

Oral History Interview—Wagiha Taylor, 2020 February 12

Participants: Dr. Christopher Breiseth
Dr. Wagiha Taylor
Dr. James Rodechko
Dr. Timothy Gilmour
Dr. Robert Heaman
Dr. Francis Michelini Spengler
Dr. Owen Faut
Suzanna Calev

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Transcriber: Colette Elick

Suzanna Calev (SC): OK, turned on.

Christopher Breiseth (CB) : So it is Abraham Lincoln's birthday, [?: that's right] the year 2020 and we're in the conference room Weckesser Hall. And around the table let me have each person articulate your name so that it's picked up on the recording. I'm Chris Breiseth, I'm Tim Gilmour, Bob Heaman, Jim Rodechko, Lisa Michelini Spengler, Wagihiya Taylor, Owen Ford, Suzanna Calev. Ok.

And let me just set, set the scene, we began this about 3 years ago [Jim Rodechko (JR): maybe even longer], Dr. Michelini really was the inspirator of this and we began, actually a discussion among the presidents themselves, and finally we said you know it is so unusual to have past presidents who even talk to each other much less feel like friends. And we should start interviewing people who are important in the life of Wilkes, as college and as university. So we have, I think, Suzanna you put the list together of about 15 people we've interviewed. We've interviewed trustees, we've interviewed alumni, we interviewed faculty, we've interviewed staff, during Bob Capin's era we had Tom Kelly come back of Binghamton, had a great session with him. And it's just an informal conversation, to talk about your life at Wilkes, how you got here, and where you had perceptions, for example Dr. Farley, we want to record those as thoroughly as we can. It's also looking at the evolution of the institution, how did it become the institution it is today, and what roles did you play in that. So, before we ask Wagiha the first question is there anything else in the preliminaries that you, Tim, what you would add?

Tim Gilmour (TG): No I think that's it. [CB: ok]

James Rodechko (JR) : No I think that does it.

CB: So why don't you tell us how, how Wilkes came into your cannon.

Wagiha Taylor (WT): Well, when my husband and I, Gene, graduated from Brown University you'd be surprised to know that at the time Wilkes University's name was pretty big. And at Brown they suggested that one of the schools he should apply to is Wilkes University. It's a pretty good liberal arts college and he will be quite happy to join them. So he did apply and he came here. So, well, I found myself here. So, I said, well I talked with Dr. Michelini at that time, and he always took pride in the fact with saying, "I hired Wagiha." He always said that. But I really did talk with him. And I said I'm here on the campus and I just came from New England.

and my husband is in the physics department. and he said well I think we need an economist. Somewhere, at the time it was not a school of business, it was not the school of even business and economics, it was not any of these kind of schools, it was the department of commerce and finance and he said you'll be able to teach economics. And at the time Dr. Rosenberg was the chair of the department, so I went to meet him and I started immediately. I started, I think, for one semester I was here like part time, and then immediately after that I became full time. And that's where I have been since then.

CB: What year would that have been?

WT: I would think it's about 50 years ago. [Laughter]

CB: 1970

WT: Ah, probably, or 69. You know. Yes.

JR: Yes, for some reason I have the recollection we started in [WT: At the same time] the same year, in 68.

WT: I was a part timer then, but 69 was when I actually started full time, yes, I did. I remember that. Yes.

CB: Tell us about Dr. Rosenberg. He remains one of the legendary [WT: Yes] faculty members here and you had direct access to him.

WT: Yes, I, I was here with him for at least a few years before he decided to retire. He was an excellent man. He was a very good economist. He was very interested in Wilkes and making sure that we do quite well. I remember one of the advice he gave me at the time and I was just out fresh of graduate school. He said to me don't start the students with giving them high grades and throughout the semester you go down. Make sure it's the other way around. [Laughter] I honestly remember him saying that to me. And I said, "my god that's pretty good advice." Yes it really is. If you start with something little and you start going up the students will love it, and will continue and they will enjoy Wilkes and they will like you. But if you start the first exam with a high grade and start going down that is not good, I always remember he was excellent. He really was.

CB: What do you remember about his work with labor unions and the labor community?

WT: He was very much involved with the labor unions and being an economist. I don't think he was a labor economist in particular, but he was very much involved with them and he always talked about it and really did quite a bit with them. Mrs. Rosenberg also was an accomplished artist by the way just in case you might be [coughing inaudible] interested in that. I even have purchased, at the time, a couple of her paintings and I still have them. She really was.

CB: I got to know her at the scholarship luncheons. [WT: Yeah, oh she did?] She came to those for years and years [WT: For a while? Oh she did?]. But, I had not realized he had retired before he died. I thought he died while still in the job.

WT: I do not even remember, remember that exactly. But I thought for some reason....

CB: Do you remember that Jim?

JR: I thought he retired first [WT: Ah, yes?] but I wouldn't swear to it. I remember him as a tough old guy

WT: Oh, he was an excellent person. I, I really enjoyed working with him.

CB: Well what, what were your first impressions of how Wilkes was organized? And of, I mean having come from Brown, which is a very old and established institution. [WT: Yeah] What, what did you encounter when you were here?

WT: I mean, we actually thought, Wilkes was so highly recommended, by those people at Brown, I don't know why but for some reason. And we came here and we really enjoyed, at the time the enrollment was large, the number of the faculty was higher than what we see now. And it was a very active, small liberal arts college. It really was.

CB: Do you remember other immigrants on the faculty? [WT: Well?] Because there was a whole world, [WT: Yeah] post ww2 [WT: Yeah] addition that Dr. Farley [WT: Yeah] included. But, but what do you remember about....

WT: I think for some reason I remember somebody from the, in the religious...we didn't have a religious department, did we? Jim?

JR: We didn't but we had some people teaching [WT: Yes some people teaching.] who had a religious, like Rabbi Katz. [WT: Yeah] there was somebody else. [WT: Yeah] too, rabbi, I can't remember. [WT: A couple of the other people....]

WT: And there were a couple of east European faculty [CB: Hmhn] that were on the campus at the time. [CB: Hmhn] Yeah.

JR: Stanko Vujica [WT: yeah and one more] [inaudible] [WT: Yes those are the names.]

JR: [inaudible] [WT: Yeah]

WT: Bing Wong [sp?] was later on he, [inaudible] was in the math department. He was not in any of the liberal arts or religious....[inaudible]

CB: Were you, were you the first Egyptian or was Mahtmoud here already?

WT: Well, it's interesting to ask that question. He might have come that just the year before me or around the same time. Yes. [CB: inaudible] Because I always said, "Oh, that I'm the very, the only Egyptian around." But there was another Egyptian. The Egyptians are very unique by the way. You don't see them every place. [Laughter] [Inaudible]

CB: I want to get your take on, on, as you think about your own Egyptian origins, coming into the valley, [WT: Yeah] what was the interplay between your background and this very multicultural [WT: Yeah] culture?

WT: I don't know if I'd call it a very multicultural area, but it was ok. You know living in Kingston, by the way, was much easier than living someplace else because we had a lot of, believe it or not, foreign origins and a lot of Jewish people and they look at me and say oh, what are you? You must be one of those kind and that's I said fine. And no, it, it, it was. And, it it was comfortable. I never really felt that, that it was a strange....people were very friendly at the time. I mean you walk on the street and somebody greets

you and the neighbors come and stop and see you and things like that. [CB: Hmhn] Yeah, it was pretty good.

CB: So were you full time when the flood hit?

WT: Oh absolutely.

CB: And what's, what's your flood story?

WT: Oh my god. You don't want to hear that.

CB: Yes we do. Yes we do.

