

Rock Voices: The Oral History Project of Slippery Rock University

Joan Condravy Interview

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BC: Today is Monday, July 28th, it is 10:05 a.m. and I am Brady Crytzer.

JC: Okay, my name is Joan Carol Condravy, although everybody here at Slippery Rock knows me as Jace, a nickname that I have had for probably thirty years now. I was born on June 13th, 1952. That was a Friday the thirteenth and I'm from Allentown, Pennsylvania. My education . . . I have a B.A. in English from Gettysburg College, and a Master's of Science in Counseling Student Personnel from Shippensburg State College, and then a Ph. D. in English Rhetoric and Linguistics from IUP [Indiana University of Pennsylvania].

BC: Okay.

JC: Okay.

BC: Let me ask you about your affiliation with the university, from the beginning.

JC: Well, I was hired in 1981 to work in the Department of Academic Support Services. [Pause] I actually underwent two interviews. The first interview, I interviewed for an Act 101 counseling position in the department. Act 101 is a state program for educationally underprepared students and I did not get that position. My dear friend and colleague Reverend Wil Hadden [Wilbert G. Hadden], was an inside candidate for that position, but then apparently I had done well enough at that interview that when another position opened—three-quarter time director of the Tutoring Center, and one-quarter time teaching a basic skills course in the English Department—when that opened up, they called me and asked if I wanted to interview for that. I interviewed for that position and I was then hired. I don't remember exactly when I transitioned from Academic Support Services to the English Department, but I do know that it happened after I completed my Ph. D., so that was probably sometime shortly after 1991.

BC: Okay, you sort of saw both sides of things. Which, looking back, did you prefer in terms of working at Slippery Rock?

JC: You mean which department?

BC: Yes.

JC: Well, I, in fact, was in some ways very sad to leave my own department. I had kind of grown up in higher education in that department. I had actually come to Slippery Rock after having worked for seven years as an English teacher in a junior high school, eighth and ninth grade. Academic Support Services was my first experience being a faculty member, and there were some really wonderful individuals in that department who really mentored me along and actually helped me, I believe, earn all of my promotions. I had started as an instructor, so I had several promotions to go through.

But I also had watched other colleagues in the department leave the department and go on to other departments, after they completed their Ph. D.'s, so I assumed that was somewhere in my future. But I still wasn't prepared for it even though I had completed my Ph. D. and I was . . . overloading myself in such a way that I was no longer able to perform all the responsibilities of my originally performed position, my originally assigned position.

So I was sad to leave, and in fact the first conversation that I had with my Dean at the time – who was Bob Watson—about leaving the department . . . we had had a meeting because I was trying to figure out a way that I could direct the Tutoring Center, teach in the English Department, chair the Women's Studies program, and teach an Introduction to Women's Studies course. I thought I had a plan to do that. His plan however, was that it was time for me to move into the English Department where I would have some more flexibility, and he told me to come back and make another appointment after thinking about that. When I left his office to walk down back to the library, I actually started to cry, because I thought, oh, it's time to do this and I don't know if I'm ready to leave this group of people. And I in fact did not make another appointment to talk with the Dean, but I let the word trickle through to me that the English Department had conducted a vote and accepted me into the department and it was just a mere formality.

So I obviously have had some deep, both professional and emotional, ties to that department, but I've also come to really enjoy working with the English Department. I have a lot of, you know, friends there who are colleagues there and it's exciting to be so focused on pedagogy and to be around people, you know, who can understand my enthusiasm and passion for the discipline that I am trained in, so I have also enjoyed that department very much as well. Now, I recently was elected to be department chair. I'm hoping I can maintain that positive feeling toward all of my colleagues.

BC: Kind of looking at the university . . . it seems like the English Department has just so many more faculty members than a lot of the departments. Why do you think that is?

JC: Well, I think it's because we're the only department on campus – and in fact from what I understand the only department in the state system—that has three courses that all students are required to take: College Writing I, College Writing II, and Interpreting Literature. So when you have the entire university, or you know, ninety-five percent of it, moving through your department, you need a lot of faculty members to teach. And that's why primarily.

BC: Okay, we've gone through some transitions here as a campus. You see we have been listed as a teacher's college, [a] state college, [and a] university. Do you have any particular memories, good or bad, of these transition periods?

