

Oral History interview with Barbara King, 2019 April 5

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Christopher Breiseth (CB): And we've said nothing of importance here we've been talking about I Hear You Paint Houses. So, [laughter] so we're here with Barbara King.

Barbara King (BK): Hi Tim.

Timothy Gilmour (TG): Hi Barbara.

CB: I think it's the 5th of April 2019 and we are gathered with Barbara King who has a long history with Wilkes [BK: Hm] and Barbara I think you've heard a little bit about what we're trying to do [BK: Hmhn] and I just let me say that we're reaching out to different people who've had an impact on Wilkes and for whom Wilkes has had an impact. And just logically your name came up and you you cross so many different activities and relationships with key people [BK: Hm] and before we get into some of those people, because frankly one of the things I like is for you to do some word portraits of some of the key people, particularly early on, [BK: Hmhn] that goes back to Dr. Miche's [Michelini] era and later. But first introduce yourself in terms of where you're from, where you grew up, your Wilkes, your early Wilkes experience....

BK: My early Wilkes experience, well, I'm Barbara King. I grew up in Lehman Pennsylvania between three farms, I didn't live on one but I lived between the cow fields [laughter] and I went to Lake Lehman High School and I came to Wilkes right after the flood, in 72. And I will say that, and you'll laugh when you hear this, but when I first came to Wilkes it was the first time I ever crossed the street at a light by myself. [Laughter] Because, because I lived in the country and there were no lights, there were barely stop signs, so this was a big deal for me. And my first year here we had black boards and no carpeting and folding chairs, right Dr. Mike [Michelini]? And, guess what, nobody complained, everybody put up, right Jim? [James Rodechko (JR): That's right] Right Bob? [Robert Heaman (RH): Hmhn] Everybody put up with it. And you know, that was, that was ok. Nobody said anything and none of the first floors had desks or anything, there just wasn't anything there. And everything smelled like flood mud and still did for a while. [JR: Hmhn] And then I left at the end of my sophomore year, I worked for four years, then I came back in [inaudible] 78 I guess, I came back in 78, and I started working in Admissions while I was, while I was finishing. And pretty much worked full time when I think about it. And when I finished, I walked out of my last class in the summer, which was Ted Engles investments class and walked right into my office [laughter] and never left. So, it just kind of worked that way. And, let's see, I worked at Wilkes I worked at, I can't get all the years straight anymore but, I worked in Admissions for a long time under oh, three or four

different Deans of Admissions. I ran evening summer and weekend for about five years, following Jack Meyers, when he went to Admissions. Then I went to Student Affairs for two years, I think it was two, doing all kinds of special programs, like, what did I do? I'm trying to think, orientation, those kinds of things. Then when Paul was made Dean, oh, well when Paul was made Dean of Student Affairs then I went with him to Student Affairs and became the Associate Dean. And through all that time for 26 years I had international students and gave those up in the early 2000's just because it was too much to do that and be the Associate Dean at the same time, there was just too much going on, so. And I remained the Associate Dean and reported to Paul until I retired in 2015. So, I did a few things, I had ten offices.

CB: Was, was John Whitby your first?

BK: No, John Whitby had just been, had just left when I got there and so my first, my first Dean was Jerry Worry, who had come out of the Philosophy Department and not quite sure exactly how that happened, but he came out of the Philosophy Department and then we went to, oh, there was they hired a guy named Mark Davis, not the same Mark Davis that was in Public Relations. That didn't last long.

CB: To put it mildly.

BK: To put it mildly, right. That was in your time frame, right?

CB: So was Jerry Worry.

BK: So was Jerry Worry, well, you inherited him too. [CB: I did] [Laughter] And then I worked for Bernie, several times actually, I worked for Bernie several times. I'm trying to think if there was...

CB: Did you work during his first candidacy?

BK: Yep, and his second. Yep, so, yeah, I I worked for a lot of people. Like I said I had ten offices.

Francis Michelini (FM): Bernie went to Bloomsburg for a year or two.

BK: Right. And then he came back and then he went to....

CB: Fresno.

BK: Fresno, that's right. Cal State at Fresno, which from where he's retired now, but....

CB: I'm planning to see him because [BK: Are you?] we're going out to my niece's wedding in Fresno [BK: Oh, ok] Tony Shipula is fixing me up with....

BK: Ok. He retired about the same time I did, so....

CB: Did, did you know John Whitby?

BK: Yes. Yeah.

CB: Tell us about him. We've not talked about him at all.

BK: I didn't know him well. You know, when I, when I knew John it was later on in his career and so I can't, I can't really speak to a lot about John. You probably can speak to John more than I can...

CB: Can you talk about John Whitby. Because from my sense he was one of the, he along with [BK: Farley] Al Farley and George Ralston [BK: Right] and John Chwalek were among the biggies.

FM: Yeah, Let that be a separate train of thought after...

CB: Ok.

BK: Ok. Yeah, I didn't know him well enough to speak to....

FM: Before I forget things in between thoughts and I'm afraid to postpone [inaudible], but we've talked a lot about the racial participation and we used to have students from Hampton Institute [BK: Hm] come to Wilkes on an exchange with before there was a civil rights movement. [BK: Hmhn] You mentioned international students [BK: Right] what was that component of the Admissions picture, I really was not conscious of that.

BK: Well, I you know I think the first, because I did this research a long time ago, but I think the first international student came in about 1957 and I think that was Ahmed Kazini. And who had relatives that ran that run Abraham Carpets [FM: Oh yes, ok] and he, I think, was the first one and then there were a lot of different people who came, particularly Palestinians, in the beginning and some Chinese, that were mostly from Taiwan, and of course Dean Ralston did all that at the time, he did all of it at the time. And then in, I'm trying to think when it was, in the early 70's then we got a lot of Greek students and Iranian students and when I started working there were a lot of Iranian still here but of course, you know, well I shouldn't say when I started working, when I was working kind of part time there, there were a lot of Iranian students, of course, that was during the Iranian crisis.

FM: Is that when Umid came?

BK: He came in 65. There were a lot of Greek students that came in at that time, yeah. And the first female graduate in Engineering was a Greek student. Margharita she was the first, she was the first female graduate, in the first class, I might add. So, then then it started to expand which is kind of how I got involved, well, I sort of got involved in it that way. Part of it was Jerry Worry and I didn't see eye to eye all the time so as a punishment he gave me international because nobody wanted to work with it. And which, you know, [chuckle] turned out to be pretty fortuitous in my life to say the least. So thanks Jerry. [Laughter] And I'll explain that later, but

then we started to get more students, especially Engineering, was especially Engineering and then in the mid 80's we got like 25, remember we got 25 Malaysians [CB: Malaysians] at one time, which was a big shock to the system.

CB: Without overcoats.

BK: Without overcoats in the middle of January, yes [laugh] that was aye ya yi.

CB: Below zero.

BK: Yes, below zero it was awful. Poor guys. Huh?

FM: [Inaudible]

BK: Huh? Because they came in the middle of January and they just came without...

FM: How did they get here at Wilkes?

BK: Engineering. It was Umid had something to do with it.

FM: [Inaudible] spreads through an undergrad?

BK: Well, I don't know exactly, Umid had something to do with it but I'm not exactly sure how it all came about.

CB: There, there, wasn't there a corporation in Malaysia, electrical engineering [BK: That was, yeah,] that wanted them [BK: American education] an American education?

BK: Yep. Yep. And they, and they liked our program. I think they liked it because it was small and a smaller town and not sending them out into Las Angeles or something like that. It worked out well.

CB: Maybe, maybe Tim knows this because he cinched the thing with Jay Sidhu but Jay....

TG: I was just thinking about this.

CB: Jay came....

BK: He was early too. He was in the early 70's.

CB: George Ralston made it possible [BK: Yep] for him to come [BK: Yep] but that had to go back....

BK: That, Jay Sidhu I think was in school when I was in school. But, it was early 70's, very early 70's.

CB: Ok.

BK: Yeah.

TG: The date was 72. Is the one I recollect, but I could be wrong.

BK: No I think you're right.

CB: So right at the end of the flood.

BK: Yes. Yeah.

TG: Yeah and he, yeah, he came [background noise] in I think he actually made the choice. He wanted an MBA and Wilkes was the only one that he applied to that would give him financial aid, which he needed [CB: Right} and so that's why he came to Wilkes.

CB: Yep and that I think was George because I remember Jay telling this when I first, I got him to come to campus because of Ron Simms then son in law, Rose?

BK: Yeah.

TG: Yeah.

FM: Rick Roth.