WT: You might need a little bit of time. [CB: Lisa's here representing her father...] Actually, [CB: We had talked to him virtually every time we've been together we talked about the flood.] Actually, we had just purchased our house in Kingston 1 week before the flood. [CB: oh my goodness] and everything was still sitting in the basement we haven't even moved them up. So everything was cleaned up with that. And then we had 3 cars in the backyard and they were all flooded and gotten rid of. And, oh, and I forgot to tell you the most important...I was at the Wilkes-Barre General Hospital having my daughter Gina. [Laughter] So I was, it was really unbelievable. But you really live with it, you survive it. It's nothing. I remember, who was my physician at the time, Dr. Bonovitz{sp?}? [CB: Hmhn] He still, I think, alive and lives in Kingston. [CB: Nadia's husband] Yeah, he came in and he said to me, well you know that we're having flood. I said what? He said and they are evacuating Kingston. What?! [Laughter] And, and then he said to me and you have a nanny who doesn't speak English? I said yes. And then he said we have to make sure that you all, they all move out. I said to him, what about me? And he said you cannot, you just had a baby a day ago. So it was really something, it was really unbelievable. Yeah. And but somehow I think at the time what happened, Gene, my husband, had at one of the major universities in Chicago one of the research projects that he was doing there, so we lived in Chicago for 2 months. We took the baby, who was just about few days, and we went there and stayed and came back. But we were fine. We were actually some of the luckier people. Somehow, we got one of those little trailers? From, must have been from the Kingston Borough, or something, and it was in the front yard and we lived in it for a whole year. We did the right things, we let the house for a whole year to dry out, not like some of the people in Kingston who went to repair them and then in a few months everything cracked and every...no we were out of the house for a whole year. But I came to Wilkes and we were fine in a few weeks after that. I, I think, I was actually, my office was in...what was it the building by the bridge? What was it? [JR: Parrish Hall] Parrish Hall. And we were on the 3rd or 4th floor, so all my work and all my papers and everything was fine. So we came and we started working and it was really summer, summer. Yeah. But I don't think I missed, by the way, Wilkes University owes me maternity leave for three kids. [Laughter] I have never had a [laughter] maternity leave and I want that to be recorded. [Laughter] and I, I always make sure you know at the time. [CB: it is recorded.] It is recorded. At the time if they knew you were pregnant you will be fired. Different days than now. So you make sure that you have a child during the summer, and I have, I had two of them in the summer and one at Christmas break. And I'm back in class. I never....

CB: This is called family planning? [Laughter]

WT: It was it was serious planning, not just family planning. [Laughter] , yeah , and my father made sure from Egypt, he was a judge and had a really pretty big position he made sure he sent me a nanny to stay with me so I will be able not to miss any classes. I never missed a class. But I never had any maternity leave ... any paid one. [CB: It's an international support system...it's impressive] uhuh, uhuh.

CB: Say something about your background in Egypt, particularly educational experience you brought to Brown?

WT: Yeah, I, actually I have always wanted to be in the United States since I was a very little girl. And I didn't want to come and be just anybody I always wanted to be an ambassador to the United States from Egypt. And, at the time when all my friends were picking their majors, whatever they going to study,-----

CB: Yes, [inaudible, yes, yes]

WT: I thought it was really...all my friends wanted to study either business administration or accounting. And I said no, I cannot major in business administration or accounting and be an ambassador. I have to major in economics. And I was only 16 or 17, so I chose economics. And I got my masters and PhD in economics because I wanted to be an ambassador in the United States. And you have to have an economics background to be an ambassador. And I just came and I, at the time, you know that 50 years ago or, even longer, the United States was so far away from the Middle East. It was not anything that, like now all our international students either have relatives here, or friends here, or they came with somebody. I didn't know anybody. I didn't have any relatives here. I didn't have any friends. So just came.

CB: This is probing even further back, what do you think as a little girl made you want to come to the states? What....

WT: Well, actually at the time there were all kind of scholarships that the United States Education Department had offered the Middle Eastern countries and I did apply to see if I can get. And actually, believe it or not, I got two of them. One in the United States to study for a PhD in economics and one to Sweden to study for a PhD in math. I said, first of all, Sweden's too cold and it's not exciting. [Laughter] And math is not really a very exciting thing. So I actually chose the US, but they had to have you have all kinds of exams in English language and things like this. And the education system outside the United States, we stress foreign languages, like from the 3rd of 4th grade, you have to learn English and French and plus your Arabic. So I had to take those and [inaudible]

CB: So you started to learn English in 4th, 4th grade about?

WT: Probably at that time, it had to be. Because we start really early.

CB: Any other members of your family, siblings, come to the states?

WT: No. They all came for visits. But they are very well established and really comfortable. They did, they are not the type, you know like, they come and stay with their sister and move with the sister then [inaudible] no one of them ever came. They were all very high positions where they are...very nice life.

CB: You are in the unique position, given how long you've been here, to reflect on the situation of, of faculty members who come from the Middle East [WT: Yeah] and from South Asia and particularly some from East Asia, China. [WT: Yeah] Say something about how you've watched that evolve and and how those faculty members felt about Wilkes and how they felt welcomed and supported and, or not? [WT: Yeah] Over the years what is your sense of that?

WT: I suppose they were all comfortable. I, I've always taken the position, if you're not happy just don't stay here. I mean, it's a little bit cruel to say. But I have always felt Wilkes was a fantastic place to be. [CB: Hmhn] We've always had good relationship, even during the times we hired you [CB: Hmhn] made sure that we got somebody with three daughters. You know I remember that. [Laughter] So that's

[inaudible] and I've always really enjoyed working here with Tim around and all that. No, Wilkes is a really good environment and place to work in. I mean I know, as of lately, people have been a little bit nervous about the budget and about this and about that, but we've really never had that kind of nervousness at one time, at that time. I mean it was always a very good place to work. I remember and at the time we always knew each other from other departments. I mean I knew Bob very well and Pat, and Jim and the rest of the, even the, remember your Chinese faculty you had, and the History and everything.

JR: KK Chow.

WT: Yeah, KK, KK. I remember I was on his tenure and promotion committee when he came up for full professor I remember that too. Yeah it....

CB: He was a remarkable guy.

WT: it was really, just, he moved out with his wife who had a position somewhere in the Midwest

JR: Wisconsin

WT: Yeah Wisconsin [inaudible]. But Wilkes has always had a very good environment to work with. And good people and of course everybody keeps asking me how did I happen to stay at Wilkes because you're not the small town small college place. Actually, in those days, families were very important with Gene, my husband, being in Bloomsburg and I'm here. After he left Wilkes he went to Bloomsburg. So which was good we didn't have to have all our eggs in one basket. But, yeah [laughter] that's so we, it was, it was actually a good arrange...I mean that is probably the main reason I continued with Wilkes. I loved Wilkes, I liked the neighborhood, I like the people and I think everything was comfortable. But the most important thing is that he was in a job that we were all living together. Now you know, you hire somebody they are working at Wilkes and they have somebody living in, in actually not an exaggerating in Florida. Or working here and have somebody in... We were the old fashioned families that you really were lucky to have a job. Where your husband would be in the same, or your spouse [CB: Hmhn] would be in the same location. So we really were we did pretty well with that. So that's why I never had to think about moving out because how am I gonna get...a physicist and a economist are the hardest ones to have really. Remember a few years back when we cancelled the economics major and the physics major in one faculty meeting and I sat there and said oh isn't that terrible? You, we cancelled their major because they are very demanding majors and they are not the type that students stop to just come and take a physics course and they probably get indigestion if they sit and talk about physics while they are having lunch. [Laughter] And the economics was not any of the favorites either. Very difficult courses. So that's why I felt really good that we were, with them, a reasonable distance of each other. As a matter of fact when he decided to move out of Wilkes University and go to Bloomsburg, so the question where are we going to meet and live. That was a major, you know 50 minutes is nothing now, but at the time that was a long distance. You know everybody now is four and five hours away from each other. So I said to him, well, I guess we could live half way through and I can drive half and he'd drive up. He said no, well, ok why don't I take care of the drive and you take care of the kids and the house I said fine. But you know I did very well, in few years the kids grew up and moved out and I'm [laughter] fine and he got stuck with driving all these years [laughter] so I did pretty well. [Laughter]

CB: Since, since you raised the issue of partnerships [WT: Yeah] of, this is the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage 2020, and reflect on the role of being a woman on the faculty at Wilkes, in the early days and how that's evolved, if that has been [WT: Yeah] of consequence in your experience.

WT: You know just before answering this question, did you probably see the article in the Wall Street Journal this past few days? About women CEO? Even though the number of women has increased but

the percentage is still very, very low. [CB: Hmhn][JR: Yeah] That is really this article, I have it here I cut it out and kept it in my office because it was very interesting. And the Wall Street Journal was really concerned about how women CEO made it or how they...[inaudible]. Well, as for Wilkes, as I said for a teaching position was pretty good. But Wilkes has never really supported having women in high positions. No, they never did. And I didn't even question that because I was raised at the time, 50 years ago, when everything was you're lucky to be where you are. You better not tell anybody your pregnant or you'd be fired, You know things like that. So, it was ok, but it's, I mean I know for a fact that I was the 1st woman Dean at Wilkes University. That, that is one fact. The other fact, I was the only woman full professor for a number of years and as a result, Bob you probably remember, could not submit numbers to different agencies that put the salaries and all that because if you did they would have said, "oh it's Wagiha Taylor." So, for several years I was the only faculty full professor faculty member [CB: Hmhn]. So it, it really has been a little bit tough. But I made it. I always tell my kids, up to now, I didn't get where I am by giving up. You, you have to keep trying. So it has not, but as of lately I see more. I go to the faculty meetings now, you should come to the faculty meetings and see more of the faculty are women. In the middle at administrative position there are many women and last year we had a Senior Vice President woman. So things are changing. But it was not this way ever, yeah it really was not. Never. Women had to really, I don't know how did I become a Dean of Graduate Studies, a dean, as a woman. It must have been, you know, a very difficult position to be able to get it.

