

Rock Voices: The Oral History Project of Slippery Rock University
Bob Berner Interview
December 4, 2009
Bailey Library, Slippery Rock University, Slippery Rock, Pennsylvania
Interviewed by Rebecca Cunningham
Transcribed by Rebecca Cunningham
Proofread and edited by Morgan Bonekovic and Judy Silva
Reviewed and approved by Bob Berner

RC: Today is December 4, 2009. I am Rebecca Cunningham, and as part of the Rock Voices Oral History Project I am here today with Robert Berner. How are you today, sir?

BB: I'm fine, Rebecca. How are you doing?

RC: Very well, thank you. We're going to start off with biographical information, so if you would like to give us your name and all the biographical information.

BB: Okay. My name is Robert A. Berner. I was born on January 31, 1939. I was born in McKees Rocks, which is near the city of Pittsburgh. [Pause] What else would you like to know?

RC: Where did you go to school?

BB: I went to Indiana State Teacher's College from 1956-1960. Upon graduation I went to Duquesne University for my master's degree in Curriculum and Supervision. My undergraduate degree was in Elementary Education. After I left Duquesne in '64, I went out to the University of Pittsburgh as a part time doctoral student in Administration and Elementary Education. I earned my doctorate in the summer, August of 1970. Then I worked a year at the University of Pittsburgh and then came here to Slippery Rock where I confused them during the interview process, and I was hired. [Laughs] That's the truth.

RC: Do you want to talk about your interview process?

BB: The interview process: well Jack C. Dinger was the chair of the Department of Special Education. He was the shaker/mover there; he was the one who founded the department. [Dinger] was here in the early 60s; '63 I believe is when the department opened its doors. In the first seven year period he had a lot of turnover in staff. Jack was a very driven person, a true leader, a shaker/mover as I said earlier. And so he always had vacancies.

I came up in the summer of '71 and talked with Fran Manfredi, who was an old friend of mine—who was already working at Slippery Rock. We were high school buddies; we went to high school at McKees Rocks together. I called Fran in advance of coming up for the interview to ask him what it was like to work at Slippery Rock. And he told me that it was good. He said that it

was a good place to work and I should come up and be interviewed. So that's how I wound up here.

Jack Dinger was a multi-tasker; he was one of the original multi-taskers. His desk was just piled with papers. When I showed up he took me around quickly. Everything was done quickly, double-time, with Jack. He was a type A personality, the kind you need when you are trying to get something to happen for the first time.

Nothing was decided in the interview, but after I left I called him back and told him I enjoyed the interview and that I would like to work there. He ignored me for a couple of weeks, then I called him back on a Friday afternoon. It seemed that his dean wanted a name to send forward for recommendation for employment. Jack was caught: he couldn't find the paperwork. And since I had just called him [after] he got his call and he put my name in. I think it just happened accidentally; being here was just a pure accident. That is a true story, no exaggeration there. It was a good thing, because I have enjoyed every year that I've been here. Never met a student I didn't like; never met a snotty student. It's been a really great trip for me.

RC: Good. So, have you always been in the same department then?

BB: Yes, I was hired in the Department of Special Education [pause] September 1, 1971. There were four of us that were hired the same fall. That was Fred Livingston, Monica Ondrusko, C.J. Nagel, and myself; so there were four of us. Total that fall there were forty-four new faculty hired at the university. So there was a whole surge of new faculty members. I remained in that department for the whole thirty-three and a half years.

RC: And you said that it started in 1963?

BB: Yeah I believe that the department officially opened in '63. I think Jack C. Dinger was here before the department actually opened. He had to do the ground work. He was like advanced party; he was it. He was the single professor in Special Education. He came from Penn State, he was a school psychologist. They brought him in here to do special education. That's my understanding.

RC: So was the idea of special education fairly new at that time?

BB: It was relatively new. Yes, yes it was. In fact, when I graduated from Indiana State Teachers College in 1960 there wasn't a single course in the curriculum in special education at the time. Children with special needs were overlooked. So Jack was pioneering a whole new field that was brand new to higher education.

RC: Right. That's interesting. So, what eras were you here for?

BB: I crossed over several eras. When I came here Slippery Rock was a state college. Al Watrel was the president then. In 1983 it became a university and I believe it was either Reinhard—

Herb Reinhard or Bob Aebersold who was president then. So I kind of crossed over the two eras. One of the things we thought, when we become a university, we thought that there would be a lot of resources for doing research and an emphasis on graduate education, and that turned out not to be true. It was a little bit of a disappointment. Even to this day we do not have a graduate dean here at Slippery Rock University. We need a dean—to have clout, go after resources—to be the visionary, the leader for graduate studies. But that was it, other than the doctoral program in physical therapy there hasn't been much progress at the graduate level.

RC: Right. Did you just teach undergrad then?

BB: No, I taught undergrad and grad. We had a grad program the whole time.

RC: In Special Education?

BB: I remember my first class, in September of 1971. I remember my first graduate class, it was at night and it was a research class. I had taken nine credits in the doctoral program in research methods. I went in that first night, there were thirty-one students. In the annex, Special Education was in the corner of Morrow Field House, but there is a small building called the Special Education annex. I had thirty-one students in there, and I taught everything I knew in the first night [laughs]. The kids all left with headaches and I left with nothing else new to say for the rest of the semester. [Laughs] I'll never forget that, I was so nervous. I was in my Brooks Brothers suit, my corduroy suit, a tie and everything. I was scared to death. I just let them have nine credits worth of research in one evening. Of course they came back the next week and we had to start all over again. I'll never forget that night.

RC: That's funny. Did you see a lot of changes in your department once you were hired?

BB: In the thirty-three and a half years I saw three: three really major changes. I guess the first one was in governance. When Jack recommended my being hired in the summer of 1971, the first collective bargaining agreement—which is the union contract—was being put in place that summer. It was approved for the fall. I got an immediate pay raise from what we negotiated salary-wise. I was an associate professor because I had ten years experience prior to coming to Slippery Rock and they recognized me and gave me an associate's professorship. The first step on the new union pay scale, which I remember was \$13,680 [laughs]. I'll never forget that.

But Jack now, being the founder of the department, being the Type A person that he was—he was the father figure and we were all his children—had a very difficult time adjusting to the new reality. The collective bargaining agreement gave faculty a lot of self-governance. We could govern ourselves now and we elected a chair. Jack went around to see if he could get enough votes to be the chair, but he found out that he did not have enough votes. So in the spring when we did the election for the chair, he tape recorded his resignation, because he did not want to face the fact that he wouldn't be elected as the chair. We elected Dr. Dick Meyers, as our first elected chair.