JC: Well, I do remember there was a lot of pomp and circumstance around the transition for Slippery Rock and a lot of the other state system schools to become a university. I can remember a number of us, myself included, not knowing exactly what that meant. We thought it was something of a superficial name change in order to have a state system of higher education, but I myself was not directly involved. This was my second year. I was probably just getting involved in my doctoral program and while I knew it was happening and we were undergoing this transition, it wasn't anything I was directly involved in.

BC: Okay, we mentioned the department a little bit, could you talk a little bit about how that changed, as the university evolved?

JC: Yes, well, I know that Academic Support Services is now called Academic Services, but I wasn't there as that name changed. And I guess most of the changes I remember are the people who left the department, you know like Dr. Harry Budd, who was the director of Act 101 when I came and was essentially the person on whose grant I was hired. I was grant funded for a while. I remember when he left. I remember when Wil Hadden, who was a good colleague and was actually the minister who married my husband and me, you know, retired. I remember when Anne Kemmerer left to go to Counseling. It wasn't called Counseling and Development, [it was called] Counseling and Ed. Psych. [Educational Psychology]. And when my good friend Champ Storch retired. So those were all very hard transitions for me because it was like all my good buddies were leaving the university, and that really knocks it out of you just a little bit; the place changes in significant ways.

My sense about the department was that it was becoming also more, kind of more administrative in nature. It seemed less like an academic department and more like an administrative unit to me, which I also thought was a kind of a sad [transition]. Now I don't know if the faculty who are

currently in the department feel that way but that's what I felt was happening there, and that I think emerged as part of a change in leadership as well.

Now the English department has also changed. I have to say that when I first became involved with it quarter time—I taught College Writing I or College Writing II, one section a semester and I always attended their department meetings, just because I thought that was the responsible thing to do – that the faculty within that department weren't very happy with each other. My sense was that there was a lot of conflict, professional and personal, among individuals, and department meetings would get quite heated sometimes and I remember thinking that I wanted to keep my head low and hope no one would notice me. So I didn't really participate very much and it's even difficult for me to determine where the fault lines were. Some departments, English departments, get split between lit [literature] people and writing people, but I'm not even sure that was it. I didn't quite know enough, but by the time I became a full-time member of the department, it seemed as though again, some individuals had retired and there was new leadership and the department seemed to be emerging into a more cohesive whole, where people seemed to respect and liked each other quite a bit. In fact I think the second or third year I was in the department full-time, the new chair of the department was, turned out to be a good friend of mine, so I felt very much at ease and had found people within the department who shared my educational background. So I feel like the department had grown to become more cohesive. I guess that's all I'll say about that.

BC: Okay, that's wonderful. What buildings did you work in while you were on campus?

JC: Oh, yes, well, my very first office was in Maltby Center, in the basement, the lower level. The Tutoring Center was down there, and I had my office down there. [Pause] That's where Academic Support Services was located. Then the Tutoring Center moved to the second floor, or really the first floor, next floor up, and my office was . . . I'm not even sure what's in there now, maybe Admissions is in there now. And then the department was moved over into the library, and I was the first one to go, so it was me in a corner and the Tutoring Center, and my department was still back in Maltby. It was that way for almost a year I think.

And then I was teaching. The English department had its offices in ECB, Eisenberg [Eisenberg Classroom Building], so I was teaching a class there. By the time I became a full-time member of the department, we had moved over into the Spotts World Cultures building. Up until actually just this January, I think we were the only department left on campus that was sharing offices that were about this size. So we have a new suite of offices, and all tenured faculty members,

tenure and non-tenure track faculty members have their own offices, so that's been a nice transition to be a part of.

BC: Okay, you mentioned when you came here, you didn't have your Ph. D. when you started.

JC: No.

BC: Was that part of your plan to go back and start doctoral work? Or was it being in the university setting that influenced you to go and do that?

JC: Oh, it was definitely being in the university setting. I came, of course, with a completed master's degree plus additional credits, because when you're in the public school, you get pay raises for continuing your education and I've always liked being a student, so that was not a hardship. I really liked my master's degree work. But my department chair, Champ Storch, said that the key to progressing professionally at the university was having your Ph. D. and I needed to find a Ph. D. program. Again I was really torn, I wasn't sure whether I wanted to look more at the counseling end of things since I was advising a lot of students and I was in more . . . my responsibilities were sort of student-services oriented; I was only teaching one writing class. Or whether I wanted to do doctoral work in English. It was a very pragmatic decision made on the basis of money and distance.