CB: And Rick said to me you know Jay Sidhu has never been asked to come back to Wilkes and he feels he owes everything to, so I immediately [BK: Hm] lined up to have him come and then I went down to visit him in Reading [BK: Hmhn] probably four times [BK: Hmhn] and then Tim really pulled him in. [BK: Right] That was huge for Jay [BK: Hmhn] it was wonderful for Jay as well as for Wilkes, but there were, weren't there foreign students back in an earlier period? Mike [Michellini]? My sense is that George Ralston had....

BK: Yeah, there were. From the 50's, late 50's on there were always international students, but you know, it might have been three, four, you know, that that kind of thing. I, I wasn't a lot at one time.

CB: Do you have any, and I know it's before your time because you dealt with, but do you know anything about the network that we used....

BK: I think it was mostly word of mouth, don't you?

FM: My recollection and, forgive me if I'm off base, because Messiah College was one that I got to know very well that had missionary outreaches in many countries [background noise] and I have a feeling that George, who was very active [BK: Right] with his church and with principled [BK: Right] opportunities, [BK: Right and Rotary, right?] may well have exploited the relationships with Julie Ayers and whoever the other ministers were [BK: Right] who had

missions, who would say I've got a real smart kid it's a crime that he's living here and that opportunity came indirectly that way.

BK: Right. That could very well be.

FM: I don't, I'm surprised they even identified a position that you described, that you [inaudible], but it doesn't surprise me.

BK: Well, after a while they had to because immigration regulations started to get stricter [FM: Right] [TG: Yeah] and it wasn't, you know, it used to be you could give scholarship money and you could do that, well you can't do that so easily anymore and it started to get that way in the 80's and so, I think that's one reason why, that's one reason why they made me the advisor. At first I was just doing the admissions but then they made me the advisor and I think that's why because they just, it took more time to work with all the students then it did earlier on. You know, before you could treat them like any other student but then the regulations got so and now they're so involved it's unbelievable.

CB: One of those contacts, just to carry on the theme you suggested, was Shel Morostein [BK: Hmm] who knew the Taiwanese, Chinese guy who lived right next to him on West River Street. [BK: Ok] And they recruited a young lady in Taiwan whose father was the Finance Minister [BK: Hmhn] and that led to the trip that Bernie and Mahmoud and I took [BK: Oh, ok] out to Taiwan [BK: Ok] where we were shepherded around by the girl's father [BK: Hmhn] and he was, he was the Finance Minister of Taiwan, [BK: Hmhn] excuse me Taipei, [BK: Taipei, yeah] and we were, we had open access [BK: Hmhn] to the whole kit and caboodle. So that was one, and Mahmoud worked on that relationship [BK: Hmhn] as I think he did on some others. [BK: Hmhn, yeah I think he did too] What, one of the things that, and Tim I salute you on this, we worked very hard in my 17 years to diversify the student body [BK: Right] and it is so beautifully diverse right now you can't be on campus without.... [BK: It's unbelievable isn't it?] It's fantastic. [BK: Yep] Both to you, Barbara, with your contact with the foreign students, but also your broader world were advising students and Tim, you from your presidency how did the diversity thing finally start to succeed, big time?

[Background noise]

BK: That's a good question. Well, what do you think Tim?

TG: Well, I think we certainly made strong efforts in a variety of the areas to attract students, but to be honest with you Chris, I never thought we were quite as successful with this as I would have liked us to have been. It remains in my mind, Barbara you can check me on this, we were at our highest maybe 8% [BK: Hmm] diverse [BK: Right] and that included a whole variety of different segments of students. And I think, I just felt that that we made some progress, but and it wasn't really bad when you looked at us in comparison to other institutions in Northeastern Pennsylvania, [background noise] but, nevertheless, I would have liked to have done a little better. And, but I think everybody during the time I was doing the presidency, I'm talking about everybody in our situation was trying to increase diversity, and we, I guess, in part because our institution, in part because of things that you were doing Barbara early on I think we actually

then moved the responsibility over to that center, but nevertheless, the point is that I think there was something of a record and we had some strategic things that we did to reach out. You recall Barbara, the Saudi students [BK: Yep, oh yes] we had kind of a mixed bag, but [BK: Yeah] it was very lucrative. [BK: Yeah, I think it still is actually] Are the, yeah, I don't what happened there because the Saudi situation had become so fraught with issues now, but and in fact when you looked at all this there was, to me there was a common theme. When I was there which was that Wilkes was appealing because it had a an interesting mix of programs and also because and, this would be something like the Saudi students, it was mentioned earlier Wilkes-Barre was viewed as a relatively safe place [BK: Right] compared to the big cities [BK: Yep] and so you had those advantages and that may have counted for our success there.

BK: Yeah, I think that's true. I'm sorry.

TG: I will say that the, and excuse me Barbara, my impression is in the last two years, for a whole variety of reasons, the international student thing has become something of a challenge so there's been a significant decline in the number of students coming to the US and so, I think those enrollments have declined. I don't know what's happened to Wilkes, but overall, I think, for instance, Chinese students [BK: Right] are far fewer than they were when during my term. We had a fair number. [BK: Oh, yeah we did] And they, a lot of them came for engineering, you know, that was the big deal. [BK: Right, engineering or business, generally] Yes.

BK: And of course, that's historically been the case with international students in this country. You know, they [TG: Right. Right] it's very difficult to sell, as much as we believe in it, it's very difficult to sell the liberal arts to a place like China or the Middle East where they've had liberal arts since biblical times. I mean it's really, it's really pretty difficult to sell that so, you know, what they want is what they can turn into dollars or, whatever they are, dinars or, whatever, but, you know, that's always been the case with international. You'll go through very few, if you went through the lists of international students from years ago you find very few people who are not in the business or science realm. I mean they're almost all are and it still, I'm sure it's still that way, I can't imagine it's not.

FM: I'm [inaudible] forced to think back over faculty [BK: Hmm] because that's kind of where I grew up in on the campus and I'm thinking there were always a diverse group of foreign professors on our faculty too. [Background noise] [BK: Right] I automatically think of inheriting the WW2 ex-patriots from Europe [BK: Yeah] who were here when I got here. Like [inaudible] Semilevitch, Vuijicas, and so on. But we had Bing Wong. We had the females, I can't always think of their names, but....

JR: Waghiya.

BK: Waghiya.

CB: Waghiya Taylor.

FM: Yeah, Waghiya Taylor. There was always an, inadvertently I think, a role model that I think a student kind of would not even realize but it made them feel, oh I can survive here [BK:

Right] because, after all, they my professor of economics is an [BK: Hmhn] Iranian woman or an Egyptian. Mahmoud Fahmey [BK: Right]. So maybe a component of whatever this history is written we should make a mental [background noise] note to kind of address that, go back over catalogues see what was here, [BK: Mmm] but I bet you that many an international student stayed and thrived at Wilkes because they saw some role models.

BK: Well, I'm sure that's probably true there was Dr. Kaslas, [FM: Hmhn] remember Dr. Kaslas?

CB: Dr. Kaslas.

BK: Yeah, I had him for History.

JR: Luitzas.

BK: The Luitzas.

FM: Hmhn.

BK: And...

JR: Moravick

BK: Oh, Dr. Moravick he was the bane of my existence but yes, Dr. Moravick. [Laughter] Aye yah yi.

CB: How about Mrs. Moravick?

BK: Mrs. Moravick? [CB: Yes] I did not know Mrs. Moravick

CB: We knew her well.

BK: Yeah I don't know. I can still see Dr. Moravick

CB: This is an earlier segue that I thought we had, but I have said, and Molly can testify to this she's listened to all the tapes, I've said that the most remarkable person I knew at Wilkes was Umid Nejib and that [BK: That] he was a more cosmopolitan person than anyone else around, not excepting me, and he there's a lot he knew we never knew. [Laughter] [BK: Yeah, well that's true] And he built engineering here [BK: Oh no doubt] and [FM: Hmhn] it was staffed by an international faculty [BK: Yes] [TG: Right, right] that anyone studying Wilkes at the time would say well that's the most singular most interesting part of Wilkes are the international teachers in Engineering. [BK: Engineering, right] And let that be a segue and I'm not asking about your private life with him, [BK: No] but I hope we'll talk about it, but your understanding of what Umid did to build engineering, how he was, how he used the networks that he had to recruit the people. [BK: Right] And then we'll get into some of the dynamics of those people with each other, which is fascinating. [BK: It is interesting] Yes. [Laughter] So, Umid's

leadership role of engineering and what it meant to this place in terms of its international face. And he was a good poet.

BK: And he was a good poet. [Laugh]

TG: Chris, Chris?

CB: Yes?