So we went from a non-union to a union, and it was like night and day. Before that first year while we were implementing the union contract, Jack was a—I won't say tyrant but he wasn't democratic. He would call you in—for example, one example: I was up here on a Tuesday and at ten o'clock he calls me into his office and says that he's the keynote speaker at the vo-tech program in Forrest County and he can't make it. So I'm giving you my notes and I want you to go up there and represent me and the university. Well you know, it's a two hours drive up there and he just handed me his notes and said, "Don't worry about it, there will only be maybe twenty or thirty people there, it's not a big deal." So I find my way up there. You can't say no, you're not tenured, it's your first year, and he's the boss. He was literally the boss. So you say all right. You're annoyed by it but you did it. Jack liked to challenge you to do difficult things.

I drove up there and I realized I couldn't make heads nor tails out of his notes so I thought I'll just you know, be kind to everybody, that's all that's really necessary. I got there and there were 230 people there and he was listed on the program as the keynote speaker. I didn't know what I was going to do except tell the truth. So I just told the truth about the whole situation.

It was okay, but those are the kinds of things that happened when you have a boss versus when you collectively decide things. So it was really a good thing, it helped us grow up and take responsibility, but it was not a good thing for Jack C. Dinger, whom we all loved and at the same time we're glad to see that he did not continue as the boss or the father figure, because it's just not a professional experience. But that was the first change.

The second change, we had a school for exceptional children right in the department and nine to twelve school districts would bus in their kids with special needs. We had three classrooms; we had a mild, severe and pre-vocational educational program. We had three instructors, who were also faculty. It was a private school, and we used it for our college students as their practicum experience. It gave us tremendous credibility. We were working with children with special needs, they were all around us every day and it was a wonderful thing. But the federal government passed a law called Education for all Handicapped Children and it emphasized mainstreaming, where the kids had to be included in the regular classes. So we had to close the school around the middle '80s. We absorbed the faculty from the school for exceptional children onto the university faculty. That was a sad day, to see that close. That was a major change.

I think the third one was the computer, when they put the computer on our desk and said figure out how to use it. We all scurried off to the community college and elsewhere to figure out how to use it. Some of us took keyboarding classes. We had relied on our secretaries to type everything. We wrote the course syllabus by hand and we did the tests by hand and they would type it on stencils and run it off. Now the digital world was there. I was one of the reluctant ones; I went into it kicking and screaming.

That changed everything because we had a beautiful graduate program that had evolved over thirty years. We had portfolios exit evaluations and we were so proud of it, but because the students wanted to take online classes and we could see the competition out there, we just took a thirty year program and put it in the dumpster. We went online, with the best effort we could make—nowhere close to what we had, in my opinion. It's getting better every year now, they've

been operating a total online grad program for about three years now in Special Education. We have students enrolled all over the place and it's making big bucks for the university and faculty. It's the time, you know, you just have to recognize that. So those are the three changes I saw: within the department/the governance, the closing of the school for exceptional children and going from an analogue to a digital world.

RC: The next question is what buildings did you work in?

BB: I worked in the Jack C. Dinger Special Education Department, housed in the corner of the Morrow Field House. With government grants Dinger had built a little annex adjacent to it. In that annex were three classrooms—two classrooms and some office space. Inside the Morrow Field House we had three classes; we had five classrooms total. In the '70s and '80s those classrooms were full of students, from early morning to late at night. We would teach a period U and a period Z, 5 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. to 10 p.m. four nights a week. There were eight grad classes scheduled each week, and our department, it hummed. I mean, it was wall to wall students.

We taught mostly in the building, but it got crowded at times and we had to teach outside of the building. I taught in places like the second floor of Miller Auditorium, in the trees. You'd look out and you'd feel like you were a dendrite, you're in the trees. That was fun though, I liked teaching up there. You were in the middle of campus; you could keep an eye on Old Main and make sure the administrators were doing their job. Yeah, that was nice. Ken Harris was chairperson of the Theatre Department and his office was right outside my classroom. He was very receptive to my being there. The only downside was you had to go up a bunch of stairs to get to the classroom.

The other odd place I taught was in the basement of Maltby. There's a small auditorium in the basement of Maltby and I had to teach in there. We had to sit the students so there was a space between every student and a space behind every student, just so you could have some discipline for evaluation purposes and give them some space so they weren't crowded into each other.

We taught at the Learning Alliance Center down in Cranberry and we taught classes in Wexford in rented space and in various other buildings throughout campus. So we didn't just teach in the building—we also taught in McKay Auditorium.

RC: Was your office in Morrow?

BB: My office was in Morrow, in the Jack C. Dinger Building.

RC: Did you have your own office, did you share an office?

BB: Oh yes. We didn't have to share with anybody. It was nice. We had plenty of office space. It was a real luxury.

RC: Good, good. The next question is first impressions of the university.

BB: I was thirty-two years old when I got here, Rebecca. Thirty-two. I came up for that interview and the campus seemed new, there seemed to be a lot of new buildings. Morrow Field House had just recently been built; there were new dorms. World Cultures and Eisenberg seemed like new classroom buildings. The place had a newness to it; there was an energy, a vitality. There was a surge of students here in the early '70s. And being thirty-two I noticed that severe miniskirts were being worn by the young women in those days. Yes, it was a nice time to be on a college campus. The basketball team in '72 I believe, within a year that I was here—had a fantastic basketball team—they went off to Kansas City and participated in the quarter finals of Division II basketball playoffs.

It was a vibrant time to be on a college campus; it was alive. Albert Watrel was the president then. I think he was president from '68-'76, something like that: about eight years. Yes it was alive; it was alive and new and shiny and exciting. I felt invigorated; I felt really good about it; I felt a goodness. That's why I wanted that job and was persistent with Jack at the time.

RC: Well good. What changes did you witness here, over the years?

BB: Changes: about three; at least three, maybe four. Changes here at the university . . . I think one of the changes I noticed: we call it grade inflation. But when I first came here most of our grades reflected close to a normal distribution. You had 3% As, 3% Fs, 13% Bs, 13% Ds and 68% Cs. So you had a distribution. As the years went on, we got better at focusing our evaluations and tests to measure what students knew reference course objectives. So there was much more focused testing. Early years you were just trying to find out if they knew everything you knew [laughs]. And that's how you got that normal curve, because you had a lot more years to learn the material than they [did]. And it separated students who were really studying the heck out of the subject versus the ones that just did their responsible best.

In addition to focusing on course objectives we started to hand out points for everything: class participation, attendance, if you were polite. It was crazy, you got points for everything. All these extra credit assignments for points, plus the more focused testing resulted in As and Bs, occasional C, occasional D. So I started seeing grading changes like that happen over the years. I think it's a good thing, I really do. I think it's a healthy thing. I think the old school way was not good educationally. How we are doing it today makes a lot more sense.

