could in academia. I realized that

he knew what he was talking about because he had served for several years in the State Department and in Guatemala.”

A job opened up at Southwestern Louisiana Institute in Lafayette (SLI, now the University of Louisiana at Lafayette) and I got the job in 1958, just before I finished my Ph.D. My second child, Mary Lee, was born in Lafayette.

Q: Did you start teaching when you were a graduate student, as people often do?

A: Yes. My first job as a graduate student was to be an editorial assistant at the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*. That was partly because the director of the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* was another Berkeley Ph.D. Two of the professors with whom I worked at Tulane had their Ph.D.s from the same man at Berkeley. So that was kind of a neat colony there, a family. For two years while I took courses I was an editorial assistant. Then in my third year I became a teaching assistant. So I did have some teaching experience. Between jobs that Mary Ellen had and my graduate assistance grants I managed to finish the Ph.D. program in five years without owing any debts.

Q: When did you get your Ph.D.?

A: 1959. I was already teaching. I started in 1958. I finished the dissertation during Christmas break and defended it in the spring of 1959. From “Epiphanies:” I was hired at SLI to teach Latin American and U.S. history. It was tough, I wasn’t prepared – too much editing and too little teaching. And I ended up teaching Latin America, US, and European history as well. To make things worse I almost had to teach the History of Nursing at SLI. This was a required course for students at the School of Nursing at SLI and it was usually taught by the last historian hired. I was hired in June and told that I would be teaching the history of nursing. I had just about figured out who Clara Barton

was when SLI hired someone else and I could pass on the course to him. Nevertheless, I learned two valuable lessons. Women had history too and more women should be teaching history. More important for me at that time was the desegregation issue. The Louisiana legislature dictated that we teach a course called Democracy vs Communism. The legislature even dictated which textbook we would use, Carleton Putnam's *Race and Reason*. It was nothing but a racist tract. We historians subverted the policy by ignoring the text and trying our best to teach objectively about both democracy and Communism. This was my first experience as a subversive. I found that I enjoyed it."

Q: How long were you at this school where you were teaching?

A: I was there until 1963. I finished in the spring of 1963. In 1962 I got a research grant from the Doherty Foundation to go to Chile. By that time I had pretty much concluded that there was no teaching job available with a Central American emphasis. So I was retooling as a South American specialist while I was in Chile.

Q: Were you working at a university in Chile?

A: No, it was a research grant so I did research wherever I could find material and I found the most material in the National Library. The Doherty Foundation provides support for young graduate students to do research in Latin America. It was a minimum grant, but it allowed us to stay for nine months in Santiago de Chile.

Q: So you and your wife and two children were in Chile for nine months.

A: Yes. From "Epiphanies:" I was studying Chilean radicalism . . . In my early career I was quite sympathetic to Marxism . . . My position at the time: Capitalism had obviously not proved beneficial to Latin America. I thought that there had to be a way out of

underdevelopment and Marxism might be it. But I had not seriously studied Marx nor did I know any Marxists . . . and I had not actually lived in Latin America.”

“My experience at the Teatro Caupolicán [in Santiago]. It was a fascinating all-day rally, an unforgettable experience. Speakers, introductions, awards, even comedians one after the other. Shouts of ‘Viva el Partido Comunista’ when things got quiet. ‘Viva la Unión Soviética.’ There were posters hailing Emilio Recabarren as a hero. He was the founder of the Communist party in Chile in the 1920s. I had done some research on him; he was a good man. They didn’t mention that he committed suicide in despair after a trip to Russia. The highlight was the appearance of the great Chilean poet Pablo Neruda. He finally appeared about 5 p.m. I had great respect for Neruda, a card-carrying Communist, so to speak. But frankly he made no sense as a political analyst. He just mouthed without conviction the Soviet line. The Communist politicians I interviewed were no better than Neruda. I wasn’t very impressed with Salvador Allende . . . either. I began to realize that these guys were not going to lead Chile to the proletarian utopia. The experience cost me a few pesos. I was trying to be inconspicuous, so when the plate was passed, I contributed. Yes, I contributed to the Communist cause. I rationalized that, without conviction, I had contributed to the Presbyterian Church as well.”

Q: How did you like living in Chile?

A: We all loved it. In the first place, it was what I needed to improve my Spanish because my Spanish was still pretty much academic. So I had an opportunity to use it on a daily basis. We were able to travel up and down Chile. The trains were very cheap. That was fun. My oldest son was in an English language school, sort of half English, half Spanish. They emphasized math in the first grade, much more than they would in the United

States. He later became a computer scientist. So I think it did have an impact on him as well.

Q: What was your daughter's name?

A: Mary Lee was born in 1960 while I was in Lafayette. She became a professor also.

Q: What is her field?

A: She is a professor of business, with a specialty in marketing, at the University of Colorado in Denver.

Q: So you were at Lafayette about four or five years.