Robert Heaman (RH): Ask, ask Patricia about that.

WT: Yeah? I remember that you know. [RH: No] yeah it really is. But now it seems like it's ok.

CB: Well the world is moving in that direction.

WT: It is. We have to move with it.

CB: And one of the interesting questions from a place like Wilkes, including the diversity issue which we didn't spend a lot of time on yesterday, but we're in a position to do, on the one [WT: Hmhn] hand, to catch up and, on the other hand, by leadership [WT: Absolutely] and general culture that this isn't really far behind [WT: Yeah] where the country is going. [WT: Yeah] But, I think, Jim, what are your thoughts on how Wilkes has kept up both on racial diversity and female empowerment.

JR: Well, I think, I think basically Wagiha is right. There was Maravene Loeschke was a Provost but senior [WT: But this is very recent.] well, since 2000.

WT: Yeah I mean, we're [JR: Since 2000] talking about the history 40 and 50 years ago. [JR: Yeah] There was no such thing. She actually, then moved on and became a president of one of the state colleges here, [Timothy Gilmour (TG): Mansfield] Mansfield. And then after that she went back to Maryland and she became a president there, [JR: Yeah] but then she died shortly after that.

JR: Bonnie Bedford [WT: Yeah she was excellent, yeah] was dean for a while.

WT: But that was only [inaudible] like, what, 15, but not before that. Yeah.

CB: So you were one of the, the 1st to hire the most senior person, woman?

Timothy Gilmour (TG): Actually, I didn't know the history, but, yeah, you know I've been, that's probably correct. Then one of the CFO's was a woman...Petra [inaudible].

WT: But that is very recent, that is recent history. But if you're talking about 30 or 40 or [TG: Yeah] 50 years ago women were not moving into those positions. Even if they were that excellent, and they were.

CB: What do you two remember about the post flood issues with people that were let go for budget reasons. Were they disproportionately women? Or not?

JR: Ann Kish, Chet Molley

WT: Hmhn.

JR: There was somebody in...[WT: English]. Yeah they were in English. There was a fellow named Al, who was in foreign language, I think. I think he taught Polish. [CB: Hmhn] Those are the three I think there were five in all.

TG: Just five?

JR: Yeah I think there was five.

CB: Did you think there were more?

Lisa Micheline Spengler (LMS): What was Al's last name? What was Al's last name? Was it Toll? {sp?} [JR: yeah.] [Inaudible]

TG: I had, I had the knowledge, I got the impression there were a number of people who left Wilkes after the flood just because they couldn't support them. I could be all wrong.

CB: Well, that's, that's worth looking into.

TG: Well now you would know Jim. I, I don't know why I had the impression...[inaudible] because of the carnage.

CB: I'm with you I thought it was about 7

JR: Oh, maybe it was, I...five sticks in my mind.

TG: Actually, I don't remember. Five names are sounding very good to me.

CB: That was the basis of AUP Censure when I arrived [WT: Oh really] was that we had people who had taught more than seven years and they were in languages, and English. [WT: Yeah] And we couldn't, under AUP rules, we couldn't fire them because they had, in effect, had tenure by virtue of being here seven years without being disinvited [WT: Yeah] so we were under censure for years.

WT: And we, another person, faculty, a male faculty member, was engineering and all of a sudden Wilkes discovered he's been here for 10 or 11 years.

JR: Oh, that's right.

WT: Yeah, and then they had to tenure him.

JR: Jankoski.

WT: Jankoski, yeah. [JR: I think that was his name] But all these, must be your time, yeah. [JR: Yeah that's right] I mean just Wilkes didn't even get around to figuring out if he's ever going to come to tenure or not.

JR: I remember, one instance, in the history dept. three of us were hired in 68; myself, Dean White and Barbara Bennett. The next year they hired Dave Leach. Somebody had to go. [WT: Yeah] There was never any discussion at all because let's just can Barbara Bennett. [WT: Uhhuh] [CB: A woman] There was no particular rationale for it [WT: Yeah] but, she went. She was here one year.

CB: I remember Dean Williams, in the 60's, there was only one woman faculty. I mean there were many more women here in that same period.

JR: Betty Jar, you might remember her. She was probably our first computer scientist. When computers were, that would be in the early 70's.

CB: Katherine Bolyn. Major faculty who were women.

WT: I was the only woman in the Commerce and Finance. And the Commerce and Finance department was really large at the time. [JR: Hmhn] We had several accountants and several business people and several business individuals and Dr. Sam Rosenburg really led that department very well.

JR: Mattie Carlin came after you. She was in accounting in the early 70's. About 70...no?

WT: I don't even remember, yeah. I'm talking about Cynthia Chisarick then. Because Cynthia's been [inaudible] here now for 30 plus years, almost 40. [JR: Cynthia is still here?] Yeah. [JR: Oh]

LMS: Jane Lampey was Dean of Students, dean of women. Yeah Jane Lampey, she's....

CB: She became the full Dean while I was here.

FMS: OK.

WT: Yeah, that's it, yeah.

FR: OK.

WT: It's your period that there was more changes in these kind of....

CB: I was here a long time.

WT: 17 years, isn't it? [CB: 17 years} Yeah, I remember.

CB: So we went through a lot of [WT: Yeah] personnel changes and made efforts in this area, but not always very successful.

JR: There was a Dean of Students, George, a Dean of Men and a Dean of Women.

CB: And, and Doan was a Dean of Women? Right?

JR: I believe so.

WT: Lampey, Jane Lampey was the one, yeah.

JR: I can't remember who was the Dean of Men? Maybe George?

CB: I think George.

JR: Yeah, he probably doubled. [Inaudible]

CB: And we've said this before, but that the continuity of the student affairs leadership from George Ralston on was just extraordinary. I, I would bet there's not another college in the country that's had that kind of consistent group, where successive generations had been trained by previous generations and I think it's very telling in the quality of what students experience here.

JR: Jean, Jean Driscoll came in 72.

WT: Yes, she was in political science. Yes. [JT: Political science] [Inaudible] Yes political science. But she didn't last too long.

CB: Did she get tenure?

JR: Oh yeah.

WT: Yeah.

JR: She was the chair. [WT: A few year after that she moved] She had been in the army during WWII.

CB: I met her, but she was not on the faculty when I came. [WT: Uhhuh]

JR: She probably retired.

CB: Yeah I met her and got a sense of her, but.... What, what would you, how, how would you characterize our students and, and any changes that you would note over the five decades that you've been teaching?

WT: I still think our students are really serious learners. Because most of them are from low income families and they carry a work load that is usually too much for them while they are studying. So they tend to be pretty studious, I would think. I, I really am not usually encountered any cases of students who had any malpractice or any serious misbehavior. And I take students on international experience, I take about 50 of them, and most of the time most of them are pretty well behaving. Yeah.

JR: I'd be remiss not to mention Pat Heaman during that whole period. She was here and pretty much [WT: Yeah] screwed over, to put it simply. They kept her in a position where she was teaching 11 credits every semester just to keep her below [WT: Below full time] the full time so she couldn't qualify for tenure.

CB: Well I will talk about that soon, what's your idea of personnel issues in this kind of setting. But part of my understanding of Wilkes and its treatment of women came from dealing with Pat's case, which as Bob knows, I spent a great deal of time on and with very happy results. But it was [TG: Finally] it showed the issue of the Department Chair problem in spades. And that's why I made the decision, as soon as I got here, that the strategic planning committee would be made up of department chairs and they would have to wrestle with the issue of coming up with some kind of school of structure and in her case it became clear very early.

JR: It wasn't just the chair, in that case, because the Dean of Academic Affairs, in the early 80's, cooperated with the chair in keeping Pat in that position.