Another change was Affirmative Action. They put pressure on us to get a more diverse faculty; we had only a few minorities. They were right but it very, very hard to find competent minorities. So the searches became long and difficult and trying. Right now we have three, I think three minorities in the Department of Special Education. We are very proud of that—yeah we do have three. We didn't have enough gender mix; we had too many males, too many white males. The irony is, if you look at the fifteen presidents at this university, they're all white males [laughs].

RC: That's true.

BB: So it's not a very good model for diversity, but that's a whole other issue. From 1889 all the way down to the present: fifteen white males have served as president of this institution.

RC: I never thought of that.

BB: Yep. Just walk the steps of Old Main and you can see the pictures of our presidents. Those were two changes. A third change was an increase in the number of students—we went from, when I first started here I think it was something like thirty-five hundred and today it's eighty-five hundred some. So more than double the number of students and they told us over the years, "Oh, we're going to have a shortage of students." Boy it didn't happen. That's three points.

RC: What about changes with buildings, with the campus how it looked when you started and today?

BB: All the new buildings you see around you are recent. Really. During the Aebersold administration there was a lot of planning going on, but there was no actual construction—very, very little. We renovated the West Gym and that was about it, as I remember. But the new technology building [Advanced Technology and Science], the Physical Therapy building, our quad outside the Bailey Library. When I came here in '71 Maltby was the library; Bailey had not been built yet. There wasn't much going on until Bob Smith. Bob Smith is our president, who was here when all the physical plant restoration, new construction of dormitories, new student union took place. That's all so recent.

When I was here, the buildings were new in the early '70s but there wasn't anything added, oh for three decades there wasn't much added. The renovation of McKay Ed[ucation] Building is a recent thing and so forth.

Let me check my notes here and see if there's anything about change. Oh, I'll tell you, here's a change that's happened: recreational sports programs. We had no ARC, as they call it today, the Aebersold Student Recreation Center; it didn't exist. There was very little opportunity to participate in recreational sports prior to the ARC being built, and that's a major change. When I was in school, if we had something like the ARC I would probably still be in school, because there's just so much to do over there. Over two thousand students, I understand, participated in intramural sports last year. That's amazing.

Well I would say those are the four changes that I witnessed while being here, that had some significance.

RC: Right. How about your impressions of the town itself? I know that you went to schools in Pittsburgh then you came to this little town. What did you think of it?

BB: [Pause] Well at the time there was a philosopher names Shumacher who wrote a book called *Small is Beautiful*. I was enamored by that. So I found the small, rural, redneck environment very appealing. [Pause] It seemed more real than the suburban area where I had moved from: I moved

from Hampton Township in the North Hills to Slippery Rock. I grew up in McKees Rocks, which is near Pittsburgh. So I was a city boy growing up. Then I was living in suburbia and up here, in the rural area. I kind of looked forward to it; I liked the simple lifestyle. But I was fooled, it's not like that; it has all the same complexities. Anywhere you go, there you are. So it didn't change a whole lot.

RC: So you lived in town?

BB: No, I lived out on Center Church Road in Grove City. There was a spec house being built out there. This was the early '70s so the interest rates were sky high. The misery index was high then: inflation was high, unemployment was high, and interest rates were high. So I ended up buying a house that was not complete [in a] totally isolated area, across from a dairy farm on Center Church Road. We moved in there with a wood burning stove in the basement, with electric baseboard heat. I had no clue what we were doing. But it was fun; it was enjoyable. I commuted from Grove City. One of the things I used to do is to run in to work. I used to put on my running shoes, run eight miles from Grove City into the Morrow Field House. I had a locker and I would changed and go up and teach and after, go down, and change into my running shoes, run home! [Laughs]

RC: So a half marathon.

BB: I would run sixteen miles a day, yes. I did that for about six month and in the cold weather. It took too much time, almost an hour and fifty minutes to run it. It was fun for the six months that I did it—

RC: That's pretty amazing.

BB: —running in from Grove City. Well, of course I was in my thirties then; it was something I could do then. I couldn't do that today, I don't think. Some can, but not this person.

RC: [Laughs] Yeah. What were your campus activities?

BB: Campus activities: all the while I worked here, I had a parallel career. I was an Army Reserve officer because I was in ROTC at Indiana. So when I started here I was a Captain in the Army Reserves and I stayed with the Army Reserve for thirty years. I retired as a Colonel in the Army Reserves. So one of my activities while I was here was to serve as an advisor to the ROTC program. I was on their advisory committee. That was a unique activity, I thought. I enjoyed that.

I participated in all the committees from all college committees to departmental committees. I served on the sabbatical committee and the promotional committee. Various other committees including the faculty search committee. I was on Graduate Council. [I was chairman of our department from 1983 to 1987 and coordinated our graduate program].

Oh I'll tell you something that's unique, that's worth recording. One of the unique things—it's not really a committee but it was a fun activity. There were twenty-five to thirty faculty across campus that participated in what we called "Over the Hill Basketball." We played Monday, Wednesday, Friday, from 3:30 to 5:00. These were faculty members from all the various departments; it included some local high school teachers and the pharmacist in town and the local Catholic priest, Father George, and some of the administrators; John Hicks participated. We'd come together and we'd play serious, competitive basketball. The only place we had to play was a very small McKay gym; it's now a dance studio. That was our basketball court and we'd play very intense basketball. And we did that for about fifteen years, from '80 to about '95, the same group would play. We got very close to each other and we knew each other well and we served on various committees throughout the campus; it was kind of an informal network. We kind of helped each other that way. We'd be at meetings and at 3:00 someone would get the secretary to get us out of the meetings so that we could play basketball, pretending it was a serious phone call—we had to take the phone call. Because that was sacred; you had to play basketball at 3:30.

I think that was unique; that was our recreation, and it was a stress reducer. We were in our thirties and forties then, so we were able to play competitively. It was really one of the nice activities that I participated in. It was more than just basketball: it was listening to people, sharing concerns and stuff.

RC: That's neat. [Pause] I looked in some old *Rockets* and found that you were part of the Butler County cable show about alternative futures. Do you remember that?

BB: Yes. Oh, yes.

RC: Do you want to talk about that, a little bit?

BB: Yes, Bob Macoskey, Philosophy Department professor: he was a talent, he was a real talent. He originated a course on campus called Alternative Futures, and he invited campus faculty members to join him in the teaching of that class, and also as guest lecturers in his class. He wanted to put a series of tapes together where we all predicted the 21st century, what would happen in our disciplines. It was remarkable. I audited his Alternative Futures class three different times, just to be around him, because he just had so much to say. He was such an enlightened person. He was a highly evolved human being, he truly was. Just a remarkable man. So unfortunate that he had to die so soon. That was probably one of the highlights of being here at Slippery Rock was Bob Macoskey.

RC: You were also part of the HIP, the Human Inquiry Program. Do you remember that?

BB: Oh yes, Human Inquiry, oh man. That was my best teaching moment if you ask me. It was done in an area outside of my discipline. Bob Macoskey originated that class; he was a real leader. He was definitely a shaker, mover; he could make things happen.