A: Technically, I was still there until the fall of 1963, but I had already interviewed for the job at Kansas before I left for Chile. I got word that I had been hired while I was in Chile. So I came back in August 1963 to Lafayette, Louisiana, to pick up our furniture and other possessions and then we came up here to Lawrence.

Q: How did you happen to get a job here?

A: Believe it or not, in 1963 there were seven positions open in the History Department.

Q: At KU?

A: Yes. The positions were mostly in international areas. This was exactly the time when the University of Kansas was expanding into the international arena. KU had just gotten a grant from the Ford Foundation to emphasize international relations and there was some sort of mix-up with respect to Latin America. There was a visiting professor at KU during 1962-63 and there was a permanent professor who was in Costa Rica serving as director of the Peace Corps. And they didn't think he was coming back. Eventually, they decided to hire me because by that time the University of Kansas had made a firm connection to Costa Rica. To my amazement, they wanted a Central Americanist. So I

dropped the South American emphasis and went back to specializing in Central America. That was exactly where I belonged. Now there are two universities in the United States that emphasize Central America, Tulane and Kansas.

Q: So then you came here in 1963. What did you think of Lawrence? It was very different at that time from what it is now.

A: I thought I had reached heaven. I had wanted to get out of Kansas desperately when I was in Wichita because I didn't like Wichita. I didn't like Kansas either. But comparing it to Louisiana, I began to think that it might be better to be in Kansas. I had been to northern Kansas often enough to know that it was different in Lawrence. And of course there is a big difference between the University of Kansas and the other places I had been. So it was a wonderful opportunity. I was delighted with the combination of being focused on Central America and being at a prestigious university.

Q: What sort of courses were you teaching here?

A: Actually, despite what I just said, I had a little difficulty persuading the History Department that Central America was that important. But it didn't take long. By the next year I had persuaded them that I should offer a course on the history of Central America.

Q: So you originated that course.

A: I did. Actually, it was the first course on the history of Central America taught in the United States. Even at Tulane, Professor Griffith taught a course that included Central America but he called it Middle America and it included the Caribbean and Mexico. But mine was the first course that only dealt with the five republics of Central America. As far as I know, that is correct. I have never seen any other evidence that anyone else taught a similar course that early.

From “Epiphanies:” “One of my internal struggles as a teacher of Latin American history has been how to deal with the issue of responsibility of the United States for the ills of Latin America, particularly dictatorship and underdevelopment. In effect, how to be objective when the political winds blow strongly in both directions, to the right and left. An early problem for me in Latin American courses was to explain the role of the US in specific, critical situations. We’re in the 1960s and I’m teaching a course on Central America for the first time. One day, at KU I was hastily preparing a lecture on José Santos Zelaya of Nicaragua. As I was very much aware, the US helped to remove him from office in 1909. But why? I didn’t have much information to go on. So I scoured the literature in my office for an explanation of the US position. And I found several references in textbooks and secondary literature. Zelaya was uniformly considered a corrupt dictator who tortured his enemies, mistreated US concessionaires, put the country into debt, was an obstacle in negotiations for an isthmian canal, and meddled in the affairs of other countries. I love to read these really dumb comments to my classes. As President Taft said, ‘Zelaya was a blot on the history of Nicaragua.’ It struck me immediately that this unanimity of views was suspect. I theorized that he had been demonized by the US in order to justify intervention. Later, I was fortunate enough to get a grant to spend a whole summer in Managua. Studying the career of Zelaya, reading Spanish language sources I found that he was completely different than portrayed in English, not wholly admirable as a character, but far more moderate and more progressive than portrayed . . . I reached two conclusions from this episode. One, I learned to be very suspicious of textbooks and two, I learned that interpretations of Latin

American figures based entirely on English language sources was not the way to arrive at objective truth.”

Q: You were here then when all the protests were happening in the late sixties.

A: Yes.

Q: How did that affect you, your family, your students or your department?

A: Well, it didn't really affect me that much. I am a pacifist, basically, so I let the Vietnam War, which I disagreed with, sort of go by without paying much attention to it. I got excited when the United States was involved in Central America, but in the case of Vietnam, I slept through it. I look back now and think, “How did this happen? How did I do this?” But I was focused on my research and focused on teaching. So I walked up and down the streets and saw people protesting, but it didn't involve me, I thought. I do remember the events of 1970 very well because I was on watch at Strong Hall one night. I happened to sleep through the burning of the Union in 1970. During the spring of 1970 I had a visitor here from, of all places, California Berkeley. He was expecting to find a quiet place but he was here when we closed down the university due to protests. Basically, I didn't have much of a reaction to Vietnam. I opposed it but I didn't do anything about it. When the Contra War came along in the 1980s I was much more involved.

Q: What do you mean, involved? You had opinions about it, obviously, but did you talk about it?