TG: Before she starts, just maybe for my own edification. My understanding is that Engineering started in answer to a desire to attract, I think it was RCA. [CB: RCA, yeah 59] [BK: Hmhn] Yeah, so I don't know who can do this, but I'd be interested, so my impression is that happened and then maybe Wayne came in and then Umid came in? How did that....

CB: Well, let's hear Dr.... Let's get Dr. Mike [Michellini] first.

BK: Dr. Mike [Michellini] knows that better than I do.

FM: There was an interesting relationship between Physics and Engineering and Mathematics and you it's hard for you to conceive of, but think of three manned departments, man as persons. [BK: Right] [TG: Right] But, Wilkes had a three-person Biology department: Umiskmiak, Chuck Reif and me and then came.... [CB: Les Turoczi] [JR: Grace Kimball] No, before Les Turoczi, well anyway I'm not, but in Physics and Engineering there was the one two year program that transcended the four year graduation in 1947 were Physics and Engineering. They stayed two year programs and the faculty were Florence Hall in Physics, Cromwell Thomas, [BK: Hmhn] who was an interesting cross disciplinarian with Engineering from Civil Engineering I believe he had his education at Penn State, I'm not sure. But Cromwell was touting the strength of composite beam construction from wood versus steel as the most cost effective strength element in building that was being ignored and I read something within the past year in a magazine that affirms exactly that. [BK: Hmhn] That they have done a building in New York City where they have to go up only six stories to do something and they found that using the plastic layered wood, not plastic, but wood, what do you call it? [TG: Laminated] [CB: Laminated] Laminated with things [inaudible]. [BK: Yeah] So Cromwell Thomas was no dummy [BK: No] and his wife was a school superintendent or principal, very high up, and I think the only reason Cromwell stayed at Wilkes was because his wife had a very [background noise] significant job in the community. But he was a very smart man he went to every wrestling match [BK: Yeah] that there was, [background noise] but his impact on engineering and mathematics should not be forgotten.

BK: Oh, Umid would say that too.

FM: Because those were two person departments [BK: Hmhn] and Tommy Richards and somebody in Math and a lot of them non everything but the doctorate, ABD's came [BK: Hmhn] to Wilkes [TG: Hmhn] that were in transition in their own careers and didn't have the dissertations, you know the [inaudible]

CB: Was Boyd Earl part of that?

FM: Boyd Earl was, but those are the kinds of names that we look [BK: Hmhn, yeah] through bulletins, that should be addressed in trying to understand the foundations because Umid didn't walk into a vacuum. [BK: No, he didn't. No, that's right] But, he walked into people who had been teaching some damn good physics. [BK: Right] And he got them, you never heard anybody fired by Umid, they always worked with him and well, maybe afterwards. [Inaudible] [Laughter] My point is there was a knowledge base. [BK: Yes, yes] And Umid Nejib could have just as soon been gone in the first year as not [BK: Yeah] except for a lot of other things. Wilkes was an environment for teaching and for research that was so welcoming to new courses to new ideas. I spoke at the eulogy at Umid's funeral, [BK: Hmhn] I don't know if you remember, and what I did was go back through the college bulletins when he came and what he had done. [BK: Hmhn] Two thirds of the courses in Math and Engineering changed under his leadership. Two thirds of the whole, you can't find that in English or Biology, I don't think. But that was the ferment that was going on at the time, which I don't believe is a digression from your [BK: No, it's not] story, it's part [BK: Oh, it's definitely part of it] of what created that kind of environment [BK: Right] and that's kind of what we've been developing what was unique about Wilkes that made it [BK: Right] what it is today [BK: Right] and that acceptance of new people [BK: New people] new roles....

BK: And he was ABD when he came and he was working on his doctorate and Dr. Farley told him that, I guess, that they wanted to start a four [background noise] year program and or maybe it was you, and wanted to start a four-year program so that's why. And then he worked with RCA and they, you know developed this four-year program and then he left, he was he was only going to stay until he was finished his dissertation. [FM: I know, I was too] Yeah, but you were too [laughter] and.... [FM: For a year that's all] Right, and so, [inaudible] then when he finished, he was going back to Baghdad because he was going to work for Westinghouse and he already had one child, they were going back to Baghdad and he had a job with Westinghouse so they did, they went back. And when he was leaving Dr. Farley said to him, he handed Dr. Farley his resignation letter and Dr. Farley said, "Well, I'm just going to put this in my drawer this is your just on leave." And he said, "Well, I didn't know what leave was." So he said, [laughter] "Oh, ok." And so that was that and off he went to Baghdad with no intention of coming back. Well then, they had their second child who had a heart problem and they couldn't get it fixed in they couldn't get it fixed in the Middle East. By then Umid's green card had run out and so they had to come back to the states to bring Omar back to get his heart problem fixed and he was having a hard time, they were giving him a hard time, his wife was an American, but they were giving him a hard time, so he didn't know what else to do so he called Dr. Farley and he said, because Dr. Farley knew everybody. So, he called Dr. Farley and said you know can you help me out here because I've got a real problem and he said Ok and somehow Dr. Farley pulled some kind of strings, got him into the country, and he said, "I always felt that I owed Dr. Farley so I went back to Wilkes." And that's....

CB: I never heard that story.

BK: And that's how he ended up back at Wilkes. [TG: That's interesting] Yeah, and and [TG: So...], what Tim?

TG: I just wanted to ask, there's a lot of really interesting stuff there. Did the two-year program, was that done for RCA or was it the four-year program that Umid developed the answer to that?

FM: We had the two-year program and Dr. Farley went with the Chamber of Commerce people to New York City to a meeting of the board of RCA at which they were considering locations to build a new transistor production facility. [TG: Right] And, so [background noise] Dr. Farley accompanied, because one of their interests was what educational support for our young engineers [TG: Right] and we had a two-year engineering program and two-year physics, at the time. But I was Academic Dean then because when he came back from New York City he came into my office, which was very unusual, because I usually went into his office and he said, "Mike [Michellini], we have to have a Bachelor's Degree programs in Physics and Engineering and Master's Degree programs in Chemistry and Mathematics by next semester, the beginning of next semester." [Laughter] [TG: No sweat] I remember, I'm not even sure I even had that much experience in recruiting no less building curriculum, but it the answer, the background of his, he made a commitment to the Board of RCA when everything else had been said and done and Wilkes-Barre had not been selected Dr. Farley went and asked, they why not? [Laugh] Sam Rosenberg had worked [background noise] with the labor management, the women's garment workers, labor was supportive of it, why not? And, apparently, one of the vice presidents leaned back and said you have no opportunity for our young engineers or people to progress in their fields. [BK: Hmm] Which was true. Where would they go to take graduate courses? [BK: Right] And so Dr. Farley said I made a commitment [background noise] that we would have, [BK: Laugh] you know, training, a Bachelor's Degree in Engineering [laughter] and Physics and a Master's Degree [background noise] to get RCA to come here and they're coming and we're going... [Inaudible] [Laughter]

BK: Things, times have changed, huh?

FM: That's the story.

[Laughter]

CB: There was a great RCA guy, who was part of that discussion, who remained very close to Wilkes. I got to know him just before he died and he recommended to me getting Roy Pollack on our board and Roy was part of the RCA group, subsequently was killed in a helicopter accident off of Cancun, but [background noise] he told this story from RCA's point of view and it's a great story

FM: Ok, Tim, Chris is taking a drink of water to get his voice back, but it's about the RCA side of that engagement [background noise] with Dr. Farley. I only ever heard that one side. So what did he say?

CB: Well, that they, RCA knew that they could work with us and this location was great because, first of all, the anthracite coal industry was collapsing at that point, 59, and [TG: Yeah] the textile field was not all that strong either, although it was the replacement [TG: Yeah] for anthracite coal and railroads. So, they had this great labor force that was to be worked with and

already we had the Rosenbergs and the Hugo Maileys to show how committed this institution was to the local economy and to the local political culture. So I got Roy Pollack to come on the board, he was very generous to Wilkes by the way, because of that that early RCA commitment and the guy, who you would have known because I think he was on the Wilkes board from RCA, lovely man, and I visited him in his home with Roy Pollack they regarded this as one of their greatest stories. That they got this little college [BK: Hmhn] to commit and at that point and Umid used to know these statistics, [BK: Yeah] a high percentage of their entire skilled work force in Mountaintop went through Wilkes. [BK: Hmm] So I don't think there's a more dramatic, well, you gotta weigh it with Hahnemann Healthcare, but these are the two great commitments that pushed us to being a university [BK: Hmhn] at the graduate level. [BK: Right] And but now where does Umid come into this? At what stage?

BK: When they were developing the four-year program is when he came [TG: Yeah] was brought in at that point.