CB: Right, well, I had my sites there as well. [Inaudible]

TG: So what I found, just, just for the record, was I think we had proportionally more women probably throughout the whole organization and as you say the [inaudible] ...it took quite some time. I think, for most of the years I was here, women were actually in the majority in the cabinet. [WT: Hmhn] Probably I'd check it, but I do remember at some point women were not in the majority [inaudible]...and things went downhill really fast. [Inaudible]

JR: There was one point [inaudible] the nursing department had 34 nurses at one point in the early 80's, but they were, I think, you'd say, secondary faculty. Then they were all tenured.

TG: Yeah, yeah. They were still when I was here, but the other point I wanted to make, was that when we did the large salary increases [WT: Yes] we found huge inequities for women, at that point, and we tried to address some of that during that period, but in some cases it was kind of too much of a gap to even stand with what we were doing there. But I, I, that's been and continues to be and, in fact, may have been exacerbated by this whole adjunct situation. [WT: Hmhn] Because there tend to be more women in that group and it was just never [inaudible]. I didn't read the Wall Street Journal article you were referring to, [WT: Yeah it was in the last few days] but my impression is their concern, is that the number, the percentage of women, of CEO's who were woman has actually gone down in the last five to ten years and it's despite, I think, substantial efforts in the corporate world. I think part of it is that women just aren't willing to take the crap that top level jobs are required you to do, but and that's smart, but, but still we should be doing better all around. And I, I, from my perspective, not that every woman is perfect, but generally the quality of decision making is [inaudible]. It's, it's just a different, maybe more sensitive point of view. That's the best I can characterize it.

WT: No I, I think, in your time, things had gotten better for women and they were moving in better positions. I am talking about 10 or 20 years before that. I mean, I remember when I became [TG: Before your time] an associate dean, yeah that's it. I am talking about the real the old times.

TG: Yeah, yeah, well no, you know, but the sad thing, I was just thinking and then I'll shut up. But when I was, I started in higher education in the institutional research and planning side of things and I can remember going to national meetings, this would be in the early 70's, and you could count the number of women at those meetings, we're talking about hundreds of people, on one hand, on one hand. Today, women are the decided majority in that, in that area.

CB: And they're the majority now in virtually all the professional schools, doctors, lawyers. [WT: That's right, yeah] So we're, we're in the process of women emerging, I think, as critical leaders [WT: Yeah] [TG: Yeah] around the world and it, I mean it is huge from a historian's point of view the implications of this are huge for family structure, social structure [WT: Yeah] power structure, and frankly, and partly being the father of 3 daughters, [WT: Yeah] I have a sense of the kind of problems we have to deal with including climate change and others, women are going to be much more resourceful in pulling people together and not having the big ego men tend to have, by virtually, the way we're socialized. There's this wonderful article in the Atlantic on raising boys, which I really recommend. It just came out in the, I think, the present issue. It's very sobering. And what's happening right now is that the suicide rate among men, white men, is just going up and up, all ages, high school, college. So there's a shift going on that is, it's very destabilizing. But, I think, if you look at Europe right now all the major international organizations are headed by women; the IMF, the, you know, the European Union [inaudible]. Europeans have

discovered, sooner than we have, the critical qualities that top [WT: Yeah] women, we're not talking about all women, the women who merge the leadership as men merge leadership, bring something, what Tim was saying, that you know, there's obviously issues of gender, biology of, but given the problems the world is facing, I think, if there's hope it's because women are going to emerge. And so it's interesting, in looking at a place like Wilkes, how that, how that has expressed itself through the years and you're in a singular position in the history of this institution. So maybe, maybe point made, or not.

TG: [Laughter] Get back to Wagiha's.

WT: You know, it is really, I mean I remember, like 20 or 30 or maybe more years ago, I was never appointed as an Associate Dean of the school and I had to have arguments with different agencies and with you and all that and the person that they put in was clearly not as qualified. I was simply, but that's the way of the time. And at the time I said, "I'm not going to let that go. I have to question that." And I did question that. And maybe that's why, as a result of that, a few years back, after that I became the Dean of Graduate Studies because they couldn't question that either. I, I mean it just takes time. It's history. [CB: It takes time] It really is, it's history. I am not too surprised, I know when I was at Brown in the Economics Department there I was the, we were only 2 women in the economics department. And for 10 or 20 years after that I go to economic conferences, no women. Now if you go you see a lot of them. I mean it's just it's a historical development. But what I suggested women should stand for their position and for what they believe in. And as I said before, I always tell my kids I never got to where I am by giving up. You have to always try. And at that period I did try.

CB: Since you brought them up, and knowing you as I do, I know that a absolute crucial part of your life were your three daughters. Tell us what's happening with them.

WT: The three of them are really wonderful. They really are doing great.

CB: What are they, what are they?

WT: The middle one, Gina which I take pride in the fact that she graduated from here, but she went to Drexel. She is a high executive at the American Express in New York. She's a senior vice president. Next step is to be the president. And that is really pretty....

CB: That's fantastic.

WT: And I, I brought her a few years back to speak to my Delta Mu Delta. I remember you always supported me with the Delta Mu Delta group. And I wanted to show our students that, you see, you can graduate from Wilkes, of course, you go to a bigger school after that for graduate school but you can be pretty up high. Jackie, my youngest one, is a Lawyer, is a she, owns her own, she's a [inaudible] she decided to go on her own and start that. And my oldest is a contract specialist with the Department of Navy as a civilian. And they really, I mean, women have to stand for what they have to do, I mean they really. If you give up and sit back you never get anywhere. Yeah. But I also find that it's easier now for women to really move up. It's not as difficult as, and I'm talking about 20 or 30 or 40 years ago not just the last 10 or 20 years. Yeah it really is.

TG: I think it is, but I'm still not sure where we need to be and I think the thing that concerns me, Chris see if you have any reflections on this. I think some of our current contentious, contentious nature of our society, while we don't talk about it much, is, we talk about basically white males who are part of our problem and these movements, but I think these males are not only threatened in terms of their jobs and that sort of thing and I think they're threatened as men, as well. I, I think they are having significant difficulty with the change in balance, which still isn't where it needs to be, but the point is that they're,

you know, they, women will work when they won't and that sort of thing and do things they won't and then [inaudible].

CB: This Atlantic article this is looking at teenagers into their early 20's, seeing this issue reflected in the dilemma of what kids are having to, to cope with, but it's, it's part of the issue of massive social change we were talking about, before you came in, about artificial intelligence and what this is gonna imply across the board including for teaching 5th and 6th year olds five and six year olds. And in that case what are your education faculty people doing to and themselves know how to prepare teachers to be facilitators etc. So we're going through, without using Bernie Sanders meaning of the word, we're going thru a revolution. It's really more profound than one any of us has ever experienced, as much as the change you've seen over the 50 years. Jim what should we [inaudible]?

JR: How do you contrast, let's say Wilkes, from the 70's to the 80's to the 90's. Do you see any basic differences as the decades go by?

WT: Oh, I of course, you, you see more ability to have freedom of speech that didn't exist at the time and oh, absolutely. I mean at the beginning if anybody said anything they would be out, without a question. Like as you said you're out.

JR: You're talking about Farley?

WT: Yeah, that's it, yeah even the first [inaudible] but, it, it is getting better. But I know, for instance that I serve on some of the committees of the board of trustees, and the one was about financial decisions, I just use that as an example, and they were talking about bringing an auditor from within. And I, without thinking, I had to quickly object to that. The auditor from within would not be able to say a thing. That person would be out if they.... Even when I'm talking about the last five or ten years. I mean there's still a little bit question. But that is not really only Wilkes. Anyplace else that you are there if you speak very much against the leadership you probably won't last too long. But I still think there is a much better room for people to express their views now and to move up and to accomplish a lot. I mean your years were really good. I mean, yours were more, I consider them the transition of years, there were more questions and more problems that you had to work out and clean up. But things start getting better after that.

TG: Things were so clean when I took over that [WT: Yeah see that...yeah.] [Laughter] it was just a walk in the park.

WT: Yeah. It really is. Actually when you think about it, yeah.

JR: How about, I know I went thru it a little bit, but you know you've in your 50 years here you've seen a tremendous change in teaching [WT: Oh yes.] and the mechanisms of teaching that I found difficult to adjust to, my last class was in 2012, with the computer and the computer age. How've you found that?