The core idea was that when you inquire into problems you use a specific method to guide that process. He identified five methods of human inquiry that humans use to try to resolve problems. They determine how knowledge is originated in the various disciplines. He gave names to them all. Then he asked us to join him and demonstrate one of those five methods of inquiry—we would be an expert in one of them.

So we put together teams; I did it for about five years. I was on one of the teams, for example, Bob Crane in Art, then we had Thom Cobb in Dance, then we had Larry Cobb in Political Science, then there was W.G Sayre in Chemistry, and then Bob Berner in Special Education. We would get together and plan what we were going to do when we met our students. Students took it as a three credit course, an elective, which was then in the General Studies Program. We had the kids read the history of the university or we had the kids read a book called *Memories, Dreams and Reflections* by Carl Jung. Then we'd teach that material to them. Each of us would have like twenty minutes to demonstrate one of the methods of inquiry while teaching the material.

So we would read the material, and look at it from our assigned method of inquiry. And for example W.G. Sayre, he's Chemistry, he's in the natural sciences, so his method of inquiry was deductive experimental. He would take some theory and deduce an hypothesis and then do an experiment. He would demonstrate that to the kids. Larry Cobb was in political science, that's behavioral science, so he'd take an inductive statistical method of inquiry. He would talk about surveys and questionnaires that produced new knowledge. Thom Cobb, he was Dance, so his method of inquiry was the intuitional symbolic method of inquiry. He would show how dance is a symbolic way to communicate things.

We didn't have a mathematician in our group but one of us had to take that method of inquiry. It was called abstract rational. I can still remember the abstract rational method of inquiry. The last one was hermeneutical dialectic. Now there's a mouthful. Now hermeneutics was: you read something and you let the book speak to you, instead of analyzing it. It's what you do when you read the Bible, poetry or a love letter. So I had hermeneutical dialectic as my assigned method of inquiry. And I'm just playing with this, you know, and learning along with the students. [We all learned how to be better teachers from our participation in the Human Inquiry Program].

But the idea of coming together, an hour before the class was to meet, planning what we were going to do, okay? Then going to meet the class and doing it and supporting each other. And we had art and chemistry and history and dance, special ed all working together, it was remarkable. There was like a synergy—things happened that you couldn't predict. It was just fun and the students loved it, they just loved it. They all came to every class, they were all very attentive, they were interactive. Everyone looked forward to it. Ah well not everyone, that's a little exaggeration, but most everyone did. It was highly successful.

RC: It sounds like fun.

BB: So that was my best teaching. I learned so much from all of them and I was learning along with the students; I was right there. I was outside the discipline, connecting things.

It's just too bad we couldn't have done something similar within the College of Education. Now we did do some team teaching in the Special Ed. Department. Several faculty teamed up and taught, but not the same kind of excitement there [pause] creativity that we experienced. I'm glad you asked me about Human Inquiry.

RC: Good.

BB: Human Inquiry, yeah.

RC: Well, while we're—

BB: My worst teaching—that was my best—

RC: Yeah, that's what I was going to ask you.

BB: My worst teaching moment, and I didn't have many of those, but the worst teaching moment for me was in my second year here. I taught a graduate curriculum class on curriculum development for children with exceptional needs. In curriculum development you work in groups; I had thirty grad students in this class. They were highly competitive and mean-spirited and didn't want to share anything. So when I had them work in groups, it just didn't work. It was awful and I didn't know what to do.

I went to Dick Meyers, who was the chair—my first year he was the chair—and I asked him, “Would you take this class, and see if you notice anything? And I'll take yours.” We switched classes: I took his class; he took my class. And he came and said, “Never again. [Laughs] Never again, I wouldn't touch that!” Individually they're wonderful, put them together and they tear each other apart. So what I did—I had to change method. Instead of doing group work, I just lectured [laughs]. I had no choice with this group.

That's never happened again, so it was chemistry. It was just something I'd never seen. I wish I could have studied that a little better, the dynamics were so unusual. One person would say one thing, then the other student would disagree and the third one would disagree with the first two and they would get emotional about it. You know, they would want to go at it and we couldn't settle with rock, scissors, and paper. Nothing worked, nothing. It was funny, I was so glad to see that particular class come to an end without us hurting one another. But that only happened one time. That was the worst, so that's not too bad, not too bad.

RC: Alright, any other campus activities or committees that you were on that you want to mention?

BB: Not really. I was on the promotion committee—because [pause] my first promotion was hard to come by; it took eight years and four tries. Every year I would get different feedback. One year I had to improve in mastery of subject matter and I worked on that. Then next year, mastery of subject matter, even though I improved in it didn't show any change. It was like a

crapshoot; you didn't know what was going to happen, what the perception of the committee was going to be. So after I finally did get the promotion, and it only came as a result of a lot of—there was an acting dean and an acting vice president at the time. The administration felt that my application merited promotion but my university colleagues were unsure in two areas, so they didn't recommend me. But the administration then was able to recommend me for promotion, and I was promoted.

So I was trying to figure out this promotion process so that I could help my colleagues. So I joined the all college promotion committee, and I'm trying to figure out what goes on here that makes this so subjective, so unpredictable. It turned out that you could see individuals around the table with their own agendas. It was clear that if you weren't known in Poughkeepsie, New York, because of some article or speech you gave, you were not credible for promotion. So everybody had their own standards, they weren't following the published standards, they had their own notions about standards for promotion—it was in its early years of self-governance. I think we've improved on that in recent years. So I left with the feeling that it's just a crapshoot and the idea is to be persistent: just keep submitting it, just keep improving it, don't give up on it. It has nothing to do with your eligibility for promotion; it has to do with people's perceptions of your application. I remember that, it was kind of interesting. And that helped lessen the pain around four rejections. [RC laughs]. So that was one of the committees that was a highlight for me.

RC: Good. What about your accomplishments on campus?

BB: I had two. I decided not to be a researcher and writer, instead I decided to be a presenter of practical information to in-service and pre-service teachers. So what I did in the '80s, I went out to around fifty, sixty school districts and made in-service presentations. I focused on left brain, right brain and how to appeal to the whole brain. Holistic education was my theme. I used to call it Hemispheric Symmetry. I got into all this work—because learning takes place in the brain—so I wanted to relate how teachers can facilitate learning in the human brain. So I would go out and have a lot of fun with that. I went to over fifty, sixty school districts through the decade of the '80s. So that was my major achievement there.

Then in the '90s I decided that teachers were so wimpy. They were not adversarial; they stayed away from confrontation. They needed to be more assertive; they needed to be more self-advocates; they needed to stand up. So I created a series of workshops called Teacher Empowerment Workshops to empower teachers to trust themselves and feel good about it.