FM: It was in the early 60's because [background noise] I don't think I was Academic Dean at the time, but I had research projects going was in Stark Hall and I remember Dr. Farley coming to the department and saying this is the commitment I made to RCA [BK: Hmhn] and we need to build some new facilities. [BK: Right] So the addition to Stark Hall that crossed the T by Chase Hall was the first addition to the first newly constructed [laugh] building other than the gymnasium [BK: Right] that Wilkes had ever built. And [TG: And engineering...inaudible] it used Federal money and because the [background noise] installation, the assignation of John Kennedy and the installation of Vice President [BK: Johnson] [CB: Johnson, Lyndon Johnson] Lyndon Johnson, Mrs. Johnson's [background noise] first public appearance [BK: Hmhn] after the ascendancy of her husband, [background noise] the president didn't leave Washington for a while, [BK: Right] after the assignation and they still didn't understand it all, apparently. But she came to provide the honors because there was Federal money involved in getting RCA in, I guess Max Rosenberg enough people knew connections in Washington, so it was 1964 [background noise] that that building, and the program must have already been in, so I'm trying to reconstruct it and that would have been...

BK: Well, Umid came in 65 [FM: Yeah, so that...] and it was probably the fall of 64 and so, yeah, that's when that's when he came in. The first four-year class in electrical graduated in 73.

FM: That makes sense.

BK: Yeah

FM: Because I was part of it as Dean in the development of the programs [BK: Right] and the hiring of faculty, [BK: Yep] but what I did was not part of the decision making because I remember Dr. Farley telling me that for some reason.

CB: But from what Barbara said you graduated your first four-year engineers while you're still here as president, correct?

BK: Oh yeah. Yeah. And, as I said, the first class had a female and it was the same year Lehigh had their first female graduate and it was our first class. But Lehigh's first graduate was and she happened to have been a Wilkes-Barre person.

CB: Now where does John Karakesh come into this?

BK: Oh God, I forgot about, oh my Gosh I can't remember. I forgot about that name all together.

CB: John Karakesh was at Lehigh [BK: Right] and he and Umid were very close [BK: Yep] and he was [BK: God, I can't remember] raised in Greece but he was Turk [BK: I can't, isn't that funny] or vice versus. [BK: I can't remember] He was an Olympic athlete, [BK: Yeah] he got a gold medal, and philosophically a real liberal arts humanitarian.

BK: Like Umid.

CB: Like Umid. [BK: Right] And Umid got him in here and we gave him an honorary doctorate.

BK: I remember that and do you know that I just cannot remember.

CB: And I remember writing that citation. [BK: Yep] But he was very proud with the Wilkes program. [BK: Yeah] Even coming from lofty Lehigh he felt we did things for our students that they weren't doing at Lehigh. [BK: Right] So John was just one of those people that Umid had in his quiver [BK: Right] to bring to enrich this place. [BK: Right] Which I think there are very few people at Wilkes [BK: For what he did] had any appreciation of how cosmopolitan [TG: Right] Umid was and how much he enriched this environment.

BK: Well, I think people thought he, Bob you knew him, [RH: Yeah] but I think a lot of people thought he was just an engineer and you know he had been raised in a family that was very, very liberal arts oriented and was, you know, had gone to the old Jesuit high school and that [laugh] so he had a great appreciation for that. He, actually, he was very much against engineering programs that did not have a [CB: Right] liberal arts component because he just thought it wasn't it, you know, education was not complete if you didn't do that.

CB: That's why he fit perfectly with the Wilkes paradigm.

BK: Well, that's right, that's right.

CB: It was the most professional program we had and he wanted the liberal arts involved [BK: Oh] and you guys tilted over the core curriculum requirements as we revamped all that. And how much, but he built liberal arts into the engineering departments, [BK: Yes] things that other students at Wilkes were not doing [BK: Right] that were liberal arts oriented that he wanted them to do.

BK: Right. And he always felt that having an international faculty, whether it was intentional or not was immaterial, but he always felt that having an international faculty was gonna help his students in terms of their ability to work with a diverse population which, you know, that's, God that's so paramount now, you know. But [TG: Oh, yeah] he always felt very strongly about that that, you know, they had to learn to deal with different cultures and, you know, there were some characters to deal with, let's face it. [Laughter]

CB: And we can get into some of those in detail. Say a little about his family. His father's position.

BK: Umid's father was a, well first of all, when he was young, he was a Kurdish freedom fighter and but he became a governor and administer of the interior, which is slightly different than the minister of the interior here, but he became a governor to one of the areas of Iraq and under the king. And then in 57 when there was a revolution, not a revolution, an overthrow, the king was assassinated and all that sort of thing, you know, then he was kind of, you know, then he was kind of out. But had been, you know, had travelled all over the world, spoke English very well. Had been, represented the country in many different places. His mom was a school teacher, who, well she founded a girl's elementary school in an area where there had not been female education, which was interesting. His sisters were both college university graduates, I mean, that was not even an issue in their house. They, as well as his brothers. And they were just a very, what, very learned and I'm trying to think of the other word, family, it was not what people think of as an Arabic family. You know that's what always aggravated me because people think oh, Arabs, the women are three steps behind, well, forget it in their family that was not the case.

CB: Or with his daughter.

BK: Nor with his daughter, that's right. And so it was a very, you know, his education, when he went to the University of Baghdad only the poor kids lived in the residence hall, in the dormitory, which was really a dormitory. But his father made him live in the dormitory so that he knew what, how [FM: Hmm] everybody else lived. And so that was a different, whole different, you know, experience as well. And his dad was a Kurd. And....

CB: Was his mother?

BK: No.

CB: That's what I thought.

BK: No, his mother was an Arab, his father was Kurdish from Sulaymaniyah. And so he had, you know, two different cultures in that family because they are widely variant cultures, as far as that goes. So he grew up kind of in both, both environments there and, you know, had uncles that lived in Turkey and all over the place so, I mean, he had gotten quite a lot of experience at that at a young age.

CB: And he was in the air force?

BK: And he was in the air force.

FM: I, you know, I, just mentally, there must be telepathy going because my next question was to say I thought I understood that Umid was a fighter pilot or some kind....

JR: Yep.

BK: With MiG's. At that time the Russians were working with the Iraqi's and, a lot, and so that's why they flew MiG's. [FM: Hmhn] And we had a MiG model here, at home, and I took it over to ROTC and it's in ROTC now. [Laughter] And then we had an autographed poster of, autographed, whatever it was, by Chuck Yeager and one of the plane Chuck Yeager broke the sound barrier with it was autographed actually by Chuck Yeager and the picture of him autographing it and they are also over in ROTC, they were happy to have that. So yeah, he did....

FM: Where?

BK: ROTC. I took it over to ROTC

FM: Oh, our ROTC.

BK: Yeah, our ROTC. Yeah, yeah. So, yeah, I mean, he had a very diverse background and it wasn't, you know, he was the top graduate in his class from the University of Baghdad of all thousands of people.

CB: You may not want to answer this. Is there anything that you can tell us about the anti Saddam Hussein efforts that Umid was part of? And don't, if you don't want to talk about it...

BK: No, it's not that. It wasn't anti-Saddam Hussein because it was before Saddam Hussein and they were in... After the after the king was overthrown, you know, then there was another group came in and there was a counter revolution and somehow or another he was involved in that kind of stuff and I never really got the whole deal because he just didn't think I really needed to know all that. All I know is that one time we were in New York City, a friend of his was in town who was working for Iraqi Airlines, and this was, you know, when Iraqi Airlines was still coming into the states and so we went out to dinner and this guy, Adnon, saying remember when we used to hide those rifles in your mother's couch? [Laughter] [Background noise] And I thought, and he said, "You know Adnon I don't think we need to talk about this right now." [Laughter] And I'm thinking, wait a minute! Wait a minute! And then Adnon said, "You're not going to believe what happened to me, Umid." He said, "About a year ago this black car came up to our office and they took me in the car and they flew me and I had a blind fold and they drove me around in Baghdad and then they took me in somewhere and they asked me all these questions and then they put a blind fold on me and they took me back and they redeposited me in my office." And I said, "Oh, isn't that wonderful." [Laughter] And I said, "Well, I'm just so happy to hear all that." [Laughter] And I said, "Well, no black limousines better pull up in Dallas that's all I can say." Yeah. So, I don't know a whole lot about that [laugh] and none of them are real

forthcoming about that because I've tried to get it out of my brothers in law too and I don't get too much out of them, so.

CB: Well, my sense of the little bit conversation with him that he was very much in touch with anti-Saddam forces.

BK: Well, yeah, I'm sure.

CB: There was a trip he took that was kind of undescribed that I think...

BK: Yeah.