A: According to my contract with the American Universities Field Staff, which gave me a grant to do research in Nicaragua during the first years of the Sandinista Revolution, 1979-1980, I was obligated to give talks at member universities around the country. So I

lectured on Nicaragua at universities, churches, and at scholarly conventions throughout the country. Frequently, I spoke to Senator Kassebaum of Kansas and Representative Jim Slattery of Northeastern Kansas about legislation about the Contra War. I helped Slattery arrange an inspection trip to Central America and traveled with him on the trip. I met with Department of State personnel, including Elliott Abrams, Director of Latin American Affairs, and Carlos Tünnermann, the Nicaraguan Ambassador to the United States, and with United States ambassadors to most of the Central American countries. I brought a number of Nicaraguans and other experts, including Vice-President of Nicaragua Sergio Ramírez, to KU to give talks at KU. As director of the Center of Latin American Studies after 1975, I was in a position to have more impact on what happened not only in history but in other fields where Latin American Studies had an impact. So I brought a political scientist here from Nicaragua, who had actually been a KU Ph.D. Since he was a member of the Sandinista Party, local people called me a communist because I had brought a communist here. So it was kind of laughable, but this is the sort of thing that you experience when you sort of reach out and try to get different opinions expressed. During the period of the Reagan administration when the government was committed to bringing the Sandinista government down in Nicaragua, I knew Nicaragua very well. I had spent a lot of time there. During the Sandinista period (1979-1990) Nicaragua held two national elections; I was an international election observer at both. I knew both sides of the issue. I tried to be neutral, but nobody saw you as neutral when you had friends on both sides.

Q: You said you had spent a lot of time in Nicaragua. Was this in the summers when you would go to Central America?

A: No matter the season. First of all I should say that after 1965 I was in residence in neighboring Costa Rica as director of the KU exchange program there for two different years, 1966 and 1974. Residence in Costa Rica was a vantage point for frequent visits to Nicaragua. I spent the Summer of 1969 in Nicaragua on a grant and by the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s until 1993 I was in Nicaragua almost every year and often more than once.

Q: So you lived down there during the school year and taught.

A: Yes.

Q: And your family was with you, I suppose.

A: Yes, indeed, at least during 1966 and 1974. By this time I had four children.

Q: Who are your other children?

A: John is number three. He is a screen writer in Hollywood. My daughter Karen finished her M.A. in history of art here at KU. She is married to a Frenchman and lives in Denver. She has three young children. She is not employed outside the home. She is very employed inside the home.

Q: So you were teaching in Costa Rica and KU students would go down and spend a year there.

A: Yes.

Q: Were these history students or Spanish students?

A: Whatever field. Most of them were students of Spanish. The idea was mainly to improve their Spanish. But quite a few history and political science students also studied there. As for me I taught United States history in Spanish and occasionally gave lectures on Central American history. I have to add that this program is the most successful

university exchange relationship in the hemisphere. It goes deeper and it has been operating longer and it has been very, very successful. I'm very proud of Kansas for being closely connected to Costa Rica. And Costa Rica became my second home. I've been to Costa Rica more than 80 times.

Q: Really?

A: On those two occasions I lived the whole year there. But I've been there practically every year since 1965 and some years several times. It's amazing because I finished my dissertation at Tulane without ever having gone to Central America. But at Kansas I had lots of opportunities to go to Central America and I took advantage of them.

Q: What do you do when you go there? Are you doing research and writing?

A: Since I have had administrative responsibilities I had something to do with administering the Study Abroad program and encouraging people to study there. I wrote numerous grant proposals strengthening the connection between Kansas and Costa Rica. Costa Rica attracts many international scholarly conventions and I often attend those. The KU program in Costa Rica has generated a number of alumni and anniversary celebrations which I have attended. For example in February 2000 Costa Rica hosted an impressive scholarly symposium featuring research and exchange involving the Universidad de Costa Rica, the University of Kansas, and Kansas State University. During 2001-2003 I was in Costa Rica several times to assess the value of a large Central American book collection. I take advantage of these trips to do research, which has led to several articles on Costa Rica and Central America, and I might add that I have brought quite a few books on Central America while on these trips.

Q: Do people from Costa Rica come here also?

A: Indeed they do. There must be more than 800 Costa Rican graduates of KU. So one of the things I've been involved in even post retirement is trying to organize an alumni group in Costa Rica. I was there last January working on that. I plan to go back this coming year.

Q: So you really like living in Costa Rica.

A: Yes, I do. At one point I considered retiring in Costa Rica but my wife wasn't particularly interested in it and with all four kids here in the United States it just seemed to be too much. By the way, I like Lawrence very much too.

Q: You've mentioned that you were the head of the Latin American Studies program.

A: From 1975 to 1989.

Q: What did this involve?

A: The main idea was to bring money from the outside to Kansas in order to promote Latin American studies. So the first assignment that I took for myself was to get a grant from the Department of Education as an international resource center. By 1976 I was successful. I'm very pleased with this because the Russian Studies program and the East Asian Studies program already had this money when I took over as Latin American director. After 1976 all three of the international programs had federal funding. That's one of the bright stars in KU's reputation because for one university to have three funded resource centers in international studies is very unusual.