WT: Well, actually, what is happening now, I notice that very clearly, students are much more demanding now then they were years back. [CB: Mhmm] They really are much more demanding, they question more things and they ask for more things and also with the technology some of those students know more about the technology than the older people. Because they grew up with it and it's second nature for them to be able to....I, I see some of my grandchildren, six and seven, they play with the computer and they know about it more than probably I know. So this is also make it difficult to be able to really control the class as much as you said it is. Yeah. And they expect you to be available more, expect you to answer more questions, expect...there was more respect for faculty members 40 and 50 years ago than now. In general, by the way, I don't know if you notice that there is not too much respect for faculty members in the United States like in the Middle East and Europe. In the Middle East and Europe a faculty member is like second

to God, they really respect them. But here they just don't, so you have to really accommodate the students and help the students and go out of your way for your students so you can have that prestigious position.

CB: Which is the healthier way?

WT: Well, in between would be better. I don't like one extreme or the other. I mean, I noticed in Europe and Middle East they really talk about a professor like second to God. I think that's a little bit too much. But here they just don't have respect for faculty members, in general. I don't know if you notice that, but in the United States they just, you know, it's just, that position is a teaching position, not like what you see over there. So I think in somewhere in between would be more acceptable and more healthy.

CB: Do you see our graduates, now, as being better equipped to take on the world, let's say than students 30 years ago?

WT: I, I actually, I love that kind of question because I really think the students now are much more concerned about the world and much more involved in world affairs and much more involved in international activities than they used to. Yes. Maybe, because they have a little bit more resources now and maybe they have a little more knowledge and they have a little bit more people that they associate with that are more worldly. They really seem to be. I think, and with the type of teaching that they are expecting, as you said, more difficult, maybe that maybe that helps them to move in the world easier than subdued kind of nature they used to have like 40 or 50 years ago.

CB: The gods in the classroom?

WT: Yeah that's it, yeah, I think so.

CB: What, what, what stresses were you referring to in the change in teaching?

JR: Well, the technology involved in teaching, I couldn't keep up with. I was having a lot of trouble with that. Well, one of the eye openers was, I think I might have mentioned it before. I started my class in 2012, I was an adjunct, but at that time, it was an evening class and I'm setting up my slides. I always started the first lecture or the first session with this, would be the class 1900-1945, with a photograph of American 1900. And I remember I'm setting it up and a kid comes in and he says, "What's that?" [WT: Oh,] [Laughter] I said it's a slide projector. [Laughter] I never saw that. And I said I gotta get out of this. [Laughter] I, I think, that kind of technology and I saw some of my colleagues, like John Hepp and Diane Wenger and they were very familiar with that stuff [WT: Yeah] and dealing with it and I was not.

CB: What would you say, how would you describe the changes in your own teaching style over the half century?

WT: Well I know that when I first start teaching I was always very close to my notes, you really, you don't want to stray away from your notes. But as you teach, you become more relaxed and I think that students enjoy it more when you can talk to them instead of just looking at your notes very closely. And I remember doing this, I had my notes, I look back I have some of these things I didn't throw them out. I had all my notes written down, at the time, and it was so painful and so difficult and took so much time to do. But as you become a little bit more secure, you're more comfortable and, you know, then you can glance a little bit at your notes, here and there, and you can speak that. Also, in addition to that, oh here's another probably a major change in my teaching activities, is that I only taught economics theories of micro and macro and that is very specific, very high level economic activities. So that was so much different than when you move more in the international business and international activities and more in the applications. So you have more case studies and more questions and answer periods and things like this. Teaching

economics is very enjoyable to me because I am an economist by training and Egyptian by birth, by the way. [Laughter] But I always have to put those two together. But it, it, it really is. It's, it's more, it's more difficult, but small demanding and you have to be sticking more close to a note or a book or something. But in the business you have more applications, yeah.

JR: How do you find, he was kind of a legend when I got here, George Elliot?

WT: Oh, yes.

JR: He was an economist.

WT: He was an economist, yes.

JR: How did you relate to him or did you find him helpful?

WT: You know when I came George Elliot was here and [inaudible] was here and Bob Deyoung., and Walton Farrar And they were the three and I honestly say, I was the luckiest person. They all liked having me, I guess because I was a little girl and they can, you know, [laugh] and they were really, really nice. They and they would probably a little bit different, because when you come from Clark University or Brown University you're more studious and you stick more to books and notes, yeah. You know, like Paul Samuleson he made a fortune, not because he was an economist but because his text book, everybody on earth used. Yeah. And then McConnell, after Paul Samuleson, came and his book was similar to Paul Samuleson. I don't understand why I didn't question that somebody was copying somebody at the time, but he also made a fortune. That was the thing to do. So being economist you look at these and you, if you ever knew everything in Paul Samuleson and McConnell you have a PhD in Economics. I mean they really had all the basic economics theories and ideas that you need to learn. So that's why, I, I have, this is why I enjoy being here for 50 years, by the way. I've never done the same thing five or ten years in a row. I taught. I was in administration. I, I was a Dean of Graduate Studies. I was, before that, Associate Dean of the school of all kind of things in Political Science and all these things. You do different things you enjoy it. I've never done the same thing for five or ten years in a row, ever. Even in my courses, even in my teaching. And then, after a while, start thinking that, what, the global economy that we live in it's our responsibility as teachers to expose our students to the world. And I started, it took me eight years to put together, the international business course trip together to make sure that we can be attractive enough to get 50 students to go. And I had 50 students for the last seven or eight years, no, in the last 17 or 18 years. I started it when you were here. And they came to see the world and see what they can do and so it is a different kind of teaching. This is a, that's why it's called an experience course, it's an international business experience. So you take the students overseas instead of being in the classroom. You show them the world. You show them the different culture, the different people, the different religion, the different activities. So, it's a different kind of teaching. So I've always done different things. I've always [inaudible] of something. And that's why I loved being here for 50 years. Actually, nobody can ever do something the same thing for 50 years. They would die out of boredom. But I've never done anything, really, I've never done anything more than five or six or seven years in a row. Like....

CB: You just made an aside to Lisa where you said economist, Egyptian. [WT: Yeah] [Laughter]

WT: Economist by training, Egyptian by birth.

[Background inaudible]

CB: But tell us, tell us the importance, [WT: That's right] [inaudible] [laughter] say something about Egypt and your Egyptian roots and how that continues to influence how you see the world? [WT: Yeah] What's your sense of what your own ultimate culture is? [WT: Yeah] Share that with us.

WT: As I said, I always see, I have to say, that I have always been lucky. I had a father who was so broad minded and so knowledgeable and he thought there's no limit to what I can pursue [inaudible]. Like he always wanted his daughter to have the highest education I remember, like few days before I was to come to the United States and I was just a little girl. I looked at him and said to him, "Papa the US is so far away isn't it? And I am going to be going in a few days." He said, "What do you mean far away? I am a judge and I can sometimes be appointed in Upper Egypt and it takes me two or three days to arrive there. This is nothing to it." And I still remember him. He said no this is not and, and I came. [Laughter]

CB: You came. [Laughter] How about the role of women as you experienced it growing up as a [WT: Yeah] girl in Egypt and what you encountered here.

WT: You know that the interesting thing is that Egypt has always been much more progressive than the rest of the Middle Eastern countries. And I know that some of them might not like to hear that. But we have always given the right to women to vote, from years back, and to be in position and there are so many women in the recent history, like the last hundred years, that are so well known. And they have been quite accomplished. So, the Egyptian women have always led activities, they've always done more....

CB: Do you sense that as a source of strength [WT: Absolutely] as you find your own life?

WT: Like I remember when I finished my PhD and I start teaching here and I go to some of the conferences in Egypt. And I still, we have a very huge organization called Egyptian American Scholars in the US and Canada, and we hold, I have been their president, the only woman president if you see the list of the presidents in the last 40 years, they are all men, except I am stuck in the middle. If they miss the letter A in my name they would think I am a man because Wagiha is a female, Wagih would be a male. But I always make sure that the A is there so they know. [Laugh] So it is, it really is, it's just a, it's a different kind of thing and you have to work harder and when you prove yourself. Like I know when I used to go to those conferences in Egypt, I still go up to now because I've been their president and I'm one of the organizers for a long time. I would expect I would see more religious conservative men around the conference and I thought it was very strange they would love to come and talk to me. Shake hands with me and ask me, who is this, about Gene. You know, bringing a stranger, you know that, very well accepted. I think depends on how your personality, if you can look comfortable and you're secure, people are gonna respect you. I have never had problems going back. I still go back for conferences and everybody loves it. You know I mean

CB: Do your daughters have a sense of their Egyptian roots?