CB: Anyway, I was told this before, but I don't know that Tim has heard it and I think it's very relevant to how the Engineering and the Environmental Sciences developed. When I was selected and before I took over on the first of July, I went to an ACE conference for new presidents in Washington and before I went Jerry Hardigan, who was then the Dean, called and said that, just all of a sudden, three Physicists were not going to be coming back in the fall. One was an alcoholic problem; another was taking an unexpected leave and so he wanted to know how many Physicists we should hire. Well, I said, "I think, I think I should come and talk about this." So Jerry Harding and Umid and I don't know what brought them together on this, I assume it was all Umid's cunning. Brought me together with Brian Redmond [BK: Hmhn] and I think Walter Placek, not Fred Bellas. [BK: Probably] And we had in Weckesser Hall a two-hour conversation in which Umid recommended that Engineering be brought together with Earth and Environmental Sciences and Physics [BK: Hmm] and that create a kind of interdisciplinary [BK: Hmhn] school. [BK: Hmmm] I don't think the word was used and at the end of that two hours I said let's do this. [BK: Hmhn] We're not going to hire any Physicists. [BK: Right] We're gonna look at what do we have to hire in Environmental Science and in Engineering. [BK: Right] So I feel that myself and Umid, [BK: Hmhn] even before I took over, [BK: Hmhn] which is why I say you know I learned to trust the guy, not always easy to do, because he was shifter, wilier than anyone else on this campus. But that [BK: Honest as the day is long] but that became the model that the strategic planning committee then, which was manned, not womaned by department chairs [BK: Hmhn] came up with the three schools [BK: Right] what we already had the critical school, [BK: Right] which Umid had developed [BK: Right] in his first meeting with me.

BK: Yeah, I remember him saying to me, I, they gave me, what, I'm trying to think, he was Engineering Chair at the time, and he said oh, they gave me Physics. I said, "Are you crazy?" [Laughter] What, Physics?

[Laughter]

CB: He argued for that because he knew politically that only if you're not gonna hire Physics faculty [BK: Right] then you're gonna use those slots in Environmental Science [BK: Yeah] and in Engineering [BK: Right] he had to take on that burden. [BK: Right] Which was a real burden.

BK: Well, I, I mean, it was, yeah, I know, it was the personalities involved that I thought....

JR: It touches on a discussion I had yesterday with Brian Whitman. I raised the question, what happened to Physics nationally? [BK: Yeah] You know when I was in graduate school half the country, guys there were majoring in Physics [BK: Physics, right] [CB: Nuclear Physics] and then it kind of disappeared. [BK: Yeah] And Brian's point was Engineering became more important than Physics. [BK: Then Physics, right] [Background noise] And just....

TG: Yeah, when you look at what happened....

CB: Go ahead Tim.

TG: Well, I was just going to say when you look at Engineering, particularly in its development, in recent years there's the line between Physics and particularly Electrical, but really, I believe, the materials and so on, the lines are so blurred that [BK: Hmm] and frankly, you know, the jobs and the money are in the engineering jobs, [BK: Right] not in the theoretical jobs. [BK: Right] I don't think anybody would really want to say this, but I think there's a feeling that Physics has, until recently, had most of its major developments in that there were fewer people needed to essentially work it, but now with the, I can't think of what the new sort of thinking about Physics in two worlds and so on, but now there's some new interest in development. But, but I did want to add one thing so, if I were telling this story there was a two year program at Wilkes, that was an Associate degree program in Engineering, that then evolved and I think probably it was significantly changed to become a four year program to address the need and the Master's program, to address the needs of RCA...

BC: You know Electrical.

TG: In the 60's and then Electrical.

BC: Right.

TG: And then the thing that you're talking about that Umid did that got you to do Chris, was though Environmental, right?

BC: Right.

TG: And I always wondered why Environmental and Mechanical and Electrical, I believe, were separate, that sort of question.

BK: I don't know.

CB: Well, I'm not sure I can handle all that, but at the time of this meeting in 84...

TG: You've been President Chris you should be able to handle anything.

[Laughter]

CB: Thanks Tim.

[Laughter]

CB: Was, I don't know what the Environmental Science departments relationship, for example to Biology, Mike [Michelini] at this at this time. But the way it came out of that meeting was that we that Environmental Engineering was going to be part of the, of the activity. My first, I was given two board positions to recommend and I recommended Keith Spalding from [TG: Yeah] Franklin and Marshall and Robert Spraul, [TG: Yeah] who at that point was the president of the University of Rochester and who had been the founder of ARPA and he was a Deep Springs Telluride guy that I knew very well. [TG: Ah, yeah] And I got Bob to come down precisely to say can we launch Environmental Engineering and Environmental Science, do we, do we have the strength? And he was very skeptical [TG: Hmm] and, of course, what was involved was his meeting with Umid. And so, the two of them spent some very productive time after which Spraul said I think you can do it. And that's what brought [BK: Hmhn] those two fields together under Umid's leadership. And we were....

TG: Was it, was it, was it in part to address the significant environmental problems that existed in North East Pennsylvania?

CB: Yes.

BK: Yes. Yes.

CB: That was huge.

TG: I wonder if that wasn't the driver. I always thought that was it. I...

BK: I think that's part, I think that's partly true, Tim, I think that everybody was getting so concerned about the environment at that point in time, [TG: Yeah yeah] not only here, but everywhere. And I think that was a [TG: inaudible] big spur on that as well.

CB: Well, and I have a hard time separating this chronologically. I, of course, got involved with the North East Conservancy and at the very heart of that was building wetlands to help clean up the toxic river [BK: Yeah] of [TG: Right] [BK: Yeah] and so we were we were deeply, Brian Redmond [finger snaps] and who's the other guy, still very active on the faculty who I spent time with yesterday? Were into the wetlands issues and....

JR: Ken Klemow?

CB: Ken Klemow. [BK: Ken Kelmow] [TG: Yeah] so Ken was a a driving force on that side and Brian was dealing with radon so we [BK: Right] [TG: Yeah] needed a testing point for radon [BK: Yep] and there we had to learn how to deal with potential private company [BK: Yep] involving our faculty [BK: Yep] and the university [background noise] in terms of electrical property and the responsibilities as well rights. But I think the local environmental

degradation was an incentive [BK: Hmhn] comparable to what RCA solid state's physics plant was to push us into Engineering. [BK: Yep] Umid brought those two together conceptually [BK: Right] and became the leader and he was the first Dean, along with you, [BK: Hmhn] and who was our third?

JR: Ted.

BK: Ted.

JR: Ted Engle.

CB: Ted. And that became our organizational structure, [BK: Yep] with variations and it's been ever since, so. That first meeting, as I look back on my time, [BK: Hmhn] was the crucial....

FM: I, I....

JR: By the way Mechanical Engineering today as it gets more theoretical [BK: Could be] Applied Engineering is the hands-on side. I know this I know this from my grandson [BK: Grandson, right] he's very...

BK: Well yeah, you would know more than I do at this [inaudible]

JR: I, I don't think it always was that way.

BK: No. I don't think, you're right.

FM: Just, just for the record because I'm an old fogey, let me recap what I tell as my story in the post WWII world of the sciences because I'm seeing threads directly [BK: Right] leading into this kind of conversation that you [CB: Great, great] had 25, 30 years later. When I came out of the service in 1946, I went back to Seton Hall, got an undergraduate degree in chemistry for no earthly reason except I think because Nutley had a lot of drug companies and there were a lot of chemists who were trying to pick up a few bucks teaching an evening course or something. But for some reason I got a degree in chemistry with no particular goal in mind except who was encouraged to apply to medical school. [Background noise] Well, of course, medical schools which had a finite number of seats [inaudible] pre-war and post war had 4000 applicants per spot from guys that had been medics in WWII and were fully prepared to become doctors and by God your social or economic standing was not going to determine whether you went to medical school or not. So, there was tremendous upheaval in the whole approach to undergraduate science. The nuclear bomb, which was top secret, of course. Radar, which was all top secret, was all secret except to the people who had done the research, like in Tuxedo Park, through the 30's and had laid the seeds at MIT and at Caltech, particularly for the entire molecular atomic revolution in man's understanding of nature. [BK: Hmm] That's as blunt as you can say it. [Background noise] When I got to the University of Pennsylvania in 1950 in their graduate department professors had their doors locked against younger professors who came in. The guys who had written the textbooks in Physiology, Bill Syfferus, the ones who had built, written the

textbooks, my advisor, I can't come up with the name now, but the senior faculty members at the University of Pennsylvania who had written the textbooks in their fields of specialization were no longer relevant in the academic world. [BK: Hmm] And if you had the misfortune of being a graduate student assigned to one of them you were doomed to never complete your program. [BK: Wow] Because the new comers [background noise] and the faculty at Penn in 1950...52, when I was actively aware of them, were basically already 50/50 molecular. The disciplines like Physics, [background noise] Chemistry, Mathematics, Engineering, all were fragmented. You had Biophysics, Biochemistry, Physical Chemistry [BK: Yeah] you had already the seeds of the breaking apart of distinct disciplines. [BK: Hmhn, Oh I understand] Like we were talking about Chemistry, Physics, Biology [BK: Right] department, [inaudible] that was done.