Q: Why do you think international studies are so important?

A: Well, I don't think you can live in a world as tightly connected as it is now without knowing something about the rest of the world. I just think it is very important multiculturally. And I think with our foreign relations, obviously, as the world's only

superpower, it is extremely important that we know what is going on and what is motivating people in other cultures, not only in Latin America, of course, but in all cultures.

From "Epiphanies:" "I spent two weeks in Cuba in 1981 . . . attending a Caribbean Studies conference in Havana. My state of mind was much colored by one of my academic colleagues . . . Many academics had visited Cuba and they tended to write about it sympathetically. I was particularly taken by the report of John Womack of Harvard . . . He wrote this glowing report of how good life was in Cuba. But when I got there I found a total opposite. Shortages of everything: clothing, clothes, food, coffee, beer, restaurants, you name it. Academic institutions in total disarray; libraries and museums closed, the botanical garden a mess, many people disillusioned. It made me very suspicious of the engaged, committed scholar and strengthened my resolve to try to be objective."

Q: Do you think students are becoming more interested in international studying or traveling?

A: Basically, since the 1960s when KU began this push to develop international programs, there has been a steady increase in information and interest in studying abroad. It has had a tremendous impact in opening up Kansas. And so you may remember that just recently Dolph Simons of the Journal-World has been complaining that we don't have enough foreign language. What? We have more foreign languages than any other big 12 school except perhaps Texas. And it started back in the 1960s. We are way ahead of Colorado, Missouri, and Nebraska in terms of the number of languages taught and the depth of these language programs. No other university in the immediate vicinity has three international

programs that are funded by the federal government. One last point. The chancellor has recently announced that we are fourth in the United States in terms of the number of students who participate in foreign study programs. So we may not rank as high in some disciplines or in some areas, but the number of students who participate abroad is very high. And it has been consistent in the case of the Kansas-Costa Rica program.

Q: Have you been specifically in charge of students while they have been abroad? Or are you mostly involved in arranging it either here or there?

A: On those two occasions back in 1966 and 1974 I was director of the program in Costa Rica. I did direct one program in England.

Q: How did you happen to go to England?

A: Well, at that time I was chair of the history department. This was in 1995. Leadership of the Humanities program in England for a long time has alternated among the History of Art Department, the English Department, and the History Department. So the director comes from one of these departments. In 1995 it was History's turn and to my amazement nobody in the History Department wanted to do this. I had been to England but not for any length of time and my wife really loved England, so I decided to apply for it. So I became the director. I knew something about English history, but had not paid much attention lately. This was an opportunity to learn. I guess I should make one other point: I had an added incentive to go to Europe in 1995 as my daughter Karen was planning to announce her engagement to a Frenchman in France. So Mary Ellen and I tacked on a trip to France after the English study tour.

Q: Did you have other people to teach?

A: Yes, we had three TAs. Ordinarily you have two TAs and the director. In this case we had three TAs and I concentrated on travel and accommodation arrangements. I had plenty of experience in Central America, Peru, and Ecuador directing study tours so it wasn't that difficult. I did lecture from time to time, but I gave basically the Spanish version of English history, for example, the story of the Spanish Armada of 1588 from the Spanish side instead of the English side.

Q: That would be interesting.

A: It was fun.

Q: How do you find the students? Do they do all right abroad? Do they get in trouble sometimes?

A: You have to make a generalization and my experience is that most students whom I have known abroad have done very well. There have always been a small number of losers. In the case of 1966 and 1974 in Costa Rica I'd say the vast majority got a lot out of it. Maybe one or two didn't get much out of it or didn't react very well to it. In one or two cases we had to send a student back for not adjusting. But generally speaking, it works very well.

Q: Then they did have that one death in Costa Rica.

A: Yes. Well, that was a very special circumstance. Yes, it happened on my bailiwick, even though I had no responsibility for that particular program. That was the Tropical Research Program in Golfito. I knew Golfito very well because I'd been there on many occasions. As a matter of fact, I was involved in discussions with United Fruit Company managers in 1984 when they offered to turn over the whole town to KU. It was really a pretty crazy idea. We had to turn it down.

Q: You mean they wanted you to buy the town?

A: No, they wanted to give it to us, 48 houses, airport, a swimming pool, the whole ball of wax.

Q: Why did they turn it down?

A: Well, we didn't have any basis for managing it. And number two, since there is a very antagonistic attitude toward the United Fruit Company in Central America, it would have been very unwise for the University of Kansas to have taken over the United Fruit Company town. All that negative cultural baggage would have turned toward us. So it wasn't a very smart thing to do. What we did finally do was to persuade the United Fruit Company to give it to the government of Costa Rica to help us establish a University of Costa Rica and University of Kansas tropical research program. And we did and it worked very well for quite a while. But this unfortunate murder took place. And that basically ended the program. I went to Costa Rica in 2001 as a representative of KU to study the situation. Since she had been killed after going to a bar, one of the tasks given to me was to study the bar milieu of Golfito. It was the first time that I had ever been paid to go do research at bars, the low life of Golfito. Anyway, I concluded, like almost everybody else did, there was nothing terribly dangerous about Golfito, any more than Topeka, Kansas City, or Lawrence. But the murder left a stain. It is a small town and it took a long time to recover from it. Personally, I didn't think it was such a good idea to have that tropical research program based in Golfito anyway because the people in San José, the best teachers at the University of Costa Rica, did not care for Golfito. If you wanted to have a good, solid program, it would be better to be in San José and then do

field trips. And that's exactly what we're doing now. I'm pleased that we kept the program and strengthened it by moving it back to San José.