WT: To some extent. They are just born here and they don't go there as often and they don't really go that much, but yeah. I know their little kids always say, "Oh, when are we going to go to Egypt?" I told one of them, by the way, Gina's oldest. I said, "Well look, when you're 12 I'm going to take you with me to Egypt." And you know I should not have said that [laughter] because now she's getting close to 12 and she reminds me. [Laughter] That was a mistake, because I think she was 6 or 7 and she said oh because they study Egypt. And you know they always have presentations in their class and they ask me to bring little camels or little toys so they take them and distribute them, they really are proud of saying how they are and now she said she's 11. I said, "Oh, I don't know. [Laughter] You have to talk to your mother." She said, "But you said when I am 12 I can go." See that's why we have to watch what we say [laughter] to kids and to students. I mean especially to your students because students are going to remember what

you say, if the kids remember, and they come back and haunt you, you know that? So you have to be very careful what [inaudible]. I don't know, one of those years we probably will make it.

JR: I think Wagiha on something that's really unique about Wilkes. Maybe it's just because we're a smaller school, but Wilkes does provide opportunities for change for faculty [WT: Hmhn]. You know you can get into [WT: Yes, yes] different things. [WT: Yeah oh yeah] Like I had buddies out at Bowling Green, where I was before Wilkes. By the way, when I came here I hated to leave Bowling Green. I was replacing 2 guys on sabbatical at [inaudible]. I have friends there, when they retired they were doing exactly, one guy was teaching Middle and Medieval History and that's all [WT: All he taught for all these years] he taught for like 35 years. [WT: Oh my god] And you know the same is true for people at Bloomsburg, which is a much smaller school, [WT: Yeah] but that was....Ben Powell {sp?} there was teaching Anthracite Mining and that's all he taught, the history of anthracite mining for 35 years.

WT: I really like what you said because it is true. Eighteen years ago when I went to the department and I said well I'm going to introduce an international business experience course that takes a student overseas during spring break. And you know what I did? I offered it the first year without being counted as a credit or getting paid for it. I just wanted to show everybody that you really have to do something like this for the student and to do something different and get the student exposed to the world. So I wasn't even voted for it and I took, at the time I remember the exact number 47 after that they came to 50 or more. Forty seven students, both undergraduate and graduate. I took them there, I did the whole experience. I, I sent about 50 or more emails during the semester telling them what we're gonna do, who is going and what direction and when I came back the following year they said ok we'll load you for one, for one, the undergraduate. And then the following year, ok we'll load you for the...I mean you've got to you've got to try. [JR: that's right] I mean if I just kept teaching economics 101 or 102 or teaching money and banking I should not forget that. Every time I run into one of the lawyers who are in town or one of the bankers. "We had your money and banking, it was such a wonderful course." That was 20 or 30 years ago. I have moved up to other things since then. [JR: Yeah] But it is, I mean if you teach the same thing you couldn't last. [JR: That's right] But I'm always doing something different and somebody say 50 years, I say I don't see it. So many different things.

JR: That's been true of so many people. Gay Meyers {sp?} started as a Field Hockey Coach [WT: Yes] who turned to education. [WT: Yeah] She wanted to do that and she took the courses and the Education Department accepted her. [Inaudible] had the possibility of joint appointments [WT: Yes] and different departments really started that and that gave people the chance to move about.

[Phone ringing]

WT: I'm sorry I should have stopped that phone.

JR: That's alright.

CB: Mentioning Mahmoud, reflect on some of the really major personalities that you've encountered among your colleagues at, at Wilkes. Some of your thoughts about them. [WT: Yeah] We talked about Sam Rosenburg, [WT: Yeah] but who, who were some of the others that stand out in....

WT: The nicest thing about those days, when I first came, is that we knew everybody else in other departments. I don't see them doing that now. I mean, I knew Patricia and Pat and I knew Jim and everybody in the history, KK Chow, I knew you. I remember you saying oh you need to run for this committee and that's... I don't see the faculty now connecting with each other as much as we did. And at the time we had as many faculty, or even more, than now. No, I really, I don't have an explanation for it,

so I was never just in the Commerce and Finance, I knew everybody else. Talked with everybody else. [JR: That's true]

CB: When you say that, tell us about some of the unforgettable characters on our faculty, that you think about [WT: Yeah] as you reflect on 50 years at Wilkes.

WT: Yeah, I really, I tell you I, I always had great respect for the sciences and I always had great respect for the arts because everybody always thought that economics and business is more materialistic and you're not interested in other. I've always liked the arts. I've purchased some of the paintings, remember that, that woman that became so well known and went to New York? [JR: Denise DeBorsen] Yes. DeBorsen. I still have her painting hanging up. I mean those were really good people that you think contributed to Wilkes. So those are in the arts and in the sciences. I mean you're talking about different people in the math, different people in engineering, different, yeah, I mean these are really very good accomplished faculty. I remember in the chemistry department, who was it that was many years ago? [JR: Jim Bowman] Yeah and before him, I mean all those people, [inaudible] yeah, [inaudible] no not him. I'm talking about [inaudible] yeah, so, I mean these are very strong personalities that really contributed to Wilkes, [CB: Hmhn] as a whole. So, for me being an economist and knowing all those science people and all those art people and even some of the English, whether they stayed or didn't, Wilkes has always had a very impressive group of faculty over the years. I mean, I guess I knew everybody in the history department, they were you know, I mean KK and all the other ones, and really, really really impressive. I still think that's where I started this conversation, with how Brown told Gene, my husband at the time, apply to Wilkes University when he finished his PhD. It is a good university, it's a good college. So we really had that good name. [CB: Hmhn] We have to start capitalizing on that and make sure that people become aware of it. We really...[inaudible]...absolutely.

CB: Talk about...I'm, I'm going to push you on this. Talk a little about, a couple to me, dominant figures, about Umid Nejb. Talk about him.

WT: Yeah, he, he was a very hard worker and he was really, he always looked in the future. When he start thinking that we better have a pharmacy program, you know that was something and he always thought to have a School of Engineering. And he was connected with everybody around in the area, he really is. He was somebody, yeah. Frank Salley, that's the one I was thinking about. You remember, that's oh, nobody of you probably heard of that name. [Inaudible] [CB: Frank Salley, yes, yes] I mean those are the people that you're asking me to see if they're and it was really good talking with them, you know, getting feedback from them and see how much they do. His daughter was one of our students for many, many years. Yeah.

CB: How about our late, lamented friend, Mahmoud?

WT: Yes. He was in education, so I, we weren't as close, but for some reason, I don't know. I was more in the sciences and more in the history and more in the languages. Yeah, but he did quite a bit. [CB: Hmhn] I would think, as a matter of fact, the, when he died a couple of months ago, the Wilkes reception that they had was so huge, it's so well attended. I walked in and said, "Oh my god, all these people from the community." So he must have left an impression on the community, [CB: Hmhn] yeah. Because I did go to that reception and there were more people there....

CB: Have you read Iran's autobiography?

WT: No. She keeps asking me if I read it.

CB: You, you should do it.

WT: Is it really? Did you read it?

CB: Oh, it's, it's wonderful.

WT: Did you read it?

CB: Yeah.

WT: She keeps asking me if I read it.

CB: She sent me a copy and I read it right away. [WT: Yeah] It's not so much about Mahmoud, it's about her transition [WT: Her, yeah] from her home country [WT: Yeah] as a girl. [WT: From Iran] You would just relate to lots of it. [WT: Yeah]

WT: She keeps asking me, "Did you read it?" I'm like, I will. [CB: Mike Lennon....] I have it on my bucket list and the bucket list is too full. Yeah.

[Inaudible]

CB: Well you raised the issue of Mahmoud in the community, how would you describe your own relationship, as a Wilkes faculty member with the Wyoming Valley community?

WT: Oh, I, yeah, I, I love being here. I am a part of every other organization you can think of. I am a part of the Torch Club, I'm a part of the Interfaith Counsel. And you should see these organizations, how they change over the last 30 or 40 years, in terms of the composition and terms of people who serve on them. Every other time they have any kind of activities in the church I'm always there speaking and I mean, you really, it's a very nice community. And when you've been around for as long as I have, and from the beginning, I felt I was part of them. So they always invited me to be on their organizations. Do you remember a name, Rose Tucker?

CB: Oh yes.

JR: Sure.

WT: Oh, you do? Oh I thought I am aging myself. I was actually, believe it or not, I was her, one of her, promoters. I was the finance director for her election. And you should have seen when we attend a breakfast at 8 o'clock in the morning. I would go there and I always felt I was so tiny, all those big husky guys sitting there. They are trying to raise this money, trying to bring this and I felt good. She asked me to be the chair and I said, "Are you sure you want me, maybe you want one of those guys to be your...?" She said, "No, no. we want you to be ...". So it was, so I was....