I had worked with a professor from Shippensburg University in a summer program, during my master's program while I was teaching at Gettysburg Junior High School, and the summer program turned out to be the Act 101 program. He had spoken glowingly of—I really admired him as a teacher; he was doing things in the classroom which were very unlike anything else I had witnessed. I had admired him a lot, and he spoke very glowingly of the program at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. That's where he had gotten his training. So Indiana University was closer by, and I believe in the contract we already had some tuition remission built in, to some degree. I went to IUP for the program in Rhetoric and Linguistics because it was that program, rather than their lit [literature] program that focused on the teaching of writing. I thought, well this is what I'm doing, I'm teaching writing.

Other options were to go to Pittsburgh or to Youngstown for Counseling and I was a little bit of a chicken about driving in and out of Pittsburgh. I had gone with a colleague and the traffic was horrendous. She could never find a parking place, all she did was to bitch and moan about it the whole time about why would I want to go down to Pittsburgh to complete doctoral work. Youngstown just seemed a little bit too far away and so I wound up with going to IUP and their Rhetoric and Linguistics program.

That was good advice that I got from Champ because I think that there is, I mean, it's common, right, most every, most all faculty members have their Ph. D.'s, not all of them, but most of them do. And so you think that you wouldn't pay attention to something that everybody has, but there is some subtle, I don't know, respect or acknowledgement or expectation that you have that degree and so I'm very happy that I completed it. The program really was oriented towards faculty, towards working professionals, so it had a lot fewer hoops that you had to jump through, and a lot of what I learned there I could apply directly to my classroom, which I thought was wonderful. I thought it really helped me become a much more informed and better teacher, particularly in the composition classroom.

So, you know, I like to say about myself that I have far exceeded anything that I ever hoped for or planned for myself. I came out of a family where neither of my parents completed high school. They were very old fashioned and thought that if they were going to send anybody to college it would be the boy of the family. I have a brother, younger by a year. He wasn't interested. They had many misgivings about sending a girl to college, and completing my college degree, getting a job as a teacher, was just way beyond anything my family or their families had done. And then finding myself a faculty member and completing my Ph. D. was like, wow, I never expected to be here. So.

BC: Okay, so you still worked throughout your doctorate program; how long did that take you?

JC: [Laughs] ten years.

BC: Really?

JC: Yeah, it took me ten years of taking a course every fall and every spring and maybe one, I guess, every summer, and then it took me a while to complete the dissertation as well.

BC: You were familiar with the state system, Shippensburg [University] and things like that. What were your first impressions of Slippery Rock University when you came?

JC: Well, I was obviously very impressed because I didn't expect to find myself at a college then, and eventually a university, and I found it . . . well first of all the size. When you're moving from working in a junior high school to working in a university, you're just being confronted by the size of the place. But I found it to be a welcoming and warm place immediately. I was renting a house out in the country and apparently came a few days earlier than the landlady had expected and she hadn't turned the water on. I had no water, so I came in the school and talked with the secretary, Marsha McKnight, about it and she was so kind about calling around and

finding out where I could shower on campus. I remember just being—thinking, oh my goodness, the secretaries here actually help you. At the junior high school they kind of directed you and supervised you and you wouldn't be asking them to do any favors for you. So I was surprised [pause], I was so surprised. Marsha was one of the first people who was just so warm and kind. And then Anne Kemmerer, who had been on my search committee, started to invite me to dinners and to spend time with her, and I was just surprised at how—I'm an introvert by nature, and everybody just reached out and seemed to be interested in doing whatever they could to make my time here [pause] feel good and to also be productive.

So it seemed very warm and friendly to me, coming from where I had come from, [pause] and that everybody here took themselves seriously as professionals. They were really interested in doing well in their programs and doing well for students. I make that contrast because, I don't know what public schools are like now, but I found that in the junior high school I had that difficult first year but after that [had] adjusted, had become a good classroom teacher, supervised the student newspaper, was well-liked by students, and well-liked by most of the faculty in my department, but I found that a lot of faculty members were very unhappy there. A lot of teachers were very unhappy. They didn't like what they were doing. They were very critical of students. They were very critical of supervisors. [Pause] I didn't feel like there was very much motivation to excel as a teacher and I was taking additional classes. I wasn't getting a lot of support from my department chair. I felt like the message was, be in your classroom five periods a day, don't send too many students to the office and that's what we want from you. And I thought I can't spend the next thirty to thirty-five years of my professional life doing this. I had to get out.