Q: You said you were chairman of the History Department. When was that?

A: It was 1993 to 1996. That wasn't such a smart thing to do.

Q: Why was that?

A: I clashed with the administration on a regular basis. It wasn't very much fun. People generally conclude that one of the worst jobs at the university is being chairman of a department and I was chairman for only three years. It was totally different from being the Director of the Center of Latin American Studies. As director I was my own man. I went out and raised a good part of the Center's budget. The college office was happy because I brought money in. Well, it's harder to get people or foundations to give money to a Department of History. So the Administration is very much concerned about the way things are going. There was no way for the chair of the department to do the things they wanted, getting rid of "deadwood," getting an ever higher student body count. It gets very personal. I have a bad memory of a number of incidents that occurred in this period.

Q: I understand that you have brought Latin American leaders in to speak at KU. You talked about the Sandinistas. Did people from other countries come here to speak too?

A: Oh yes, I remember professors and scholars from Mexico, Guatemala, Peru, Chile, Argentina, and even a couple Latin American specialists from the Soviet Union. Also one from the People's Republic of China. At least three Nobel Peace Prize winners from Latin America have visited KU: President Oscar Arias of Costa Rica (three times), Rigoberta Menchú of Guatemala, and Adolfo Pérez Esquivel of Argentina. When Robert White was Ambassador to Paraguay he paid a visit to KU, and he later returned

just after being dismissed by President Reagan as Ambassador to El Salvador. As for Paraguay, we have had numerous Paraguayan scholars visit us, and President Wasmosy of Paraguay spent a day on campus. We have a relationship with Paraguay as well as Costa Rica.

Q: You mean students go there to study?

A: Mainly it is the Paraguayans who come here, but a few Kansans go to Paraguay. I had the privilege of signing the original agreement back in the 1980s with two universities in Paraguay. It is a reciprocal arrangement, but the fact is that more Paraguayans are interested in coming here than Kansans are interested in going there. So it is a little out of balance. I think the whole agreement needs to be redrawn. But Paraguay does offer some advantages that Costa Rica does not. It is really quite different. It tends to be more dictatorial. Costa Rica is sort of the flower child of Latin America, the most important democracy. On the other hand, one of the least democratic of the Latin American countries historically is Paraguay. It is a completely different circumstance. So if you want to understand Latin America, you ought to know both sides of the spectrum. I just came back from a two-week tour of Paraguay, so I'm very much focused on Paraguay right now.

Q: What were you doing?

A: My partner Mary Miller and I and a couple from Newton arranged a historical, cultural tour of Paraguay. So we spent two weeks touring the country. Since most of the people involved in the tour had been to Paraguay before and had close connections, it was really a fun thing to do. We knew a lot of people in different fields: the arts, music,

engineering, agriculture, economics, anthropology, and sociology. We met a lot of former students. So it was a lot of fun. It was a lot of work too.

Q: I suppose, and responsibility if you are in charge of a tour.

A: My partner is treasurer and I am the historian of the group. I once was president of the organization. We just came back from Topeka in order to do this interview. I spent most of the day doing research in the archives of Topeka. Because almost all the Kansas/Paraguay documents are over in the history museum in Topeka.

Q: Do you mean the relationship between Kansas and Paraguay?

A: We are sister states.

Q: I didn't know.

A: I think we have failed to get the word out.

Q: I've heard of the German connection and the connection with Japan.

A: Those are sister cities.

Q: I didn't know there was a sister state. But Paraguay is a country.

A: The nomenclature is not quite accurate but this has been operating for 40 years. Most states in the US have sister relationships with the states of Mexico or Brazil or other Latin American republics.

Q: I didn't know that.

A: I told you that there are about 800 Costa Ricans who are graduates of KU. Well there are some 600 Paraguayans who are graduates of the six regents' schools. In the case of Paraguay I made a very strong point when I was director of the Center that we should cooperate with the other regents' schools. By that time we had a program operating called TUCLAS, the Tri University Center of Latin American Studies involving KU,

Wichita State, and Kansas State. Paraguayan students are admitted equally with Kansas residents in all six of the regents' schools. So they have been coming up in great numbers lately. Unfortunately, not many Kansans are going there.

Q: Do they have many universities in Paraguay?