CB: She knew you taught money and banking.

WT: Yeah, so I guess that's how she got the money in. [laughter] Yes so, they, so I have always been in all these kind of organizations and activities. But that was some experience. I remember the day she, was her day for the count of the votes, and we were, I don't know if it was at Gus Genetti or the other hotel at the time, and everybody was there and she made it. She really did win big. The valley with the heart she started that expression and I always liked that.

CB: She served them all.

WT: Hey, that was way before your time Tim.

TG: Yeah I don't know her.

WT: Yeah, you probably don't even....

CB: I was just a kid. [WT: Yeah, that's it] [Laughter] She was a firecracker.

WT: She really was a big politician.

CB: She was Lebanese, right?

WT: Syrian or Lebanese, yeah. But born here for a long times.

CB: Born here, yes. But she, she pulled elements of the community together [WT: That's right] politically. [WT: Yeah] She's extraordinary.

TG: What position was she elected to?

CB: Was she City Council or County Commissioner?

WT: Commissioner, I thought. [CB: Commissioner, yeah] That was pretty high.

CB: One of the, there were only 3 of them, right? [WT: Yeah] Three commissioners.

TG: Yeah, you can really cause trouble in those positions.

CB: She caused trouble. [Inaudible]

WT: I don't know if I remember the name, but when I was the president of the North East Pennsylvania Association of Arab Americans and, I tell you, I was the only outsider, even though I am Egyptian, but all the members are born here. And they are all those big guys who have plumbing business, this business, and I mean here I am they elected me to the president. And it was really some kind of a and we had, let me think, we brought a senator to speak on the Wilkes campus. Flannery, or [inaudible] one of those senator and I invited you at the time to come and introduce him and you did come and introduce him. I mean, it was a very, the community has always been part of my activities and, and with all these organizations I presided on I, I really enjoyed working on these groups. And now I'm concentrating more on the Torch Club and the composition of the Torch Club has changed tremendously. We used to have all the judges and all the presidents of the banks and all the presidents of the universities, including you, as members. Now the composition is changing. And now I am on the Interfaith Council and whenever you go around the table to introduce I always say I, I am an economist, I am not a theologian. I don't know what I am doing there but they wanted me to represent. So it, it is pretty good to be part of the community.

JR: Torch Club, when we were on it it was all men. [Laugh]

WT: You're right. I was actually, [CB: Were you the first woman?] the first woman was from Wyoming Seminary and she left a couple of months and I was the second one. And the only one for a long time, yeah.

JR: There was a real fight. There were men on that that didn't want women.

CB: Including people who had been faculty members of Wilkes.

JR: That's right.

WT: Really?

JR: I recall one. [Laughter]

CB: We won't site their name.

TG: Everyone excuse me, I'm just going out. I'll be right back.

WT: I remember...I think we should...I remember when you invited me to speak at the Torch Club he wanted to women to come and they probably never even had a woman speaking at that club before.

CB: No, you were the first.

JR: You were probably the first.

WT: And yeah, and [JR: Jane Elmes came in too] it was Dr. Breiseth...no she didn't.

JR: She came after you.

WT: I don't think she ever joined. [CB: Who?] [JR: Jane Elmes Crahold. No. She was not ever.

JR: Are you sure? Ok.

WT: I am. I keep track of those who are.

CB: Well, as you said it takes time for progress. [WT: Hmhn] I'm in the Torch Club up in Ticonderoga. I'm the Vice President [WT: Yeah] and our president is a woman. [WT: Yeah] And we have more women than men [WT: Yeah] in the club. [WT: Yeah] I'm giving a talk there next, in 2 weeks, on on Francis Fergus. {sp?}[Inaudible]

WT: Was that secretary his name is Handley? That my organization, the Arab American Organization when I was president, we invited him to come and speak here. I'm trying to think of his name because he was such a powerful senator and for us to be able to invite him. I would call him on the phone and I say my name is so and so and I'd like you to come and speak. [JR: Of Pennsylvania?] No, he was somewhere, somewhere in the Midwest. Was very well known senator, yeah. I'm trying to, I have his name in the...and he came. So we did have very big speakers.

CB: You know this this is parenthetical, but the two great raconteurs of the valley, I, I urged both of them to do it in oral history, Al Albert and Andy Sardoni.

WT: Yes, and I knew Al Albert very well.

CB: Al Albert was really the [inaudible] of the Syrian Lebanese community. [WT: Sure, yeah] And mention the fact that had two or three heads of families on the Titanic that went down. [WT: That's it, yeah] They were bringing more members of their family. [WT: Yeah] But that was a trauma traumatic experience as as [WT: For the...] the Lebanese community here was really growing in stature and power economically. But, so when you talk about you were the only kind of one born in the Middle East, I mean the roots of the Lebanese Syrian community here go back generations. [WT: A long time ago they really...]

WT: And that's why I was so, not impressed, amazed, that they elected me as a president. Because all of these people had been here for 50 or even 100 years and I was an outsider.

CB: They recognized talent.

[Laughter]

WT: Really, it's just....

CB: What do you think we haven't talked about that we should talk about?

WT: I don't know if you're really interested in my, my economic and international business economic organizations?

CB: Go for it.

WT: Oh, I, I....

TG: That's interesting. Yeah.

WT: I'm going to make that very short. I started an organization called Congress of Political Economists International. That's COPE, it's been 40 years now. I started it with a faculty member in Bloomsburg, by the way, and we started together. He passed away, like, 20 or so years ago and it is still a very active economic organization. And now we're expanding it multi-disciplined. We hold an international conference in an international location once a year and if you look at the list, I have that's why I have been all over the world by the way. Because I'm taking that conference to different countries. And even though I finished my presidency of it they all decided that I should be called an honorary president because I'm the one who's really running it, in a sense. So that's a pretty active one. And the reason I have been thinking about it lately, I had a speaker at one of these activities in one of my conferences that was from Harrisburg and the reason I'm thinking of it is that some way or the other his name came up lately. Because like a week or 2 ago after he was speaking at my organization, he was standing in Harrisburg, had a, had a news conference and he pulled his gun and he put it through his mouth and killed himself. I have never, so for some reason his name came up lately, again for some reason that they mentioned it. So those are some of the really powerful....

CB: Do you remember his name this was this was front page in the New York Times story? [WT: Yeah]

JR: I don't remember the name.

WT: You know, I mean, it was so much all over the news because he called the conference and nobody knew what the news conference [JR: Oh yeah, yeah] and he stood there [JR: I remember that] pulled that gun from his pocket and he.... It's just something. No, but we survived, the conference does well. We, we, last July, we were in Rome, we had it there. And we had it before in, oh, every European country. We've been to China and Japan, Hong Kong all these places.

CB: Wagiha, what's been the focus of the group? What have you really....

WT: It used to be, originally, economics, but then we decided that the number is not as large we made it multi-disciplinary. So I remember, for instance, you spoke at that conference. I mean, and everybody was so, it was, really they were so impressed in talking about it, it was pretty big. And we...[TG: That was in

Singapore, by the way] yes. Singapore, that's right. And you know who was our, who was our provost? The man who went down south and became a president?

JR: Oh Reynold.

WT: Reynold. He came and he presented a paper in chemistry at that conference, yeah. So it is, it was branching out. So a couple people from the sciences came and presented, but it's still mostly business and economics, but we are branching into those other areas. So this year we have decided we have been travelling all over so much maybe we should come back to the United States, the United States is part of the world, anyway. Instead of all the other. So we are going to go to New Orleans in July, if anybody is interested?

TG: You know, you can get Reynold.

WT: Actually, somebody said that, they said. I have to look for his phone number to see if I can talk to him. [TG: I got it] You think you can text it to me? Ok, thank you. Yeah, that would really be nice because everybody said to me you're going there you better call Reynold and he spoke at that conference before, he presented a paper on chemistry.

CB: Where is he now?

TG: He's at, oh gosh, that's so embarrassing.

WT: One of the colleges down there.

TG: It's the historically black institution, but Catholic. I'll think of it in a minute.

WT: Yeah, ok. Everybody said I should invite Reynold.