So, the university was wonderful. I mean, [pause] I'm a person who is internally motivated, but that can only go so far. The university offers a lot of external rewards to help motivate you, just the promotion process and sabbatical leaves and there are awards that you can win. I just thought that there were all kinds of things that were incentives to me to really work hard and excel and I love that about the university. I'm not sure that all faculty members have the same appreciation for the university that I have because of the background that I came from, so I just, it was just like coming into a candy store, you know. People were kind and helpful and there were so many things to be done and you got recognized and rewarded for doing it, you know, an exceptional job, so I thought it was great.

BC: Okay, can you talk about some of the campus activities you have been involved with since you have been here?

JC: Uh huh, well since I've been here for twenty-seven years I've been involved in a lot, but I can tell you, I can still remember the first time I decided to actively seek a leadership position. I was on the Tenure and Sabbatical Committee, and I had been on it for, I don't know, a couple of years. I must have come onto it after tenure because you can't be on the university-wide one unless you're tenured. So I remember watching the individual that was chairing it, thinking this person isn't very well organized, or these meetings don't have much of an agenda, or it's not really clear, and I kept thinking, you know, this person ought to do this and this and this. So when this person stepped down and people were looking for a chair, I said, oh I'll chair, because I thought well, I think I can do this at least as well, if not better, than my predecessor.

And so . . . I'd been on and chaired the Promotion Committee. I chaired the Women's Studies Committee and then when that became a position that carried a release time for one course, then I became the director of Women's Studies for many years.

And then of course I got very involved with the union. I was a department representative and then I was elected [an] at-large member to the Executive Committee. Then I served as Bill Williams' vice president when he was president and then when he became the interim, you know it actually took me a while to—we were so excited for his transition from being department chair and APSCUF president to becoming the interim provost that it didn't occur to me until after a week or so that it meant that I was going to be the APSCUF president. I was like, "Oh my god," you know, and of course I've won several elections. I'm going into, I've been the APSCUF president for five years [and] I've just been elected to another two year term.

I've sat on the President's Commission for the Status of Women. I was the chair of that for a while, and I just got elected department chair to the English department, so I feel like I've followed the progression that any faculty member does that has a long career here. The first couple of years you spend your time kind of being quiet and try to figure out what's going on, at least that's what I did, and then you start to serve on committees, and then when you, one feels comfortable and well-informed enough, you begin to assume leadership positions at a higher and higher level, and so that's what I've done.

BC: Okay. You've already mentioned some of them, but could you talk about some of your favorite accomplishments since you've come here?

JC: Well, I think they would probably be tied to the Women's Studies program. When I first got involved I didn't feel that it was a very inclusive group and I feel like I took a small program and while it's not a big program, I believe it's become a lot more visible in the university. I spent a

lot of time developing out-of-the classroom kind of programming to make sure our name was in front of people.

Some of my favorite programs that I established were . . . we do an annual poetry and prose reading that students and faculty participate in; it's every December. We have a leadership and mentoring dinner which would occur every professional development day in the spring, and have a variety of speakers. I can remember coming up with that idea and thinking our program's budget wasn't enough to pay for dinner for everybody, but what if I invited all faculty, staff, and administrators to come, and invite students to come, and be their host, and pay for their dinners for the evening, that could be a very inexpensive program for the Women's Studies program. We could kind of celebrate the fact that faculty mentor students. It's an event that they could take them to.

We'd always have a relatively local speaker, who—a woman—who had risen to some sort of a leadership position and that person would come for an overnight stay at the Apple Butter Inn and they would talk about, in a very personal way, how they had moved forward, and who they had mentored, and who the mentors in their life were. And I thought well, we're going to do this, and I thought now what if it's like one of those, what if you throw a party and nobody shows up. But the first year sixty people came. And the next year eighty people came. And the next year 120 people came. And then, when it started to edge up toward 130, the staff center, the university club was too small to hold us, so then we moved over to the little private dining room, it's not the small private dining room, but the smaller dining room in Boozel. And we've kind of hung out there, 125-130 over the last several years, and we've combined that dinner with Women of Distinction awards and people have just seemed to really like that.