I started with one, Creative and Brain-Friendly Education. That evolved to Clinical Scholarship, which was making teachers scholars so that they could solve their own problems. The third one was Action Supervision, which was a form of self-supervision. Then I went to Creative Leadership: do what you need to do and ask permission later. Ask for forgiveness type of thing, because teachers are generally not assertive. I was trying to get them to be more assertive. The last one was Intuitive Teaching, that after a certain number of years experience you could begin to trust your intuition.

So those five workshops that I gave for credit and non-credit, I did for ten years, through the '90s. When Barb McGinnis was up in Graduate Studies we offered them as graduate credit. I always relied on her to get parking passes. We did them on campus and I did it through the intermediate unit as well. They were very successful and I thoroughly enjoyed creating, putting them together and actually presenting them. I think it did help. To be honest we probably had thousands of teachers, over ten years, [who] took those classes. I went as far as Dubois, Pennsylvania. I was all over the tri-county area, showing up—I was like a huckster—selling empowerment [laughs], except there was very little money involved in it. I enjoyed that more than if I had sat down and tried to do some serious writing. John Hicks says you'd be much better off if you had done writing instead of presenting, but I'm just not that type of person. I like to be out there, facing people.

RC: Right. That sounds like fun.

BB: Oh it was, Rebecca. It was a highlight, for the whole ten years.

RC: Okay, we're going to switch gears a little bit and talk about leaders and movers and shakers. So if you want to start with presidents, deans, union—

BB: Okay we'll talk about the six presidents while I was here. The first one was Albert Watrel. Among the six presidents that served during my tenure he was the leader. If you mean by leader a catalyst for change, someone who promotes change. He got fired for political reasons, when he took initiative to build the lodge above the football stadium without the proper authorizations. At least that was the manifest reason; the real reason was probably political, but he was a leader in terms of taking initiative.

The other five were good managers, very competent managers, but they played it safe, within the constraints of the law, tradition and regulations. They made peace with the union; it was a warm, fuzzy kind of relationship. We often said about our leaders, at least at the time I was here, that we were a well-managed but poorly led institution. I don't know if that's a fair comment or not, because it's pretty hard to be a leader in the State System of Higher Education. They want managers; they want their CEOs to be managers, I think.

The second was Larry Park and he was only here for two years. When Watrel got dismissed, Larry came in for a couple of years. He was very quiet; he was kind of in the woodwork and we didn't hear much from him. He liked to play golf, outside of town; you could see him on the golf course.

The third one: Herb Reinhard. Herb Reinhard was a cheerleader. He loved to ride—during the homecoming parade. He liked to be seen at the basketball games. He was very busy. He had a great big smile, he gave wonderful speeches. That's why I call him the cheerleader president. [RC laughs]. This is all my perception, okay? He did make some initiatives. He did the last lecture series, which was kind of neat; got the faculty involved in that. So there were a few things he did. Basically he was a cheerleader. Very, very pleasant person to look at and to listen to. He was nice.

Then Bob Aebersold: he was a phys. Ed. professor here and then became president. He was a stabilizing influence. During his period there was planning going on, not much construction. It was a calm period, it was a stable period. It's a period that made sense. Bob is a rock at the Rock. That's how we looked at Robert. And he knew how to make peace; he made the right agreements and pacts with people. He kept everyone on task.

Then of course we had Warren Smith. Warren Smith was the introverted environmentalist; he was a very quiet, reserved type of gentlemen, who was very much interested in environmental issues.

Then of course, Bob Smith. He acted [as president] for two years, from 2002-2004. Then in 2004 he became our president. He's very salesperson-oriented and we liked him a lot. He has a nice smile; he's a good manager.

So I was saying poorly led, well-managed, but maybe that's all you can hope for, maybe that's appropriate. That's the way it needs to be.

RC: Sure.

BB: The shaker, movers. As I mentioned before: Bob Macoskey with his Human Inquiry Program and his Alternative Futures program. He was union leader for a bunch of years. He was a talent. He did things for students that were way beyond what one would expect. He had one little girl in his class that had some kind of facial disfiguration and he paid for her restoration in a hospital in Boston, just to get her on track. Later she married an ROTC instructor and it had a really nice ending. He took a real interest in selected students and the faculty. He was a talent: truly, truly a talent.

I think what hurt [his health] most was the strawberry pies at Eat 'N Park. He used to take his students over there two nights a week and from 10:00 o'clock 'til about 2:00 in the morning; they would eat strawberry pie, drink coffee and talk philosophy. Now you can imagine the calories and the sugar involved in that, and they did that over a bunch of years. I don't know if that contributed to his heart attack. He died while having an angiogram, a routine diagnostic examination on the table at the Butler hospital. It was so sad, so sad; such a sad thing. His wife was wonderful. She was a special ed teacher; they lived in Butler. She was just a beautiful person. We were lucky to have Bob. So he's an example of a shaker, mover, no question.

I think Anne Griffiths, who was the dean in the College of Ed[ucation] for a period of time, she was the first, I think, women's basketball coach here at Slippery Rock. [She] was "Annie Get Your Gun." She knew how to shake things up, move them. She'd get herself into a lot of difficulty, but you have to admire her as being a leader; she was probably one of the few deans who was truly a leader dean. [She had] very strong ideas about things, strong resolve to get stuff done. She had that GSD: "get stuff done" degree.

Shakers, movers, who else? Jack Dinger, the department chair. Without question Jack was a leader. That's why you either loved or hated him or both: you loved and hated him. You admired

him for his leadership, but you didn't like the way he did things. But he was definitely a leader, yes. So I would say Jack, Bob and Anne were the three leaders, the way I perceive it.

RC: Right. What about when you first came here, did you perceive that there were movers and shakers here?

BB: No. I was just so immersed in what I was doing. Early on you try to be competent in what you're doing, and what's going on around you isn't a focus of yours at all. I was blinded to that. It wasn't until the '80s that I began to wake up to the whole campus here.

RC: Right. What about other people who influenced you or were significant?

BB: Well, Rebecca, one of the things that I did that was smart: I audited classes—informally audited—of my colleagues. Those people greatly influenced the way I taught. I figured that if I could find people on campus who were doing it well and if I did what they were doing I couldn't miss.

So I went up to them and asked them if I could sit in on their classes. It was an unofficial audit. If there was an open seat, could I come in. I'm here just to learn and also to observe teaching styles so that I could incorporate that into what I did. And I had no trouble. No one ever said "no" to me. I did it about six times.

The ones that most influenced me were Claire Settemire—taught a history of the Bible class and Egyptology. Claire taught without notes based on her trips to Egypt and the Far East. She gave blue book essay evaluations. She knew her subject; she had tremendous credibility. She had her own take, her own interpretation, her own revisionist view of history. So that really inspired me.