A: Universities are proliferating in Paraguay just as in Costa Rica but they are not as strong as those in Costa Rica. So essentially to explain why Kansas students go to Costa Rica and not to Paraguay there are two reasons. It is much costlier to go to Paraguay. It's farther. And the universities are much better in Costa Rica than in Paraguay, as you might imagine, since one is a democracy and one has been a dictatorship.

Q: You mentioned William Griffith. He was at KU also, wasn't he?

A: Yes. That was a most unusual situation. Both Griffith and I studied under John Rydjord at Wichita State. Then I went to Tulane, where William Griffith became my mentor. When Griffith had difficulties with Tulane in the early 1970s, he was looking for a change. At that time KU was committed to strengthening Latin America Studies so we hired Griffith as Director of Latin American Studies. It was rather unusual to have mentor and student in the same department in the same field. It lasted about six years before he retired. As Director of the Center for Latin American Studies, he wasn't involved in teaching as much as I was.

Q: Then you became the director after he retired.

A: I succeeded him. He was very gentlemanly about it. One measure of success of a faculty member is the number of graduate students mentored. So when he came here he said, "I am not taking any graduate students." Therefore all the graduate students who worked in Central America worked with me in that five-year period. You have asked me about

students and I spoke about undergraduates. I think I am most proud of the number of graduate students, Ph.D.s and MA.s, who have studied Central America here.

Q: I always ask people if they remember students who have gone on to greater things, been very successful. Are there any who come to mind?

A: Yes, indeed. I think rather than going on to greater things they have gone on to other places and succeeded in their lives. Lester Langley, my first Ph.D., had a highly successful career as Research Professor at the University of Georgia. Richard Salisbury was at Western Kentucky University. They didn't have a Ph.D. program, but he won the award as the best teacher one year. Marshall Eakin won such an award at Vanderbilt University. He has been very successful. He is the chair of the department. He was an M.A. student of mine. He went on to UCLA for his Ph.D. Then Larry Laird, who retired before I retired, got his Ph.D. in 1974 and went to AID (Agency for International Development) and served in several different countries in Latin America. He served in Paraguay, Costa Rica, Barbados, and the Dominican Republic. He has gotten good recommendations everywhere he has been. So, yes, there is a long list of students who I think have succeeded.

Q: Have you had publications? Have you ever written a book?

A: I edited a book on Costa Rica, a bibliography of Costa Rica. I edited a couple of other books. I have a lot of articles, but I have never published what would be a solid, academic book. I'm going to do that after I retire. I got too deeply involved in administration. Looking back I think that was a mistake to have spent so much time in administration. It was a double mistake in that the financial rewards for being in that level of administration are very poor.

Q: And it takes a lot of your time.

A: Yes.

Q: I read somewhere that you had talked to federal legislators about how U.S. policy affected Latin American.

A: Especially in the 80s during the Contra War. I was very close to Jim Slattery and Senator Kassebaum. At least they listened to me. Some do and some don't. In the case of Senator Dole, he wouldn't talk to me, for instance, about the Panama Canal Treaties of 1978. He knew that academics were in favor and he wasn't so I couldn't step in the door.

Q: You traveled a lot. Was some of this on sabbaticals?

A: Yes, I had sabbaticals. I spent one semester on sabbatical in Nicaragua. This was particularly important to me because I was in Nicaragua in the first year of the revolution. So it was a fascinating experience to witness a revolution.

Q: I suppose, but it sounds rather dangerous.

A: Well, it got more dangerous later. Personally, I never had any really negative experiences in Nicaragua, even though there was a very bad relationship between Nicaragua and the United States. There is a lot of anti-Americanism around. But if you are known as a person who teaches Latin American history, you are most likely treated with great respect. Most people recognize that my interest in Central America and Latin America is very strong but that I don't particularly have a foreign policy. I often say that the U.S. has a foreign policy but Kansas doesn't. So I can't be blamed for what I can't control.

Q: That's reasonable, certainly. Have you had honors?

A: Oh, yes. I have had honors. I have had awards from Nicaragua and Costa Rica and from Paraguay, mainly for student exchange. I was very pleased at receiving an award from The Partners of the Americas, a lifetime achievement award. That was announced in Guatemala early this year. The two awards at the Huntington Library were very nice. They also provided money to pay the cost of the trip to California. That was nice.

Q: I read that in 1999 you had the Provost's International Leadership Award.

A: Yes.

Q: I suppose you were on committees. Are there any you particularly remember?

A: Well, I served on the International Leadership Award committee after getting that award. That was fun, seeing the nominations come in from the different parts of the university. I've served on two committees that I felt very strongly about. One was International Student Exchange and the other is the Senate Library Committee. I served on the Senate Library Committee three times and was chair once. I have been rather strongly committed to library acquisitions.

Q: For Central America?