I've introduced LunaFest, which is a women's film festival that happens every fall. So I think it's really taking the Women's Studies program, building its base among faculty who either teach in it or feel welcome to participate even if they don't teach in it, expanding the number of programs that it does to try to keep itself visible.

I mean, we've had some really big name speakers here. Patricia Ireland who was president of the National Organization for Women was here, and I'm going to blank on other names at this point, but I've written a number of grants to bring speakers who we ordinarily couldn't afford to [have] here. I'm thinking of like Elaine Brown who was the only woman to ever lead the Black Panthers. She came one semester. So, I think it's really the work that I've done for Women's Studies that is among my major accomplishments.

Then of course my work with APSCUF, the faculty union. I've worked with our faculty now through two very contentious negotiations. I had a wonderful staff here to work with, but I think together we kept the faculty well informed, ready to do what they needed to do, but still reasonable and rational in their behavior and their expectations. When I look around at some of my sister institutions, I don't always see that happening elsewhere, so I have a very excellent faculty to work with, and they've been very supportive so I think that just continuing to keep APSCUF as a vital and well-supported organization is something that I am proud of.

BC: Okay. So, do you have any best and worst teaching moments?

JC: [Laughs . . . pause] Well best, I would have to say not particular moments but I have so enjoyed teaching the Introduction to Women's Studies class that I would sometimes leave that class – I would always teach it as an evening class, 5-7:30 – sometimes those classes were so good, the conversations were so good, and you could see the little light bulbs going on; people were willing to participate, and it was energetic, and I would leave that class sometimes thinking, I can't believe I get paid to do this, you know, it's just so much fun.

Probably my worst moments have come in that class as well, but really only one. There was one semester where there was a young man in class, who just came in with a really hostile attitude. It's not unusual for there to be two, three, or four young men in those classes but I've never encountered hostility from them before. But boy, I did with that individual and it made every class trying for both me and his peers. But in terms of singling out one "aha" moment, no, not really.

BC: Okay, can you shed any light on leaders from a personal standpoint? We have their names, but we would like to get a feeling for them.

JC: When I looked at this question, I probably blended it with the second, with the question below it because the only reasons I would know these movers and shakers is because they influenced me in some way. I would say Anne Griffiths, who was . . . was she the dean when I started to work with her? She may have been already the dean. But she was one of those individuals who liked to claim that she could see potential in faculty members and that when she met me she thought that I was capable of all, of great things. So she reached out to me and encouraged me to serve on committees sometimes with her. She always used to tell me this story about geese, that she was a lead goose, that she was always out in front flapping her wings and all the geese behind her could kind of benefit from that because they were following her, they were kind of in her air stream. But that those lead geese get tired and that they need to have the

geese that were behind them come forward, and I was one of those geese behind her that she kept trying to push toward, toward the front. So she was just very helpful to me and I admired her because she seemed strong and forthright and assertive, and didn't back down from conflict, so I just have a lot of respect for her and was really glad that [she] and I were friends. I don't know what it would have been like to be a faculty member for her, I was never in her college, so that probably helped too, you know. I could just get to enjoy the qualities of leadership that I saw in her without having to ever be subjected to them.

I remember, only vaguely though, Bob Macoskey. He . . . I knew how involved he was with the environmental movement here and the setting up of Harmony House and the Sustainable Systems Program. But he also struck me as a very wise man. Any time I ever heard him speak, he had a wonderful sense of humor and an understanding [of] an organization and [a] faculty member's place in it. So, I remember he did a presentation for Women's Studies at my request once, so he was very accommodating. [Pause] I remember his death and I remember we had a memorial service at the ski lodge and it was packed with people, not everyone could get into it. And I remember how touched I was by how many faculty members came out to honor him; made me proud to be a part of that group who shared a common respect for this individual. I really wish I [had] known him better.