Then I went over to Psychology and took Cognitive Psychology, because I was getting into that left, right brain thing. I took it from Bob Sayre. Bob Sayre is now deceased; he had a brain tumor or something. But when he taught he would start at one end of the chalk board and he'd work his way across the room. He would outline. So at the end of the hour of the class, everything he said was there in front of you in outline form. He did it all without notes and it was all logically connected. Beautiful style of logical teaching and he inspired me tremendously; he was great.

And of course Bob Macoskey: I audited his Philosophy of Religion and his Philosophy of Art class, and I audited his Alternative Futures class three times. I spent a lot of time in his office with him informally, while he would warm up some kind of organic soup on his hot plate in his office for his lunch, that kind of thing. He would eat good food during the day and then he would go to Eat 'N Park at night. But that's what he did.

Then Tim Walters: Tim Walters taught a class called Creative Dramatics. He tried to get us to be more expressive, to let your body language reflect what you're thinking. Tim wore little berets and smoked a pipe. He was just an interesting personality, a very lovable person. So that's five.

[Mark Shirring: Mark taught Orientation to Education to all teacher education majors. With a number two pencil over the summer he would provide a personal schedule for every incoming new student. His office in the McKay Education Building had wall to floor buttons given to him by his students in appreciation for his personal interest in them. Mark Shirring was a master at academic advisement. He was a positive person who helped faculty and students with the intricacies of academic scheduling.]

Now in house: in the department Dick Meyers was my mentor. He was about ten years older than me and he gave me the green light to do some things, like developing workshops and going outside the discipline. To do a workshop on intuitive teaching you had to know something about intuition. Well that's not special education. So you had to sit in front of people who aren't recognized within your discipline. He was willing to sign off on travel requests so that I could go to creativity conferences.

Then Don Stauffer, another colleague of mine, who is now retired. [He] came a year after I did, in '72. He and I would teach graduate classes on Thursday night and then we would take off for the Days Inn in Butler, because that's when Comedy Club was. Every Thursday night there would be three different comedians in there. We would leave Slippery Rock around 7:30 and be there at 8:30 for the start of Comedy Club. We'd go right up to the bar and the bartender would put a beer in front of us because we always had the same beer. He had Iron City Light and I had Sam Adams. We'd get a basket of popcorn and we'd watch—and many times our students would be serving us; they worked over there. Those three comedians would get up there and do their thing. Then after the show, we would sit with the comedians and critique them—tell them, “You need more material here, you need to do this, you need to do that.”

Some of the things they'd say, their observations, we'd incorporate into our teaching Friday morning, the next day. So it was kind of like an in-service. We did that for ten years, we'd teach graduate classes then take off every Thursday evening to the Days Inn in Butler. I'll never forget that. So we kind of influenced each other to lighten up as we taught and the comedians helped us to be lighthearted about the things that we did.

RC: That's really interesting.

BB: So that's unique. You can see why I like Slippery Rock. It's a lot of fun, a lot of fun.

RC: Sounds like it. [Pause] How about major events: do you remember any?

BB: Major events: I think of it in terms more as celebrities coming to campus. I remember Dustin Hoffman coming here. He had just finished *The Midnight Cowboy*, I think, was one of his, in the late '60s. He was here in the '70s, doing the college circuit. They brought him to the Morrow Field House; there were about eight hundred students there. I went over—I wanted to hear what he had to say. I go in the men's room over there and who's standing there washing his hands: Dustin Hoffman. I didn't recognize him, that's the funny thing; I didn't recognize him. I just thought he was another person in there. “Wouldn't you know it,” he said, “I've been rejected in my life, but this is the first time I've ever been rejected by a commode seat. In that first stall,”

he said, “you put that seat down and it springs right back up.” That’s what he said. I just laughed and didn’t think anything of it. Now I go in and there he is! [Laughs] I was talking to Dustin Hoffman and didn’t even know it.

The interesting thing was though, that he started talking about what it means to be an actor and what’s involved and what it means to be a person as an actor. The kids thought he was going to do pieces from his movies and everything; they got bored and they left. A third of them walked out on him. So I thought, if they walk out on Dustin Hoffman and they yawn at what I do, that’s not so bad [laughs]!

Then we had George Carlin come to campus, the comedian that just recently died. It was Homecoming and he was here to entertain us. I came back from the football game; Clarion had beaten us in overtime, by a field goal or something. Carlin arrived on campus in this great big black limousine that has Carlin sitting in the front seat. I recognized him. We go in and the place is packed; Morrow Field House was packed. Carlin gets up on stage, there’s somebody warming the crowd up first, a minor comedian. Then he got on, and he looked at everyone and he said, “I have just two words for you ‘F* Clarion.’” [Laughs] he just said it, right out there. Everyone just broke up, you know? He dropped the F bomb and everyone—only George Carlin could do that and get away with it.

We had Harry Belafonte. He didn’t sing but he talked to us about different things. That was truly remarkable. We had Fred Rogers, Mr. Rogers, who did a commencement address here at Slippery Rock. So that was neat. So I think those kinds of events were major for me.

RC: Right. Any other major events, or something else that was going on in the world that affected the students?

BB: No, just the usual. The Rock is sort of an isolated environment you know? The cookie could be crumbling and we’re just passively involved in it. It seems kind of strange. When the space shuttle exploded, that was a traumatic moment.

We had on campus in the late ‘70s a homicide/suicide, which was a real bummer. It was one of the unfortunate days, because we knew we had to talk to our students about mortality, death and unpredictability. It was a young man, who was captain of the men’s tennis team; 4.0 student, a beautiful young person. His girlfriend was a head cheerleader here. She dumped him and found another boyfriend and he couldn’t deal with it. So he went up to the dorm, and he shot her and then killed himself.

RC: That’s terrible.

BB: It was a homicide/suicide. [Pause] No one could explain it; no one could predict it. They were both perfectionists, everything had to be just perfect. He couldn’t deal with the rejection.

It was the worst thing that ever happened in my thirty-three and a half years. It was just terrible. What do you do, what do you say, how do you process that? You have to talk about it; you just can't ignore it. So that afternoon the whole campus had a kind of—you could just feel it, you just couldn't believe it happened. So you went into your classroom and what did you say to your students? Nothing you were doing seemed to be of any relevance after that. But you know how we are at the Rock: we're very practical, resilient, and people move on. That was a major event. You're asking me good questions, Rebecca.

RC: Good. At this time, if you want to look through your notes, and if you see anything you want to—

BB: No, you're doing good. We're right on task. Memorable events, we're playing with that.

RC: Or memories.

BB: I can give you—memorable events. [Pause] There were three here that I, as I was looking through, trying to address your questions. The first one was March 27, 1980. March 27, 1980: Herb Reinhard was the president and he instituted the Last Lecture Series. They invited faculty to prepare their last lecture. Act as if this was your last lecture, what would you tell your students? So I did mine on surviving my first year of teaching. We did it in the staff lounge. It was remarkable, trying to imagine what it would be like, because I was just in my late '30s, early '40s. If this was going to be my last lecture, what would I say to my students? That was impressive. The Last Lecture Series was a success. Of all the things that Reinhard instituted, that went really well.