TG: It's a, it's a really, really great place. [Inaudible]

WT: Yeah. Ok, that would be good. Yeah. So this is my big international conference, yearly. It takes me so much time to put it together, get the programs together, get everybody. I even now, becoming, believe it or not, change what you do. I now, instead of [background inaudible] hiring somebody to make the reservations, I call myself and I'm fine and I negotiate. I got a very good price if you like to come to New Orleans, I really invite you personally to come. I got an excellent hotel at a very reasonable price. I just said why paying all this money to have a travel agent, let me do that. And I called and I negotiate and I get a better price, so if anybody is interested you're welcome [laughter] and....

TG: We'll just all meet in New Orleans. [WT: Oh yeah, that's right] But it is the summer.

[Laughter]

WT: Yeah, but that's ok. Yeah it will be ok, yeah.

TG: It was fine when I did it one year.

CB: You come from Egypt, that, that kind of heat is not.... [TG: Yeah]

WT: The other organization, really I invite you to come, is one of the international business trips. You don't have to take it for credit and you don't have to do the work, but you can come for fun because we're leaving in 2 weeks.

CB: How do you raise the money for this organization?

WT: Everybody pays their own way, including me. Including anybody else. So, in in two and a half weeks we're going to England, Ireland and Wales for the 9 days break. Next year, at the same time, I've already started that and I would love to have some of you join. We're going to Paris, Rome, Florence and what is the other fourth one? [CB: Moscow?] No, French, not that. [Laughter] So it is, yeah, yeah. So we're gonna be.... [Inaudible] We did that two years ago. Yeah, so it's, the flyer is out and the students love the idea of going to Rome and Paris and Florence and they are so.... [Inaudible] I have done the study awhile back saying what are your other activities, I did the research and I found that students do not want to pay 2900 on the spot. So if you announce it a year, a year and a half before and they pay a 100 or 200 or 300 at a time, by the time the trip comes they are paid, so that's what we do. So I've already announced that 2021 and I have a lot of people who are already signed in. So if anybody is interested in Rome

CB: Is there a name for this activity?

WT: Yeah, it is the course is called BA464 International Business Experience so that any guest like you take it don't have to take the course, but you can do, yeah.

CB: Can I do it pass fail?

WT: Oh, no, you'd be ok, you're ok. And you know who came with me on that and he took it for credit who's this Brian? [JR & CB: Brian Redmond] He loves to take anything so he took it for credit. I say why torture yourself? He did, he did the presentation, he did the paper. [Brian Redmond] Brian Redmond, yeah. He took it for credit. So he brought his wife and came and, but if you come you're welcome to just come and enjoy it. Paris is wonderful place, I've done this, and Rome is, of course, beautiful. Florence and oh these places are really something.

CB: Did you ever think about offering a course in marketing? Especially since you're a marketer to the tenth power.

WT: Yeah, everybody tells me I, I am a sales person. You know that we cannot have an open house, I don't know if you heard about this, without me being there. I, I really don't want to say that I get a standing ovation every time I talk about the presentation at the open house. Because the parents and the kids, the prospective they come, and always attend the open house and I hope I am bringing students in. Because we have different faculty that talk about different things and now I'm talking about International Experience and about all these, doing these things. So are you coming to Paris? And Rome? [Laughter] And Florence? Now that you send me....

TG: I'll come to New Orleans though.

[Laughter]

WT: You'll come to New Orleans? OK. I'll expect you.

TG: Yeah.

WT: Did you send me the phone number?

TG: Yeah, can I, I don't have your number.

WT: 570

JR: What about you?

FMS: No, I can't stay, actually.

TG: Yep?

WT: 570-313

TG: 313?

WT: 9967. Once you send me his phone number, you'll start, I'll have your number and I'll be sending you all these flyers now.

BH: What you didn't tell him that if he goes to New Orleans he'll have to speak French.

WT: Oh yeah? [Laughter] That's ok. [TG: Mais oui?] He actually, my group really loved his presentation when he came. Yeah.

TG: That's funnier than heck. I...[inaudible]

CB: This is our lunch.

WT: Oh.

SC: Are we still going on with the oral history? Chris are we done with the oral history? Or do you want to just pause?

CB: No, no lets, what do you think? [Inaudible] Let's make sure there's no other topic anyone wants to raise. Jim? We've gone through virtually all these, what....

JR: I'd go back to what Wagiha said about departments talking to each other. [WT: Yeah] That's an experience too. I think, I think all of us have known people throughout the school. [WT: Throughout, everyone] In Bowling Green we had a dept. of 27 historians, those were the only people I knew. And that was true in Bloomsburg where it was a considerably [WT: Yeah] smaller department. Those were the only people you really associated with. Here the connections between departments were wonderful.

WT: But now it is not. You don't know anybody.

JR: Why would that be?

WT: I, that's what I don't understand it because I remember, at the time, I really remember Owen Faust say, "Wagiha what do you want to run for? Then we make sure that you get voted for that." I mean we were always together but I don't see that as happening now. I mean, is it that everybody, I am thinking that everybody is worried about their future. And about their tenure and they better stick on doing their research and their teaching and don't spend any time with anybody. But I remember when I came I was all over the campus, I knew everybody. I really knew everybody.

CB: I'm not sure that you can blame technology for everything, but [WT: Is it?] but I just, wherever I am I make eye contact to claim I'm here, with students. I've just been here three days, it's the longest I've been here in one time for a long time, virtually, every student is looking at his or her iPhone as they're walking.

WT: Yeah I, that's right.

CB: Or they're talking to somebody, [WT: Yeah] which back in the day you'd thought they were talking to themselves, but now this is a conversation with others. I used to think that you're, you're into a kind of focused concern with self [WT: Hmhn] that does not open you up. [WT: Yeah] A couple people, I worked to get their eye contact, said hello. [WT: Yeah] They seemed surprised. [WT: Yeah]

WT: You know what I do I walk in my class a few minutes early and everybody is sitting there like this and you know I talk to them, what are you all doing? I really ask them. Could you tell me what are you looking at? I mean, I really just, that it's [inaudible] they are checking this and checking that. I say you wanna be looking at everything ...

CB: Back in the day when people would look at their watch you'd say put your arms down and what time is it? [WT: Yeah] And they had no idea what the time was.

WT: Yeah, that's it.

[Background inaudible]

CB: I see that as almost you gotta stay in touch with what's on that screen. [WT: Yeah]

[Background inaudible]

Owen Faut (OF): One of the things that we did while you were president was have TGIF's once a month and I say that because I used to run them and you guys supported it without any problem whatsoever. But we would get 50 to 100 people at those TGIF's and we'd get to know each other and it wasn't just faculty, it was staff as well.

CB: And we used Fenner [OF: That's right] when....

OF: But they don't do that anymore and there are no social events for the faculty and staff any longer.

JR: Do they still have the faculty, the once a month faculty presentation to the faculty?

WT: No not anymore.

JR: Really, it's gone?

WT: And they don't have what they used to have, Women's Faculty Association. You know I was the president of the faculty....

CB: Women's and Wives Club.

WT: Yeah that was, that's [inaudible] another, but before that I was the president of the Wilkes University Faculty Association. It's gone. Yeah.

CB: Well, things change. [WT: Yeah] Things change.

OF: I had no idea the TGIF's came out of an association that you guys, I think was started, over at where [CB: Capin?] Capin, no, not Capin. [WT: Capin Hall?]

TG: No, well at least we had them, as long as I had them, in Fenner Hall.

CB: Fenner.

WT: Yeah.

OF: We started that [TG: Yeah] but the whole idea came out of, what's the organization you guys had? You started meeting and you started doing TGIF's and then you just decided....

JR: I don't know if it was an organization.

OF: But do it on an organized basis and it took off. [WT: Yeah]

TG: You brought the beer and you had an organization.

[Background inaudible]

CB: It starts with the beer.

OF: But again, you guys supported that without any problem, when all I did was hand in the bill to Mike Lennon and....

CB: [Inaudible] George and how we'd use the house we developed that while he was still using the back of the house for his wife, we built the front of the house as a faculty [inaudible]

JR: Maybe they ended when they tore down Fenner Hall?

OF: That was part of it. [WT: Yeah] It ended before that though.

TG: No, no, I think it kind of died out or something towards the end.

OF: Nobody ran it [inaudible] that's how it died.

TG: No, actually, I remember somebody else actually tried to keep it going and....

OF: Well, the administration started keeping it going over here, but they had it done by the food service and they wanted to be paid for that and they essentially said that nobody else should run it because they felt they should be doing it and they charged double, triple, [laughter]quadruple what the whole thing cost otherwise. And then it got too expensive.

CB: Well thinking of the cost let's, let's...Suzanna, I guess you can turn it off and well get our lunch.

SC: Yes.