And Bob Aebersold, again, as faculty member you don't work so closely with the president. I wasn't APSCUF president at that time. But he too always seemed very friendly, and actually, I was scared to death of him at first when he was the provost, because my chair at the time, Harry Budd, had not used funds wisely for the Act 101 program and I think maybe had run out of funds and maybe had to go to the provost to get additional funding, and he [dragged] me along with him. I didn't have anything to say but I was there and Bob Aebersold just unloaded on him. I mean he walked around and he yelled at him and I just kept cringing, oh I wish I wasn't here, I wish I wasn't here. But he was absolutely charming to me when he was the president. I didn't proofread *Focus*, the Women's Studies newsletter, well enough and his name appeared on the front cover misspelled but he was very kind about it, but very blunt about it. Please make sure this [doesn't] happen again.

Over the years, [I] have had conflict consistently with one other faculty member on campus, to the degree that, all other faculty knew about it, and it was unhealthy. Bob Aebersold was aware of that. This person frequently wrote letters to the president about me. I can remember Aebersold pulling me aside at an APSCUF social that we have at the end of each semester to honor people who are retiring, and saying something to me like, "I just want you to know that I know you are doing a good job and I don't pay any attention to what so-and-so says and I just want you to not

worry about this.” I thought well, that is a really kind thing for him to do; he didn’t have to do that. So I really liked Bob Aebersold. I regret that I didn’t get to work as APSCUF president while he was here.

And then I’ll just mention one other person, Mark Sellman, who was in our Public Administration Department. I’m not sure, by the time I knew Mark he seemed to be a fairly senior faculty member and my sense was that he held leadership positions. He may have chaired the department, I’m not sure. He may have chaired Promotions and Tenure. But he would frequently join a number of us at the lunch table at the university club—staff center at the time—and he was just very, very funny but so supportive of faculty members. There were two things I remember him saying all of the time. He was a big union supporter as well and a big promoter of the CBA, the Collective Bargaining Agreement, and he would complete his lunch hour each day by getting up and saying, “I must return to my office to fulfill my contractual obligations.” In other words, he had office hours or a class to teach, and I just remember I just thought it was so funny that he would do that, that he would say that over and over again. And then he was of the opinion that all faculty members were valuable, all faculty members were working as hard as they could and . . . he believed that we should all support one another, even in the promotion process. He didn’t feel that the University Promotion Committee should rank people low. He didn’t feel that the University Promotion Committee should not recommend somebody. His entire philosophy was, “Promote ‘em all; every year you oughta promote ‘em all,” and I always liked that about Mark as well, so I just have [a] very fond memory of Mark Sellman.

And of course, Wilma Cavill. She’s still here, but Wilma and I have been friends for years and she’s been very instrumental in terms of reaching out to me and saying you should get involved in this or I’ll do this with you or, you know, I’ll support you if you want to do this. So those are the people whose names come to mind.

BC: Okay. Can you think of any major events that took place, whether it be a national event or on campus that you witnessed while you were here?

JC: Oh my, I remember when the Psychology Department picketed . . . did they picket Old Main? They must have. It was when the Psychology Department was being moved from BSB [Strain Behavioral Science Building] to Vincent Science Hall and they didn’t want to go. So they picketed at one point, with signs about, “We Won’t Go!” They went. If the administration wants to move you, you go. You really can’t *not* go. But I thought that was pretty funny.

Weather events: I remember a day it was . . . I know there was snow. They closed. It was Bob Aebersold who closed school but not because of the snow but because the temperatures dropped below zero. And it was not a good idea to be outside and I remember that he walked all over campus yelling at people who were outside, saying, “Get back to your residence halls, get back to your residence halls.” I guess that if he was going to shut down school for the day he wasn’t going to have people playing outside.

Well, of course, you know probably everyone remembers what they were doing when 9-11 happened. I remember coming in to the school and finding the hallways were empty and faculty members sitting in a classroom with their eyes glued to a screen. The first plane had hit. I didn’t have the news on, and just as I sat down the second plane hit. And that was the first day that our new dean, Dean McKinney, was going to have his first college meeting. And of course he simply invited us into an auditorium and we watched TV on a screen. It wasn’t right that we have a meeting [then]. Gosh, I feel like I’m probably missing all kinds of things but that’s really what comes to mind.

BC: Okay, this question doesn’t really pertain to you, because you’re still here, but what do you think you will miss the most when you leave here?

JC: Oh, probably my colleagues, probably my colleagues. It’s been—and I think I already spoke about this – but this probably started around ten or twelve years ago, that the first . . . the individuals who had meant a lot to me started to retire. And I think I would have to say that there was . . . I was probably . . . I’m a very mentally healthy person but I was probably depressed for a semester. I didn’t feel good and I think it was because people who I had seen almost on a daily basis and had spent a lot of time talking with and laughing with and working with weren’t in my life anymore.