A: For all of Latin America but primarily Central America. From the moment I arrived here in 1963 I began to demand the strengthening of the Central American collection. I believe that it is one of the top three in the nation now. Partly it's because of circumstance. When Griffith retired, he sold his library to KU. I was director of the Center of Latin American Studies at that time. I helped to steer this through and helped to find money to buy it. He arranged it so that he gave part of it and sold part of it so he could get a tax write-off. It is one of the strongest Guatemalan collections in the world right here in Spencer library. When he died he died in 2003 without heirs, he left

\$320,000 to the Central American collection. In the meantime I learned that if you purchased everything coming out of Central America it wouldn't be that expensive. So way back in about 1970 I persuaded the university to buy everything it could get its hands on relating to Central America. Our collection may not be as strong for publications in the colonial period, as in a couple of other universities. But in the last 35 years our collection is very strong on all Central American countries.

Q: Are these magazines and books, whatever they are writing?

A: In every field. But in the case of Costa Rica almost everything published, even children's literature. The library usually balks when you say you want to buy books of recipes or casual travel guides or something like that. I'm happy to say that the history of cuisine is growing in importance, even in a small country like Costa Rica. That is part of education. So anyway we have a very comprehensive collection policy on Central America. I did a lecture this spring on acquisitions on Latin America. I have a long list of rare items and rare collections that I have purchased for Spencer. And I'm still doing it. I was doing it two weeks ago in Paraguay. I bought some rare items that will eventually go to Spencer.

Q: Where do you buy them, from museums or college libraries?

A: Anywhere I can find them. I go to used bookstores. And I purchase from individuals and museums. If you know the library acquisition policy, they usually have an agent who buys from bookstores. The agents sort of sweep through and buy what is available. But they often miss small university publications and institute publications and religious publications. So that's what I do. I try to pick up the things that the agents miss.

Q: So you have a specific fund for this.

A: Yes, my own funds. I buy them.

Q: Then do you give them or sell them to the university?

A: It works both ways. I have perhaps 15,000 books (items might be a better description) in my own collection. Most of that is on Central America. Last year I gave to KU my Chilean collection which I collected mainly in the 1960s. I plan to donate others probably little by little. Lately I've been purchasing books from Honduras to build up the Honduras collection in Spencer; in this case with money from the Endowment Association. Between the Spain, Portugal, Latin American Department in Watson and Spencer Library we've purchased probably about 1,500 books on Honduras. Needless to say we have one of the largest collections on Honduras.

Q: You said you had 15,000 books. Where on earth do you put all of that?

A: You should come to my office.

Q: Did you keep them at KU?

A: All of my Costa Rican books are in my office. I think I have the record of having more books in my office than anyone at KU with an office the size of mine.

Q: Most KU offices wouldn't be big enough.

A: You should come see my office. Then one room in my house is the Nicaraguan room. The other room is the Honduras room. Another room is the banana room because I collect on banana history. I have a very large collection of banana memorabilia and literature. I give a humorous lecture on bananas in my courses. I still do. I've been doing this for 30 years.

Q: Something about the United Fruit Company?

A: Not particularly. Bananas are funny. Everybody makes jokes about banana peels.

Q: I never thought of it that way.

A: I make up a lot of stuff too. Think of Carmen Miranda.

Q: Oh, yes. That's a while ago. Your students probably haven't heard of her.

A: Right, I have to explain Carmen Miranda. You'd be amazed how many cartoons there are which have bananas as the theme. I've collected political cartoons. I have banana cartoons focusing on Perot, Reagan, Nixon, Clinton, Hilary.

Q: I didn't know that.

A: You should come see my collection.

Q: Have you been involved in community activities?

A: Not so much. I once was a financial manager for a city commissioner's campaign. It was successful. Carl Mibeck was an old buddy of mine. Do you remember Carl Mibeck?

Q: I didn't know him, but I think he was a high school teacher.

A: Yes. He and I were in the third grade together in Wichita. So we've always gotten along well together. I shared his views toward the developers in Lawrence so I got behind him. And he won his campaign. Lately I have been contributing funds to causes instead of being active.

Q: Will you have continued involvement with KU?

A: I've never stopped. Actually, in a way it has increased since retirement. Since I don't have the obligation to go to class, I'm promoting Latin America through KU Endowment Association and the Alumni Association. What does this mean? First of all I established a scholarship fund for Central American research. I'm trying to persuade KUEA to increase its size. I'm very disappointed that in the entire period that I've been at KU

there has never been much effort on the part of KUEA to bring money in for Latin American studies. By far the largest and just about the only donation has been the Griffith Endowment. That's a shame. Actually, five years before retirement I started a small fund and now it's up to \$60,000, soon to be \$80,000. That's for a Central American scholarship. It won't be used until we get up to \$250,000.

Q: So you talk to people and convince them to give money.

A: Some, but I give money also. In fact, if I had to say anything about my accomplishment, I would say that it's a triumph to survive the Depression times and arrive at a situation where, because of TIAA-CREF and good investments, I'm able to give money to establish a scholarship fund. On this last trip to Paraguay I announced that we were going to establish a Paraguayan fund. I issued a challenge of \$5,000. I said I would give \$5,000 if the partnership would raise \$5,000. In two days we were up to \$10,000. (By January 15, we were up to \$15,000.) So I'm pushing for more. I'm working to establish a network of people at the university who will push for raising money for Latin America. There was one instance of success. Back in 1999 we had a symposium here on Costa Rica. With lots of help I raised \$50,000 on and off campus in order to fund that symposium. So I know that it can be done. You just have to go for it.