BK: Hmm.

TG: Yeah. Yeah.

FM: And the whole world changed. Now along comes the 60's [background noise] and Alvin Brook [BK: I remember him, yep] UCH was hired as a Physics professor, I think I may have hired him, I'm not sure. [BK: Hmm] But he had the [background noise] novel idea of offering a course in Environmental [BK: Environmental. Yeah] Science and of course nobody listened to him, nobody knew what it was. And I'm not sure when the Knox Mine disaster happened. [CB: 59] The water flooded the mines [CB: 59] but all of a sudden, the environment had iron in the water and you had [background noise] all kinds of things. [BK: Yeah] And Alvin Brook was hired as a Physics professor. [BK: Yeah] He was not, his title was no other discipline, there was no discipline of Environmental Science...in the country. Period. [BK: Right, right] And he came to the academic standing committee proposing an Environmental Science program. I think, at best, they approved a course, but they didn't have a program. But at the time of the flood in [background noise] 1972 we were out in two boats bought for the Environmental Science program to do research in it. Wilkes was the first undergraduate institution in Pennsylvania to have a program [BK: Right] defined in Environmental Science leading to the degree. And it was tough to get it accredited, but it's understandable if you understand the disciplines weren't defined. [BK: Right] And that's the environment you walked into where what are you a Physicist? Or an Environmental Science or an Environmental Chemist or, you know, what? And so, the world was changing [BK: Right] and one of the things about Wilkes that we perpetually returned to there was a willingness and an acceptability to change. [BK: True] It may have been difficult, but you look at the processes [BK: Yeah] in other universities, it's damned hard to get a new program.

BK: Boy, that's for sure. [FM: Yeah] I found that out through Minnesota. [FM: Yeah] [Laughter] Holy cow.

FM: But I never remembered that being a hurdle.

JR: Well, it wasn't easy to get the Environmental Science and pass. [FM: Yeah] I remember the Chemists were dead against it.

FM: Oh, they hated it.

BK: Really?

FM: The Chemists...

JR: Yeah. It's amazing.

TG: Yeah.

[Laughter]

FM: Just like the professors at Penn that locked their doors against the young whippersnappers. That's the [chuckle] evolution of resistance.

SC: I had a question.

TG: Meanwhile the whole world passed them by. Could I just get one thing in before the questions asked and that is so, so when I'd been the president I came from a background, one job removed at Georgia Tech, and so I really wondered about the Engineering program and brought, brought somebody in I knew who could, could examine the program and tell me about it, it's long-term viability. And I think at that time, and I'm talking about disciplinary, at that time enrollments were down pretty, pretty, pretty far and the thing that I think is interesting is that I will expect that this person I brought in to give me a rough report. And it was not. He felt that the program actually was more like what Georgia Tech should be doing so even, you know, in in 2001, I guess, the feeling was that this was a unique program that had real [inaudible] and his feeling it was better pitched at the needs of [background noise] industry in areas where engineering was being done than the more theoretical programs that existed elsewhere. So, I mean, that whole thing continues as a very interesting program and, as you all know now, Engineering enrollments are up pretty high at Wilkes again.

BK: I remember you telling me that story, way back then, Tim.

TG: Yeah.

BK: After Umid died, yeah. Hm.

TG: Yeah, it's kind of real testimony, I think, to what Umid did, you know, throughout the development of that program.

CB: Well, I, this by the way I think is one of the most valuable sessions we've had in terms of conceptually what we've covered and given some shape to. Suzanna, you wanted to add something?

SC: Yeah, I, in the development of all these programs I'm wondering where the, how the library supported the research involved? Because in our current position right now we have a huge budget cut and in pushing for all these doctorate programs, these graduate programs, you really

need access to research for all these different programs and I'm just wondering during, if each one of you can sort of maybe talk about like how the students really were able to push through that and do the research and become this really great alumni. Is there something unique about the student body itself or was it really the faculty that really pushed through or did the library really have, give them access to this research?

JR: I was on the library committee many of those years and the budget always [SC: Hmhn] shifted with the new programs. They put a lot of money into purchasing the materials that students would need. So, I think the library did keep pace with them.

SC: Ok.

CB: But it was in the hands of, as I recall, of the Department Chairs [BK: Yes, absolutely] to determine what they needed so I'm sure Umid...

BK: Had a list this long. [Laughter]

CB: Well, part of what you're look, before the internet, open this whole thing up, [BK: Right] I mean still you need subscriptions on the internet, you still do on the internet. [BK: Right] But that he would have probably had a very rich selection of journals that were vital [BK: I'm sure he did] to the several fields that he would have been in charge of, or put someone in charge of that. [BK: Right, I'm sure.] [Inaudible]

JR: I can tell you this there was this one chemical journal [chuckle] and he hid that one. The bill for it for a year was \$4000, [BK: Oh, God] nobody used it [laughter] [SC: Oh] anywhere, faculty, Umid canceled the subscription. [BK: Yeah] They hit the ceiling over it. [Laughter] There was nothing, they weren't using it. [Laughter] [BK: Jeesh]

CB: Anything else to Suzanna's? I think that kind of answers your question.

TG: Yeah, I think, yeah, I think it's kind of interesting. I'm not, I know that there's the new graduate program, but there's a real distinction between what your library resources are and what the requirements are in resources between undergraduate, and particularly doctoral programs. And I would hope also that these new programs, [background noise] I think some of them are applied, and so, again, there's a certain prescribed set of resources, nevertheless that's the development. And the other thing is that library exchange programs can help for, you know, unusual resources that that a person focusing on a particular problem can get access to. But it, it is an issue, I think, increasingly, because of expenses. These resources and I suppose some of you have been following the University of California's abandonment of its contract with the [SC: Elsevier], oh gosh, what's the...big European? [SC: Elsevier?] Yeah. [SC: Yeah] And it's just an indication of how difficult the problem is and I would, I would assume that Wilkes would have that kind of problem in spades, but I I don't know how to address it. But there is a difference between undergraduate and graduate programs in terms of their requirements.

CB: And I'm, just to clinch that point. In developing the Pharmacy Program and be it recorded here again, Umid was the leader [TG: Yeah] in that even in the idea that we should have it

didn't come out from the biologists or the health science people it came from Umid saying Wilkes has got to be at the doctoral level in some field [BK: Hmm] and this is the most promising field and he and Mike Lennon really put [BK: Put it] it together, but one of the issues was how are we gonna afford all the library [BK: Hmhn] and other materials [TG: Right] that are gonna be needed. [TG: Right] And they included that and I, you know, I was recalling for the present Dean of Pharmacy at the symposium last night that the two key alumni that came into the critical board meeting to to reassure the board that the more than one million dollars required to launch this program was a good investment, Bill Raub [BK: Hmhn] and Wayne Yetter. [BK: Hmhn, oh, that's right] Two alums who, one tops in the pharmaceutical field and Bill Raub who was the president's science advisor, among many other titles he had, he was the head of NIH for a while. Two, two of our most illustrious alums in this area and again they worked with Umid [BK: Hmhn] who helped vocalize their presentation [BK: Yep] to the board which was the biggest sales job in my 17 years [Laugh] was that board meeting [TG: Hmhn] and the board unanimously supported it.

BK: And let me go on...

CB: And it was a bad period financially for Wilkes. [BK: Yes, it was] This was a, but it goes along with these earlier times, when we probably shouldn't have done it Wilkes made a commitment [BK: Yeah] to go ahead and its help define the institution.

BK: And let me go on record as saying I hated the idea. Because what he said I think we need a Pharmacy Program I said, "Oh, are you are kidding me." [Laugh] And I said, "And who is going to do this?" He said, "Well I guess I am." I, I said, "Well, that's what you need, something else to do. [Background noise] I'm so happy..." I was, I couldn't believe it. [Laughter] You are not really going to do this like there's not enough going on, but oh, yes. But, you know, as it turned out it was [CB: Providential] providence, yeah. And Omar died [CB: Yes] and Umid was supposed to go on sabbatical and Mike Lennon called me at home and he said do you think Umid is ready to go on sabbatical and I said, "God no." I mean he was a mess. I, I said no, I, no. And he said, "Ok, then we're gonna let him run with Pharmacy." So that's why I said it should always be the Omar Najib School of Pharmacy [background noise] rather than the Nesbitt School of Pharmacy because [laughter] that's what he put all his effort into.