And it’s also hard to see how institutions go on, you know. We all consider ourselves to be so important and so significant, but it’s sort of like Jell-O when you leave and the hole doesn’t stay there for very long, it just closes up right behind you. And that was a very hard recognition. That was hard for me to come to grips with. And even now, I had one of my best friends retire, and you know I wonder what that’s going to do to our relationship because with most of my relationships with people who have retired, I don’t see them very often any longer. It’s . . . I don’t know, you (referring to the interviewer) probably know what it’s like as a student: you get to be such close friends and you think those friendships, which are intense, are going to last forever and then you suddenly don’t find yourself in the same context anymore. I know you can

make an effort but when so much of your conversation . . . everything is about what's happening right here, it's just not that easy. So I think I will miss my colleagues.

I'm not sure I'll miss teaching because I've been in the classroom now for thirty-four years. I'm actually not going to be in the classroom for the first time in the fall because the department is so large that you get nine hours, three course release [time], to do the department chair; and then I still do the APSCUF presidency, which is one course release [time]. I started to feel a little burned out in the classroom. My attitude about the classroom has always been that I can't expect students to be excited with what we're doing unless I'm going and I'm excited. I've been able to do that but I feel like I've had to force it more the past couple years. It's just seemed so routine despite the fact that I change books and change assignments; but it just seems so routine . . . the preparation and the going into the classroom. It's just like, ah, I have to do this again. So I'm hoping maybe after two years without being in the classroom maybe I'll feel like, oh I really miss that. I had my first experience with distance education this summer, which isn't the same thing at all. So I don't know if I'll miss being in the classroom or not, I'll have to discover that. I hope that I do.

I think that I'll miss my colleagues, and I may end up missing being in the center of things because I've held so many leadership positions and because of my work with APSCUF I'm at the center of everything, and obviously I must enjoy that or I wouldn't keep doing it. You know, I've always liked to know what's going on and not be receiving it second and third hand. I'm usually directly on the receiving end of anything that is going on.

BC: I remember when we've interview the retired faculty who were involved with things like APSCUF— things like that—the pattern we find is they never really leave. They are always still involved in it in some way because they always stay local and keep their hand in the mix.

JC: Yeah . . . well, we'll see.

BC: Do you have any words of wisdom for current or future Rock community members from your experience?

JC: I guess I would always recommend to new faculty members to begin carefully, to never assume that you know all the answers, that you know what the right thing is to do. That there's so much to be learned, and if you want to be successful here, I think that you have to spend some time being more of a listener and an observer than a talker and an actor. I try to encourage newer faculty members to just proceed slowly for the first couple of years. That doesn't mean not do anything, but to kind of just proceed slowly and cautiously but to spend a lot of time listening

before you step up. I think that provides a good basis for being a successful faculty member in the future.

I guess what I think would make Slippery Rock generally a better place, would be that if we were all a little bit more kind and generous with one other. You know, [the] faculty, and I certainly would include students in that. And in fact that's something—if I were to reflect on my teaching—that is something that I have become over the years, is to be a little bit more flexible with students, a little bit more generous with students, a little kinder and empathetic with students. I guess I would like faculty do that more with each other; we tend to be so hypercritical of everything.

Peter Elbow used to make a distinction between what he called the doubting game and the believing game. He said academics are great at the doubting game, that their education in a sense had prepared them to be critical of everything, to start out by saying why something won't work, and what the problems are going to be. He thinks that the classroom would work better and communities might work better if we played more of the believing game, where if instead of being super-critical right from the beginning, you try something on for a while; you let yourself think in terms of, well, maybe this could work or maybe we should try this. I guess I would like to see people play more of the believing game than they do right now. I sometimes think maybe we could arrive at more and better solutions than we do.

BC: And lastly, how would you like to be remembered?

JC: Strong union leader, good classroom teacher, a feminist educator, somebody who was kind, somebody who reached out to people.

BC: Is there anything else you would like to bring up?

JC: No, I'm exhausted [laughs].

BC: Dr. Condrary, thank you very much on behalf of myself and the library staff. Any time you would like to come back, just give us a call. We would be happy to have you.

JC: Okay, thank you.