Then, on January 11, 1985, I remember doing one of my workshops on left, right brain. Bob Watson got some kind of grant money to do a conference at the Sheraton in Clarion. They brought in Sally Springer, who is a world renowned expert in hemispheric specialization. She was a researcher, publisher, and they brought her in and they asked me if I would do a mini lesson and she would then critique it in terms of its relevance to brain hemisphericity or brain specialization to see to what extent what I did, the methods I used, were whole brain or not. I just felt—it was so affirming to have someone of her stature come in and take a look at what I was doing and say, "Well it's not balanced; need a little more right brain activity; not enough left brain," or whatever. So she did—I did that up there. And that was January 11, 1985. It was a high-tech, high-touch conference. That was truly a highlight. That gave me confidence to continue doing what I was doing.

The last thing was the winter commencement in 1996; December 21, 1996 when Bernie Freyberg was the commencement speaker. Bernie's speech was entitled *The Alleged Unpredictability of the Future*. It was the best—of all the commencement speeches I've heard, and I've heard fifty or more here. He had the students enthralled, and parents listening. You couldn't hear a word [from the audience]; everyone was just so quiet. They were intent on listening. He told the students, "I can predict your future." He said, "I know exactly what you are going to experience." And everyone thought, "Where's he going with this?" He said, "You're all embedded into the Greek tragedies," and he tried to spell that out. You're all going to have to

deal with adversity and you're all going to say and do something stupid and life's going to treat you unfairly, I'll guarantee you that. That's what's in your future. Now are you up for that challenge?" he said.

And he gave advice, "Don't hesitate to ask help from others," and so forth. But it wasn't one of those warm, fuzzy, "use sunscreen" kinds of things. He leveled with them. I could see the administrators on the stage weren't too happy when he first introduced the topic; they thought it was too harsh. It was suppose to be a happy, gay, celebratory moment and he was letting them know there are speed bumps ahead. It's just what being human is all about and you get stronger from adversity and you just make amends and apologize. You recognize you're human; you're going to do and say stupid things. It was a beautiful thing. It stayed with me my whole life. It just affected me in a lot of ways because it's true for all of us, what he was saying to those students.

So that commencement, and that was the commencement in which Bob Aebersold was given an honorary degree. He was still president I think, at the time [laughs]. Oh I love it. I don't know how those things work, I don't know, but that's okay. Yeah but that—winter commencement, December 21, 1996. Bernie Freydborg's commencement address was the finest, ever. So that's it, those three, I think the Last Lecture Series, the High Tech/High Touch Conference and the winter commencement address. Those were highlights, memorable events.

RC: Right. Do you see anything else on your papers you want to add?

BB: Ah, no. I think we're ready to go to the fourteenth question: what do I miss? [Pause] I miss three things. I miss the classroom, I do. I miss—I was thinking last night, as I was trying to prepare myself for this interview. I miss the classroom, the interaction, the live interaction. We used to tease that this is the classroom where thought took place. "Okay, so what are you thinking? What are you thinking?" We'd go around. I loved it because you didn't know what was going to happen. It was live; it wasn't cleaned up or anything. Crazy things happen in classrooms; it was really neat. I miss that, I miss that excitement. That's why I would not be good online as an instructor. I like live; I like messy, untidy kinds of things.

Then I miss the tempo and the rhythm of an academic semester. To me an academic semester is like a tether ball. It starts out slow and it goes faster and faster and faster. I miss that: the tempo, tempo of an academic semester. It gave rhythm and tempo to everything and when you finally get your final grades in you feel relieved, you know, "I survived." And when the students finally turn in their last assignments and take that final—but that's what happens. Right now, at this time of year the ball is moving pretty fast around that tethered pole, yeah.

I miss those two things, the classroom and the . . . I don't know if I have a right to or not, but I was always kind of an observer of the metamorphosis that took place between the post-adolescent freshmen and the young professional exiting the university. It was a wonderful thing to see. I used to do freshmen seminar, where you would help students adjust and adapt to the university and living away from home and making wise decisions about their lives. Then watching them go from freshman to sophomore to junior, to field experience, to internship (whatever), to student teaching, and become young professionals. What a beautiful thing to be an

observer of. I observed that for all those years. You look at this flip-floppy freshman and then this very together young professional as a senior. It was just such a wonderful thing to see that action in front of your eyes. That I miss, I miss not seeing that, yeah. So those three things, the classroom, the academic semester and the metamorphosis of students.

RC: Are there any students that stick out in your head?

BB: Oh, they were remarkable, oh yes. [Pause] Slippery Rock students will forgive anything once [laughs]. They let you be creative; if it doesn't work you just apologize and move on. You don't have to be fearful of that. Our students, I think, run the world. They're the operators; they're the people that make the wheels go around. There's nothing snooty about them. They get in there and they'll get dirty and they'll make it happen. They all have GSDs, they know how to "get stuff done."

For example one of the young guys said to me, "One of the things I like about Slippery Rock is it's one of the few places that you can wear Old Spice cologne and still get a date." You don't have to buy the expensive stuff; they're quite practical. Or they'll say to me, "You know Dr. Bob," they used to call me Dr. Bob, "It's hard to feel secure on a Slippery Rock." [Laughs] They had a sense of humor about things that were painful. That's what I always admired about them and they always gave a good account of themselves, in ways you didn't anticipate.

I had one student who couldn't sit in her seat. So I put her in the back of the classroom and I said, you can stand and dance around back there all you want. She was hyperactive or something; she just couldn't sit there for fifty minutes or whatever. So she'd be back there, dancing around [laughs] and that's fine. Today she's in charge of some major program, highly successful, and she couldn't even stay in her seat while she was in my class.

I had another one, hypoglycemic or something; she had to eat grapefruit all during class. She had to be eating all the time. But she's a leader today too. So students with—just minor accommodations—can do really wonderful things. They'd come to me, first class, "Do you have a Tylenol, Dr. Bob?" "The class hasn't even started yet, how could you need a Tylenol?" And I'd give them a Tylenol. You're not supposed to do stuff like that.

RC: Are there any stories you'd like to share: maybe your first year of teaching or anything that sticks out?

BB: Ah story time; I taught a class in my pajamas once. [RC laughs] Yeah, I did. My colleagues were fearful for me; they thought maybe I'd gone over the edge or something. It was 8:00 a.m. and nobody seemed to be awake, you know? So I thought maybe I could awaken them if I wore my pajamas. I had a pair of sleep pajamas and I a safety pin and covered up the fly with that. I wore a top hat and a tie, I looked really goofy, and I taught the class in my sleep pajamas. I don't think they even noticed; no one even commented, they just thought I was having a bad morning [laughs].