CB: That's fascinating. [BK: Yeah] That's worth having on the record. [BK: Yeah]

BK: He, I mean, that's, that's how he got himself, I swear, that's partly how he got himself through his, Omar's death was, you know, working on Pharmacy and devoting, you know, I swear, 15 hours a day to do it. [TG: Yeah]

CB: I've got one more round on Umid and then I really want to get back to you [BK: Yeah] and your sense of the institution from Student Affairs and Admissions. Say a little bit about how he managed this international congregate of faculty and the gender relations.

BK: Well, the gender, he tried very hard to be to have gender equity in terms of hiring. I mean there's no doubt about that. And over the years there were some really good people [inaudible] Chowdry was wonderful [inaudible] in Engineering and there were others. There were also a

few that weren't so good and one Physicist, one female physicist, that, I can't even [background noise] remember her name now, Eleanor, somebody, I can't remember her last name. And she was a Wilkes graduate as well, that was kind of a disaster. But she, you know, in all honesty, I think shouldn't be saying this, but in all honesty, I think she was on the spectrum somewhere, she was very, very bright, but I think she was on the spectrum somewhere and it just wasn't working out. And he didn't hire people necessarily to be, just, just to have some balance of of whatever. I mean, first of all, a lot of your, a lot of the people who are interested in teaching engineering do happen to come from international backgrounds. You know, they're not, they're not necessarily Americans who want to make a lot of money. You know there, so, therefore you get a lot of that in engineering, I mean, you're going to have that in terms of international faculty. But there were a lot of different kinds of people within that, you know, a lot of different ethnic groups and, I don't know, he had a real talent for being able to do that and to work with every one of them on their own level. On the other hand, he also could keep them under his thumb because [CB: Hmhn], you know, some of them, still, [chuckle] you know, he, some of them needed that. And they were the most productive in those particular situations. And, you know, it's not that they didn't always drive him crazy, because sometimes they did, but he just had a way of doing that, you know, that way of working with people like that was kind of innate with him. And, again, I think it goes back to the way he was raised and all the different kinds of people he was raised with and, you know, he always told the story of living in Baghdad and neighbors on one side were Armenian, were Armenian orthodox and on the other side were Iraqi Jews and because, in those days, there were a lot of people living in those countries, you know? And so, you know, he said we just kind of grew up with all of it it just didn't really phase anybody. So, I think, I think he grew up with that and it was kind of an innate ability for him to be able to deal with them. And they're not, they're not an easy group to deal with. [CB: Yeah] [Chuckle] Then, I mean, I can't speak to now, I don't know, but....

CB: I remember the Iranian and Iraqi tensions [BK: Yeah] on the faculty. [BK: Oh, yeah] He, he [BK: Yeah] was so on top of all that.

BK: Indians and Pakistanis. [CB: Yep] You know, there were a little bit of everything.

[Laughter]

CB: And, again, in terms of your recalling the Vujcas and others after the war, under the umbrella of Wilkes there really was a world. [BK: Oh, yeah] You know, there was really a world [BK: Yeah] and it was, [background noise] I'm going to use the word, but it was, it was cosmopolitan beyond any awareness by Northeastern Pennsylvania [BK: I can tell you about that] [inaudible] Scranton. [BK: Yeah] I mean, this was a cosmopolitan oasis. [BK: Yes, I think that's true] And it's not just in the sciences. [Background noise] [BK: No, that's true] I wanted to just insert, earlier we talked about the sciences and the distinctive commitment at the graduate level, but in the English department and the Creative Writing Master's program, I mean, you helped produce Marlon James, who is emerging as a [BK: Hmm] major writer out of Jamaica and so I mean that and that was, he credits that that program as a critical part of his opportunity.

BK: He's at McCallister.

CB: He hadn't gone to McCallister yet, I think, at that point. Maybe he had.

BK: No I don't think then he had.

TG: No

BK: Now he had because they keep, Garrison Keilor has a bookstore right on the McCallister campus, just because I go to it all the time. And they've always got Marlon James's books there because he's right there.

CB: That's his identity, is McCallister.

BK: Yeah.

CB: But I just say, we, we, we did some, some creative things in the Liberal Arts [BK: Oh, no doubt, no doubt] as well and gave head to a faculty member who wanted to push ahead [BK: Hmhn] and I think, Bonnie was one of the people that did that in the Creative Writing [BK: Hmhn, hmhn] and Pat and so that is part of the Wilkes signature as well.

BK: Right. Oh, there's no doubt.

TG: Oh yeah.

BK: It all is. I mean, it's, that's what we'd hoped for.

CB: Now your time here do you want to say anymore on that?

[Inaudible]

BH: Were you an English major?

BK: No, I wasn't. No, I was everything else. No, actually, when I applied [background noise] I looked at my application once when I was in whatever role I was and I applied as an English major. [BH: Hmhn] But then I went to Sociology and then I went to Psychology and then I went to Accounting and I ended up in Business because it was the fastest thing to get out of at the time.

[Laughter]

CB: And then she went into Umid.

BK: That's right. [Laughter] Exactly.

CB: Tim, Tim wanted in on that.

BK: I'm sorry, Tim.

TG: Well, don't be sorry. [Laughter] Yeah, I can remember, actually, Bonnie and Mike wanted to put that together. [BK: Hmm] And I remember they came in and there was a point where we were Bonnie was phasing out of that super dean-ship that she had and she was proposing this as what she would do in her first year after that, or whatever. And I remember coming in and proposing it to me I, were you in that meeting, Jim?

JR: I might have been.

TG: I think you were. I think you were. But I remember thinking myself this is really a crazy idea. I mean, why would you do this, this way? But it was just, from the beginning, it was a huge success. [BK: Hmm, it was] And then, of course, they had interesting linkages because Mike knew Norman Mailer and Norman Mailer kind of adopted as the kind of program he wanted to support, but the faculty was just extraordinary. And the thing that was amazing, and Barbara you probably remember this, [background noise] when the people would come to the summer workshop and the midterm workshop it was like there was another amp of light, you know. [BK: Yes, that's right, yep] It was just something else. And of course, a lot of these program, and it's true of Pharmacy too, these things have been replicated at other institutions and so there's competition these days, but both of those programs still, I think, are doing ok. [BK: Yeah] [CB: Hmhn] And they have defined Wilkes in many ways because and I want to go back, Chris, because, you know, when I came in [background noise] there were some enrollment issues and so on, but Pharmacy really helped with both the numbers, the raw numbers, and particularly the quality of the student body. It was, it was a huge force in holding us at a level of selectivity, which I don't know that if we would have been able to maintain without it [BK: Hmm] And so it was it was, I mean, it was a very successful program don't misunderstand me, but it was far more successful than a successful new program, it was something that sustained Wilkes as an entity overall for some time

CB: Which is why I think Mike Lennon and Umid, together, anticipated its potential. [TG: Yeah] Again I'd go back to Mike, Michelini, it seems to me that hybrid vigor among departments, even though we were not consciously interdisciplinary formally, there was a great deal of feeding off each other from the departments, the department, with bright [TG: Yeah] people being open to try new things. And in the absence of a tight administrative structure [background noise], with your experience in Minnesota, [BK: Hmhn, yep] the kind that sits on things, it was constantly burbling up. [BK: Right] And in departments that didn't have anyone doing it they didn't burble. They just kind of were there. [BK: Right] But where the burbling was they could create a whole structure and a whole new curriculum.

JR: Well, I think Umid was the one who started joint appointments.

CB: He was.

FM: Jim?

JR: What?

CB: Joint appointments.

BK: Joint appointments.

JR: In various departments.

BK: Hmhn.

CB: And that happened while I was here.

FM: There are such animals?

CB: Yeah.

JR: Oh, yeah. Well, there were dozens of them.

BK: There were, yeah. Hmhn.

FM: Well, [JR: You'd have a primary department] division structure kind of implied that there would be more collaboration in crossing between [BK: Hmhn] course work and knowledge.

JR: I think there were joint appointments between people in different divisions. Yeah.

BK: Yeah, I think there were too.

CB: Hmhn. Anything else [TG: Yeah...] on Umid and the, just faculty and the dynamics there?

BK: Well, not that I could speak to, you know, I've kind of spoken about what I know about it. Let's put it that way.

CB: I just...

BK: Yeah.

CB: Tim, did you want to get in on something? I, I heard you....