Q: You've certainly been busy with a lot of things. Anything else you plan to do in retirement?

A: Well, I would like to do a lot of things. I have proposed that we do a history of the Kansas/Paraguay relationship. With my Costa Rican colleague María Eugenia Bozzoli, I published one little book on the Costa Rican program. It was 100 pages; it's a booklet. Originally I planned to cover the whole period of the relationship from the 1940s to the

present. The history of the KU Costa Rican program is so interesting, its origins, that I only got up to 1962. We just decided to go ahead and publish it anyway.

Q: So you would like to continue.

A: I'd like to finish it. I don't think I'll have that opportunity unless I find a willing collaborator. I'm hoping for help also with a book on Kansas/Paraguay

Q: I think I read somewhere that you like gardening. Do you still garden?

A: I've been through that. I lived on a small farm for 15 years. And I had a tractor and a John Deere mower and I enjoyed playing farmer. I was sort of recapturing my youth when I was driving a tractor in the 1940s. I raised vegetables and my wife raised flowers. That was then. When Mary Ellen died, we were already thinking about moving to town. So I left the farm and I moved in with Mary Miller. She has very close contacts with the university. Her daughter Shelley was the director of the Spain, Portugal, Latin America Department in Watson Library. She lives right close to the university. So we had somebody come in to do the landscaping. We are just watering. So gardening is not high on our priority list right now.

Q: What is your assessment of KU, Latin American Studies, past, present, hopes for the future, that kind of thing?

A: I think I've touched on that. I am very happy that it has been funded with federal money. But what is happening in other Latin American Studies programs around the country is that private funding has been making the real difference. For whatever reason, the university has not pushed for private funding for the Center. So there are not as many good scholarships as we should have. I mean in comparison to Tulane and other

competing institutions. So I'm not content to just sit by and watch that happen. I want to improve our funding.

Q: Is there anything else you'd like to mention?

A: Let me just add that I'm reverting to my Spanish major days and focusing my reading on Latin American poetry, especially Nicaraguan poetry. That's partly because I'm scheduled to give a lecture on Nicaraguan poetry soon.

Q: In Spanish?

A: No, in English. I have a very strong feeling about Nicaragua. It's partly because I know a lot of poets in Nicaragua. Nicaragua is a very special place because the intellectual community is very tightly knit. So after spending several months there I began to realize that I knew historians, musicians, the poets, and the literary figures, whereas in the United States you are channeled in one direction. You don't have this broad assortment of friends in the cultural community. Among these various individuals poetry was very prominent because almost everyone in Nicaragua considers himself or herself a poet. That's because of the great poet Rubén Darío of the late 19th and early 20th century, the founder of modernism, one of the key movements in Latin American poetry. A lot of people, Nicaraguan or not, would argue that the most important poet in Spanish in the past 200 years would be Rubén Darío. You can imagine that if a little country like Nicaragua could produce this great poet, a lot of people in Nicaragua think of themselves as poets. So I got to know Ernesto Cardenal real well. He is a priest poet, and probably the number one poet in Spanish today. Some people would argue that. There are others. It's kind of like what is the number one university in the United States. It depends on how you look at it. In the case of Cardenal, he was a Sandinista, a pistol-packing priest.

He became the minister of culture. I interviewed him several times. I tried like the dickens to get him here to KU. He has never found the time to come here. But I saw him on several occasions. I ran into him way back in 1969. I bought his revolutionary poetry under the counter during the Somoza dictatorship. I feel very strongly about Nicaraguan poetry. To my amazement, in the last five years I'm starting to write poetry myself.

Q: Do you write it in Spanish or English?

A: I write in English. But I'm using the Cardenal technique. The Cardenal technique is not so spiritual as you might think a priest would be but very focused on specific names and references around you. Can you imagine a priest writing a poem on Marilyn Monroe? He did. It's really very moving. So I've been writing poetry in my odd moments. And I'm having a ball.

Q: What sort of subjects do you favor?

A: I have a wide range. I write about colleges and universities that I have visited. I write autobiography, about TV ads, about Christmas. And it all goes back to a combination of being a Spanish major at one time and having so many friends in Nicaragua who are poets. The old saying in Nicaragua is that if somebody reaches in his breast pocket like this, it's not a gun, it's a poem he's reaching for. He knows you are going to read him your poetry, so he has to read his first.

Q: That's something interesting to do in retirement.

A: Yes, it is. I'm enjoying it. My partner is afraid I will try to publish some of these, but I'm not thinking about publishing. I'm just doing it for fun.

Q: I guess that's about it. Thank you very much.

A: Thank you for listening.