One time I went to work in a gorilla outfit. Over here on Route 8 they had a costume place and I came in and taught class in my gorilla outfit. I walked across campus in it, no one hardly stopped and noticed [laughs]. They just acted like it was an everyday occurrence! I thought I'd get attention. I like to do little silly things like that from time to time; I enjoy that sort of creative type of stuff. Just so I'd know that I wasn't taking myself too seriously. Apart from the Halloween thing, can you do this once in a while, being silly and be okay with it? Those two things stand out in my mind. Unusual moments.

Ah, I don't know Rebecca; too much of this is coming at me all at once. Words of wisdom, my first ten years I was a pretty serious teacher. I thought professors were serious people. I wanted to play the role, and I wouldn't give myself permission just to be me in those early years. So I went to Brooks Brothers and bought all my clothes there: sports coats and ties, corduroy suits. I looked pretty professor-like. Then I would hide behind my lectern and scare the hell out of my students with how much I knew—at least I thought I knew a lot—and scare myself in the process.

Bill Hodgkiss, who was a physical education teacher, was going by and he looked in and saw me there, not having any fun in there and he yelled in the acronym KISMIF. Then he would disappear. Then the next day "KISMIF!" and then he'd run off. "KISMIF!" So I chased him down once and asked, what's this KISMIF? He said, "It's an acronym, you haven't heard of it?" "No." "It means Keep It Simple, Make it Fun. Enjoy your teaching and the students will too." Well I dismissed it at first, but the more I thought about it, he was right. And so, Bill's words of wisdom to me are the words of wisdom I pass on to everybody. If you can keep things simple and make them fun, you're going to enjoy, really enjoy what you're doing. So I thank Bill Hodgkiss for those words of wisdom.

RC: That is good advice. So you're retired now.

BB: No, I've graduated to another phase in my life. My challenge right now is to enjoy life, the way I enjoyed working at Slippery Rock. You got to enjoy life, that's the real challenge: to enjoy life. I don't know if I have much capacity for that because I'm a worker; I like to get things done. I'm a doer, I'm not a be-er. I'm not good at just sitting and enjoying. I like to feel the joy after I've accomplished something.

RC: Right, well is there anything you're up to these days?

BB: Well, yes, I'm busy. I stay very busy with things that are meaningful to me. The important thing is, I've found that if you have your health and you have your family and people around you that you care about, that's what makes you happy. It's not money, it's people and health. If you've got your health and the people you care about, you're going to enjoy life. I think that's the secret. So I've been working on that, keeping the relationships good and doing the hard work that they require.

RC: Do you come on campus and visit?

BB: Yes, I'm on campus every night. In the morning I walk to Sheetz, it's about one thousand steps from my house. I live in the borough and I walk to Sheetz. I get a Pittsburgh Tribune and I walk back, that's two thousand steps. At night I walk out here, Branchton Road, along the new path. That's three miles from my house, round trip. So there's six thousand plus two is eight thousand and the other two thousand is incidental walking. So I get my 10,000 steps a day.

I'm active in the ARC [Aebersold Student Recreation Center]. I've had eleven trainers: exercise science majors. In their junior year, before they go out and do their internship; they pick up a client. I've had eleven of these trainers over the last five years.

I've audited six classes since I retired. I took nutrition classes and I took Death and Dying and I took philosophy and religion again from Andrew Colvin. He's a wonderful instructor in Philosophy. Wendy Stuhldreher, the nutrition class; she's great. So I've been auditing classes and playing catch-up on things I've neglected over the years.

I have been simplifying my life. I've been paring away; I've given stuff away, everything: clothes, books, etc. I can pick up and move and carry everything important in one hand. That was hard. It was hard to get rid of things that you're emotionally attached to because we're all packrats. So simplifying life is what I've been up to, and travel.

I've been buzzing around seeing friends, playing make up to people I've abused in my past. Karma stuff. Took my roommate from college on a week's vacation, and I took my brother, who I abused as a child—didn't abuse, I annoyed as a child. Yeah, doing make up stuff. My sister is in Chicago, I went out to see her, took her to Hilton Head for a vacation for a week. Things like that, make amends to all the people that—seems a little silly to be doing that and they know exactly what you're doing [laughs].

RC: They enjoy, you enjoy. That's what's important.

BB: So what do you think, Rebecca, you got enough?

RC: I think so. Maybe, do you want to check your notes?

BB: No, I think we've covered it pretty well.

RC: Okay, well if there's any story or person you want to mention . . .

BB: I just feel very blessed and very fortunate that I've had this opportunity to be at the Rock, and still in the area. I served on the dean's advisory committee in the College of Ed. I didn't mention the deans that were there, but we had quite a collection. We had Wayne Walker; he was from Texas and he was no-nonsense. Dean Anne Griffiths, I mentioned. Jay Hertzog, our last dean. He was very effective. He was a very, very competent dean. He never forced you to do anything; he invited you. Once you said yes to it though, you had to be highly motivated. He was a very effective dean. Changed just recently, graduated [laughs].

RC: Are their people in the department that you taught with that are still there?

BB: Yes. We're going to have a Christmas party on 18th of December. They invited us back, so we're going to be there and we're going to carry on at the Christmas party. It will be good to see them all again. Fred Livingston, Fran Manfredi, Monica Ondrusko, Bob Sattler, and quite a few [will be there]. There were always twelve or thirteen of us. We always maintained a dirty dozen; we used to call ourselves "the Dirty Dozen." Yes, faculty. That's the fun thing too: camaraderie. The Rock. And I love the way students name things around here. East Lake is called Lake Inferior, did you know that?

RC: I didn't know that.

BB: There's a sculpture out by the Eisenberg building, they refer to that as "broken potato chip." Did you know that?

RC: No.

BB: The aluminum sculpture over here in front of the music building. That, Jim Myford did. Kate Brennan, I think, commissioned him to do that sculpture. It's supposed to symbolize a sound wave or something. The students call it a, oh what do they call it? "Curly fry," they call it a curly fry.

RC: Yeah, it looks like one.

BB: Kids name, rename everything. In front of the Special Ed building there's four balls that go down there, it starts off rough and ends up smooth. Each one of them represents a memorial to an unnamed bowler [laughs]. See, that's what I mean about students having a sense of humor. I never thought of it. When you stand in front of it, yeah it looks like it could be, you know? It could be a memorial to someone. It's a round ball so it must be for a bowler. How logical, huh? Neat, neat, that's sanity I think.

Many people have come and gone—when I was doing this last night [referring to questions], you could go on forever. But it's all positive, as they say: it's all good. It really is positive, never a bad day, other than that one tragic incident, that was it, that was it. I'll remember that date.

Would I do it again? Absolutely, absolutely.