TG: Yeah, I think I thought better of saying it. [CB: Ok] It was just something about division structure and I don't think it was particularly useful.

FM: Barbara, as a listener to the kind of engaging we've been doing for a few years now, actually, are we on a particular track that should be part of a Wilkes history?

BK: Oh, I think it absolutely should. Absolutely. I mean, really when you think about it there's so many, as you've all thought before, I'm not saying anything new I'm sure, but, when you think about it I'm sure there's just so many tentacles that go out and all come back together and go out and come back together, they all have to be explored as far as I'm concerned, you know.

JR: Can I ask one question? You came to Wilkes in 72? [BK: Hmhn] It's my understanding that at that point we didn't lose many freshman [BK: No] despite the flood that came?

BK: Oh, no that's right.

JR: Did you attempt to go somewhere else?

BK: No, [JR: Yeah] didn't even think about it actually. I was, I I what I originally wanted to do was go to Muhlenburg. And I wanted to go to Muhlenburg from the time I was in like 9th grade. So I paid, well, I didn't pay, my parent's paid my deposit and at the last minute I said, "Oh, I don't want to go to Muhlenburg." [JR: Chuckle] And I think I didn't, I don't know why exactly I didn't want to...

CB: You'd thought they'd have more traffic lights that...

[Laughter]

BK: Maybe, that could be. Allentown was a whole lot bigger, you know. But, I I think, part of it was, I was thinking financial, although my parents thought I was crazy when I told them that 20 years later. But I think to go to Muhlenburg at the time, to live on campus, it was \$3600, a year. Which was a lot of money in 19... [TG: Big money] Yeah in 1972. [TG: Yeah] To go here and I wasn't going to live on campus, but to go here and live on campus, I think it was like, \$2200, so you can imagine the tuition was, I don't know, 18, something like that? And I don't know, maybe I felt guilty. I don't know. But I told my parents that about 20 years later and they just looked at me like I had three heads, like nobody said that to you. [Laugh] And I said, "No, I know." But No. I remember standing over on the hill up in Edwardsville looking at all the rooftops over here thinking well, that's where I'm going to school. That's nice. [Laughter] You know, it didn't really phase me much I didn't even think twice about it. And you know like I said I got here and everything was in disarray and I didn't think much about that either. You know the biggest problem I had was the registrar was set up over in Weckesser and I had to register and at the time they had busses....

FM: Al Zowotski.

BK: Yeah, well, I don't remember, who was there at the time? But anyway, was that who it was?

FM: Yeah.

BK: But I, Franklin Street, they were letting people go both ways on Franklin Street and they had a bus though that would come over from Kingston so you didn't have to drive, but of course I was too cool to do that. So, I took my car. My father said do not take your car to Wilkes-Barre and said, Oh yeah, yeah. So, I got in my little Volkswagen and I came over here and I came down this way and I drove up here and I parked in front of Weckesser and I came home and the next morning I had four flat tires. Let me tell you [background noise] because I ran over nails.

Let me tell you how happy my father was. [Background noise] [Laughter] He was not happy. I told you not to drive the car but, you know, I was too cool. What can I tell you? [Laughter]

FM: Well in 1972 when your tuition was what, 3200?

BK: Not even.

FM: My salary was 32000.

BK: Wow, can you imagine? Well, that's not even as much as the tuition now. [Laughter]

FM: Yeah.

BK: Can you imagine? But no, it never, it never phased me. For whatever reason, I don't know.

JR: Well, it's an amazing, we were worried at the time because we [BK: Oh, I'm sure] thought we were going to lose freshman [BK: Right] [FM: Hmhn] and it didn't happen.

BK: There were 400 & some in my class when it started. I mean [JR: That's pretty good] I remember.

JR: Back in that day and age.

BK: Yeah. Very good.

FM: I had a letter after the flood from a father in New Jersey, who owned the Knife and Fork restaurant, anybody who knows the shore knows that it was a very elite restaurant in Atlantic City, right at the south end. And his daughter was enrolled to start at Wilkes in September [BK: Hmhn] and he addressed it to Dr. Michelini and he said will you be honest with me and tell me whether we should make alternative plans for my daughter. [BK: Hmhn] Yeah, so I wrote a letter back to him and explained to him you know education is not buildings it's teachers. [BK: Right] We're all still going to be here and we're going to recover. [Background noise] He sent me a check for \$5000.

BK: Wow. Well, that was a pretty big check in those days.

[Laughter]

FM: It was.

CB: That's a great story.

BK: Yeah, that is.

FM: I forgot his name, but honest to God. [BK: Wow] I never forgot that and his daughter came here [background noise] and Dean Lampey said you should have sent his check back for \$5000 and get her the hell out of here.

[Laughter]

FM: Oh, she was the most un-studented college student. Strike that from the record.

[Laughter]

CB: Well, that's why he sent \$5000.

BK: Right.

FM: She said she's cost me more than that now.

[Laughter]

CB: It might be noted that yesterday at the scholarship luncheon three of the four students that were highlighted and they really were magnificent, [BK: Yep] were from New Jersey.

BK: Yes, I noticed that. I noticed that.

CB: I don't know, Tim, when you left here what was the percentage of the student body, undergraduate student body from New Jersey?

TG: I have no idea, Chris.

CB: In my day it was, it hovered between 20 and 25%.

BK: Right. I think it was....

TG: I know we had a substantial contingent from New Jersey, that's for sure.

BK: I want to say, I want to say in the early 70's it might have been a little bit higher. Then, but I could be wrong.

TG: Yeah. All's I was going to say was that, and Mike [Michelini] would be able to speak to this much better than I, but there was a substantial contingent of students from New Jersey and from metropolitan New York City. [BK: Hmhn] There were the New Jersey students which had had declined some during, you know, in my time. [BK: Right]

BK: Well, the absence of, the absence of state aid in New York certainly that transferrable state aid for New York certainly caused a problem there.

TG: Yeah, yeah.

BK: You know and I don't know what the situation is with New Jersey now, I have no idea.

CB: I'm going to shift gears, I want you to talk about Student Affairs and starting with your portraits of George Ralston and Art Hoover and Dean Lampey, [TG: Oh, man] I'm leaving out Paul Adams [BK: Right] who we have interviewed already.

BK: I know, I know.

[Background noise]

BK: Oh, George Ralston. Well, of course I knew about George Ralston before I even got here. I think everybody knew George Ralston, it was kind of like Dr. Farley, you, your kind of, I only ever saw Dr. Farley once that I can remember, and that was in front of Weckesser and he was already the chancellor at that time. And that's the only time I ever remember seeing him. And then I think he died the following year. George Ralston, I met, I just knew who he was I think everybody knew who George Ralston was. I, you know, I do know that the first day I came to school I had two other people with me from like, from Lehman, and I barely missed him on the bicycle with the car. The one guy said to me, "Barbara, that's not the way to start your college career by knocking the Dean off the bicycle." [Laughter] I said, "I know that's probably true."

CB: There are two driving stories.

BK: Yeah, so far there are two, that's right. [Laughter] Oh, dear. Oh, dear. And of course, then I'm and then of course I remember him with the Ralston cheer because, yes, I was a cheerleader and so I do remember him doing, you know, doing the Ralston cheer behind us at the bonfires [laughter] that we used to have over in the parking lot by the football game, by the football field. And so, he was Dean Ralston, I, he was just always around and always everywhere and the perfect gentleman. And, of course, I always remember Helen because she was the perfect lady and still is, I might add.

CB: She's willing to be interviewed.

BK: Oh yeah, you should.

CB: I talked to her yesterday at lunch.

BK: You should.

SC: Yes.

BK: She's wonderful, Helen. And then, of course, I remember the president because the president, you know, was I just thought the president at Wilkes at the time was just the most wonderful thing in the whole world. Still do.

[Laughter] [Inaudible]

BK: I did. I thought he was the greatest thing going. And I remember him eating, the pie eating contest out by the, do you remember that?

FM: I won it.

BK: You did win.

FM: And I won the watermelon eating contest. [Laughter] And I attributed it to my Italian nose where I would plough a furrow and....

[Laughter]

BK: My gosh. I thought that was the greatest thing.

CB: Barbara, you've raised us a lot of humor we have not achieved.

RH: Did he hire you?

BK: I'm fun.

FM: I saw something in the Newsweek or some publication this past week [BK: Yeah] about somebody had a watermelon eating contest and how demeaning that is to the black community [BK: Oh, dear] because we're eating watermelon and I'm like, oh my God I'm glad I lived in a different age.

[Laughter]

BK: Oh dear.

CB: Anything more on George?

FM: Speaking of history, just a moment because you may even though I was going through I say...

[Recording ends abruptly]